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THE BHAGAVAD GITA AND THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF SAINT IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA: LEADING TO SPIRITUAL ENHANCEMENT

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ABSTRACT: The *Bhagavad Gita* like the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola leading to spiritual enrichment points out of a meeting of heart and mind between two texts. The essence of the spirituality of the *Bhagavad Gita*, like the spirituality of Ignatius is the vision of God. Its spirituality is oriented towards God above the world as well as within it. Both texts offer a parallel insight for deep and authentic happiness building up a life towards God and in God. Even though the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Spiritual Exercises* play different qualitative rolls in its own traditions, both agree that only those who have God above the visible world are able to experience God vice-versa. The quest to have God experience is an exercise involving conscious effort and constant attentiveness.

KEY WORDS: Bhagavad Gita; Ignatian Spirituality; the Vision of God.

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El Bhagavad Gita y los ejercicios espirituales de san Ignacio de Loyola: conducentes a la mejora espiritual

RESUMEN: Tanto el *Bhagavad Gita* como los *Ejercicios Espirituales* de san Ignacio de Loyola, que conducen al enriquecimiento espiritual, señalan un encuentro de corazón y mente entre los dos textos. La esencia de la espiritualidad del *Bhagavad Gita*, como de la espiritualidad de Ignacio, es la visión de Dios. Su espiritualidad está orientada hacia Dios por encima del mundo y dentro de él. Ambos textos ofrecen una visión paralela de la profunda y auténtica felicidad, construyendo una vida hacia Dios y en Dios. El *Bhagavad Gita* y los *Ejercicios Espirituales*, desempeñando papeles cualitativamente diferentes en cada una de sus tradiciones, están de acuerdo en que sólo aquellos que tienen a Dios por encima del mundo visible pueden experimentarlo y viceversa. La búsqueda para experimentar a Dios es un ejercicio que implica el esfuerzo consciente y la atención constante.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Bhagavad Gita; espiritualidad ignaciana; la visión de Dios.

1. OBJECTIVES AND STRUCTURE

The concern in this article is to understand the significance of these two spiritualities and deal with some of the important resonances. We will analyse, critique and personalize the teachings of these spiritualities in order to improve spiritual life in different traditions. Then we will seek to have better understanding of God, world and self-based on the stands of these spiritualities.

The article has three parts; the first part will be exploring with integral spiritual path of book *Bhagavad Gita*. The second part will be approaching with the Spiritual path of *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola and its understanding the spiritual process towards God. Finally conclude seeking significance in the book of *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Spiritual Exercises* for personal spiritual benefits.

2. INTRODUCTION

The Vatican Council II gave new vision or perspective for the Indian Church in its approach to Hinduism. The Declaration, *Nostra Aetate* has given the impetus for recognising the spiritual and moral good found among the followers of other religions, as well as the values in their society and

culture. It is indeed significant that it is the first time an Ecumenical Council has expressed such an open approach to the Non-Christian Religions.

«Thus, in Hinduism men contemplate the divine mystery and express it through an unspent fruitfulness of myths and through searching philosophical inquiry. They seek release from the anguish of our condition through ascetical practices or deep meditation or a loving, trusting flight toward God... The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions. She looks with sincere respect upon those ways of conduct and of life, those rules and teachings which, though differing in many particulars from what she holds and sets forth, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men» (NA 2)¹.

It is right that we Christians understand the spirituality of Hinduism that governs majority of Indians to be able to dialogue with them for our mutual spiritual enrichment. God, who has spoken in the past in many ways through various religious traditions, scriptures, ritual practices and cultures, continues to pervade the world through the Holy Spirit. As a Christian it is imperative to dialogue with other religions, especially Hinduism in India, to find God's will.

On October 20, 1555, Luis Gonçales da Câmara² questioned Ignatius as to how he had drawn up the book of the *Spiritual Exercises*. St. Ignatius of Loyola replied that,

«he had not composed the Exercises all at once, but that when he noticed some things in his soul and found them useful, he thought they might also be useful to others, and so he put them in writing; for example, the examination of conscience with that arrangement of lines, etc. that

¹ Throughout this study all the citations from the documents of the II Vatican Council are taken from, *The Documents of Vatican II*. Translated by W. Abbott. New York: Guild Press, 1966.

² José Vaz De Carvalho. "Câmara, Luís Gonçalves da". In *Diccionario Histórico de la Compañía de Jesús, Biográfico-Temático I*, editado por Charles E. O'Neill y Joaquín M.^a Domínguez, Roma – Madrid: Institutum Historicum, S. I. 2001, 608. «Luís Gonçalves da Câmara era Jesuíta vivió (1553-octubre 1555 en Roma) en íntima comunicación con Ignacio de Loyola, escribió dos obras de valor inapreciable: *Acta Patris Ignatii* y *Autobiografía de Ignacio*. Era confidente de Ignacio de Loyola, Confesor y tutor real». (Luís Gonçalves da Câmara was a Jesuit from Portugal lived (1553-October 1555 in Rome) in close communication with Ignatius of Loyola, he wrote two works of invaluable value: *Acta Patris Ignatii* and *Autobiography of St. Ignatius of Loyola*. He was a trustworthy of Ignatius of Loyola, confessor and royal tutor and prince of Portugal).

he derived the elections in particular from that diversity of spirit and thoughts which he had at Loyola when he was still suffering in the leg»³.

The book of *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius is the very essence of his life experience. The genesis of the book is said to have been completed in the year 1536-39, and there are indications⁴ that some elements were still added to the text. These changes, presumably of minor character, deal with some aspects of the rules for the discretion of the spirits, some new rules that may have been added regarding the 1st, 2nd and 3rd «weeks» and some other corrections in the text.

The *Bhagavad Gita* (BG)⁵ is the most important song of God among the didactic passages of the Mahābhārata, the great epic of India. The *Bhagavad Gita* in the Hindu tradition is accepted as a sacred scripture that plays a significant role in India's philosophical and religious system. The date and the text of the *Bhagavad Gita* are connected to the following questions: Does it have a unity of its own? Is it the work of any one particular author within a definite period of time? Or is it a composite work written by different authors at different sequences of time? Among the scholars there is no unequivocal consensus regarding its date, text, and unity. Hence the opinions of the various authors have to be understood

³ *Autobiog*, n. 99. The Autobiography of St. Ignatius, edited by John Francis Xavier O'Connor. New York: Benziger Brothers, 1900. Since this text is of much significance to our study we have here its original version in Spanish: «Él me dijo que los Ejercicios no los había hecho todos de una sola vez, sino que algunas cosas que observaba en su alma y las encontraba útiles, le parecía que podrían ser útiles también a otros, y así las ponía por escrito, *verbi gratia*, del examinar la conciencia con aquel modo de las líneas, etc. Las elecciones especialmente me dijeron que las había sacado de aquella variedad de espíritu y pensamientos que tenía cuando estaba en Loyola, estando todavía enfermo de una pierna». Zapico Fernandez Dionysius, y Candidus De Dalmases, eds. *Fontes Narrativi*, Serie I. *Romae: Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu*, 1943, 504.

⁴ Ignatius of Loyola. *Ejercicios Espirituales*. Editado por Cándido de Dalmases. Santander: Sal Terrae, 1987, 16. These indications are based on the third letter of S. Francisci Xaverii epistolae, I, 47, *Romae: Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu*, 1945; Santiago Arzubialde. *Ejercicios Espirituales de S. Ignacio: Historia y Análisis*. 2.^a ed. Bilbao: Mensajero, 2009, 50-51.

⁵ Sri Shankaracharya. *The Bhagavad Gita*. Translated by Alladi Mahadeva Sastri. Madras: V. Venkateswara Sastrulu Trust for V. Ramaswamy Sastrulu and Sons, 1961. The *Bhagavad Gita* is the sacred book of Hindu with eighteen chapters. The eighteen chapters of this classic, symbolically represents the spiritual struggle of the human person in search of the divine. For our study we will be referring to Sri Shankaracharya's *Bhagavad Gita*. Abbreviation for the *Bhagavad Gita* is used (BG), the chapters are written in Roman numbers I, II, III, and verses are with Arabic numbers 1, 2, 3...

and evaluated as approximations rather than as historical certitudes. Hence, looking at the internal and external evidence apropos of the date and the text of the *Bhagavad Gita*, K. T. Telang writes that:

«We have now adequate grounds for saying, that the various and independent lines of investigation... converge to this point, that the *Bhagavad Gita*, on numerous and essential topics, ranges itself as member of the Upanishad group, so to say, in Sanskrit literature. Its philosophy, its mode of treating its subject, its style, its language, its verification, its opinion on sundry subjects of the highest importance, all point to that one conclusion. We may also... lay it down as more than probable, that the latest date at which *Bhagavad Gita* can have been composed must be earlier than the third century B. C., though it is altogether impossible to say at present how much earlier»⁶.

