

# The principal teaching of the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*

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## Abstract

We come across a burning controversy among scholars regarding the principal teaching of the Bhagavadgītā. Some scholars think that the principal teaching of the Bhagavadgītā is jñānayoga. All other yogas are just the helping conditions to jñānayoga. Some thinkers argue that karmayoga occupies the central position in the teaching of the Bhagavadgītā and the other yogas are nothing but the auxiliary factors to the same. Philosophers belonging to the third group are of the opinion that the supreme position has been given to the bhaktiyoga in the teaching of the Bhagavadgītā. But scholars of the fourth group agree with none of the three views mentioned. They hold that the principal teaching of the Bhagavadgītā is to establish that the blended path of all the yogas is the best path. I agree with the fourth view. The principal objective of my article is to refute the first three views and ultimately to substantiate the fourth one already mentioned. None of the yogas is subordinate to others. All of the yogas are equally complementary to each other.

**Keywords:** *Bhagavadgītā, karmayoga, jñānayoga, bhaktiyoga, blended path.*

Our present society is running through a number of problems. According to our *śāstra* the principal reason for these problems is the separation of our practical life from the spiritual life. Therefore the objective of *Bhagavadgītā* is to make a bridge in between our practical life and spiritual life (*yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva madarpaṇam, Bhagavadgītā - 9/27*) and thereby to solve all the problems. In fact the picture of our society is nothing but reflection of the thinking and activities of the people living in it. If the people living in our society are honest and good then the activities done by them must be good which turn our society into haven. But if they are dishonest and bad then their actions must be bad which turn our society into hell. It is only the moral education that can convert the immoral people into moral ones and ensure discipline, order and well-being for the whole society. But it is important to note that moral or religious teaching ensures well-being not for the society alone but it establishes the well-being for the individual as well. Keeping this in view, Swami Vivekananda beautifully says that the objective of the teaching of our *śāstra* is twofold— *Ātmano mokṣārtham jagat hitāya ca*. It ensures the *mokṣa* or liberation for the individual and establishes the well-being for the whole society. We come

across the same view when we go through verse no 20 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā*.<sup>1</sup> But the question is how does our *śāstra* do the same? In reply to this question it can be said that our *śāstra* for doing the same proposes for three principal *mārgas* or *yogas*— *karma yoga*, *jñāna yoga* and *bhakti yoga*. *Bhagavadgītā* also suggests these three *mārgas*.

We come across a burning controversy among the scholars regarding the principal teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā*. According to Hindu religion in general each and every *yoga* is competent to lead one to the state of *mokṣa*. The goal is one that is the *mokṣa* and we can reach to that goal following different *mārgas*. Different *mārgas* are something like the different rivers which took their birth from different places and run through different arias and ultimately meet to one and the same ocean. Likewise different *mārgas* take their journey from different states and run as their own way but ultimately reach to one and the same goal i.e. the attainment of *mokṣa*. The different distinguished commentators of the *Bhagavadgītā* are of different opinions regarding the principal teaching of the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*. Śaṅkarācārya, for example, thinks that the principal teaching of *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* is the teaching of *jñāna yoga*. All other *yogas* dealt with in the *Bhagavadgītā* are nothing but the helping conditions to *jñāna yoga*. Rāmānuja, on the other, says that the principal teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā* is *bhakti yoga* and other *yogas* are the auxiliary factors to *bhakti yoga*. Bal Gangadhar Tilak agrees with none of them. He argues that *karma yoga* is the principal teaching of the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* and other *yogas* are the subordinate helping conditions to *karma yoga*. Among many others Brajendra Nath Seal and Mahānāmabrata Brahmachāri have given a fourth view. According to them *Bhagavadgītā* proposes for a blended path of all the afore said three *mārgas* taken together. I think that the fourth view is more acceptable so far as the teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā* is concerned. If we carefully go through the whole of the *Gītā* then it can be understood that all the paths are complementary to each other. The whole *Gītā* can be compared with a three-wheeler vehicle. It runs depending on the three wheels of *karma yoga*, *jñāna yoga* and *bhakti yoga*. All of the wheels of a three-wheeler vehicle are equally important. Likewise, all of these *yogas* are equally important. If

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<sup>1</sup> *karmaṇaiva hi saṁsiddhim āsthitā janakādayaḥ lokasaṅgrahamevāpi saṁpāśyan kartum arhasi.*

any one of the wheels is kept aside then it (vehicle) cannot move any more. The movement of one wheel depends upon the movement of the other two wheels. Similarly the movement of one *yoga* depends upon the movement and co-operation of the other two *yogas*. Let us examine and explain how and why the three *yogas* are inter-dependent and complimentary to each other.

The *Bhagavadgītā* starts its journey with the discussion of *karma yoga* which is otherwise popularly known as *niṣkāma karma*. The full form and conditions of *niṣkāma karma* have not been referred to in a single verse, rather they have been reflected in a number of verses belonging to different chapters. But we shall deal with some of the fundamental verses among them. The most important verse dealing with *karma yoga* is verse no 47 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter which ruins as— *karmaṇy evā' dhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana mā karmaphalāhetur bhūr mā te saṅgo'stv akarmaṇi*. This verse shows that *karma yoga* or *niṣkāma karma* is a *karma* which is done without having the desire for fruit. The immediate next verse i.e. verse no 48 of the same chapter points out another important aspect of *niṣkāma karma* that aspect is the aspect of equanimity of failure and success.<sup>2</sup> Verse no 56 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter points to the same thing in different words. This verse says that a *karma yogi* treats sorrow and pleasure equally.<sup>3</sup> Verse no 55 draws our attention to one of the important conditions of the possibility of *niṣkāma karma*.<sup>4</sup> This verse categorically states that a *karma yogi* otherwise known as *sthitaprajña* must be completely devoid of desire underlying mind and be satisfied with soul alone. Now let us come back to another important conditions of *niṣkāma karma* or *karma yoga* that has been cited in verse no 45 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter.<sup>5</sup> This verse teaches one to transcend the boundary of the *guṇa* in order to be a *karma yogi*. I think the most fundamental conditions of *karma yoga* has been pointed out by this verse. This is what is about the nature and principal conditions of *niṣkāma karma* in a nutshell.

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<sup>2</sup> *yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā dhanañjaya siddhyasiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṁ yoga ucyate.*

<sup>3</sup> *duḥkheṣv anudvignamanāḥ sukheṣu vigatasprīhaḥ vītarāgabhayakrodhaḥ sthitadhīr munir uchyate*

<sup>4</sup> *prajahāti yadā kāmān sarvān pārtha manogatān ātmany evā 'tmanā tuṣṭaḥ sthitaprajñas tado 'cyate*

<sup>5</sup> *traiguṇyaṁ viṣayā vedā nīstraiguṇyo bhavā' rjuna nīrdvandvo nīyasattvastho nīyogakṣema ātmavān*

Now let us enter into a philosophical significance of these conditions and nature of *niṣkāma karma yoga*. Let us start with verse no 47. According to this verse an action will be converted into *niṣkāma karma* or *karma yoga* if it is done without desire for fruit. But it is worthy to note that the manner in which that condition has been expressed is very striking. It says that one has the right only upon action but not upon its fruits. Here the question comes why it is said so? Why one has right only upon one's action but not upon the fruit of one's action? I think the act of searching of the answer to this question inevitably brings us to the land of *jñāna yoga*. But in the land of *jñāna yoga* we get partial answer to the afore said question. So in order to have the full answer we have to proceed further and ultimately reach to the kingdom of *bhakti yoga*. Thus *karma yoga* is inter connected with *jñāna yoga* and *bhakti yoga* both.

