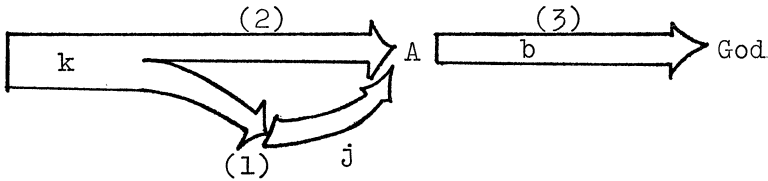


The Three *Yogas* in Rāmānuja's *Gītābhāṣya*

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The *Bhagavadgītā* (*BhG.*) tried to unite the tradition of knowledge (*jñāna*) and that of action (*karma*), which had been antagonistic to each other from ancient times. *Bhakti*, a relatively new trend, was accepted by the author(s) of *BhG.*, as a means of final liberation. Thus, in *BhG.*, *jñānayoga*, *karmayoga*, and *bhaktiyoga* appear as the three main methods of attaining final liberation and one can more fully understand the thought of *BhG.* through a proper understanding of their relationships.

In this paper I will examine how Rāmānuja deals with these three *yogas* in his *Bhagavadgītābhāṣya*¹⁾ (*RBh.*). The following diagram should help to understand the relationships of the three as they are seen in *RBh.*



In the diagram “k” stands for *karmayoga*; “j” for *jñānayoga*; and “b” for *bhaktiyoga*. “A”, the intuition of *ātman* (*ātmāvalokana*), also plays an important role in Rāmānuja’s system. As we see, it is a terminal through which every person must pass on his way to God (*Vāsudeva*)²⁾. As indicated by the diagram, the three *yogas* may be considered as the three courses which lead to final

1) A. A. S. vol. 92, Bombay, 1923; Gujarati Printing Press, Bombay, 1935; Granthamala Office, Kancheepuram, 1965.

2) Cf. *RBh.* intro. to XIII.

liberation either directly or indirectly. One course leads to "A" through "k" and "j". I call this Course 1. The second (Course 2) leads to "A" through "k". The third (Course 3) leads to God through "b".

In Course 1 *karmayoga* is the preliminary means of attaining *jñānayoga*, which in turn results in the intuition of *ātman*³⁾ (*RBh.* II, 53). The second chapter of *BhG.* enjoins people to perform deeds (*karman*) without consideration of their effects. In so far as deeds are performed without any desire for their effects, the performance of those deeds becomes *karmayoga*. According to Rāmānuja, the knowledge that *ātman* is eternal and is subject to God is a prerequisite to *karmayoga*⁴⁾. He holds that *karmayoga*, which is based upon this knowledge of *ātman* and which is performed without any desire for the effects of deeds, is the preliminary means of *jñānayoga* (*RBh.* II, 53).

In Course 2, on the other hand, *karmayoga* leads directly to the intuition of *ātman*⁵⁾. *BhG.* praises *karmayoga* especially in the third and the fourth chapters: *karmayoga* was taught by God himself in the ancient times and many ancient sages had obtained final liberation only through *karman*⁶⁾. Rāmānuja holds that *karmayoga* is superior to *jñānayoga* because the former is easy to perform, whereas the latter is more difficult (*RBh.* III, 8). Furthermore, *karmayoga* urges one to be attentive (*RBh.* III, 19, 35) and presupposes the knowledge of *ātman*⁷⁾ (*RBh.* III, 19, intro. to IV). When one takes Course 2, one can obtain the intuition of *ātman* only through *karmayoga* without going through *jñānayoga* (*RBh.* IV, 21).

Course 3 is the way of *bhakti* leading to God. Both *karmayoga* and *jñānayoga*, which result in the intuition of *ātman*⁸⁾, are preliminary means of *bhakti*. The introduction to the thirteenth chapter of *RBh.* declares that both *ka-*

3) J. A. B. Van Buitenen, *Rāmānuja on the Bhagavadgītā*, Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi, 1968, p. 20.

4) Cf. *RBh.* II, 12.

5) *Ibid.*, p. 20.

6) Cf. *BhG.* III, 3, 20, 21, IV, 1~3.

7) *Ibid.*, p. 21.

8) *Ibid.*, p. 21.

9) *Ibid.*, p. 22.

rmayoga and *jñānayoga* constitute part of *bhakti*, and that God is attained through *bhakti*⁹).

Rāmānuja thus holds that *jñānayoga*, which is always brought about by *karmayoga*, leads to the intuition of *ātman* (Course 1). Sometimes *karmayoga* brings about the intuition of *ātman* directly (Course 2). Neither *karmayoga* nor *jñānayoga* can lead to God directly. In order to attain God, one must obtain the intuition of *ātman* through *karmayoga* or *jñānayoga*, because it is *ātman* that attains God. The way *ātman* attains God is called *bhaktiyoga*.

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