The *Bhagavad Gita* is one of the most religious, sacred scripture and spiritual book of the Hindu tradition may be earlier than 3rd century B. C. The great poem, the *Bhagavad Gita*, is «the crown jewel of all Indian Literature»⁷. The *Bhagavad Gita* makes aware of man's selfish action and right action, of ignorance of spiritual truth and true knowledge, and of selfish love and love of God. The main purpose of the *Bhagavad Gita* is the permanent union of man with God⁸. In other hand, the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius Loyola is one of the spiritual books of Catholic tradition of 15-16th century written by Ignatius of Loyola himself. The purpose of *Spiritual Exercises* (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 1⁹) is to get rid of all inordinate attachments, and after their removal, to seeking and find the will of God in the disposition of our life for the salvation of our soul¹⁰. These two books provide systematic and comprehensive spiritual path that can lead people to attain their highest goal in life that is God. Without doubt, these two books resonate with one another as there are similarities in their ideas and approaches and yet they have their own emphasises and uniqueness. Even though the two texts are

⁶ Kasinath, Trimbak Telang. "Introduction to the translation of The Bhagavad Gita". In *The Sacred Books of the East*, edited by F. Max Müller, vol. 8, 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

⁷ Swami Vivekananda. *Thoughts on the Gita*. Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1981, 14.

⁸ Sri Shankaracharya, *The Bhagavad Gita*, 64-66.

⁹ The quotations referencing to the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola in the article will be indicated in abbreviation as: *Sp. Ex.*, nn.

¹⁰ For the English translation of the *Spiritual Exercises*, we depend on Louis J. Puhl. *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. A New Translation Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph*. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1951.

apparently very distinct in time and place, both show deep similarities in their ways of understanding the spiritual process towards God.

We realized that we cannot compare both texts considering them at the same level. While Bhagavad Gita is the Sacred text of Hindu tradition, and the fundamental of Hindu belief, whereas the *Spiritual Exercises* are only a method for spiritual life among many others developed in Christian tradition along almost two thousand years.

3. INTEGRAL SPIRITUAL PATH OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA

All the eighteen chapters in the Gita are «Yogas», ways or *margas* of human beings' union with the divine. These chapters can be listed under three basic *margas* of Hinduism — *Karma-yoga* (the way of works), the *Jñāna-yoga* (the way of knowledge) and the *Bhakti-yoga* (the way of love). Though these three *margas* are distinct, they are interdependent. A proper understanding of these three ways is indispensable to get at the nature of the process of spiritual liberation in the Gita. At times one path may have greater emphasis in a context as Krishna¹¹ suggests Arjuna regarding Karma as better than knowledge, but that never excludes the other two paths the *Jñāna-yoga* and *Bhakti yoga*. N. K. Brahma writes: «The *Bhagavad Gita* tells us clearly that the three thought to be regarded not as divergent paths leading to different goals but as disciplines suiting different stages of development and converging towards the same end»¹².

«Yoga» or spiritual path suggested by the *Bhagavad Gita* is multidimensional. From the definition of *yoga* mentioned in the *Bhagavad Gita* II: 48, 50¹³ and VI: 20-23¹⁴ we come to know how spiritual path of *Bhaga-*

¹¹ B. K. Chaturvedi. *Gods & Goddesses of India*. Delhi: Books for All, 1998, 100. Krishna is one of the god's in Hindu religion who is identified with supreme and portrayed the greatest of the descents in human form of Vishnu.

¹² Nalini Kanta Brahma. *Philosophy of Hindu Sadhana*. London: Kegan Paul, 1932, 296.

¹³ *BG* II: 48, be steadfast in the performance of your duty, O Arjun, abandoning attachment to success and failure. Such equanimity is called Yoga; *BG* II: 50, one who prudently practices the science of work without attachment can get rid of both good and bad reactions in this life itself. Therefore, strive for Yog, which is the art of working skilfully (in proper consciousness).

¹⁴ *BG* VI: 20, when the mind, restrained from material activities, becomes still by the practice of Yog, then the yogi is able to behold the soul through the purified mind,

vad Gita integrates all human actions towards divine. In the Gita, Yoga means: «the control the soul (*buddhi*) exercises over “the self”, “the integration of self”, “sameness-and-indifference”, “surrendering attachment”, “being the same in success and failure”, “getting busy with work”, “the integration by the soul”, “being united with the soul”, “discarding of both good and evil works”, “skill in performing works”, “checking the thought and making it still”, “seeing the self in self and finding content”, “knowing the utmost joy which transcends the sense”, “standing firm, unmoved by any suffering”, “the unlinking of the link with suffering and pain”, “to be brought about with firm resolve and mind all undismayed”»¹⁵. Let us now see the concept of the world and the different paths in yoga how they unfold themselves to lead a person to union with the divine.

3.1. KARMA-YOGA (THE WAY OF ACTION)

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krisna reveals how He is not obliged to work and yet he works to uphold the world so that it is not destroyed (*BG III: 22-24*). This act of Krisna urges human beings to action rather than inaction. Path of action is liberative if action is done in the way the Gita suggests.

The Gita teaches *loka-sangraha*¹⁶ (*loka*-world, *sangraha*-protection, welfare of the world) (*BG III: 20-21*), working for the welfare of the world. As a social being, man or woman has to perform his/her social and moral action because he/she has to discharge his/her social obligations¹⁷. According to the Gita, everyone has to perform one's *svadharma* (*sva*-own, *dharma*-duty, right) because it is participation in God's work. It is through one's own nature and through one's own specific work that one is called

and he rejoices in the inner joy, *BG VI: 21*, In that joyous state of Yog, called *samādhi*, one experiences supreme boundless divine bliss, and thus situated, one never deviates from the Eternal Truth. *BG VI: 22*, having gained that state, one does not consider any attainment to be greater. Being thus established, one is not shaken even in the midst of the greatest calamity, *BG VI: 23*, that state of severance from union with misery is known as Yog. This Yog should be resolutely practiced with determination free from pessimism.

¹⁵ *BG II: 48-50; VI: 20-23*.

¹⁶ Ganesh Dao. “The Concept of ‘Lokasangraha’ As a Path of Harmony in Society”. *Humanities and Social Science Series 2*, Vol. 24, Issue 12 (2019): 39-42.

¹⁷ Charles Wilkins. *Bhagavat Geeta*. London: Printed for C. Nourse, 1785, 120.

upon to participate in God's work. By doing one's *dharma* one participates in *loka-sangraha* with God. It brings to the notion of World Brotherhood and can make a harmonious world. However, action has to be done with the spirit of renunciation: «But work alone is your proper business, never the fruits it may produce: let not your motive be the fruit of works nor your attachment to mere worklessness» (*BG* II: 47). Renunciation is said to be the best mean to attain peace as it is upheld better than «effort» (*abhyasa*), «wisdom» (*Jñana*), and «meditation» (*dyana*)¹⁸. Renunciation includes virtues of detachment, evenness, and indifference. The renunciation of the desire for and the attachment to the fruits of one's actions, according to Gita, is the result of this experience of *samatvam* (sama-equal or even, meaning, equal consideration towards all human beings), and it can be realized only through the way of love (*Bhakti-yoga*), the loving surrender of oneself to God's will¹⁹.

In the Gita *samnyasa* (renunciation) consists in «giving up works dictated by desire» and a true *samnyasi* is one who does the work without craving for its fruits (*BG* XVIII: 2). True renunciation consists in activity that is free from selfish-desire, and in abandoning or renouncing the fruit of an action. Therefore, it is not inactivity. *BG* III: 30 and XII. 6 can be best understood in the light of *BG* III: 4 where it becomes clear that Krisna wants desireless action with attitude of offering everything to the Lord. Every action has to be offered up to the Lord as a sacrifice.

Krisna says: «Do works for Me, make Me your highest goal, be loyal-in-love to Me, cut off all other attachments, have no hatred for any being at all: for all who do thus shall come to Me»²⁰. Thus, the *Karma-yoga* of the Gita has to be seen as the glorification of work as sacrifice and worship (*yajna*) lovingly offered to the Lord with the interior knowledge (*Jñana*) of the necessity of perfect detachment from the fruits of one's actions. In the Gita, *Karma-yoga* as moral path includes *Jñana-yoga* and *Bhakti-yoga*.