Now let us explain the same in detail. So far as verse no 47 is concerned it teaches us to perform our action without having the desire for enjoyment of the fruit. I think here the reason for saying so has been hinted at. The reason is that one has a right only upon action but not upon the fruit of action. But no intelligent conscious person can be satisfied with this answer. He must proceed further and ask why one has no right upon the fruit of one's action. The satisfactory answer to this question can be attained only through the proper knowledge of one's self. Thus it is essential for the *karma yoga* to take the help of the *jñāna yoga* in order to attain the proper knowledge of the self. In the first half of 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter *Bhagavadgītā* deals with *ātma-jñāna*. Here *Bhagavadgītā* more or less follows the ontological view of Sāṃkhya philosophy. Sāṃkhya ontology says of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. *Puruṣa* stands for soul and *prakṛti* stands for matter. All material objects are the products out of *prakṛti* through evolution. Our body, sense organs, mind, ego and *buddhi* are also the effects coming from the material cause called *prakṛti*. It also states that *puruṣa*, the soul is conscious but inactive and *prakṛti* on the other hand is unconscious but active. Following the ontological teaching of Sāṃkhya school *Bhagavadgītā* also teaches that essentially we are soul and different from *prakṛti* or body. Our body is something like our dress. Our old dress is replaced by new ones. In the same way

our old aged diseased body is replaced by a new and healthy one.<sup>6</sup> *Gītā* like Sāṃkhya school also believes that our soul is inactive (*sthāṇur acalo*).<sup>7</sup> So far as our discussion is concerned it is seen that we cannot be a real agent of any action. If we are not agent of an action how can we have desire for the enjoyment of the fruit of that action. This knowledge of the nature of our soul necessarily converts all our actions into *niṣkāma karma* or *karma yoga*. So the knowledge that converts our actions into *niṣkāma karma* and thereby makes us *karma yogi* is derived through *jñāna yoga*. Thus we see that *jñāna yoga* is complementary to *karma yoga*. This view has been substantiated by sloke no 52 and 53 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter.<sup>8</sup> Following the ontology of Sāṃkhya school *Bhagavadgītā* on the one hand says that no action is done by us, the *puruṣa* or soul and on the other it states that all actions are done by *prakṛti*.<sup>9</sup>

The literal meaning of *niṣkāma karma* implies that it is a *karma* or action without *kāma* (desire). This condition of *niṣkāma karma* has been clearly reflected in verse no 55 of 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter.<sup>10</sup> This verse categorically points out two conditions for the possibility of *niṣkāma karma*— (a) we have to transcend the boundary of *kāma* and (b) enter into the land of soul. But how and why one can transcend the boundary of the *kāma*? For the sake of better understanding let us go to the answer to the second question (why question) first. The principal objective of *niṣkāma karma* is to ensure the well-being (*lokasaṃgraha*) for the society and liberation for the agent himself.<sup>11</sup> So far as the objective of *niṣkāma karma* is concerned the action of a *karma yogi* cannot be motivated by the self-interest or *kāma* rather it will be

<sup>6</sup> *vāsānsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya navāni gṛihṇāti naro 'parāṇi tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇānya nyāni sanyāti navāni dehī -2/22*

<sup>7</sup> *acchedyo 'yam adāhyo 'yam akledyo 'śoṣya eva cha nityaḥ sarvagataḥ sthāṇur acalo 'yam sanātanaḥ -2/24*

<sup>8</sup> *yadā te mohakalilam buddhir vyatitariṣyati tadā gantāsi nirvedaṃ śrotavyasya śrutasya ca. śrutivipratipannā te yadā sthāsyati niśchalā samādhāv acalā buddhis tadā yogam avāpsyasi*

<sup>9</sup> *na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhaty akarmakṛt kāryate hy avaśaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛtijair guṇaiḥ- 3/5*

*prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ ahankāravimūḍhātmā kartā 'ham iti manyate -3/27*  
*prakṛityai 'va ca karmāṇi kriyamāṇāni sarvaśaḥ yaḥ paśyati tathā 'tmānam akartāram sa paśyati - 13/30*

<sup>10</sup> *prajahāti yadā kāmān sarvān pārtha manogatān ātmany evā 'tmanā tuṣṭaḥ sthitaprajñas tado 'cyate*

<sup>11</sup> *karmanai 'va hi sansiddhim āsthitā janakādayaḥ lokasaṃgraham evā 'pi sampaśyan kartum arhasi- 3/20*

motivated by self-sacrifice which converts one's action into *yajña*. Verse no 25 of 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter shows that one cannot perform *nişkāma karma* or *yajña* unless and until he becomes *jñāni*.<sup>12</sup> The action of an ignorant person is bound to be *sakāma*. Now let us go back to the answer to the first question i.e. how we can transcend the boundary of *kāma*. *Kāma, crodha, lobha* etc. are nothing but the essential properties of the three *guṇas* of *sattva, rajas* and *tamas* underlying *prakṛti*. So *kāma* is the consequence or effect and *guṇa* or *prakṛti* is the cause of the same. If we are to transcend the boundary of the effect then first of all we have to transcend the boundary of its cause. Since *kāma* is the effect of the *guṇas* so, to transcend the boundary of the *kāma* we have to transcend the bound of *guṇas*. This is the reason why verse no 45 of 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter teaches us to go beyond *guṇas*.<sup>13</sup> In order to do the same again we have to seek co-operation of *jñāna mārga*. *Jñāna mārga* teaches that we are *puruṣa* or soul that is why we are different from *prakṛti* and *guṇas*. But due to ignorance we wrongly identify our selves with *prakṛti* and *guṇas* i.e. our body, mind, ego and so on. Consequently we become influenced and motivated by the *prakṛti* and the *guṇas*. The moment true knowledge about the distinction between our soul (*puruṣa*) and the body or *prakṛti* arises we can transcend the boundary of the *guṇas* and *kāma*. Here *jñāna yoga* provides us the knowledge of the distinction of the *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* this knowledge fulfills two-fold purpose. On one hand it helps us to transcend the boundary of the *guṇas* (*nistrai-guṇyo bhavāṛjuna*) and *kāmas* and on the other it leads us to reach to the state of soul.

*Bhagavadgītā* shows that for another reason *karma yoga* will knock the door of *jñāna yoga*. It is already stated that *karma yoga* or *nişkāma karma* is the action meant for the society, the others (*bahujana sukhaya bahujana hitaya*). This is the reason why *nişkāma karma* has been described as *yajña* or sacrifice. In fact the whole teaching of the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of the *Gītā* i.e. the *karma yoga* aims to convert our actions into *yajña*. Our action will be converted into *yajña* if we do the same by sacrificing our self-interest. In fact *sakāma karma* and *nişkāma karma* are self-contradictory and opposite to each other like light and darkness. As long as there is

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<sup>12</sup> *saktāḥ karmany avidvāso yathā kurvanti bhārata kuryād vidvāms tathā 'saktāś cikīrṣhur lokasaṅgraham*

<sup>13</sup> *traiguṇyaviṣayā vedā nistraiguṇyo bhava 'rjuna nirdvandvo nityasattvastho niryoga-kṣema ātmavān*

darkness there cannot be light and vice versa. Similarly as long as there is *sakāma karma* there cannot be *niṣkāma karma* and vice versa. As long as one continues to think for the self-interest he cannot think for the interest of the others. Keeping this in view Swami Vivekananda beautifully says religion is self-abnegation. Rabindranath Tagore says religion is self-denial for self-realization. Ramkrishnadeva says the same in a lucid and simple manner. He says *āmi mole ghucibe junjāl*. So far as our discussion is concerned it implies that the possibility of *niṣkāma karma* necessarily presupposes the destruction of *sakāma karma*. But the question is how can our *sakāma karma* be destroyed. In reply our *śāstra* says that our *sakāma karma* can be destroyed through knowledge. So *karma yoga* again takes the help of *jñāna yoga* here. This truth has been reflected in verse no 19, 33 and 37 of the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter. In verse no 37 and 19 it is said that as all fuels like woods etc. are burnt out by fire so all our actions are burnt out by the fire of knowledge.<sup>14</sup> Verse no 33 states that all our actions lose their existence in knowledge.<sup>15</sup> We know that different rivers lose their existence when they enter into the ocean. Likewise our actions lose their existence into the ocean of knowledge. But it is worthy to note that these three verses in particular give birth to wrong conception in Arjuna. Arjuna thinks that so far as the teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā* underlying these three verses are concerned it is clear that there is no room for *karma* or action when one turns into a *jñāna yogi*. He thinks the teaching of the *Gītā* here implies that *jñāna yoga* is superior to *karma yoga*. So he becomes happy since it goes in favor of what he wants himself. But Arjuna gets confused and hopeless when he listens to sloke no 42 i.e. the last verse of 4<sup>th</sup> chapter.<sup>16</sup> This verse orders Arjuna to be prepared for fighting with Kaurava by removing all kinds of doubt underlying his mind. This confusion led him to raise question in the very beginning of the next chapter i.e. *sannyās yoga*. He again asks the same question which was asked earlier in the

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<sup>14</sup> *Yatha 'idhānsi samiddho 'gnir bhasmasāt kurute 'rjuna jñānāgniḥ sarvakarmāṇi bhasmasāt kurute tathā.*

*yasya sarve samārambhāḥ kāmasankalpavarjitāḥ jñānāgnidagdhakarmāṇaṁ tam āhuh paṇḍitaṁ budhāḥ.*

<sup>15</sup> *śreyān dravyamayād yajñāj jñānayajñāḥ parantapa sarvaṁ karma 'khilaṁ pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate.*

<sup>16</sup> *tasmeād ajñānasambhūtaṁ hṛitsthaṁ jñānāsinā 'tmanaḥ chittvai 'naṁ saṁśayaṁ yogam ātiṣṭho 'tiṣṭha bhārata*

beginning of the 3rd chapter that what actually Śrī Kṛṣṇa likes to teach whether *karma yoga* is superior or *jñāna yoga* is superior.

