

## ***Jnana-Yoga of The Gita***

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### **Abstract**

The *Bhagavad Gita* is the most important episode in the great epic *Mahabharata* from the point of view of a doctrine. Among the ancient Indian religious literature, *Gita* alone is the *Smṛti* text that is elevated to the status of a *Sruti* literature. Hence, the teachings of the *Gita* transcend its context. The *Gita* serves as a guideline both to the physical and spiritual aspects of human life. In the physical realm it envisages a harmonious social living through its emphasis on *dharma*; while in the spiritual realm the *Gita* nourishes the human aspiration of attaining perfection, i.e., life in the Divine. Here, the *Gita* establishes its doctrine of the three-fold path that leads to God-realisation, namely the *karma-yoga*, the *jnana-yoga* and the *bhakti-yoga*.

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**Keywords:** Yoga, Bhagavad Gita, Jnana-yoga, Hinduism, Upanisads.

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### **Introduction**

It appears that the tension seen in the modern society today is the outcome of a one-sided approach to life, in the sense that the modern human fails to integrate spirituality with his/her daily affairs. In other words, s/he does not know how to merge work with knowledge and knowledge with devotion; whereas the *Gita* has done it. However, an ordinary reader may find it difficult to comprehend its vast description spread over seven hundred *slokas* in eighteen chapters. Hence, this paper is a moderate attempt to present to the reader the gist of that integrated living as taught by the *Gita* in its material content. Nevertheless, its spiritual content is much deeper and is open to the reader to explore and personalise it.

### **Locating the Gita in the Indian Philosophy**

The *Vedas* and the philosophy based on it are at the core of Hinduism. Different sages compiled the *Vedas* at different times; as a result, in the beginning, they were unorganised and their teachings were apparently incoherent.<sup>1</sup> The great sage *Badarayana* reconciled these inconsistencies by dividing the *Vedas* into four and imparting their teachings to his four disciples.<sup>2</sup> He also harmonised the teachings of different *Upanisads* in his

1 Bal Gangadhar Tilak, *Sri Bhagavad Gita Rahasya*, (3<sup>rd</sup> edn.), Pune, J. S. Tilak and S. S. Tilak, 1971, p.16.

2 K. K. Panicker, *Srimad Bhagavad Gita: Bhavadarpanam Commentary* (ML), Alleppy, The Bidyarambham Press, 1972, p.23.

*Brahmasutras*. The *Brahmasutras*, thus, could be seen as the summary or essence of the *Upanisads*, and is considered as authoritative as the *Upanisads* themselves.<sup>3</sup>

The *Bhagavad Gita*, being placed in the great epic *Mahabharata*<sup>4</sup> forms part of the *Smriti* literature. Hence, just like any other *Smriti* text, the *Gita* also interprets its teachings in accordance with the *Sruti*. Thus the *Upanisads* serve as the primary source of the teaching of the *Gita*. This being the relation between the two, Edgerton appropriates *Gita* as the "versified summary of the *Upanisads*."<sup>5</sup>

In the course of time these three closely linked philosophical tenets (*Prasthanana*), namely, the *Upanisads*, the *Brahmasutras* and the *Bhagavad Gita* acquired the collective name *Prasthanatrayi*.<sup>6</sup> The prominence of the *Prasthanatrayi* could be viewed in its influence on the later philosophical systems; and these systems had to be adherent to them in establishing their doctrines. The followers of the Vedic religion looked down the religious opinions or the cults, which could not find a place in the *Prasthanatrayi*. Accordingly, B.G.Tilak considers the *Prasthanatrayi* as the "pillars of Vedic religion"<sup>7</sup> and in Radhakrishnan's terminology, they are the "triple canon of Hinduism."<sup>8</sup> Here it is in this context, that is, as part of the *Prasthanatrayi*, that we find the position of the *Bhagavad Gita* in the Indian Philosophy. A close observation will reveal to us that the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita* are at the basis of every treatise of the subsequent philosophical systems in India.