The *Karma-Yoga* of the Gita is all-embracing²¹. It includes all the actions and movements of man in the physical, moral, intellectual and

¹⁸ *BG* XII: 12-14.

¹⁹ Marie Louise Burke. «Is Renunciation Negative»? *Vendanta for East and West* 11 (1962): 108-117.

²⁰ *BG* XI: 55.

²¹ In fact, this «all-inclusive» character can also be applied to *Jñana-yoga* and *Bhakti-yoga*. All the three *yogas* of the Gita are mutually inclusive and complementary.

spiritual realms. There is an intimate connection between the *Karma-yoga* and *dharma*. All the teachings connected with *Karma-yoga* belong to the sphere of *dharma* understood in the sense of morality²². The moral teaching of Hinduism in general and of the Gita are essentially related to the comprehensive concept of *dharma* (righteousness)²³. In fact, the Hindus call their religion the ageless or eternal religion/law. Since India has given rise to different religions which are theistic or non-theistic in character, *dharma* has come to mean any spiritual system irrespective of its theistic or no-theistic character. The term *dharma* however, has a wider connotation than religion²⁴.

Dharma is from the root *dhr* meaning to hold, to remain, to fix, to support, to make firm²⁵. But in practice it is used in a variety of meanings such as «law, teaching, truth, religion, morality, righteousness, and duty».

3.2. JÑANA-YOGA (THE WAY OF KNOWLEDGE)

The doctrine of the Karma-yoga of the Gita shows that both desire (*kama*) and attachment (*sanga*) are born of ignorance (*ajñana* or *avidya*). It is *ajñana* that is the ultimate cause of all suffering and misery, and it binds man to the cycle of *samsara*. In contrast it is knowledge (*Jñana*) that enables one to come to the true perception of the nature of the Ultimate Reality and of the self and to overcome the bondage inherent in works²⁶.

²² In contradistinction we may observe that the *Jñana-yoga* and *Bhakti-yoga* belong to the sphere of spirituality. It is for the sake of analysis and interpretation and better understanding that we distinguish these «three ways» under the aspects of morality and spirituality. They are in fact interdependent and inclusive of one another in the Gita.

²³ Mariasusai Dhavamony. *Classical Hinduism*. Roma: Università Gregoriana Editrice, 1982, 332-367.

²⁴ Soosai Arokiasamy. *Dharma, Hindu and Christian, According to Roberto De Nobili. Documenta Missionalia* 19. Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1986. The first chapter of this work, "Dharma as Ethos", 21-61, which deals with *dharma* in the sense of objective duties and *dharma* as virtue as understood and interpreted by De Nobili, gives us a panoramic view of this complex concept in Hinduism.

²⁵ Mariasusai Dhavamony. *Classical Hinduism*. 334. Also see James Stutley and Margaret Stutley. *A Dictionary of Hinduism*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977, 76.

²⁶ Robert C. Zaehner. *The Bhagavad Gita*. London: Oxford University Press, 1969, 18. For the concept of *Jñana* in relation to the religio-philosophical traditions of West.

The ignorance is not the absence of intellectual or rational knowledge. «It is spiritual blindness»²⁷. *Ajāna* is spiritual ignorance or a power which blinds the soul and subjects it to the law of *samsara*. Patanjali's Yoga Sutras (*BG II*: 3-4) mentions obstacles or causes of sufferings which are: ignorance, egoism, attachment, aversion, and the desire to cling to life.

Jñāna is a transcendent wisdom which produces «spiritual insight» in the self and destroys the evil resulting from Karma. The definition of *Jñāna* (*BG XIII*: 7-11) involves all aspects of life including moral dispositions and ascetical practices which are conducive to the acquisition of right knowledge²⁸. *Jñāna* is:

«Humility, modesty, non-injury, forbearance, uprightness, service of the teacher, purity, stead-fastness, self-control, detachment from the senses, objects and no sense of 'I' most certainly, insight into birth, death, old age, disease, and pain, and what constitutes their worthlessness, to be detached and not to cling to sons, wives, houses, and the like, a constant equal-mindedness whatever happens, leasing or unpleasing, unswerving loyalty-and-love for Me with spiritual exercise on no other bent, to dwell in desert places, to take no pleasure in the company of men, constant attention to the wisdom that appertains to self, to see where knowledge of reality must lead, [all] this is wisdom... Ignorance is what is otherwise than this»²⁹.

The true object of *Jñāna* is the Highest Brahman seen as the «One» and as the source of «many»³⁰. The knowledge of God leads to the unswerving loyalty-and-love (*Bhakti*) for the Lord. It is *Jñāna* (knowledge) that leads one to the true perception of the nature of the Ultimate Reality and of the self. And this knowledge liberates the self from spiritual ignorance (*ajñāna*) which blinds the soul and subjects it to the law of *samsara* (cycle of rebirths). Further, the *Bhagavad Gita* teaches that the knowledge of the personal Lord leads to loving communion with Him.

See Enrico Gerardo Carpani. "Human Knowledge and its Negative Background in Transcendental Conscious". *New India Antiquary* 8 (1946):130-135. See also Jitendra, Nath Mohanty. "Consciousness and Knowledge in Indian Philosophy". *Philosophy East and West* 29 (1979): 3-10.

²⁷ Sarvepalli Radhakrishna. *The Bhagavad Gita*. London: George Allen-Unwin, 1927, 62.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

³⁰ *BG XIII*:16; *IV*:9, 10; *VII*:19; *X*: 3; *XIV*:1ff; *XIV*: 26; *XVIII*: 53; *IX*.15, *VI*: 31.

So, there is close relationship between *Jñāna* and *Bhakti* (*BG XV: 19*). It is the *intuitive*³¹ knowledge of the Lord that leads a person to the experience of loving communion with the Lord. Though the *Bhagavad Gita* teaches that *Jñāna* leads one to true *Bhakti*, it is also true that true *Bhakti* leads one to higher *Jñāna*. From true love of God comes discipline of the mind and genuine wisdom or knowledge. Krisna tells Arjuna, «By devotion he knows me in reality, what and who I am; then having known me in reality, he forthwith enters into me (*BG XVIII: 55*)». The knowledge of the Lord leads to the love of the Lord and the love of the Lord leads to the higher knowledge of the Lord. They are mutually inclusive³².

3.3. BHAKTI-YOGA (THE WAY OF LOVE)

The *Bhakti-yoga* of the *Bhagavad Gita* guarantees salvation to everyone irrespective of any social class, sex, or past conduct. Through *Bhakti* all can attain union with God. All people, good or evil, male, and female, high and low are said to attain the highest goal of spiritual liberation provided they take refuge in Krisna (*BG IX: 32-33*).

Bhakti is «loving devotion». The Experience of «devotion» is very relevant in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Word «devotion» appears so often in the text. We will refer here the three main context: 1) The *Bhagavad Gita* is essentially a conversation between God and his devotee about liberation and the means to attain it. *Bhakti yoga* is discussed in the *BG XII*. However, throughout the scripture we can find references to devotion. Lord Krishna repeatedly emphasizes that whoever fixed their minds upon him and remain absorbed in his thoughts is bound to attain him only. 2) The *Bhagavad Gita*, single minded devotion to Vasudeva is the surest path to self-realization. In whatever way a devotee approaches him, he accepts them, for men approach him from all directions (*BG IV.11*). 3) A true devotee is never lost to God. He lives in his constant gaze and under his continuous protection. The Lord always takes care of the needs of a pure devotee who is totally lost in pure devotion to him (*BG IX. 22*).

³¹ *BG XV: 15*, says: I am seated in everyone's heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge and forgetfulness. Intuition is knowing or feeling something without really knowing how we know it.

³² Sarvepalli, Radhakrishna, *The Bhagavad Gita*, 137.

Pure devotion is the highest form of love to which God responds with unconditional love and immediate attention. See also *BG VII: 13, VIII: 14*.

It is a personal relationship between God and the devotee or worshiper (*BG IV: 3*). There is an intimate personal relationship leading to complete union between devotee and God. The one who sees all realities as one, knows God abiding in all things and thus worships him with his whole heart, such a person abides in God (*BG VI: 31; XV: 19*). Those who worship God with devotion, they abide in God and God abides in them (*BG IX: 29*). Krisna loves the person who practices *samatvam* (sameness-and-indifference), who is full of devotion, who is even towards friend and foe, who is same in honour and dishonour, pleasure, and pain, reproach, and praise, who is steady in thinking, who is free from attachment and who is homeless (*BG XII: 17-19*). Thus, the relationship is established from both parties.