So far as the teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā* underlying the three verses mentioned above is concerned it is very clear that the confusion and the doubt in the mind of Arjuna is well grounded. If all our actions are burnt out by the fire of knowledge then there cannot be any point for advising someone to proceed for any action. But our care full analysis of the same helps to understand that actually the real teaching of those verses is not the same as it is understood by Arjuna. When those verses state that our actions are burnt out by the fire of our knowledge then thereby they refer only to our *sakāma karmas* but not to *niškāma* ones. It is already stated that *sakāma karma* and *niškāma karma* are contradictory in nature like the light and darkness, day and night. So if one is to perform *niškāma karma* then he has to destroy his *sakāma karmas* first with the help of the fire of knowledge. But one cannot be convinced by this argument. They may argue that so far as verse no 33, and 37 of chapter 4 are concerned it is seen that the term *sarva* has been used before *karma*. This clearly shows that by the fire of knowledge all kinds of our actions are burnt out. So the above argument in favor of *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* is not acceptable. I think if we have to resolve this problem then we have to go back to verse no 18 of the same chapter. It says *karmaṇy akarma yaḥ paśyed akarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ*. This verse categorically advises us to see our *akarma* in *karma* and *karma* in *akarma*. If we try to understand the proper significance underlying this verse then our problem will be resolved. We consider our-selves to be the agents of our *sakāma karmas*. In fact all *sakāma karmas* are performed by us due to our ignorance. But it is already stated that actually we cannot be agent of any action since we are the souls or *puruṣas* and souls or *puruṣas* are essentially inactive. All actions are performed by *prakṛti* and the *guṇas* underlying *prakṛti*. This knowledge clearly shows that we cannot have any actions or *karmas* of our own. Thus all our *karmas* are turned into *akarmas*. This is what is about the teaching of the first part of verse no 18. Now let us go to the teaching of the second half of verse no 18.<sup>17</sup> The followers of *jñāna mārgas* like Śaṅkarācārya think that a true *jñāna yogi* can live without performing action (*karma*). But *Bhagavadgītā* teaches repeatedly that

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<sup>17</sup> *sa buddhimān manuṣyeṣu sa yuktaḥ kṛtsnakarmakṛt*

it is quite impossible for one to live without performing action.<sup>18</sup> One cannot live without taking food. Beside this our heart, lung and so on continuously doing their action. So a real wise man sees *karma* in *akarma*. I think the second half of verse no 18 bears another significance. The moment one understands that he is not the real agent of an action rather the real agent of all actions is *prakṛti* and *guṇas* governed by God then he also understands that he has to perform his actions as the slave (*dāsa*) of God. Here, in this state one actually sees *karma* in *akarma*. It is *akarma* in the sense that it is not his own *karma* since he cannot be an agent of any action. And again it is his *karma* since he is the slave of God. So far as our discussion is concerned it is seen that when verse no 33 and 37 of the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter refer to all actions (*sarvaṁ karmākhilam, sarva karmāṇi*) then thereby they mean only the *sakāma karmas* which are wrongly thought by the ignorant people to be really done by them. Actually *niṣkāma karma* is not the *karma* of us it is the *karma* of God. We do the same not as the agent of them rather as a slave of God. When a labourer, for example works in the field of crops it is not his own work, it is the work of the landlord. The action of the labourer here is *akarma* in one sense and *karma* in another sense. It is *akarma* in the sense that he is not the real agent of the action he performs but it is *karma* in the sense that it is the *karma* of a slave under his master. The same labourer becomes master and does his own work when he goes back to his own home. But as long as he performs his own works being the agent of them he cannot perform the action of his master and vice versa. In the same way one cannot continue to perform *sakāma karma* and *niṣkāma karma* both. *Niṣkāma karma* means the *karma* of the God and *sakāma karma* means the *karma* of his own. In order to perform *niṣkāma karma*, the *karma* of God he has to destroy all the *sakāma karmas* i.e. the *karmas* of his own. This is the implication of the teaching underlying the above verses. So there is no room for confusion regarding the teaching of *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*. Through verse no 18, 33, and 37 of 4<sup>th</sup> chapter<sup>19</sup> the *Bhagavadgītā* clearly says that in the first step all our *sakāma karmas*

<sup>18</sup> *na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhaty akarmakṛt kāryate hy avaśaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛtijair guṇaiḥ. 3/5*

<sup>19</sup> *karmaṇyakarma yaḥ paśyed-akarmanī ca karma yaḥ sa buddhimān manuṣyeṣu sa yuktaḥ kṛtsnakarmakṛt. śreyān dravyamayād yajñāj jñānayajñāḥ parantapa sarvaṁ karmākhilam pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate.*

are burnt out completely by the fire of knowledge and then the place of *sakāma karmas* is acquired by the *niṣkāma karma*. By the fire of knowledge when the sense of our ego i.e. the sense of agentship of action is destroyed then we perform our action as the slave (*dāsa*) of God.

For another reason *karma yoga* is in need of the help of *jñāna yoga*. The classic example of *niṣkāma karma* or *karma yoga* is the *karma* of God himself. This view has been depicted in different verses of the *Gītā*. Verse no 22 to 25 of 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter and verse no 7, 8 and 11 of 4<sup>th</sup> chapter clearly say that God has nothing to do for the sake of his own, since He is perfect being. But in spite of this He comes down to the world and performs actions in order to establish justice, discipline and well-being of the society. So if one is to perform *niṣkāma karma* then he has to follow the path of God Himself. God Himself has set the example of *niṣkāma karma* so that people can follow Him. But *Bhagavadgītā* also points out that if one is to perform *niṣkāma karma* following the example setup by God then first of all he has to manifest the godly nature underlying him. This message also has been reflected in different verses of the different chapters of the *Bhagavadgītā*. Some of the verses containing this teaching is verse no 10 of 4<sup>th</sup> chapter, verse no 2 of 14<sup>th</sup> chapter verse no 10, 12, 14 and 15 of 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter and so on.<sup>20</sup> But the question is how can the godly nature be attained by us. In reply to this question *Gītā* teaches that we ourselves are God. Whether we are identical with God or we are the part of God this is the matter of controversy. But either we are identical with God or part of God, it is true that we are godly in nature. So far as the essential nature of fire i.e. the burning power of fire is concerned it is equally shared both by the fire and the small flame of it. The essential property of gold is shared both by the biscuits of

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*yathaidhāmsi samiddho 'gnir bhasmasāt kurute 'rjuna jñānāgniḥ sarvakarmāṇi bhasmasāt kurute tathā.*

<sup>20</sup> *vītarāgabhayakrodhā manmayā māmupāśritāḥ bahavo jñānatapasā pūtā madbhāvamāgatāḥ. idaṁ jñānamupāśritya mama sādharṁyamāgatāḥ sarge 'pi nopajāyante pralaye na vyathanti ca. sahayajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā purovāca prajāpatiḥ anena prasaviṣyadhvameṣa vo 'stviṣṭakāmadhuk iṣṭān bhogān hi vo devā dāsyante yajñabhāvitāḥ tairdattānapradāyaibhyo yo bhunkte stena eva saḥ. annād bhavanti bhūtāni parjanyaād annasambhavaḥ yajñād bhavati parjanyo yajñāḥ karmasamudbhavaḥ.*

*karma brahmodbhavam viddhi brahmākṣarasamudbhavam tasmāt sarvagatam brahma nityam yajñe pratiṣṭhitam.*

gold and the smallest particle of the same. Similarly the godly nature is shared both by God or the part of it (*jīva*).