### **The Doctrine of *Jnana-Yoga***

The word *yoga* comes from the Sanskrit root 'yuj', meaning union; hence the term *yoga* stands for a "state of union."<sup>9</sup> In the *Gita*, *yoga* is defined as "equanimity of mind" ('*samatvam yogaucyate*' - 2:48), and in verse 2:50, *yoga* is seen as a "skilful device of performing actions" (*yogahkarmasukausalam*). Thus, the term *jnana-yoga* means the application of this skilful device (equanimity of mind) in the accumulation of *jnana*.

### **The Concept of *Jnana***

The Sanskrit root '*jna*' is cognate with the old English 'knawan'.<sup>10</sup> Hence on etymological consideration, one normally translates *jnana* as knowledge.<sup>11</sup> There are two types of

3 Bal Gangadhar Tilak, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 16-17.

4 The *Gita* comprises of eighteen chapters of the *Gita Parvan*, which is the third *upaparvan* of the sixth main *parvan* - *Bhismaparvan* - of the *Mahabharata*.

5 Franklin Edgerton, *The Bhagavad Gita*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1978, p. 109.

6 Bal Gangadhar Tilak, *Op. Cit.*, p. 17.

7 *Ibid.*

8 S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavad Gita*, London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1956, p.16.

9 Bal Gangadhar Tilak, *Op. Cit.*, p. 75

10 Bimal Krishna Matilal, '*Jnana*' in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 1987 edition.

11 However, at the intuitive realm, when *jnana* is concerned with the *Brahman*, it has a deeper meaning and the word 'knowledge' is insufficient to express it.

knowledge: *vijnana* and *jnana*. *Vijnana* is the informative knowledge acquired through mind, the intellectual faculty. Perception of the reality, here, remains at the periphery. *Jnana* is the transforming wisdom obtained through *buddhi*, the intuitive faculty. Here, reality is viewed from a deeper perspective where there is no distinction between the perceiver and the perceived.<sup>12</sup>

### **Jnana in the Sruti Literature**

The entire thought of the *Upanisads* moves around two fundamental concepts: (i) the *Brahman*, and (ii) the *atman*. Comprehension of the Ultimate Truth is *jnana* in the *Upanisads*. In other words, *jnana* is the knowledge of *Brahman* or *atman*; the knowledge that the two are not different but identical, as Paul Deussen says, "That is to say - the *Brahman*, the power which presents itself to us materialised in all existing things which creates, sustains, preserves, and receives back to itself again all worlds, this eternal infinite divine power is identical with the *atman*, with that which, after stripping off everything external, we discover ourselves as our real most essential being, our individual self, the soul."<sup>13</sup> The identity of the *Brahman* and the *atman* is the kernel of the Upanisadic teachings and is briefly expressed by the great sayings (*Mahavakyas*) "*Aham Brahmasmi*" (*Brhadaranyaka Upanisad* 1.4.10) and "*Tat Tvam Asi*" (*Candogya Upanisad* 6.8.7). The *Upanisads* exhort an earnest seeker (*sadhaka*) to strive for this "*Brahma-atma-aikyam*"<sup>14</sup> (unity of the *Brahman* and the *atman*) where all illusions vanish and true *jnana* emerges.

### **Jnana in the context of the Gita**

The external dramatic setting of the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita* begins with the plight of Arjuna so as to fight against his relatives and teachers. Arjuna had once been well resolved to strike down his enemies; thus, he voluntarily came into the battlefield, blew his conch and raised his bow as a sign of his preparedness to fight. But the same Arjuna, having seen his kith and kin at the enemy side, throws aside his bow and arrow and sits in his place in the chariot overwhelmed by sorrow and despair.