Various people may worship God for their own reasons (*BG VII: 16*) but true worshipers are those who do virtuous deeds, who have stopped being sinful and who are freed from delusion of opposites (*BG VII: 28*). True worshipers are people with pure mind and devotion and their offering is acceptable to God be it a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water (*BG IX: 26*). Everything has to be an offering to God, our works, our daily sacrifices in life, our austere practices etc. (*BG IX: 27*). They worship God who glorify Him always in their humility with devotion, being steadfast (*BG IX: 14*). This devotion towards God includes all attitudes of love, friendliness, compassion, evenness, indifference, endurance, steadiness, contentment, self-control, purposefulness and conviction in view of reaching God (*BG XII: 13-14*).

Krisna acknowledges that a devotee honouring other gods in faith honours Him (*BG VII: 21*). People worship other gods out of ignorance but eventually they worship Him (*BG VII: 20, 23*). God invites the devotee to have Him as his/her goal in heart and mind and to come to him with devotion (*BG IX: 34*) and all those who having Him as their goal, work for Him alone with detachment, without having enmity towards other creatures, enter into God (*BG XI: 55*). Whatever way people worship God, He fulfils «devotees» desires (*BG IV: 11*).

The *Spiritual exercises* (meditations, yoga) has to be done with devotion and without devotion one cannot realize the Supreme (*BG VIII: 10, 22*). Undivided *Bhakti* is a necessary pre-condition for reaching and realizing God. One has to fix one's mind in God alone by practice (*BG XII: 8-12*).

It is through *Bhakti* the one becomes «Brahman» (*BG XIV: 26*) and also by become «Brahman» that we attain *Bhakti* (*BG XVIII: 54*). Again, it is through devotion that we come to know God and be in Him (*BG XVII: 55*). In the Gita, the *Karma-yoga*, the *Jñana-yoga* and the *Bhakti-yoga* constitute only one yoga, namely, the Gita-Yoga³³. It is *Bhakti* which is the integrating and unifying element. *Bhakti-yoga* of the Gita works as a unitive force and brings *Karma-yoga* and *Jñana-yoga* together in a grand synthesis of loving surrender to the loving Lord. We can say that in the liberation process of the Gita, *Bhakti* permeates all our efforts to reach God. It shows the relationship of selfless love between the personal God and the devotee.

From what is said above it is clear that the spiritual path of the *Bhagavad Gita* is the path of right knowledge, right and selfless action and true devotion. It is a path that demands efforts to grow in knowledge, actions and devotion. The *Bhagavad Gita* ultimately teaches what God wants people to do on earth. It reveals God's will in everything that human beings are related to. These ideas resonate much with the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius who also talks in similar terms in his *Spiritual Exercises*.

3.4. REGARDING THE INDIVIDUAL SELF

The individual self is usually called *purusa* (man, person, spirit) and sometimes *atman* (self)). In the *Bhagavad Gita* the self is indestructible, incommensurable and eternal. Why is it indestructible? Because it is incommensurable (unknowable) in the sense that it is incapable of being the object of knowledge. This amounts to saying that the self is not determinable by the senses or any other means of knowledge. There is no tautology involved in the use of «indestructible» and «eternal» since, as Sankara explains: «we have in our experience two kinds of destruction and eternity. The physical body, while existing as such, may undergo some transformation owing to sickness and such other causes, and in that sense, it ceases to be something and becomes something else. The terms “indestructible” and “eternal” denote that the self is subject to neither sort of destruction»³⁴. Apropos of the eternity of the self, we have to bring in

³³ Sarvepalli, Radhakrishna. *The Bhagavad Gita*, 163.

³⁴ Sri Sankaracharya. *The Bhagavad Gita*. Translated by A. M. Sastri. 5th ed., 38-39.

the distinction between the «self-in-itself» and the self as it is individuated in a human being. «In a world of living things, a minute part of Me, eternal (still), becomes a living (self), drawing to itself the five senses and the mind which have their roots in Nature» (*BG XV: 7*).

This «living self» (*jiva*) is the same as the embodied self. The «self», as distinct from the body it assumes, is a minute part of God. Hence it is eternal. In its inmost essence it remains undisturbed by the world process and action (*Karma*) (*BG III: 17-19, V: 14*). The distinction between the self as it is in its essence and as it «becomes» when it is associated to the body and the world is sufficiently brought out in *BG III: 17-19*:

«Nay let a man take pleasure in itself in self alone, in self his satisfaction find, in self alone content: (for then) there is naught the needs to do. In works done and works undone on earth he has no interest, -no (interest) in all contingent beings: on such interest he does not depend».

Here the contrast is between the man who has achieved liberation and the sensual man who makes the senses his pleasure ground. The man who is liberated takes pleasure in self alone which is by definition eternal, timeless, beyond cause and effect and all activity³⁵. «The self-in-itself» is eternal and therefore cannot be born or die. It cannot be understood as being involved in the process of transmigration or in action. Since it beyond time it is wholly static.

But is so far as this «self-in-itself» is involved in a body or non-self. It is continually implicated in the world process and is associated with an individual psycho-somatic mechanism and by consequence it becomes the embodied self. According to Gita the human psyche is constituted of soul/intellect, mind, ego, and the five senses³⁶. The ego is not very much elaborated upon in the Gita except that it is a false centre of personality and that it must be eliminated³⁷. The concept that interest us most in this connection are mind and intellect or understanding which includes intellect and will. When intellect and will is detached from everything and when the self is subdued and all longing gone, one transcends all works and finds complete success and perfection (*BG XVIII: 49*). When perfection is found, one becomes *Brahman* (*BG XVIII: 50*). *Brahman* becomes,

³⁵ Robert C. Zaehner. *The Bhagavad Gita*, 132-133.

³⁶ *BG VII: 4*, Krisna says: Eightfold divided is my Nature, thus: earth, water, fire and air, space, mind and soul, – and the ego.

³⁷ *BG III: 27; XVIII: 59*.

with self-serene, he grieves not nor desires, the same to all contingent beings he gains the highest love-and-loyalty to Me (*BG XVIII: 54*). *Becoming Brahman* is a necessary condition to obtain that devotion (*Bhakti*) which, in its highest level, perfects liberation itself and leads the self to the Personal God³⁸.

4. THE SPIRITUAL PATH OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF SAINT IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

St. Ignatius' book of the *Spiritual Exercises* has its first and principal origin in the rich mystical experiences with which God gifted him during his stay at Loyola and Manresa. The purpose of this little book is explained in a general way in St. Ignatius' Autobiography as dictated to Gonçalves da Câmara. It states «that certain things which he observed in his soul and found useful to himself, he thought might also be useful for others, and so he put them down in writing»³⁹. We have a clearer enunciation of its purpose of its at (*Sp. Ex.*, 1); «[...] so we call *Spiritual Exercises* every way of preparing and disposing the soul to rid itself of all inordinate attachments, and after their removal, of seeking and finding the will of God in the disposition of our life the salvation of our soul»⁴⁰.

Ignatius explains what he means by *Spiritual Exercises* as he writes⁴¹ — «By the term *Spiritual Exercises* is meant every method of examination of conscience, of meditation, of contemplation, of vocal and mental prayer, and of other spiritual activities that will be mentioned later. For just as taking a walk, journeying on foot, and running are bodily exercises, so we call *Spiritual Exercises* every way of preparing and disposing the soul to rid itself of all inordinate affections, and, after their removal, of

³⁸ «*Brahman become*» on this see *BG II: 72; V: 24-26; VI: 15, 30*. See also Robert C. Zaehner. *The Bhagavad Gita*, 397-398.

³⁹ In this article the quotation in English from what is generally referred to as the *Autobiography* of Ignatius of Loyola are taken from *Pilgrim's Testament. The Memorirs of Ignatius of Loyola*. Translated by Parmananda Divarkar. Rome: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1983.

⁴⁰ Saint Ignatius of Loyola. *The Spiritual Exercises. A New Translations based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph*. Translated by Louis J. Puhl. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1951.

⁴¹ For the understanding of the main lines of the spiritual path described in the *Spiritual Exercises*, I will be following Santiago Arzubialde, *Ejercicios Espirituales*.

seeking and finding the will of God in the disposition of our life for the salvation of our soul» (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 1).

