

Human Person in the *Spiritual Exercises* and the Bhagavad Gita

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Introduction

Christians perceive that sincere and authentic dialogue with other religious traditions on different levels is the “signs of time and call of God”. This is precisely because the Vatican Council affirms that every authentic religion possesses “precious elements of religion and humanity”¹, “seeds planted by God in ancient cultures”², “seeds of the Word”³, “seeds of the Lord”⁴, and “truth and grace found among the nations”⁵. In particular for Hinduism, the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions gives this special mention:

In Hinduism, men contemplate the divine mystery and express it through an inexhaustible abundance of myths and through searching philosophical inquiry. They seek freedom from the anguish of our human condition either through ascetical practices or profound meditation or a flight to God with love and trust... Likewise, other religions found everywhere try to counter the restlessness of the human heart, each in its own manner, by proposing ‘ways,’ comprising teachings, rules of life, and sacred rites... The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men⁶.

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¹ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 92, Text in AAS LVIII, 1966, pp. 1113-1114. Please see *Acta Apostolicae Sedis – Commentarium Officiale*, An. Et Vol. LVIII, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 1966. The English translation of the documents of Vatican Council II is taken from W. M. Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II*, Guild Press, New York, 1966.

² Vatican Council II, *Ad Gentes*, n. 18, Text in AAS LVIII, 1966, pp. 968-969.

³ Vatican Council II, *Ad Gentes*, n. 11, Text in AAS LVIII, 1966, pp. 959-960.

⁴ Vatican Council II, *Ad Gentes*, n. 15, Text in AAS LVIII, 1966, pp. 964-965.

⁵ Vatican Council II, *Ad Gentes*, n. 9, Text in AAS LVIII, 1966, p. 958.

⁶ Vatican Council II, *Nostra Aetate*, n. 2, Text in AAS LVIII, 1966, p. 741.

In line with these documents, our study is a sincere search of a dialogue to seek and experience “those seeds of the Word”, “those elements of grace” and “that ray of Truth” found in the Bhagavad Gita on ‘Human Person’. The dialogue that we are exploring on “Human Person” points toward a meeting of heart and mind between Christianity and Hinduism, approached in a spirit of respectful inquiry. In the first part of our study, we will concentrate on the human person in the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius by analysing his Christian anthropology founded on the Bible in general and St. Paul in particular. The second part of our study is the systematic exposition on the human person in the Bhagavad Gita, a study on the selected texts by analysing the Samkhya philosophy and its new interpretation used in the Bhagavad Gita. In the Third Part, we bring together the *Spiritual Exercises* and the Bhagavad Gita, comparing and contrasting them in the spirit of affirmation, focusing on the theme of human person. However, it will be shown that, during the dialogical encounter, it is very difficult to make absolute and clear the similarities between the *Spiritual Exercises* and the Bhagavad Gita because of their differences in cultural and religious background.

Human Person in the *Spiritual Exercises*

Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises* uses the Pauline perspective on human person. In this way, he deserts from the mainstream, Occidental worldview, which is heavily dependent on the Greek philosophical concept of human person as “rational animal”. Also it is really striking why Ignatius chose to follow the Pauline understanding while his contemporary theologians followed the Greek understanding. The Pauline understanding of human person has a similarity with the understanding of human person found in the Bhagavad Gita, though there are certain substantial differences, because of their divergent worldview. Ignatius’s images of human person in relation to the self and to God were based on his faith-experience. The human person is above all oriented to the mystery of God.

In the Old Testament, the ‘human person’⁷ is not analyzed into heterogeneous components; he is not considered an aggregate of parts. Yet the Old Testament presents various aspects of the human, principally “flesh”, “soul” and “spirit”. “Flesh” (*basar*) is not something that he has but he is flesh in the fragility of his living being. “Soul” (*nefesh*) is not his vital principle, but man is soul in the concrete manifestations of his vitality, especially those which emanate from his face, eyes, lips, hands and heart, the seat of knowledge and will. “Spirit” (*ruah*) is what he is insofar as the divine influence becomes especially manifest, when inrushes of insight, wisdom, or religious enthusiasm happen to him, beyond ordinary experience⁸. The significance of this integral view of

⁷ Whenever the terms ‘human person’, ‘exercitant’ and ‘yogin’ are used in this article, they refer to both gender though for simplification they are used as masculine gender by the author.

⁸ For a detailed study on the Old Testament concept of the human person, please refer to R. V. DeSmet, “The Christian Concept of A Human Person” in *Ignis* 19 (1990) 127-130.

man's being is shown by the fact that wellbeing or calamity affects the entire man as an indivisible whole. According to the Bible, mankind is distinct from all the rest of creation, including the animals, in that he is made in the image of God.