This disinterest to fight seen in Arjuna is not because of his inclination to renounce the world and embrace *sanyasa* as the view of scholars like B.G.Tilak, but is on account of his spiritual blindness and excessive attachment to his kinsmen.<sup>15</sup> Thus, within the framework of the Gita, Sri Krishna - as the genuine spiritual master - imparts *Brahma-jnana* as a 'sovereign remedy' to the plight and spiritual blindness - the typical hindrances to release from *samsara* (tire cycle of birth and rebirth) - of Arjuna who, in fact, represents the entire humanity.<sup>16</sup>

12 S. Radhaknshnan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 237.

13 Paul Deussen, *The Philosophy of the Upanishads*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edn.), New Delhi, Oriental Books, 1958, p. 39.

14 It is the fundamental dogma of the *Vedanta* system.

15 V. H. Date, *Brahma-Yoga of the Gita*, New Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1971, p. 3.

16 *Ibid.*

In the Upanisadic spirit, the *Gita* proclaims: "*ksetra- ksetrajnayanorjnanam*" (13:2), i.e. *jnana* is the right understanding of *ksetra* (the field of activity for the conditioned soul - the body) and *ksetrajna* (the knower of the field - the highest *Brahman*, who is present in all the *ksetras*).<sup>17</sup> Twenty-four elements (the five great elements, false ego, intelligence, the un-manifested, ten senses, the mind and the five sense objects) along with their seven modifications (desire, hatred, happiness, misery, the aggregate, the vital force and courage) constitute the body (*ksetra*). All changes - growth, decline and death take place in the *ksetra* and it is the abode of all appearances.<sup>18</sup> The *Gita* entitles *ksetrajna* as the real object of knowledge (*jnea*) (13:12) knowing which one attains immortality. He is the transcendent *Brahman* who is without any beginning and is neither absolute existence (*sat*) nor absolute non-existence (*asat*).<sup>19</sup> The following extracts from the *Gita* further describes the *Brahman*:

And, indivisible (though) it appears as dividend among the beings. It to be known as the creator, the sustainer and the destroyer (13:16).

It is the light of lights and is said to be beyond darkness. It is the knowledge, the object to be known through knowledge, and that which resides in the hearts of all (13:17).

Here *Bhagavad Gita* identifies this 'highest *Brahman*' with Sri Krishna, the personal God (13:2) and asserts *jnana* as the ability to distinguish God as 'knower of every field' from material nature (*ksetra*) (13:26- 34). This position of the *Gita* is not contradictory to the Upanisadic teachings. Instead, it only emphasises again that this material world is not separate but the eternal part (*amsa*) of the One Supreme Self (15:17) and, that at the awakening of *jnana*, one is able to see the imperishable *Brahman* dwelling in the perishable things (13:27) which are, infact, *Brahman* Himself reflected through the medium of *Prakrti* (the nature of *Brahman*).<sup>20</sup>

The *Gita* posits *Brahma-jnana* as that knowledge knowing which everything else in the universe is known (7:2) and admits it as its favourite means to obtain release from *samsara* (9:1). However, this *jnana* is concealed in the 'fire of desire' (*kama*), the 'eternal enemy of ajnani' (3:39). Desire is the cause of *avidya* (ignorance) which in turn gives birth to *adharma* (lawlessness) in the world. Thus, the *Gita* sternly warns the genuine seeker (*sadhaka*) to be aware not to fall in this danger and urges him/her to destroy this enemy by realising the *atman* within and controlling the mind by intellect (3:43).

According to the *Gita*, "the highest kind of achievement a man can have in his life is

17 A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Bhagavad Gita As It Is*, Mumbai, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1986, p. 638.