The purpose for doing *Spiritual Exercises* may vary as some say it is done for the election of a state of life, others say it is to reform one's life, while still others say it is to initiate the life of union with God leading to infused contemplation. These are immediate effects or the positive spiritual fruits of the *Spiritual Exercises*. But the remote intrinsic end well, not only this end of the complete *Spiritual Exercises* consists in a) «the conquest of self» («vencer a sí mismo»), b) «the regulation or ordering of one's life» («ordenar su vida»), c) not «determining oneself by any inordinate affection» («sin determinarse por afección alguna que desordenada sea»), and thus «finding the will of God in the disposition of one's life» («buscar y hallar la voluntad divina en la disposición de su vida»)⁴². When we go deeper into the implications of these points, we come to realize that the *Spiritual Exercises* demand the integration of the whole human activities in the light of Christian faith and life.

4.1. CONQUEST OF SELF (VENCERSE A SÍ MISMO)⁴³

The conquest of self or overcoming of oneself (*vencer a sí mismo*) includes mastery over the sensuality including exterior and interior senses. It calls to be the master of one's own body. Regularity in rising up (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 73, 74), silence (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 80), modesty of eyes (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 81), corporal penance (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 87), fidelity to the hours of prayer (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 6, 12, 13, 19), putting away what is worldly and vain (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 63), interior recollection (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 74, 78, 130, 206, 229) etc., are part of exercises that indicate the need of self-control and self-knowledge. Further, this process of «overcoming oneself» involves surrendering of one's will to God. It demands refraining from all sins (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 36, 61, 63, 165, 166, 348-350), choosing always that which is more pleasing to the God (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 23, 151) and keeping oneself «indifferent» with regard to health or sickness, riches or poverty, honour or dishonour, and long

⁴² José Calveras. *Qué fruto se ha sacar de los Ejercicios Espirituales de San Ignacio*. Barcelona: Librería Religiosa, 1950, 45-46, 114-138, 139-146.

⁴³ Stefan Kiechle. «Vencerse a sí mismo». En *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana*, 2.^a ed., editado por Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana, 1754-1755. Bilbao: Mensajero, 2007.

life or short life (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 23). One is resolved to do God's work even in the experience of poverty, humiliation, sacrifices and sufferings (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 97, 98, 147). This process may lead a person to the «third degree of humility» which disposes one to embrace actual poverty, humiliation and sufferings if they are not opposed to God's greater glory (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 167, 168, 197).

It is in fact the surrender of self-love (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 189) that empowers the exercitant to get out of his own world of likes and dislikes and enters into the sphere of Christ's transforming influence. This total surrender of one's will to God also includes one's submission of understanding and memory to God (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 234) so that they may be used only for His greater service considering Him present in all things (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 235). Ignatius asks the retreatant to subject his understanding to the Church's authority in what concerns the Catholic faith (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 365).

To the extent the retreatant is able to conquer himself (i.e., to free oneself for Christ and His service), he becomes capable of having an intimate and *interior knowledge* of Christ as God and man, the «eternal Word become flesh» (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 109, 130). It is this intimate knowledge of Christ made man that strengthens the exercitant to go ahead in confronting and acting against «sensuality and carnal and worldly love» (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 97).

4.2. ORDERING OF ONE'S LIFE

The regulation or ordering of one's life implies putting in order everything that concerns the whole person, internal and external, private and public. It can lead to choosing one's state of life or way or life (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 15, 16, 63, 171, 177, 189). On a higher level the object of this ordering consists of all one's intentions (namely, all one's likes, aspirations and personal decisions), actions (namely, exterior works and occupations with reference to other persons and things), operations (namely, the spiritual, intellectual activity with reference to one's own personal life) (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 46).

The regulation or ordering of one's life is a process which consists in turning away from grave and venial sins to the extent of experiencing abhorrence for them and in rectifying all disorders in one's actions (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 63). It implies harmonizing one's life to God's will. Accordingly,

regarding making a choice, the Exercitant chooses proper means to achieve the end, and not fitting his/her end to the means. He/she will use or not use means according to the inspiration and movement of God's grace. Further it also means using God's gifts as far as they help in the attainment of the end and getting rid of them as far as they prove a hindrance. St. Ignatius suggests to «choose that which is more conducive to the end for which we are created» (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 151).

The process of regulating one's life consists in the following which are spread throughout the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius:

- Purifying oneself of all sins (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 32, 35, 165, 166, 348, 349, 370).
- Correcting one's actions, bad habit, and negligence (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 24-27, 35, 63, 90, 160).
- Doing daily duties and fulfilling normal obligations (*Sp. Ex.*, nn.73-88):
 - The «particular examen» (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 27-30, 90).
 - The rules with regard to eating (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 210-217).
 - The rules for the distribution of alms (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 337-344).
- Equipping oneself with theological, cardinal and moral virtues, making oneself strong against the enemy of our human nature (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 327).
- Choosing that which is more pleasing to God (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 151, 155, 180).

In this process of overcoming oneself St. Ignatius emphasises personal efforts in forming one's consciousness by way of «general examen of conscience» (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 32-42), in cultivating a delicate conscience (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 349-50), in overcome a sinful habit or a particular defect (exterior or interior, (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 24-27), in acquire the contrary virtues to one's defects (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 245), in contemplating the life of Christ to imitate him and in seeking and finding the will of God in the disposition of one's life (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 189).

Because we humans are weak, we need constant vigilance, attention and readiness in this process. Ignatius writes: «For everyone must keep in mind that in all that concerns the spiritual life his progress will be in proportion to his surrender of self-love and of his own will and interests» (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 189).

4.3. GETTING RID OF «INORDINATE AFFECTION» AND «FINDING THE WILL OF GOD»

Affection is the «love which one has for a thing» (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 184), or «of being attached to a person» (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 338). Example of this we find in the meditation of the «Three Classes of Men» (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 149-157). As one can be affected in favour of a thing/person, one can also experience aversion or abhorrence to a person or a thing. It is «affection against» and this too admits of degrees as in the case of «affection for». When we talk of «inordinate affection» (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 1, 21) we presuppose that there are affections that are in order. The affection is good and in order when our choice of things/persons come «from the love of God» (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 338). We choose solely because of His Creator and Lord. On the contrary, an «affection» is «inordinate» when the motive of love is not inspired by the love of God. Keeping the «Principle and Foundation» (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 23) in mind we can rightly say that an affection is «inordinate» when it is in conflict with the end for which man is created, the love and service of God and one's own salvation.

The purpose of the *Spiritual Exercises* is to seek and find the will of God in the disposition of one's life for the salvation of one's soul after having removed the inordinate affections (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 1)⁴⁴. This implies that till a person has rid himself of all the inordinate affections, or at least till he/she is really trying to get rid of them, the person will have neither the light to see what is God's will for him, nor the courage and the strength to accept it and carry it out. Seeking and finding God's will is a process and without divine grace this process of transformation is not possible. 16th annotation of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola says that the Exercitant should be insistent in prayer and in his other spiritual exercises in begging for this grace. «Seek and find» the will of God in one's life is based on supernatural motive of serving God for His greater glory and of greater spiritual profit for one's own soul and to become one with God.

⁴⁴ «Para buscar y hallar la voluntad en la disposición de su vida para la salud del ánima...» (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 1). («To seek and find the will of God in the disposition of one's life for the salvation of one's soul...»).

5. SEEKING SIGNIFICANCE IN THE BHAGAVAD GITA AND THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA FOR PERSONAL SPIRITUAL BENEFITS

In the third part we will try to demonstrate propinquity between two texts the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius of Loyola. The two texts are very closely allied in understanding about God and the basic spiritual life of human person. I believe the similarities of two texts will abet launching a healthier and deeper understanding of God and spirituality.

5.1. THE TWO WORLDVIEWS

The worldviews of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Spiritual Exercises* will be restricted to the vision of God and the doctrine of creation. The *Bhagavad Gita* represents God as transcendent and Immanent. Man on his part is incapable of knowing this transcendent God. This becomes clear when Krishna, the personal God of the *Gita* tells Arjuna that men of no understanding consider Him as known and perceptible. But «they know nothing of my higher state⁴⁵, the Changeless, All-Highest» (*BG VII: 24*), and that «there is no one at all that knows Me», (*BG VII: 26*). At *BG XV: 18*, Krishna speaks of his nature to Arjuna thus: «Since I transcend the perishable and am more exalted than the Imperishable itself, so am I extolled in Vedic as in common speech as the “Person All-Sublime”» (*BG XV: 16*). The «perishable», as is said at *BG XV: 16*, comprises all contingent beings especially «selves» as they are while still in bondage to material Nature. The «Imperishable» is the «highest Brahman» (*BG VIII: 21*)⁴⁶. The «All-Sublime Person» is the «Changeless, All-Highest» Person *BG VII: 24*), the «one Eternal God»⁴⁷. The *Bhagavat Gita* also very expressive of the immanence of God. Krishna, the Supreme God of the *Gita*, is transcendent as the All-Sublime person as well as immanent, and dwells in the hearts of many men as the essence of all things (*BG VII: 8ff*).