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā* i.e. in *sāṃkhya yoga* it is mentioned that a *karma yogi* or *niškāma karmi* must be *sthitaprajña*. No one can perform *niškāma karma* unless and until he becomes *sthitaprajña*. Here Arjuna, wants to know from Kṛṣṇa – what are the characteristics of a *sthitaprajña*, how *sthitaprajña* can be recognized?<sup>21</sup> The answer to this question has been given by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in a number of verses of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the other chapters. Among them the most important verse is the immediate next verse i.e. verse no 55 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter that points out the most important characteristics of a *sthitaprajña*.<sup>22</sup> This verse clearly mentions two characteristics of *sthitaprajña*. These characteristics themselves are also the conditions of *niškāma karma*. One condition is that a *karma yogi* who is otherwise called *sthitaprajña* must transcend the boundary of *kāma* or *guṇa*. Secondly he must enter into the kingdom of the soul. One cannot belong to the world of *guṇa* and the world of soul at the same time. A man cannot be a citizen of the two countries at the same time. Similarly one cannot be a citizen of the two worlds, the world of *guṇas* and the world of souls at the same time. In order to be the citizen of the world of soul one must surrender the citizenship of the world of *guṇas*. One cannot co-exist in two countries at the same time. So long as one exist in India he cannot exist in Bangladesh and vice versa. Likewise one cannot co-exist in the world of *guṇas* and the world of soul at the same time. As long as one exists in the world of *guṇas* he cannot exist in the world of soul. So if one is to enter into the world of soul then first of all he has to leave the world of *guṇas*. But the *guṇas* bind its, the ignorant people with the pillar called body and material world. *Guṇas* in fact are the material elements underlying *prakṛti*. The literal meaning of the term *guṇa* is rope. The term *guṇa* is particularly used to refer to the rope that is used to bind a boat in the bank of a river. Likewise the *guṇas* bind ignorant people with body and the material

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<sup>21</sup> *sthitaprajñasya kā bhāṣā samādhisthasya keśava, sthitadhīḥ kim prabhāṣeta kim āsīta vrajeta kim. 2/54*

<sup>22</sup> *prajahāti yadā kāmān sarvān pārtha manogatān ātmany evā 'tmanā tuṣṭaḥ sthitaprajñas tado 'cyate.*

world.<sup>23</sup> That state is called the state of bondage. As long as one continues to exist in the world of *guṇas* he continues to suffer from enumerable problems. Unless and until one becomes free from the bindings made by the *guṇas* he cannot enter into the state of soul. For the same reason he cannot turn himself into a *sthitaprajña* and cannot perform *niṣkāma karma*. Here comes the necessity of the help from the part of knowledge (*jñāna yoga*). Only knowledge can rescue one from the control of *guṇa* and *karma*. But the question is: how knowledge can rescue a person who is under the control of *guṇa* and *kāma*. In other word how knowledge can make one free from the bindings made by the *guṇas*. In order to make one free from the binding of the *guṇas* what is necessary is the hands and legs of the rescuer. But the knowledge has neither the hand nor the legs. How can knowledge then rescue one from the bindings of the *guṇas*? In reply it is said that the binding made by the *guṇas* is not real. In reality *guṇa* cannot bind one with the world or the body. It is already stated in the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* that we are soul. And soul is essentially ever free. Soul is essentially *sat, chit* and *ānanda*. It can never be the subject to bondage. But due to *avidyā* or *māyā* one wrongly considers himself to be bounded. In fact the state of bondage is the result of the identification of the soul with the body which is otherwise called *dehātmabodha*. As the bindings of the soul with the body and the material world is false so the question of real unbinding is pointless. Here again question arises if soul is essentially *sat, chit* and *ānanda* then how it can be affected by ignorance or *avidyā*. Knowledge and ignorance are two contrary states like light and darkness. Light and darkness cannot co-exist in one and the same place at the same time. As long as there is light in a place there cannot be darkness and vice versa. Similarly knowledge and ignorance cannot co-exist in one and the same place at the same time. If there is knowledge in a place than there cannot be ignorance (*avidyā*) in that place at the same time. Now if soul in essence is *chit* i.e. knowledge then it cannot be the subject to ignorance or *avidyā*. If this is the case then how the state

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<sup>23</sup> *sattvam rajasa tama iti guṇāḥ prakṛtisambhavāḥ nibadhnanti mahābāho dehe dehinam avyayam.*  
14/5

*rajo rāgātmakam viddhi tṛṣṇāsaṅgasamudbhavam tan nibadhnāti kaunteya karmasaṅgena dehinam*  
-14/7

*tamas tv ajñānajaṁ viddhi mohanam sarvadehinām pramādālasyanidrābhis tan nibadhnāti*  
*bhārata-14/8*

of bindings which has been claimed as false be accounted for? I think this problem can be resolved through the experience gathered from our practical life. We know that sun is ever shining. Self-shining is the essence of the sun. But in the rainy days the light or the self-shining nature of the sun is covered by the deep cloud. In the same way though soul is *chit* in essence but it is covered by the deep cloud of ignorance (*avidyā*). *Bhagavadgītā* along with the *Upaniṣads* repeatedly asserts that soul is *chit* in essence it is self-shining like the sun. Not only that all the lights actually come from one source only and that is the soul. We know that both moon and the sun give light to the world. But the light given by the moon is not of its own, it is borrowed from the sun. But *śāstra* states that the light of the sun even is not of its own. The sun borrows its light from the soul or God. This truth has been reflected in verse no 18 of 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*.<sup>24</sup> This verse states that the soul or God is the light of the lights. We come across same type of assertion in *Śvetasvatara Upaniṣad*. Here the truth seer claims that he knows the self which is greater than the greatest and it is self-shining like the sun.<sup>25</sup> *Bhagavadgītā* in verse no 38 and 39 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter says that the self-shining nature of the soul i.e. the knowledge is covered by *kāma* as fire is covered by smoke, the baby is covered by womb of mother and the mirror is covered by deep dust.<sup>26</sup> Now the question is how knowledge can help one to be free from the false bondage created by *guṇa* or *kāma*. It is already stated that the false bondage of the soul is the result of our false identification with the body or *prakṛti*. The moment one gains the knowledge of its own nature he comes to know that in reality he is soul which is completely different from the body and the *prakṛti*. Thus the false identification of him with the body i.e. the *dehātmabodha* is destroyed and thereby false bondage created by the *guṇas* or *kāma* is also destroyed and he becomes free. Now one easily transcends the boundary of the land of *guṇas* and enters into the kingdom of the soul. In this way one who was *indriyarāma* in transformed into *ātmarāma* and becomes *sthitaprajña*. In this state all the actions performed by him automatically becomes *niṣkāma*. Here

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<sup>24</sup> *jyotiṣām api taj jyotis tamasah param uchyate jñānam jñeyam jñānagamyaṃ hṛidi sarvasya viṣṭhitam*

<sup>25</sup> *Veda aham etam puruṣam mahāntam ādityavarnam...*

<sup>26</sup> *dhūmenā 'vriyate vahnir yathā 'darśo malena ca yatho 'lbenā 'vṛito garbhas tathā tene 'dam āvṛitam.*

*āvṛitam jñānam etena jñānino nityavairiṇā kāmarūpeṇa kaunteya duṣpūreṇā 'nalena ca.*

one regains his real or original nature of infiniteness and perfectness. Since he is infinite and perfect he cannot have any sort of lacking from the part of his own. Consequently he does not feel any urge to do any action in order to fulfill his own want. In this state he goes beyond all sorts of necessities or demand for himself. So whatever he does he does for the sake of others, the society or world (*lokasamgraha*).

The *karma yoga* or *niṣkāma karma* takes the help of the knowledge of our soul for another reason. It is already stated that *sakāma karma* and *niṣkāma karma* are opposite to each other. As long as one continues to think of one's own interest he cannot think for the interest of others. One become self-centered when he identifies himself with the body. The infinite soul becomes finite by the boundary of our body and ego. The water of the ocean is essentially infinite and unlimited but the same infinite and unlimited water of the ocean becomes limited and finite when it is put into a jar. It is the body or wall of the jar that makes the infinite water of the sea as finite. Likewise the soul is essentially infinite and perfect but that infinite and perfect soul becomes finite by the limited boundary of our body and ego. The same can be explained by another example. We know that space is infinite and unlimited but it becomes limited and finite by the boundary of the wall. So far as the space is concerned the whole world is one. It does not know any plurality and limitation but one and the same world becomes different countries just through different borders set upon the world. In reality India and Bangladesh is one and the same in space but they are divided and limited by the border standing in between them. The India again is sub-divided into different states and the state in turn into different districts by the imaginary and artificial boundary imposed upon one and the same space. In the same way one and the same soul or *Brahman* turns into different individuals through the boundary imposed by different bodies and the sense of egos. If one looks into the boundary then he sees plurality and division, and his outlook becomes limited and the actions done by him are bound to be *sakāma*. But if one ignores the boundary of the body and ego then he can find the infinite and perfect nature of him and thereby the plurality and limitedness becomes false to him. His outlook becomes broader. In this state he perceives one among many. If one perceives the jars then to him water is many and limited but if he sees