18 S. Radhakrishnan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 300.

19 R. C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad Gita*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 340

20 K. K. Panicker, *Op. Cit.*, p. 105.

the intuitive knowledge of *Brahman*.<sup>21</sup> The greatness of *jnana* is very well seen in the *Gita* as it makes even the most sinful man hopeful of deliverance: "even if you be the most sinful of all the sinners, you will cross the (ocean of) sins by the raft of knowledge alone" (4:36). The *Gita* qualifies *jnana* as "*guhyaadguhyantaram*", i.e., the secret of all secrets (18:63), the realisation of which not only reveals him that he is *Brahman* but also that all this is '*Vasudeva*' or *Brahman* (7:18-19). Hence according to the *Gita*, *jnana* involves two aspects: (i) the perception of the Self within the self, and (ii) perception of the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self.<sup>22</sup>

### **Perception of the Self within the Self**

In the experience of *jnana*, one perceives the Divine Self within him/ herself - "the yogin becomes delighted within himself by seeing the *Atman*" (6:20). It is the awareness of the personal self becoming totally transparent to the Divine Self.<sup>23</sup> It is the Upanisadic experience of "*Aham Brahmasmi*" (I am *Brahman*). The same experience resonates in the *Gita* where the *jnani* identifies himself as 'Krishna's very self (7:18). In other words, *jnana* becomes the inner awakening to the "Light of lights hidden in the hearts of all" (13:17).

### **Perception of the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self**

In the *jnana*-experience one perceives the Divine Self inseparable from the entire reality: "...for by this knowledge you will see that all living beings are but part of the Supreme, or, in other words that they are Mine" (4:35). The entire universe is depicted as the 'body of God' in the *Viswarupadarsana* (11:13). Further, Krishna describes himself as the in-dweller of all the *ksetras* (material body) (13:2); the beginning, the middle and the end of beings (10:20) and the eternal seed of all universal beings (7:10). Thus in the *Gita*, *jnana* becomes an 'experience of universal theophany' that enables the human person with a holistic vision of reality.<sup>24</sup> This again is the 'intuitive experience of "*Tat Tvam Asi*" (That Thou Art) in the *Upanisads* where the *jiva-Paramatma* union is realised.

### **The Role of a Guru in the attainment of *Jnana***

The *Gita* acknowledges that it is difficult for a seeker (*sadhaka*) to get through the path to the realisation of *jnana*, however genuine his/ her intentions may be. Thus, it advises the seeker to approach a spiritual master (*guru*) who is not only well versed in the speculative knowledge of the world, but also a real *jnani* (4:34). By the instruction of a guru, the seeker is able to understand his/her spiritual condition and to identify him/ herself as part (*amsa*) of the *Brahman*.<sup>25</sup> The guru, thus, becomes a channel through

21 V. H. Date, *Op. Cit.*, p. 97.

22 Sebastian Painadath, "Bhagavad Gita's Contribution to the Future of India", in *Jnanadeepa: Pune journal of Religious Studies*, vol.1, no.1, January, 1998, p. 20.

23 *Ibid.*

24 *Ibid.*

25 A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Op. Cit.*, p. 700

which *jnana* flows into the seeker. In the *Gita*, we have a fine example of this process where Krishna, as the real *guru*, gives advice to Arjuna. A seeker when pleases his *guru* by rendering his wholehearted service to him without false prestige, receives blessings from the *guru* (4:34). However, in this context, the *Gita* condemns blind following of the instructions of a *guru*.<sup>26</sup> It is necessary that a seeker understands and be convinced of those instructions. Hence, in the *Gita*, we find Arjuna asking questions and getting his doubts clarified from Krishna (3:1; 5:1; 18:73).

### **The Inner-Dispositions to obtain *Jnana***

The *Gita* (4:39) describes three virtues, namely: a) faith; b) oriented action; and c) control of senses, that a genuine seeker should have to be persistent in the pursuit of *jnana*. The external assistance of a *guru* is of no use if the seeker does not possess these inner dispositions.

#### **Faith (*sraddha*)**

A genuine seeker should have utmost faith in his/her *guru* and the instruction given by him/her. Faith is the 'aspiration of the soul to gain wisdom.'<sup>27</sup> All the same, it is not a blind belief. If faith is constant, it eventually leads one to the realisation of *jnana*. The *Gita* condemns the doubter and the faithless saying he is worthy of neither world: "lost are the ignorant, the faithless and the (perpetual) doubter. For the doubter (especially) neither this would nor the other (will do any good); nor is there happiness (for him)" (4:40).