⁴⁵ Robert C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad Gita*, 253.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 366-367.

⁴⁷ George Howells. *The Bhagavat Gita and the New Testament: The Internal Relations of their Fundamental Doctrines*. Tübingen: The University of Tübingen, Inaugural Dissertation, 1970, 36.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the creation is not *ex nihilo*. The Gita doctrine of creation is very much influenced by *Samkhya* philosophy according to which there cannot be a production of something out of nothing. From nothing, nothing is made. There must of necessity be a material out of which a product is made or developed. It also disclaims the notion that matter which is impure can originate from the pure spirit⁴⁸. Hence it posits a material substratum or principle of the world: *Prakrti* (material Nature) which is an independent principle, coexistent with pure spirit (*Pususa*). However, whereas in the *Samkhya* system *Prakrti* (material Nature) is an independent principle, in the Gita it is wholly under the supervision and the lord of Krisna, the personal God. At *BG IX: 8* we read: «Subduing my own material Nature ever again I emanate this whole host of beings... from Nature comes the power». Krisna subdues, relies on, or consorts with material Nature, which is his lower nature⁴⁹, in order to produce the entire phenomenal world. The phrase has a sexual connotation⁵⁰, which becomes explicit in *BG XI: 3*: «Great Brahman⁵¹ is to Me a womb, in it I plant the seed: from this derives the origin of all being».

At *BG VII: 14-15*, *Prakrti* (material Nature) is identified with *maya* which is generally seen as the divine creative powers. Thus, in the Gita the world's cause is composite, God and *Prakrti* (material Nature). At *BG VIII. 18* this *Prakrti* (material Nature) is described as the *avyakta* (the unmanifest) since it is perceivable not in itself but only when manifested as beings in the universe. In its *avyakta* (unmanifest) state, the three constituents (*gunas*⁵²) of *Prakrti* (material Nature) are in a state of equilibrium. It is when this equilibrium is disturbed that the beings differentiate themselves according to the proportion of the *gunas* (constituents) and become manifested. This disturbance of the equilibrium of the *gunas* (constituents) under God's action resulting in the manifestation of the

⁴⁸ Patrick Olivelle. "The Concept of God in the Bhagavad Gita". *International Philosophical Quarterly* 4 (1964): 535-547.

⁴⁹ *BG VII: 4*.

⁵⁰ Robert C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad Gita*, 276-277.

⁵¹ Here the «Great Brahman» is understood as *Prakrti* (material Nature), see also Robert C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad Gita*, 352.

⁵² Viz. *Sattva* (goodness or purity), *rajas* (passion or energy), and *tamas* (darkness, dullness). The doctrine of *gunas* (constituents of material Nature) is elaborate in the *BG*, and it is applied to material things as well as to material, spiritual and religious activities. On this see *BG XVII*.

beings is the hub-centre of the Gita's teaching on creation. According to Mircea Eliade one of the four «kinetic ideas» that bring us directly to the core Indian spirituality is *maya*. It is a mysterious power that engenders and maintains the cosmos and, in the process, sets in motion «the eternal return» of the individual self as long as he is blinded by ignorance⁵³. The word *maya*, in one form or another, occurs in the *Rig Veda*⁵⁴. As used in the Vedas, the term *maya* signifies primarily mysterious, awesome, wonder-working power. The effects produced by this power are said to transcend human understanding. One who possesses this *maya* has power over others, gods inclusive, for good as well as for evil⁵⁵. J. Gonda adopts a central or fundamental meaning which underlies all uses of the term *maya* in the Vedic as well as the literature of the Hindu period. He paraphrases this meaning as follows: incomprehensible wisdom and power enabling its possessor, or being able itself, to create, devise, contrive, effect, or do soothing⁵⁶. In the *Vedanta*, *maya* signifies the power which causes the world to appear as really existent and distinct from the universal soul⁵⁷.

The author of the *Bhagavad Gita* is quite familiar with the term *maya*. What strikes us when we examine the different Gita passages in which the term occurs is that it is not used in the sense of «illusion» (viz. a sensuous perception of an external object involving a false belief). The reality of the world is not questioned by the Gita⁵⁸. Though the reality and maintenance of the world is willed by God, it nevertheless, does not reveal him as He is in His timeless essence. It is the material Nature composed of three constituents⁵⁹ that leads astray the whole universe and hence it is

⁵³ Mircea Eliade. *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*. New York: Princeton University Press, 1973, 3. The other three ideas are *Karma*, *nirvana*, and *yoga*.

⁵⁴ *Rig Veda* I.32.4; I.33.10; V.2.9; V.48.3; VII.1.10; VIII.3.19; X.74.3, etc. The word *maya* is only once used in the *Upanisads* in a cosmological sense.

⁵⁵ Paul David Devanandan. *The Concept of Maya*. London: Lutterworth Press, 1950, 23.

⁵⁶ Jan Gonda. 'Maya' *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*. London-Paris: The Hague, 1965, 166. See also Enrico, Gerardo Carpani. "Maya and Exoteric Wisdom in Indian Thought". In *Siddha. Bharati* edited by Vishva Bandu, 12-21. Hosiarpur: V. V. R. Institute, 1950.

⁵⁷ Arthur Anthony Macdonell. *A Practical Sanskrit Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979, 226.

⁵⁸ Jan Gonda, 'Maya' *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*, 172-173.

⁵⁹ The three *gunas* (constituents) are *sattva* (goodness), *rajas* (Passion), and *tamas* (Darkness). The doctrine of the *gunas* is elaborate in the Gita, and it is applied to material things as well as to mental, spiritual, and religious activities. *BG XVII*.

seen as an «uncanny or mysterious power» (*maya*) (*BG* VII: 13-14; VII: 25; XVIII: 61). The material nature is the lower Nature of Krisna and that by His creative energy (*maya*). He consorts with Nature and comes to be in time (*BG* IV: 6). When we put together the stanzas of *BG* IV: 6 and VII 14 we arrive at a satisfactory explanation of what the Gita means by *maya*. It is the creative energy/power of God. It is also understood as the wisdom of God. This creative wisdom and power in certain context is seen as the «phenomenal display of a wonderful creative ability»⁶⁰ and in some other contexts «the power determining the world's inexplicable existence»⁶¹. We may also observe that we cannot understand the real significance of the term *maya* in the Gita except in its relation to God. It is in a sense inextricably intertwined with the being of God⁶². In the Gita, *maya* is real and it is divine since it depends on God.

In the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius' vision of God, as we know, is authentically Christian, and so it is Trinitarian. The Catholic Church teaches that the one God exists in three persons (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), subsistences, hypostases, who are the one divine nature, essence, substance (as distinguished from subsistence), equal, coeternal, and omnipotent⁶³. Therefore, Ignatius' conception of God is profoundly Christian and therefore, Trinitarian. This Trinitarian way was essential to the attitude of life St. Ignatius: it was the basis of his piety, and we meet it at every turn in his *Spiritual exercises*⁶⁴. The three Divine Persons in the *Spiritual Exercises* (see the first contemplation of the 2nd week⁶⁵, *Sp. Ex.*, nn. 102, 106-109; and nn. 273, 307), leave us in no doubt as to the trinitarian character of Ignatius' vision of God.

In the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius presupposes the Catholic Church's doctrine of creation, viz. creation *ex nihilo*, which implies that the whole

⁶⁰ Herman Oldenberg. *Die Religion des Veda*. Stuttgart. Berlin: J. G. Cott'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1917, 159.

⁶¹ Jan Gonda, '*Maya*' *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*, 166-167.

⁶² Even in Sankara's monistic system, the world is considered as an illusion only in relation to the Absolute who is One without a second. Empirically it is real and from the philosophical viewpoint it is *anirvacaniya* (undefinable). In other words, we cannot adequately describe it; it neither is nor is not. See Robert C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad Gita*, 256.

⁶³ Karl Rahner, ed. *Encyclopedia of Theology*. London: Burns and Oates, 1981, 1757.

⁶⁴ Karl Rahner. *Spiritual Exercises*. London: Sheed and Ward, 1986, 16.