In the most explicit example from Scripture of these divisions, St. Paul writes: "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23). Human person is made up of physical material, the body, that can be seen and touched. But he is also made up of immaterial aspects, which are intangible – this includes the soul, spirit, intellect, will, emotions, conscience, and so forth. These immaterial characteristics exist beyond the physical lifespan of the human body and are therefore eternal. These immaterial aspects – the spirit, soul, heart, conscience, mind and emotions – make up the whole personality.

The Bible makes it clear that the soul and spirit are the primary immaterial aspects of humanity, while the body is the physical container that holds them on this earth. The Body (Greek, *soma*) is the entire material or physical structure of a human being – it is the physical part of a person. St. Paul, writing to the Romans connects the body, the mind (soul) and the spirit: "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12:1-2). The Soul (Greek, *psyche*) consists of the mind (which includes the conscience), the will and the emotions. Genesis 2:7 states that human person was created as a "living soul". The soul and the spirit are mysteriously tied together and make up what the Scriptures call the "heart". The writer of Proverbs declares, "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life" (Prov. 4:23). It is clear here that the "heart" is central to our emotions and will. But "a natural (*psuchikos* – soulish) man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (1 Cor. 2:14).

The Spirit (Greek, *Pneuma*⁹) is well-explained in Numbers 16:22, when Moses and Aaron, "...fell upon their faces and said, 'O God, God of the spirits of all flesh, when one man sins, will you be angry with the entire congregation?'" . This verse names God

⁹ The third person of the triune God, the Holy Spirit, coequal, coeternal with the Father and the Son: a) sometimes referred to in a way which emphasizes his personality and character (the Holy Spirit); sometimes referred to in a way which emphasizes his work and power (the Spirit of Truth); never referred to as a depersonalized force. b) the spirit, i.e. the vital principal by which the body is animated; the rational spirit, the power by which the human being feels, thinks, decides; the soul. c) a spirit, i.e. a simple essence, devoid of all or at least all grosser matter, and possessed of the power of knowing, desiring, deciding, and acting; a life giving spirit; a human soul that has left the body; a spirit higher than man but lower than God, i.e. an angel. d) the disposition or influence which fills and governs the soul of any one; the efficient source of any power, affection, emotion, desire, etc. e) a movement of air (a gentle blast); of the wind, hence the wind itself; breath of nostrils or mouth. See G. W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Mich, 2000, pp. 872-875.

as the God of the spirits that are possessed by all humanity. Notice also that it mentions the flesh (body) of all mankind, connecting it with the spirit. Another key verse that describes the separation between soul and spirit is Hebrews 4:12: “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart”. One sees in this passage of Scripture that the soul and spirit can be divided – and that it is the Word of God that pierces our heart to bring the division of soul and spirit, something that only God can do. As human persons, we live eternally as a spirit, we have a soul, and we dwell in a body.

In the New Testament, the human person stands in focus in the person of Jesus acknowledged as saving Messiah. Jesus, as truly God-man, integrates the whole of mankind, which he saves, into a mystical body of which he is the head. Jesus’ vision of human person prolongs the views and hopes of the prophets but goes beyond them. He regards all men as called to a radical conversion through which they will be born again into divine sonship. The purpose of the *Spiritual Exercises*, “to overcome oneself and to order one’s life” (SE 21:1), might be described as accepting oneself and centering one’s life on God. The verb ‘overcoming’ can connote a battle with oneself, a struggle between the forces of good and evil. If we view life as a process of coming to know and love ourselves, others, God and the world, then ‘acceptance’ and ‘centering’ are also appropriate terms. Although St. Paul takes over some concepts from his Greek milieu, he adheres to the Biblical line of thought in refraining from speculative analysis of the components and properties of man. He particularly resists Greek dualism through his emphasis on the hope for resurrection of the whole man¹⁰.