#### **Oriented Action (*tatparah*)**

Faith helps the seeker to cultivate a right orientation to the realisation of *jnana*.<sup>28</sup> S/he, therefore, acts upon the instruction of the *guru* and overcomes the obstacles that arise in the path with determination. This in other words is true wisdom.

#### **Control of Senses (*samyatendriyah*)**

According to the *Gita*, desire (*kama*) is the eternal enemy of a *jnani* (3:34). Desire covers the *atma-jnana* (3:38) and deludes the one who is in pursuit of it (3:40). The senses, mind and intellect are the abode of desire (3:40). Thus the *Gita* instructs one to annihilate desire first, by controlling the senses (3:41). This makes the seeker steadfast in his/her effort to attain *jnana*. The *Gita* says that the one who has no control over his senses is not worthy of *jnana* (2:66) for their mind follows the wandering senses just as the ship is carried away by the wind upon the waters (2:67).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 263.

<sup>27</sup> S. Radhakrishnan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 171.

<sup>28</sup> Pathikkonda Wiswambara Nath, *Tat Tvam Asi: The Universal Message of the Bhagavad Gita*, Delhi, Motilal Benarasidas, 1998, p. 206.

### ***Jnana-yogi and the Worldly Affairs***

One may naturally raise the question: does a *jnani*, having attained the greatest treasure of *jnana*, engage themselves in the activities of the world? The *Gita* admits that there remains no duty for the *jnani* after the acquisition of *jnana* (3:17); however, it does not advocate renunciation of the world, for "none born out of prakrti can remain without doing action" (3:5). Hence, the *Gita* recommends the *jnani* to do action without desire for the sake of *yajna* (sacrifice - the action done for the welfare of the universe) (3:9). Here, the *Gita* provides the example of Krishna himself, who even when being the supreme *jnani*, engages himself in the activities for the upkeep of the universe (3:22). This position of the *Gita* coincides with the *jnana-karma samuccayavada*.<sup>29</sup> In the words of T.G. Mainkar, "the intention of the *Bhagavad Gita* is to teach that *Nitya karma* and *Tatvajnana*, both together lead to salvation and not the *sanyasa* or renunciation of the *karmas*."<sup>30</sup> Thus a *jnani* does engage in the worldly affairs but s/he is different from an ignorant (*ajnani*) while doing so. The *Gita* makes the distinction clear, saying, "attached to actions is the ignorant work, even so should the wise who wish to guide the people work without being attached O Bharata" (3:25).

### ***Bhakti-Jnana-Karma Satnuccaya***

The present section outlines the position of the *Gita* on the inter-relation of *bhakti*, *jnana* and *karma*. The *Gita* presents a harmonious integration of *karma* with *jnana* and *jnana* with *bhakti* in the pursuit of God-realisation. In the integration of these three paths the focus of the *Gita* is on God-realisation rather than in establishing the primacy of one path over the other.

### ***Karma Culminates into Jnana***

#### ***Yajna - The Action Done for the Sake of God***

In the *Purua Mimamsa (Karma-kanda)* the word *yajna* (sacrifice) denotes *Vishnu* or the omnipresent God: "*yajnovai Visnoh*."<sup>31</sup> This fundamental meaning of *yajna* is preserved also in the *Gita* as *yajna* is seen identical with *Brahman* and with the knowledge of *Brahman* (3:9,24). However, the *Gita* goes a step further and perceives all the actions done for the sake of God as *yajna* (3:9). The universe is the projection of the one *Brahman* through *Prakrti* (the nature of *Brahman*) (4:8). The origin and the sustenance of the universe are the outcome of *yajna* (3:14). Therefore, the action done for God is nothing but the action done for the welfare of the universe (*lokasamgraha*). Further, *yajna* is seen as a wheel set in motion for the continuation of the world (3:16). As per the *Mimamsa School*, the most important element in a *yajna* is the giving up of the idea of mine-

29 According to the *samuccayavada*, one cannot rely absolutely on *jnana* alone for the attainment of salvation as also on *karma* alone for the same. It is clever blending of both *jnana* and *karma* alone that is capable of securing salvation. See, T.G. Mainkar, *A Comparative Study on the Commentaries on the Bhagavad Gita*, Delhi, Motilal Benarasidas, 1969, p. 51.