only the water ignoring the jars then plurality and finiteness becomes false to him. In our day-to-day life we come across chair, table, bench and so on made up of woods. So far as the names and forms are concerned they are many but so far as the wood is concerned they are one. In the same way we come across different individuals in the world. One individual is different from the other individuals so far as the body is concerned but all the individuals are one and the same so far as their soul is concerned. It is the knowledge of our self that shows that we all are essentially one, since one and the same soul underlies all individuals. Plurality is the false creation by the false boundary imposed by body and the ego. *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* teaches us to follow a unique technique by which we can transcend the boundary of the false plurality and enters into the territory of oneness. That technique is beautifully reflected in verse no 29 of the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā*.<sup>27</sup> This verse teaches to see oneself in each and every individual of the society and on the other way around to see each and every individual in oneself. Now let us examine and explain the significance underlying this verse. In fact following this technique even a most self-centered individual can be transformed into a real *yogi*. A self-centered individual only loves himself. Consequently whatever he does he does for the sake of his own interest. But subsequently he learns to see himself in his own children and thereby identifies himself with them. Now the sense of his self becomes extended. Now whatever he does he does for the sake of himself and for the sake of his children. In the next day he learns to see the reflection of himself in the mirror called his neighbors and thereby he identifies himself with his neighbors also. Thus his self gets more enlarged. Consequently the scope of his action also becomes expanded. In this way in the course of time if one continues to see the reflection of his self in the mirror called the people of the whole world then thereby his sense of self becomes worldwide extended and accordingly his actions also get extended aiming to ensure the well-being for the whole society. Thus the action which was *sakāma* turns into *niṣkāma*. In this way *karma yoga* takes the help of *jñāna yoga* in different ways in different levels.

Now let us see why *jñāna yoga* will take the help of *karma yoga*, in other words how *karma yoga* becomes complementary to *jñāna yoga*. So far as our

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<sup>27</sup> *sarvabhūtastham ātmānam sarvabhūtāni cā 'tmani ikṣate yogayuktātmā sarvatra samadarśanaḥ*

forgoing discussion is concerned we have come to know that a *jñāna yogi* is one who has attained the knowledge of his self. He knows that plurality is false and oneness or non-duality is the truth. Essentially we all are one, since one and the same reality i.e. the God lives in the body of all individuals.<sup>28</sup> A *jñāna yogi* is in fact *ātmarāma* who is liberated. More clearly to say a *jñāna yogi* in the true sense of the term is a *jīvanmukta*. He transcends the boundary of the body and the material world and enters into the kingdom of the soul. The world of the soul is the world of perfection. One living in this world is perfect and has nothing to do for the fulfillment of his own need. If he does not have any need to fulfill then what is the justification for his work? So a *jñāna yogi*, cannot have any action for himself. This truth has been beautifully expressed in verse no 17 and 18 of 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā*.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps keeping these verses along with some other in mind Śaṅkarācārya is of the opinion that a *jñāna yogi* cannot knock the door of *karma yoga*. But so far as verse no 8 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter, verse no 2 of the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter and some others are concerned it is clearly understood that *Bhagavadgītā* does not agree with Śaṅkarācārya. *Gītā* advises that a *jñāna yogi* should come down to the world of *karma*. The living example of the same is God Himself. In the *Bhagavadgītā* Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself repeatedly says that though He has nothing to do for His own sake yet He comes down to the world in the form of different *avatāras* for the sake of the betterment and well-being of the world.<sup>30</sup> In this context Mahānābrata Brahmachāri in his book *Gītādhyān* beautifully says that knowledge is an abstract thing. The knowledge underlying *jñāna yogi* must be reflected in the different actions done by him as greed underlying greedy person is expressed in different activities performed by him. If one asks – if both of ignorant and wise persons are engaged in actions then what is the difference between them? In reply it is said that

<sup>28</sup> *kṣetrajañānam cā 'pi mām viddhi sarvakṣetreṣu bhārata kṣetrakṣetrajañāyor jñānam yat taj jñānam mataṁ mama*-13/3

<sup>29</sup> *yas tv ātmatir eva syād ātmārptaś ca mānavaḥ ātmany eva ca saṁtuṣṭas tasya kāryam na vidyate*

*nai 'va tasya kṛtenā 'rtho nā 'kṛitene 'ha kaśchana na cā 'sya sarvabhūteṣu kaścid arthavyapāśrayaḥ*

<sup>30</sup> *yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata abhyutthānam adharmasya tadā 'tmānam sṛjāmy aham*.-4/7

*paritrāṇāya sādḥnām vināśhāya ca duṣkṛitām dharmasanthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge*.-4/8

so far as the actions are concerned there is no difference between two persons. They are different so far as the purposes of their action are concerned. The purpose of the action done by an ignorant person is to fulfill the interest of his own. But the purpose of the action done by a *jñāna yogi* is to ensure the well-being for the society which is otherwise called *lokasaṃgraha*. Mahānāmabrata Brahmachāri says that a *karmi* takes the help of *jñāna yoga* to convert his *sakāma karma* into *yajña* (sacrifice). But a *jñāna yogi* will take the help of action (*karma yoga*) in order to establish *lokasaṃgraha*. Ratnākara was engaged in action to fulfil the need and demand exclusively for himself. But the same Ratnākara with the help of knowledge of his self turns into Vālmiki and again engaged himself in the action for the well-being of the society. Siddhārtha getting liberated becomes Buddha and comes back to the society and engages himself with the teaching of morality to the society for the sake of *lokasaṃgraha*. In the same way *Bhagavadgītā* teaches that a *jñāna yogi* should actively engage in different types of benevolent and altruistic actions to establish well-being for the whole society. It is worthy to note that the *Bhagavadgītā* not only teaches that a *jñāna yoga* should catch the hand of *karma yoga* but also states that in fact both of them are one and the same. *Karma yoga* and *jñāna yoga* are something like the two sides of one and the same coin. The two sides of a coin in fact are inseparable. Both of them taken together constitute a single whole. Likewise *karma yoga* and *jñāna yoga* are inseparable from each other and both of them taken together give birth to a single whole. We come across this truth being reflected in verse no 4 and 5 of chapter 5<sup>th</sup> and verse no 1 and 2 of 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā*. According to the *Bhagavadgītā* *jñāna yoga* or *sannyāsa yoga* in fact does not consist in sacrificing *karma* rather it consists in sacrificing the fruit or consequence of *karma*. The common characteristics of and the common conditions for being *karma yogi* and *jñāna yogi* is the sacrifice of the fruit of the action which has been expressed in verse no 1 of the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter. According to *Bhagavadgītā* *karma yogi* and *jñāna yogi* both are conscious about the fact that they are not the real agent of an action. So in reality no action is done by them. All of the actions are performed by the *guṇa* and *prakṛti*. So both of them share a common property of sacrificing agentship of action and fruit of the same and both of them continue to carry their action being the slave of God. Though

apparently they are engaged in works but in reality they do nothing. They carry out their actions as an instrument at the hands of God. So far as the teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā* is concerned there is no contradiction between *karma yoga* and *jñāna yoga* both of them go hand in hand. One *karma yogi* is *jñāna yogi* or *sannyāsi* at the same time so far as the sacrifice of the sense of agentship along with sacrifice for the desire of fruit are concerned and a *jñāna yogi* is a *karma yogi* so far as he is carrying on his actions. We think man and woman are opposite in their structure and nature. So we may think that if one is man then he cannot be woman and vice versa. But in the case of *Ardhanārīśvara* both of them are clapped together. Here a man becomes a woman and a woman becomes a man. Thus contradiction is resolved. In the same way *karma yoga* and *jñāna yoga* appear to be contradictory to each other but in reality like *Ardhanārīśvara* both of *karma yoga* and *jñāna yoga* are clapped together. One is complementary to the other.