⁶⁵ It is on the mystery of *Incarnation*.

of reality comes from God's action and is comprised by it⁶⁶. God is the efficient (but not the material) cause of the whole universe. The object of creation is everything, without exception, in all its dimensions. The creative act of God does not eliminate the action proper to the creature, in fact, it brings it about. Creation is God's beneficent action towards man! It is God's act of loving and giving. Hence to believe in God's creation is to see the whole of creation as God's gift, a gift of God's infinite goodness, and a task to be carried on to a fulfillment in and with Christ.

In the *Spiritual Exercises* we cannot but perceive Ignatius' deep insight into the mystery of creation. God, the Creator and Lord, is the Supreme Being for him. The substantive *Creador* (Creator)⁶⁷ is so often used to help the retreatant to discover the meaning of God's creation which is actually the beginning of the history of salvation itself. As we know, it is in the *Principle and Foundation* (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 23) that we find a clear statement on the purpose of God's creative act: Man⁶⁸ is created by God. Man's salvation consists in praising, reverencing, and serving God. All the other things in the universe are created by God to help man attaining his end. Therefore, the ultimate criterion of man's salvation or spiritual liberation consists in that supreme end: God. The «seeking and finding the will of God in the disposition of our life for the salvation of our soul» (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 1) is further defined by the purpose God has in mind for the whole of creation. On the one hand, the Creator thus gives the whole of creation to all men «as a way or means to attain their end; on the other, they transform themselves into a way or means willed by God, by which all of creation evolves until through them it reaches and praises God in... Christ»⁶⁹. It is in Christ that the movement of nature and history are brought into living relationship with the ineffable reality of God. In other words, the vision of the whole universe and of man which Ignatius presents in the *Spiritual Exercises* is positive. In it every created reality is seen as reflecting God's dynamic plan of creation and redemption as expressed in Christ and as being continued in the Church through the Spirit⁷⁰. There is nothing in the created universe that cannot in some way be integrated into the service

⁶⁶ Karl Rahner, ed., *Encyclopedia of Theology*, 318-319.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 288-290.

⁶⁸ Man stands for all the human beings, the whole human race.

⁶⁹ Gilles Cusson. *Biblical Theology and the Spiritual Exercises*, St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1988, 65.

⁷⁰ This once again draws our attention to Ignatius' Trinitarian vision of God.

of God. The other things are «the unrelinquishable position for man as far as his attaining God is concerned»⁷¹. On the other hand, Ignatius lays emphasis on the fact of sin (*Original and personal*) which consists in going against the God-intended finality of a creature: a stubborn refusal to seek, find, and do God's will. But in the mystery of *Incarnation* everything has been basically reintegrated into God by Christ. Only in this perspective can Ignatius' stress on overcoming the sinful/or inordinate attachment to things, and then seeking and finding the will of God (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 1, 21, 23), on knowing, loving and following Christ (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 104), and on loving and serving and serving the Divine Majesty in all things (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 233) be really grasped and experienced.

«For all people comprise a single community, and have a single origin, since God made the whole race of men dwell over the entire face of the earth... One also is their final goal: God» (*NA 2*). This implies that, cutting across the cultural and the religious barriers, there is at work in man an inner dynamism towards an absolute in being meaning, truth, life, and love. It is this absolutely ineffable reality that we call by the name «God». God exists. The fact of His existence is disclosed to man in ever so many ways. To know God then means to be known by Him in the first place. Recognition and experience of God on man's part is possible by the sole fact that God is God. It is notable the fact that the *Bhagavad Gita* is like the *Spiritual Exercises* is in the aspect that God is transcendent and immanent.

The *Bhagavat Gita* represents God as transcendent. Man on his part is incapable of knowing this transcendent God. They know nothing of the «Changeless», «All-Highest» (*BG VII: 24*), and that «there is no one at all that knows Me» (*BG VII: 26*). Thee knowledge of the «All-Sublime Person» which Krisna reveals to Arjuna is the most mysterious doctrine: «And so have I at last revealed this most mysterious doctrine...» (*BG IV: 3*). The reference to the revelation of the «most mysterious doctrine» brings out its transcendental aspects. Whereas Ignatius presents brings out the nature of the ineffable and transcendent God, through his vision of the Triune God, that springs from his mystical experiences at Manresa, La Storta and Rome. So, he presents this mysterious and «wholly other» God in action. Ignatius' profound respect for the ineffable action of God is shown in his instruction to the one who gives «Exercises» (*Sp. Ex.*,

⁷¹ Karl Rahner, *Spiritual Exercises*, 20.

n. 15), viz. to let the Creator and Lord in person communicate Himself to the devout exercitant in search of the divine will that He inflames him with his love and praise and dispose him for the way in which he could better serve God in the future.

The *Bhagavad Gita* is also very expressive of the immanence of God. Krisna, the supreme God of Gita, is transcendent as the All-sublime person as well as immanent, and dwells in the of men as the essence of all things (*BG VII: 8ff*). Same way the immanence of God in this created world is expressed much more powerfully in the *Contemplation to Attain Love* (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 230-237). Here the exercitant is asked to behold himself standing in the active presence of God in heaven (the transcendence of God) and has to reflect on the blessings of creation and redemption and the special favours he has received (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 234). Thus, in the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Spiritual Exercises* the vision of God is seen as the new vistas of God's active and continuous presence in the history of the universe and the history of salvation, because all things depend on God.

5.2. SPIRITUALITY OF ACTION A CALL TO BE PARTICIPANT IN GOD'S WORK

The whole purpose of Krisna's various teachings, instructions, and clarifications to dejected Arjuna is to lead him to action — to fight. The *Bhagavad Gita's* main emphasis in this context is the path of action. It is through one's involvement in the world that one achieves salvation. The *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius gives the similar message as he always emphasized «to find God in all things». Since both the texts have their own way of looking at this path of action, it will help us to have clarity regarding the spirituality of action. I can have better understanding of how my action can be my path of salvation.

Both the texts acknowledge this fact that God is at work in this world. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krisna tells Arjuna how he is not obliged to work and yet he works to uphold the world. The world will fall to ruin if God did not work (*BG III: 22-24*). This same fact is more personalized by St. Ignatius who says, «how God labours for me in all the creatures on the face of the earth» (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 93, 96, 97). He seems to be more aware of in detail where and how God is active — in the heavens, elements, plants, fruits, cattle, and the rest, giving them existence, sustaining and

being part of their activities. Then from observations from these things he turns inwards (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 236).

The act of God's working in the world tells us that «work» is indispensable. If God who does not require work, yet works it means work is something holy. St. Paul too understood the importance of work and for him «those who don't work have no right to eat» (2Thess 3,10). I clearly see here that the Gita emphasises activity of God in the world and St. Ignatius emphasise awareness of the activity of God. «Work» is glorified in the *Bhagavad Gita* and in the *Spiritual Exercises* God is glorified in «work». This gives me two perspectives to look at my own works which I do. Do I work because working is holy or out of necessity? Can my «work» be a means for purposefulness in life? The *Bhagavad Gita* tells us that we must do our *dharma* and we must work for God alone. The purpose of my work is *lokasangraha*. St. Ignatius asks the person to focus world as a personal gift in which God is present and active and his task is to find God in all things and all things in God and to love and serve him in all matters.

The *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Spiritual Exercises* are talking about action or work and its significance in relation to God. The person's spirituality here is to participate in the activity of God working in the world in every created reality. The person's participation is deeper when he/she is able to see God's activity as significant not only in upholding the world but for upholding him/her in various ways. The spirituality of action calls persons to be a co-worker with God in all his/her capacity. As the *Bhagavad Gita* calls for total commitment in doing the work for God alone so also the *Spiritual Exercises* calls for total surrender in doing what God wants one to do.

5.3. DETACHMENT IN WORK

The book of *Spiritual Exercises* is to rid oneself from all inordinate attachments (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 1, 21) so that we become effective instrument in God's kingdom. St. Ignatius invites us to become magnanimous co-workers with God. It requires abandoning of our own will if we accept God's invitation of working with Him. It requires acceptance of His will and plan. This surrendering of our will to God necessarily requires detachment from all things to be more effective co-worker.

It is human tendency to be attached to things in this world. We need enlightenment regarding this world and things in it. St. Ignatius gives a beautiful theological and spiritual vision to have proper attitude towards things in the world. Things in the world are means to help us serve God. So, all things created are good as they are gifts from God and He is also actively present in them. But I have to make use of things in so far as they help me to attain our purpose of serving God (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 23). But our «inordinate attachments» (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 1), «the disorder» of my actions (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 63) and «worldly love» (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 97) take away my freedom towards things. So, we need to be indifferent towards all created things and we should not prefer one thing to other. «Three degrees of humility» (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 166) told by St. Ignatius is a process of detachment. The more detached we are the more true instruments we become in God's activity in the world.