30 *Ibid.*

31 K. K. Panicker, *Op. Cit.*, p. 208 (note).

ness (*mamatva*). In a similar fashion *Bhagavad Gita* brings forth its famous doctrine 'niskama karma' and urges one to act. Thus, when action is done for *lokasamgraha* with this attitude, it elevates the human nature to that of the Divine.<sup>32</sup>

### **Merging of Karma into Yajna**

The *Gita* says that human by nature is inclined to *karma* (3:5) All the same, those *karma* performed for oneself (the *Mimamsa* School terms them as *Purusartha karma*) binds man (3:9); while the entire *karma* of a man who does them for the sake of *yajna* (sacrifice) are dissolved of its bondage (4:23). Hence, the *Gita* emphasises the need of integrating every human action (*karma*) into *yajna*" for those who do not perform *yajna* are worthy of neither this nor the other world" (4:31). Further, the integration of *karma* into *yajna* ensures a harmonious living even in this world (3:10-12).

### **Yajna eventually leads unto Brahma-jnana**

The performance of *yajna* moves one closer to the Divine, for it is an action (*karma*) for the sake of Him. The more one is closer to the Divine, the more s/he has access to the knowledge of Him. Hence, the *Gita* declares solemnly, "...all actions find their end without any remnant in the realisation (of *Brahman*) O Partha" (4:33). It is in the fire of the realisation of *Brahman* that the fruits of the *karma* are burned off and one is freed from the cycle of birth and rebirth (4:19, 37). In the words of Swami Prabhupada, "the purpose of all sacrifices is to arrive at the status of complete knowledge...for without attainment of knowledge, sacrifices remain on the material platform and bestow no spiritual benefit."<sup>33</sup> The position of the *Gita* is very clear as Krishna counts *jnana-yajna* as the best among the various *yajnas* offered to God (4:33).

### **Jnana: The Ultimate Resolution of Bhakti**

*Bhagavad Gita* asserts that through *bhakti* one comes to realise the real nature of the Lord (18:55). The essence of *bhakti* consists in fixing one's mind on the Lord, being devoted and doing sacrifice unto Him, bowing down to Him and becoming attached to Him knowing that He is the destination (9:34). Though the study of *Vedas* and performance of sacrifice (*yajna*), penance (*tapa*) and charity (*dana*) are said to be highly useful, it is also possible that the one who practices them fails to secure the *darsana* and *jnana* of *Brahman*. But one never fails when "one approaches the Lord with undeviating devotion" (*ananya bhakti*) (11:53-54). *Bhakti*, therefore, is seen as a powerful means to obtain *Brahma-jnana*. Scholars like B.G.Tilak considers that *bhakti* can never become a *nistha* (the course of leading one's life by which ultimate Release (*moksha*) is obtained), for *bhakti* leads to *jnana* and is never a direct means to *moksha*.<sup>34</sup> In the *Gita*, although Krishna exalts all the four kinds of devotees (7:16), He expresses a special affection for the one who is endowed with *jnana* saying, 'His very Self' (7:18). Further, when *jnana*

32 V. H. Date, *Op. Cit.*, p. 193.

33 A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 261-262.

34 Bal Gangadhar Tilak, *Op. Cit.*, p. 640.



is realised, the devotee of the Lord begins to experience the presence of the Divine in every bit of reality (7:18).