But one may ask why does a genius like Śāṅkarācārya think that *karma yoga* and *jñāna yoga* cannot go hand in hand, they are contradictory in nature? The answer is simple, when Śāṅkarācārya maintains that *karma* is contradictory to *jñāna* he thereby says of *sakāma karma*. *Sakāma karma* of course is contradictory to *jñāna* like light and darkness. As long as there is darkness in one place there cannot be light in that place. Similarly as long as there is *sakāma karma* there cannot be *jñāna* (*ātmajñāna*) and the vice versa. *Bhagavadgītā* also believes the same. As the classic example of *sakāma karma* *Bhagavadgītā* cites the *karma* of the *Vedas*. The witness of the same is the verse no 42-45 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter. But *Bhagavadgītā* beautifully shows that the contradiction between the *sakāma karma* and *ātmajñāna* is the contradiction between *kāma* and *ātmajñāna*. There is no contradiction between *karma* devoid of *kāma* and *ātmajñāna*. If one tries to cross a river with the help of a wooden un-dry log then he cannot be successful, the log along with the person will be drowned into the water. But if the same log is turned into boat then it will positively help the person to cross the river. Here *sakāma karma* stands for the wooden un-dry log that drowns a person into *bhavanadī*. But *niṣkāma karma* i.e. the *karma* without *kāma* stands for the boat which helps one to cross the *bhavanadī*. An ignorant person does his action to fulfill his need. But a *jñāna yogi* who is otherwise known as *ātmārāma* does not have any need of his own. Here he

is engaged in action just for the sake of *lokasaṅgraha*.<sup>31</sup> A *jñāna yogi* performs his action not being influenced by *abhāva* rather he performs his action spontaneously due to his *sabhāva*. When fire burns something it is not the case that fire does the same in order to fulfill any need of its own. The activity or power of burning of fire is nothing but the essence or *sabhāva* of the fire. In the same way action of a *jñāna yogi* turns into the *sabhāva* of him.

So far as our discussion is concerned we have seen that why *karma yoga* will knock the door of *jñāna yoga* and why again *jñāna yoga* will go to the door of the *karma yoga*. Now let us see why *karma yoga* will go to the *bhakti yoga*. The careful and close analysis of the teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā* shows the logical and clear answer to that question. Verse no 47 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter points out that a *karma yogi* must perform his action without the desire for fruit. Now if one asks – what is the reason behind it? Why one performs his action but does not have the right upon fruit of his action? The immediate answer to this question is that in reality he is not the agent of any action, the real agent of all actions are the *guṇas* and the *prakṛti*. The reference of the same has already been given. But when we proceed further we come to know that the *guṇas* and the *prakṛti* again are not the true independent agent of the action. They do their action under the mastership of God. This shows that the actual independent and true agent of all actions are nothing but God. So the owner of the fruit of all actions is nothing but God Himself. This is the reason why *Bhagavadgītā* advises one to sacrifice all the fruits and actions to the lotus feet of God.<sup>32</sup> Thus one starts his journey to find out the answer to the question why one does not have the right upon the fruit of his action and ultimately he reaches to the world of *bhakti*. The moment one sacrifices all his actions and fruits of them to the feet of God his actions turn into worship (*pujā*) and he himself becomes *bhakta*. This clearly implies that a *karma yogi* necessarily be a *bhakti yogi*, there is no gap between *karma yoga* and *bhakta yoga*, without being a *bhakta* one cannot be a *karma yogi* in the true sense of the term.

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<sup>31</sup> *labhante brahmanirvāṇam ṛṣayaḥ kṣīṇakalmaṣāḥ chinnadvaidhā yatātmānaḥ sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ-5/25*

<sup>32</sup> *yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva madarpaṇam-9/27*

The second reason for the same is available in verse no 36 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter and verse no 14 of the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā*. So far as our forgoing discussion is concerned it is seen that we, the ignorant people are under the control of the *prakṛti*, *avidyā* and *māyā*. We are bound to do whatever is ordered by the *prakṛti* and the *guṇa* which is otherwise called as *śaḍripus*, *kāma*, *krodha* and so on. Here we cannot exercise our freedom of will. A subordinate is bound to do whatever is ordered by his boss. Even if one knows that what is ordered by his boss is not right yet he has nothing to do without caring out the order of his boss. In the same way we, the ignorant people are subordinate to our *guṇas* and *śaḍripus*. Even if we know that whatever is ordered by them are not right yet we are bound to abide by the order of them. This shows that our knowledge is not sufficient to rescue us from the control of them. A smoker knows very well that smoking is injurious for his health. A thief is quite conscious about the fact that stealing is not good. But in spite of knowing the same he cannot resist himself from doing those wrong actions under the pressure of the *guṇas* or *śaḍripus*. We come across the same truth in verse no 36 and 37 of 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of the *Gītā*.<sup>33</sup> So knowledge is handicapped here. In this state we need the help of God. We are under the control of *guṇas*. So we are *guṇādhina* but the *guṇas* themselves are under the control of God. So God is *guṇādhīsa*. In this situation only God can rescue us from the hands of the *guṇas* and *māyā*. I think an example can help us to understand the same in a better way. Suppose Mr. X is doing his service in a factory under the bossism of Mr. Y. In this case X is bound to carry out the order of Mr. Y. The knowledge and the effort of Mr. X cannot help him to be free from the influence and control of Mr. Y. In this situation the Mr. A, the real owner of the factory can help Mr. X to be free from the control of Mr. Y. Likewise as we are under the control of the *guṇas*, *avidyā* and *māyā* our knowledge and effort cannot make us free from the control of them. In this state only the God, the master of both of us, the *guṇas* and ignorant people can save us from the hands of them. This truth has been beautifully depicted in verse no 14 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *atha kena prayukto 'yam pāpam charati pūruṣaḥ anicchann api vārṣṇeya balād iva niyojitaḥ. kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajoguṇasamudbhavaḥ mahāśano mahāpāpmā viddhyenam iha vairiṇam.*

<sup>34</sup> *mātrāsparśās tu kaunteya śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkhadāḥ āgamāpāyino 'nityās tāms titikṣasva bhārata*

Now let us proceed to another question – why a *jñāna yoga* will go to the door of *bhakti yoga*? In other words why does a *jñāni* become a *bhakta*. Verse no 16 of the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter of *Bhagavadgītā* says of four kinds of *bhaktas*.<sup>35</sup> Verse no 17 of the same chapter asserts that among the four kinds of *bhakta jñāni bhakta* is dearest to God.<sup>36</sup> But what is the reason behind it? One of the answers to this question has been given in the same verse of 17. It is said that a *jñāni bhakta* knows nothing other than God. He believes that everything is God (*vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti*).<sup>37</sup> The attention of *jñāni bhakta* does not move from the door of one deity to the doors of other deities. He knows very well that all the deities are subordinate to God. So all his attention moves in an around God, the *puruṣattama*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. I think besides this answer another important answer can be given to the same question raised. *Bhakti yoga* in the true sense of the term necessarily pre supposes some conditions. One must fulfill some conditions for becoming a *bhakta*. Those condition are fulfilled by knowledge. It is the knowledge of the self or God that makes a *karma yogi* qualified for becoming an ideal *bhakta*. In chapter 13<sup>th</sup> i.e. the *kṣetra kṣetrajña vibhāg yoga* of *Bhagavadgītā* it is stated that our body and mind are something like the land of crops. For growing the crops two things are necessary. One is the effort of the farmer. The farmer prepares the land through plowing. But this is not enough, ultimately water is necessary. For that he has to wait for the kindness of God. When God gives water through raining only then crops will be produced. In the same way our body and mind, the land has to be prepared for becoming a *bhakta*. Our mind becomes dirty due to the mud or dust of *kāma*, *krodha*, *lobha* and so on. Unless and until our mind is made clean God cannot enter and sit on our mind. The name of God, *puruṣattoma* according to *Bhagavadgītā* is Kṛṣṇa. The literal meaning of the term Kṛṣṇa is one that draws all things and beings to Him. God is something like magnet. Magnet essentially attracts iron to his center but if the iron is covered by the thick layer of moisture or mud then it cannot be attracted by the power of magnet. Similarly God is a magnet the nature of whom is to attract everyone to His center but our mind is covered by the

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<sup>35</sup> *chaturvidhā bhajante mām janāḥ sukṛtino 'rjuna ārto jijñāsura arthārthī jñānī ca bhāratarṣabha*

<sup>36</sup> *teṣāṃ jñānī nityayukta ekabhaktir viśiṣyate priyo hi jñānīno 'tyartham ahaṃ sa ca mama priyaḥ*