Detachment is also the cornerstone of the spirituality of the *Bhagavad Gita*. The *Bhagavad Gita* also talks about the need of inner freedom towards all created things, which come only from detachment and which leads to total surrender to God's will. In the Gita the world and everything in it is good and holy because God is the creator (*BG X: 20; VII: 6*). In the world action (which also implies use of things) is unavoidable but renunciation of the fruits of action is possible and this what the *Bhagavad Gita* teaches (*BG III: 5, 33; XVIII: 5-6*). The *Bhagavad Gita* wants us to be effective co-workers with God without attachment (*BG II: 47*). Detachment, sameness and indifference, steadiness is necessary towards total surrender and union with God (*BG XII: 18-19*).

The significance for my spirituality in the teaching of these two spiritualities regarding detachment is that man cannot claim to be an instrument of God unless I am detached. Further, this detachment is not the purpose of life. Detachment is a means to total union with God. It helps serve God better. Things are there at my disposal and I may have to use them effectively to be effective co-worker. But in the third degree of humility (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 166) this detachment becomes the means for total self-expression of love towards God. It is in my own free choice I deliberately choose this path. So, detachment can be path of union with God, if it is done with devotion. It is when we are free from attachment to all created things that we can love God alone.

5.4. ACTION AND CONTEMPLATION

The teaching of the *Bhagavad Gita* as mentioned above clearly urges one towards «Action» for *lokasangraha*. This path of Karma-yoga leads one to union with God. Even contemplation is a path to union with God but path of action is better suggested by God (*BG V: 1-2*). Similarly, St. Ignatius has priority of action over contemplation because we are invited to become co-workers with God. For St. Ignatius «love ought of manifest itself in deeds rather than words» (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 230). His spirituality focuses on the activity of God in the world but there is emphasis on detachment by which one participates in this activity⁷². He does not reject contemplation, but he unites it with action. According to him a life of prayer and contemplation is necessary but it is not an end in itself. It is to help action performed with a pure intention for the love of God. Ignatius wants one to be united to God all the time even while working⁷³ Krisna in the *Bhagavad Gita* also urges the action-oriented person to be united to God at all times (*BG VIII: 27*).

What we have to learn is that action and contemplation have to go together. It should be contemplation in action. We should be united to God not only in the times of personal prayer but also while engaged in work. Contemplation is necessary because no one can rightly do action without it (*BG VI: 2*). Action is not right action unless it is performed in the light of the experience of God as without familiarity with God action can be self-serving⁷⁴. This active life leads me to achieve two purposes of salvation and perfection of self and others. Moreover, any act of love towards my neighbour is also the expression of love towards God. When action is performed in view of the welfare of humanity based on the pure love of God, action and contemplation are fused and the double concern of the salvation of the individual and the love of neighbour is achieved⁷⁵.

⁷² Over N. Mohammed. "Hinduism and Ignatius Spirituality". Unpublished, class notes, Jñana Deepa Vidyapeeth Pontifical Institute for philosophy and Religion, Pune, India, 2013, 117.

⁷³ *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, Part IX, Ch 2, 1.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 120.

5.5. FINDING GOD IN ALL THINGS AND ALL THINGS IN GOD

It is true that it is active life that St. Ignatius wants us to choose in serving God. All activities must be done for the sake of the love of God. This requires that we love God and find Him in all things as He is present in all things (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 196, 235-237). But finding God is possible only when we are filled with the love of God which is grace given by God. Filled with God's love St. Ignatius is led to seek him in all things. In the «contemplation to attain love» he wants us to see how everything is a gift. God is not only present but is active in the gift (*Sp. Ex.*, n. 236). In our response we can only offer to Him what we have received freely and so St. Ignatius urges us to surrender and offer back everything to God as our offering of our love for Him (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 234-237). We find God beyond this world and also *in* the world. It is God above who comes down and enters into the world through incarnation (*Sp. Ex.*, nn. 107-108) and this we understand only when we are free or detached from the world. St. Ignatius clearly understood that everything is not God but everything is in God. Things in the world can lead us towards or away from the world.

The *Bhagavad Gita* teaches with confidence that God is immanent in the world and that the world is permeated by God. If everything is sacred and divine, everything becomes a symbol and presence of God. The tree yogas (*Karma yoga, Jñana yoga and Bhakti yoga*) help the person understand that finding God in all things depends on the person's capacity and taste and temperament (*BG XII: 7-11*). Finding God in all things and all things in God is an essential concept in *Bhagavad Gita*: the same in all contingent beings abiding without change, the highest Lord, when all things fall to ruin, himself is not destroyed, who sees him sees indeed (*BG XIII, 27*).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The essence of spirituality of the *Bhagavad Gita* is very similar like that of *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius. The *Bhagavad Gita* sees God above the world as well as within it; God is in all things and all things are in God. Vision of God above helps us to see the reality of the world. In the Krishna's stupendous theophany Arjuna saw the One in many and the many in the One (*BG XI: 13*). Then after the vision Arjuna confessed Krishna as the Lord (*BG XI: 35-46*). Importance of seeing God in all things

is emphasized in many verses in the *Bhagavad Gita* (*BG* XIII: 27; XII: 28-31; VI: 30). When we see God in all things, we love them for the love of God and we see them with equal eyes. We see «with an equal eye a learned and a humble Brahmin», «a cow», «an elephant» or «even a dog» or «an outcast» (*BG* V: 18; V: 8). God hides in creatures and He can be found if the veil of darkness is lifted from our eyes (*BG* VII: 12-14).

Looking at St. Ignatius' illumination at the bank of river Cardoner (August 1522)⁷⁶, and what the Gita talks about God and his presence in creation I become convinced that without God experience change of behaviour is not possible. St. Ignatius was illumined because he was constantly seeking God and went about with devotion. God will surely give me wisdom if I devotedly seek Him. This vision of «One in many and many in One» is grace given to those who are detached and are united in God. It is with the eyes of God that I can see Him in all things and all things in Him. Seeking God in all things demands that I have God as my ultimate goal, that I am devoted to Him, that I am detached, that I have no hatred towards any creature, that I work for him alone — and thus I come to Him (*BG* XI: 55). I can be in God and He can be in me if I see everything in God (*BG* VI: 30).

The *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Spiritual Exercises* guide the person towards integrated life. They not only suggest various paths towards union with God but they bring the person whole vision of human life, world and God and how person is related to all these. If the *Bhagavad Gita* presents to person the integrated and holistic path towards union with God *Spiritual Exercises* helps person to order his/her life by getting rid of all personal attachments one by one. If the *Bhagavad Gita* talks about importance of «self» knowledge that is beneficial and liberating, *Spiritual Exercises* teaches person show this «self» is trapped into self-seeking and how one can conquer oneself. There are lots of similarities about the spirituality in these texts regarding realities of «self», world, and God and their inter-relationship.

We ask many existential questions to ourselves in life. Who are we? Why are we here? Who is God? Why do things exist? What is the purpose of creation? How should we live our life etc.? All such questions are

⁷⁶ *Autobiography*, n. 30; Javier Melloni. "Cardoner". En *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana*, 280. Javier Melloni. "El Conocimiento en la experiencia del Cardoner. *Manresa* 71 (1999): 6 -10.

answered by both these texts. By talking about these things, these texts give us direction and meaning in our life. Without realizing our «self» as divine, filled with divine potentials and qualities we may underestimate ourselves. We are taught how our «self» can be our friend as well as our enemy. St. Ignatius tells us how we can conquer our «self». Sameness, indifference, detachment, equanimity, magnanimity — all these are spiritual qualities of the «self» that we need to realize if we need to see our «self» in God. The principle and foundation of St. Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises* and the concept of *lokasangraha* in the *Bhagavad Gita* give us purpose in life. God who is transcendent and immanent at the same time holds everything in him. Our destiny is in God. He is in us and we are in him and likewise everything is in God and He is in everything. We are just an instrument in God's hand and everything that we have is God's gift. We cannot boast of anything of our own. Ultimately, it is God's grace that liberates us but we need just to come and take refuge in him. As a true human being we must live an active life in the service of God and the task is *lokasangraha*. We are called upon to live a life of compassion, equality, service, devotion, detachment, indifference and total surrender to God. All these spiritual attitudes will lead us to do our *dharma*. We need to be contemplative in action. All these will lead us to do God's will and God will lead us to himself.

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