### ***Jnana along with Karma and Bhakti leads to Moksha***

*Moksha*, according to the *Gita*, is not merely a release from *samsara*, but entering into the being of *Brahman* or Krishna: "the *yogin*, who finds the bliss within himself, sports within himself, and sees the light within himself, becomes one with *Brahman* and obtains the peace of *Brahman*" (5:24); "...then, having known Me (Krishna) in essence he (the devotee) forthwith enters into me" (18:55). The *Gita* advocates a three fold path that leads to *moksha*, namely, the *karma-yoga*, the *jnana-yoga* and the *bhakti-yoga*. These paths are not to be seen as independent without any relation to each other. Instead, they complement each other in the pursuit of God-realisation (7:17,18; 10:10). Hence, a genuine seeker (*sadhaka*) needs to assimilate a perfect blending of *karma*, *jnana* and *bhakti* in his/her *sadhana*. Douglas P. Hill points out their interrelationship:

It has so often been stated that work and knowledge and devotion are, in Krishna's view, alternative and equally efficient methods leading to release, that it is important to insist that these three methods are, throughout the *Gita*, regarded as complementary, each no more than the application of the single theory of control to one department of man's being.<sup>35</sup>

The *Gita* exalts *karma* over *sanyasa* (5:2) and urges one to act without any desire (*kama*), for the fruits of *karma* (6:24), which, in fact, is the Cause of bondage (6:21). Now the performance of *karma* is to be coincided with *jnana* and *bhakti*. *Jnana*, on the one hand, frees the *sadhaka* from all delusions (*moha*) (5:16) and gives him/her right perception; while the *bhakti*, on the other hand, revitalises their enthusiasm and smoothens their path to God-realisation (12:7). Thence, *karma* no more binds them to its fruit and the *sadhaka*'s life becomes "a continuous sacrifice, on the altar of God."<sup>36</sup> *Bhakti* is seen as a relationship of love one has with a personal deity.<sup>37</sup> This expression of love towards the personal deity itself is a *karma*, and when *bhakti* is combined with *jnana* it achieves the best results (11:54). Finally, *jnana* is not to be seen as a path separate from *karma* and *bhakti*. In the *Gita*, Krishna exhorts not to follow those who view *jnana* as separate from *karma* and *bhakti* and even calls them "fools" (5:4).

According to the *Gita*, it is not *jnana* alone but *jnana* along with *karma* and *bhakti* that leads to *moksha* (7:1, 17-18; 9:13-14; 10:10). Therefore, a perfect *jnana-yogi* should be a perfect *karma-yogi* and a perfect *bhakti-yogi* too. Thus, the *Gita* sustains an equal status to *karma*, *bhakti* and *jnana*. However, one cannot but say that the position of the *Gita* regarding *jnana* is that of a 'primus inter pares', i.e. first among the equals.

35 W. Douglas P. Hill, *The Bhagwat Gita*, Chennai, Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 53

36 V. H. Date, *Op. Cit.*, p. 143.

37 W. Douglas P. Hill, *Op. Cit.*, p. 65.

## Conclusion

The *Bhagavad Gita* espouses a holistic vision of life in establishing its doctrines of *karma*, *jnana* and *bhakti*. When a person advances in the path of *karma-yoga*, s/he does action not to nurture his/her selfish desires but for the integral well-being of the entire reality. Integration of *karma* (action) into *yajna* (sacrifice) ensures the ecological balance. Performed in this manner, *karma* leads the human beings to a liberative experience; awakening the creative forces of love, freedom and equanimity within themselves. In the *jnana*-experience, one realises that s/he and the entire reality are not separate but essentially part of the Divine-Self itself. This realisation changes his/her life and attitude towards the reality outside. S/he begins to perceive the presence of God in everything. Now s/he is no more under the illusion and works hard not for the perishable, but for the imperishable - the *Brahman*. Further, *bhakti* as a life in the Divine love adds new vigour in their effort to reach unto the *Brahman*. The aspect of sharing oneself totally with the Divine in *bhakti* transforms their life and makes them friendly and compassionate towards their fellow beings and the world at large. In this holistic approach to life, in the *Gita*, we find the meeting point of spirituality and a secular vision. This integral vision of life, it goes without saying, ensures a harmonious living in the society.