<sup>37</sup> *bahūnām janmanām ante jñānavān mām prapadyate vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ*

thick layer of mud of *ṣadripus*. Consequently, the power of attraction of God does not work for the ignorant people. It is the knowledge of self (*ātmajñāna*) that helps to wash and purify our mind and thereby makes us qualified for being a real *bhakta*. Another beautiful example has been cited by Mahānāmabrata Brahmachāri. He says that if one staying in a room is to take fresh air coming from outside then first of all he must open the window. But though opening the window is the necessary condition positively it is not the sufficient condition for receiving fresh air from outside. The sufficient condition for the same is the kindness of God. When God gives air only then the person living in the room will enjoy the fresh air. So the first condition i.e. opening the window is fulfilled by the person concerned with the help of knowledge but the other condition is fulfilled by the grace of God. We have to open the windows and door of our mind and subsequently God will enter into the room of our mind and lives there. So far as our discussion is goes I think it is clear that why a *karma yogi* becomes *jñāna yogi* and why again a *jñāni karmi* becomes a *bhakta*. So far as the teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā* is concerned *karma yoga* is prior to *jñāna yoga* and both of them again prior to *bhakti yoga*. A *karmi* in order to be a *karma yogi* first of all he will catch the hands of knowledge or *ātmajñāna* and subsequently both of them catch the hands of God or *bhakti yoga*. We come across the hints of this teaching in verse no 29 and 30 of the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter and sloke no 35 of 4<sup>th</sup> chapter.<sup>38</sup>

Now let us see why does *bhakti yoga* go to the doors of *karma yoga* and *jñāna yoga*? In *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* *bhakti yoga* occupies one of the central places. In verse no 27 of 9<sup>th</sup> chapter Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to surrender whatever he does to the lotus feet of the God.<sup>39</sup> In verse no 34 of the same chapter Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to be His *bhakta* in a categorical way.<sup>40</sup> But what type of *bhakti* does one of *bhaktas* should have that has been described in verse no 11 of 13<sup>th</sup> chapter and verse no 7 of 8<sup>th</sup> chapter. In these verse *Bhagavadgītā* teaches that mind of a true *bhakta*

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<sup>38</sup> *sarvabhūtasthamātmānaṁ sarvabhūtāni cātmani ikṣhate yogayuktātmā sarvatra samadarśanaḥ. yo mām paśyati sarvatra sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati tasyāhaṁ na praṇaśyāmi sa ca me na praṇaśyati. yaj jñātvā na punarmoham evaṁ yāsyasi pāṇḍava yena bhūtānyaśeṣeṇa drakṣyasiyātmanyatho mayi.*

<sup>39</sup> *yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva madarpaṇam*

<sup>40</sup> *manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī mām namaskuru mām evai'syasi yuktvai'vam ātmānaṁ matparāyaṇaḥ*

should be engaged with the thinking of God without any interruption. It implies that one *bhakta* should fix his mind on God always without any interruption.<sup>41</sup> But it is not an easy task for one to set our mind on God continuously since our mind is flickering and unsteady. This truth has been reflected in words of Arjuna in verse no 33 and 34 of the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter.<sup>42</sup> In those verses Arjuna states that mind of the people is more unsteady and flickering than the air even. So how this type of flickering and unsteady mind can be fixed up? In reply to this question Kṛṣṇa frankly recognizes that mind is really unsteady and moving. So to control the same is very difficult. But at the same time Kṛṣṇa also states that it is not impossible. He says our mind can be controlled through *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya*. In fact among the three *yogas* (*karma yoga*, *jñāna yoga* and *bhakti yoga*) *bhakti yoga* is the highest state. So it is quite natural that one cannot reach to the state of *bhakti yoga* in a day. In order to reach to the state of *bhakti yoga* one must take the help of staircase of *karma*, *jñāna* and *dhyāna yoga*. If one student is to get admission into the class of Master Degree then he must come through the ladder of Madhyamika, Secondary and Degree course. In that sense the lower classes are the necessary precondition for entering into the higher classes. Similarly since *bhakti yoga* is the highest state if one is to enter into the kingdom of *bhakti yoga* then he must take the help of *karma yoga* and *jñāna yoga* both. The same can be explained in another way. Suppose one wants to reach to the roof of a house. In that case he must take the help of staircase. In the same way if one is to reach to the state of *bhakti yoga* then he must take the help of the staircase of *karma yoga* and *jñāna yoga* both. Thus *karma yoga* and *jñāna yoga* become the helping condition of and complementary to *bhakti yoga*. This truth has been reflected also in verse no 9, 10, and 11 of chapter 12 of the *Bhagavadgītā*.<sup>43</sup> Now let us explain the same in detail. A true *bhakta*

<sup>41</sup> *mayi cā'nanyayogena bhaktir avyabhicāriṇī viviktadeśasevitvam aratir janasansadi tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu mām anusmara yudhya ca may arpitamanobuddhir mām evai'syasy asamśayaḥ*

<sup>42</sup> *yo 'yam yogastvayā proktaḥ sāmyena madhusūdana etasyāhaṁ na paśyāmi cañchalatvāt sthitim sthirām cañcalaṁ hi manaḥ kṛṣṇa pramāthibalavaddṛiḍam tasyāhaṁ nigrahaṁ manye vāyoriva suduṣkaram.*

<sup>43</sup> *atha cittam samādhātum na śaknoṣi mayi sthiram abhyāsayogena tato mām icchā'ptum dhanamjaya abhyāse 'py asamartho 'si matkarmaparamo bhava madartham api karmāṇi kurvan siddhim avāpsyasi*

cannot have anything for himself. He must surrender himself along with all his belonging to the lotus feet of God. He becomes a slave of God. A slave in the true sense of the term cannot be the owner of anything. He is purchased by his master. Since he himself is purchased his belonging at the same time is also purchased. Likewise a true *bhakta* becomes a slave of God which implies that he himself along with all his belonging is purchased by God. So whatever he does he does for the sake of God, whatever he posses he sacrifices the same to God. But the question is why a *bhakta* should consider himself as slave (*dāsa*) of God? what is the reason behind it? If one is to find out the proper answer to this question then he must take the help of knowledge or *jñāna yoga*. In verse ne 12 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter *Bhagavadgītā* says that if one does not sacrifice his food and other belonging to God then he should be treated as a thief.<sup>44</sup> But what is the reason behind it? The proper answer to this question is discovered by knowledge. Proper knowledge shows that the whole world is nothing but the creation of God. According to Hindu religion God is the material as well as the efficient cause of the world. He is the material cause of the world in the sense that it (the world) is the manifestation of Himself and again He is the efficient cause of the world in the sense that this manifestation or creation has been made by God Himself. God is the only reality. So there is nothing other than God. Keeping this in view Advaita Vedānta says '*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*'. The same view has been reflected in the different verses of the different chapters of the *Bhagavadgītā*. Verse no 19 of the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter says that God is everything (*vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti*). Verse no 4 and 5 of the same chapter shows that earth, water, fire, air, sky, mind, intellect, ego, soul everything is God.<sup>45</sup> Verse no 6 and 7 of the same chapter again state that the whole world comes out of and goes into God.<sup>46</sup> God is something like thread which unites all things of the world as a thread unites all individual pearls. So far as our discussion is concerned it is understood that everything is God. So the food, water, oxygen on which we are

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*athai tad apy aśakto 'si kartum madyogam āśritaḥ sarvakarmaphalatyāgam tataḥ kuru yatātmavān*  
<sup>44</sup> *iṣṭān bhogān hi vo devā dāsyante yajñabhāvitāḥ tair dattān apradāyai 'bhyo yo bhunkte stena eva saḥ*

<sup>45</sup> *bhūmir āpo 'nalo vāyuh kham mano buddhir eva ca ahankāra itī'yaṁ me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā*  
*apare 'yam itas tv anyām prakṛtim viddhi me parām jīvabhūtām mahābāho yaye'daṁ dhāryate jagat*

<sup>46</sup> *etadyonīni bhūtāni sarvāṇi'ty upadhāraya ahaṁ kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayas tathā*  
*mattaḥ parataram nā'nyat kiñcid asti dhanañjaya mayi sarvam idaṁ protaṁ sūtre mañiṣā iva*

essentially depended for our existence are nothing but the gift of God Himself. A slave lives on the food and cloth given by his master. In the same way we live on the kindness of God. More elaborately to say the food we live on is produced by the fulfilment of some conditions. For production of food the necessary elements are the seed, the land, the water, the sunlight and so on. All of them are given by God Himself. Secondly for living oxygen is most vital. In each and every moment we take oxygen through the process of respiration. That oxygen again is the gift of God. Thirdly, our body is essential for us. This body is the product of *panchabhutas* or *prakṛti*. These *panchabhutas* (earth, water, fire, air and ether) or *prakṛti* is the very part and parcel of God. These are known as *Aparā Brahman*. Now let us go to our essence, our soul. So far as the teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā* is concerned we are nothing but the soul which is eternal. But that eternal soul which is beyond creation and destruction is nothing but the part and parcel of God.<sup>47</sup> Thus it is seen that, we, the each and every individual cannot but be the slaves of God. So one cannot know this philosophy behind us without the help of knowledge.

One may argue that in fact *bhakti yoga* is the mater of faith, it is not the mater of argument and knowledge. *Bhakti yoga* necessarily presupposes the existence of God. But the existence of God cannot be established by knowledge. In fact God is *avānmanasagocara*. So it is beyond any logical proof. It is purely mater of unquestioning faith. Keeping this in view *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* says of *bhakti* devoid of knowledge (*jñānasunyabhakti sādhyasāra*)<sup>48</sup>. But this view of the opponent cannot be accepted. The same *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* says of *bhakti* based on knowledge (*jñānamisrābhakti sādhyasāra*)<sup>49</sup>. Hindu *śāstra* never teaches any blind faith. The whole teaching of Hindu religion consists of three-unit *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*. The second unit that is *manana* is based on knowledge and reasoning. In fact *bhakti* means unquestioning firm faith on God. This state is beyond doubt but this doubtless state presupposes the doubtful state. Unless and until one transcend the boundary of doubt he cannot enter into the state which is completely devoid of doubt. Day necessarily presupposes night. Similarly

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<sup>47</sup> *mamāi'vā'nśo jīvaloke jīvabhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ manaḥśaṣṭhānī'ndriyāni prakṛtisthāni karṣati.*-15/7

<sup>48</sup> *Caitanyacaritāmṛta, Madhyalīlā, chapter-8*

<sup>49</sup> *Caitanyacaritāmṛta, Madhyalīlā, chapter-8*

doubtless state necessarily implies the doubtful state. Our mind at the very initial state of *bhakti* becomes the kingdom of doubt. That doubt can be removed only through knowledge. This is the reason for which *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* repeatedly reminds Arjuna of the necessity of *buddhi* or *jñāna*. Verse no 38, 39, 40, 41, 42 of the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā* repeatedly show the importance of knowledge.<sup>50</sup> Particularly verse no 40 and 41 state that a doubtful person attains neither the peace in this life nor the peace in after life. He attains the same only when his doubt is removed through knowledge. A true *bhakta* in order to enter into the level of firm faith he must first transcend the boundary of doubts through knowledge. Thus *bhakti yoga* necessarily goes the door of knowledge.

Now let us deal with why does *bhakti yoga* will go to the door of *karma yoga*. I think the logical analysis of the concept of *bhakti yoga* shows that *bhakti yoga* is necessarily mixed up with *karma yoga*. *Bhakti yoga* means the mind, the intellect, the body, and overall all the actions performed by them are centered in and around God. Hence the term actions refer to three kinds of action—mental or intellectual action, verbal action and bodily action. All these actions are nothing but disinterested or *niṣkāma* which is otherwise known as a *karma yoga*. As long as one performs his actions for the sake of himself (they are bound to be *sakāma*) he cannot perform the same for the sake of God. On the other hand as long as one performs his actions for the sake of God he cannot perform the same for the sake of himself. This clearly implies that in *bhakti yoga* whatever is done by one for the sake of God, it is done by sacrificing the interest of his own. It is already stated that whatever is done by ignoring the interest of one self is nothing but *yajñā* or *karma yoga*. Thus it is seen that the *karma yoga* is complementary to *bhakti yoga*. If we keep our attention on the *bhakti yoga* i.e. 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of *Bhagavadgītā* then I think

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<sup>50</sup> *na hi jñānena sadṛśiṣaṁ pavitram iha vidyate tat svayaṁ yogasansiddhaḥ kālenā'tmani vindati śraddhāvān labhate jñānaṁ tatparaḥ saṁyatendriyaḥ jñānaṁ labdhvā parāṁ śāntim acireṇā'dhigacchati*  
*ajñāś cā'śraddadhānaś ch saṁśayātmā vinaśyati nā'yaṁ loko 'sti na paro na sukhaṁ saṁśayātmanaḥ*  
*yogasaṁnyastakarmāṇaṁ jñānasamchinnasamśayam ātmavantam na karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanamjaya*  
*tasmād ajñānasambhūtaṁ hṛtsthaṁ jñānāsinā'tmanaḥ chittvai'nam saṁśayaṁ yogam ātiṣtho'ttistha bhārata*

this concept will be more clear to us. In verse no 8 of 12<sup>th</sup> chapter Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to set his mind and intellect on God and in the immediate next three verses he says of the techniques or paths following which one can do the same. It is already stated that it is really very difficult to set our mind and intellect on God. Since our mind is flickering and unsteady by its nature. Keeping this in view *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* says Arjuna that if he cannot fix his mind upon God then he has to resort to the path of *abhyāsa yoga*.<sup>51</sup> The *Bhagavadgītā* further says if Arjuna fails to do the same then he should continue to perform all sorts of his action for the sake of God.<sup>52</sup> Again if Arjuna cannot be successful even in his second attempt then he should perform all his actions being a *karma yogī*. More clearly to say in third attempt one should perform all his actions for the sake of God without the desire for the fruit of his action. So far as our discussion goes it is clear that following the path of *abhyāsa*, *karma*, and *karma yoga* one enters into the sphere of *bhakti yoga*. But it is important to note that though *Bhagavadgītā* advises to take the help of *karma yoga* in the third attempt yet it does not mean that it is inferior to the earlier two paths rather *karma yoga* is much more superior to them. This view has been substantiated by the immediate next verse that is verse no 12.<sup>53</sup>

So far as our discussion is concerned it is seen that one takes the help of *karma yoga* and *jñāna yoga* in order to enter into the kingdom of *bhakti yoga*. But after being a *bhakti yogī* does one continue to be associated with the *karma yoga* and *jñāna yoga*? I think the answer must be positive. *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* in verse no 16 of the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter says of four kinds of *bhaktas*.<sup>54</sup> Among them the last one that is the *jñāni bhakta* is the superior most. He is superior for the two reasons— first he knows nothing other than God, the *puruṣattoma* Kṛṣṇa. Secondly, other three kinds of *bhakta* pray to God for the fulfilment of their own interest, but the fourth one prays to God not for the sake of himself but for the sake of God. This implies that only the fourth kind of *bhakta* is a true *bhakta*. A true *bhakta* then must

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<sup>51</sup> *atha cittam samādhātuṃ na śaknoṣi mayi sthiram abhyāsayogena tato mām icchhā'ptuṃ dhanamjaya.*- 12/9

<sup>52</sup> *atha cittam samādhātuṃ na śaknoṣi mayi sthiram abhyāsayogena tato mām icchhā'ptuṃ dhanamjaya.*- 12/9

<sup>53</sup> *śreyo hi jñānam abhyāsāj jñānād dhyānam viśiṣyate dhyānāt karmaphalatyāgas tyāgac chāntir anantaram*

<sup>54</sup> *caturvidhā bhajante mām janāḥ sukṛtino 'rjuna ārto jijñāsur arthārthī jñāni ca bharatarṣabha*

fulfil two conditions, firstly he must be *jñāni* and secondly, his actions towards God must be selfless (disinterested). More clearly to say *bhakti* has its two levels. In the first level it is *aparā bhakti* which is otherwise called *vaidhī bhakti* and another is *parā bhakti* which is otherwise called *rāgānuga bhakti*. The *bhakti* of the first level is conditional, therefore it is *sakāma*. In this state a *bhakta* prays to God for the satisfaction of the personal interest of himself but *bhakti* of the second level that is *parā bhakti* is unconditional. It is the *bhakti* for the sake of *bhakti*. *Aparā bhakti* or *vaidhī bhakti* is a means to fulfil an end. But *parā* or *rāgānuga bhakti* is an end. The *bhakti* of the common people is *aparā bhakti*. But the *bhakti* of the so-called Gopis is the classic example of *parā* or *rāgānuga bhakti*. The *bhakta* of the first level is neither a *karma yogī* nor even a *jñāna yogī*. But the *bhakta* of the second level is *karma yogī* and *jñāna yogī* both. Thus it is seen that true *bhakti yoga* must be clubbed together with *karma yoga* and *jñāna yoga* both. In the conclusion we can remember the example that was cited in the beginning of our discussion. The *Bhagavadgītā* with *karma yoga*, *jñāna yoga* and *bhakti yoga* is something like a three-wheeler vehicle. Here the three *yogas* i.e. the *karma yoga*, the *jñāna yoga* and the *bhakti yoga* stand for the three different wheels of the vehicle called *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*. If any one of the wheels is kept aside then the vehicle cannot move anymore. Likewise if any one of the *yogas* is kept aside then the vehicle called *Bhagavadgītā* cannot move towards its goal. So the principal teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā* according to me is the blended path of all the three *yogas* – *karma yoga*, *jñāna yoga* and *bhakti yoga*.

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