Ignatius uses the language of his day, both popular and scholastic, but his thought is in line with that of St. Paul, who speaks of “flesh and spirit”. Flesh is not body, but includes both body and soul¹¹, or what we would call human nature; it is that aspect of our being that is one with the rest of creation, and hence is subject to all manner of pressures. It is not bad in itself, but vulnerable and, in fact, wounded. Spirit, according to St. Paul, does not mean soul, but corresponds rather to person; it is that aspect of our being that is in the ‘image and likeness of God’¹² and has a mysterious affinity with the

¹⁰ *Soma*, body, is not a part of man but describes the human person as a whole in his objective manifestation and in his relations with men, world and God. Man is *soma*, but he is also *sarx*, flesh, when as a prey to his self-sufficiency and self-seeking, he aligns himself sinfully with the world in rebellion against God. Then he stands in a state of radical division which prevents him from achieving a free and integral existence. But “flesh” can be “put off” through conversion of hearts, and “body”, man as a physical whole, can be transformed at resurrection. Please see R. V. DeSmet, “The Christian Concept of A Human Person” in *Ignis* 19 (1990) 129-130.

¹¹ The word “soul” (*anima*) is used in the following numbers: SE 1; 2; 6; 15; 16; 17; 20b; 23; 25; 38; 40; 43; 47; 124; 152; 166; 169ab; 175; 177; 180; 181; 185; 189; 208; 219; 229; 238; 246; 263; 290; 311; 313; 316; 317; 326; 330; 331; 332; 333; 335; 336; 339; 348; 349; 350; 351. Please see J. Rickaby, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola – Spanish and English*, Burns & Oates Limited, London, 1915, p. 134.

¹² For a detailed study, please refer to INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*, Roma, 2002. The text was approved *in forma specifi-*

divine. Ignatius's understanding of human person, like that of St. Paul, has its roots primarily in the mystery of the creation of humankind (within the total creation) according to God's image and likeness, together with the mystery of the redemption of that same creation, seriously flawed by sin, through the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Son of God and source of the indwelling Spirit¹³.

In the *Spiritual Exercises*, the self-knowledge of the human person leads him to the knowledge of God (SE 23, 104). The Principle and Foundation states: "Human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by means of doing this to save their souls" (SE 23:2). Here we have described the experience of our personal relationship with the God who is constantly creating us in the concrete particulars of our deep desires and decisions whereby we come to self-realization¹⁴. We see Ignatius's view of freedom wherein the human person is called to freedom, a view that is grounded in the conviction that fundamentally the human person is created by and oriented to the mystery we call God who offers to share with us the divine life through grace. Our acceptance of this offer is already God's gift of accepting us unconditionally¹⁵. The human person is viewed as having memory, understanding, will, imagination and emotions (SE 45, 55, 65). In so far as the human person comes to know who he is in his individual uniqueness and beauty and to love the self he is before God, to that extent he comes to know the depth and beauty of the incomprehensible mystery of God¹⁶. Certainly Ignatius's notion of "soul" includes this very understanding of self.

It is in spirit where freedom resides; but this freedom is hampered by its association with the flesh. Our spirit by itself cannot bear the burden of the flesh, but God's Spirit comes to the aid of the human spirit: "God's Spirit joins himself to our spirits to declare that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:16) and "The creation itself would one day be set free from its slavery to decay and would share the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21)¹⁷. In other words, for St. Paul the human person is "spirit, soul and body" (1 Thess. 5:23-24). Elsewhere he refers to the spirit as "inner self" (Eph. 3:16), while soul and body together are "flesh" or "human nature" (Rom. 8:12)¹⁸. Christian

ca, by the written ballots of the International Theological Commission. It was then submitted to Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, the President of the Commission, who has given his permission for its publication.

¹³ Cfr. T. E. Clarke, "Person and Society in the Exercises" in *The Way Supplement* 76 (1993) 53.

¹⁴ Please refer to J. A. Tetlow, "The Fundamentum: Creation in the Principle and Foundation" in *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 21/4 (1989) 1-53; Cfr. T. E. Clarke, "Ignatian spirituality and the Protestant principle" in *The Way Supplement* 68 (1990) 52-61.

¹⁵ Cfr. A. Callahan, "The Human Person: Contemporary Theology and the Exercises" in *The Way* 76 (1993) 86-87.

¹⁶ G. E. Ganss's idea is taken from A. Callahan, "The Human Person: Contemporary Theology and the Exercises" in *The Way Supplement* 76 (1993) 88.

¹⁷ J. M. García-Lomas (ed), *Ejercicios Espirituales y Mundo de Hoy*, Mensajero – Sal Terrae, Bilbao-Santander, 1992, p. 141.

¹⁸ In Paul, we find a more technical phraseology employed with great consistency. *Psyche* is now appropriated to the purely natural life; *pneuma* to the life of supernatural religion, the principle of which is the Holy Spirit, dwelling and operating in the heart. The opposition of flesh and spirit is accentuated

theology adopted the Greek definition of a human person as a rational animal, made up of just body and soul, and thereby dismissed the Pauline model. For St. Paul and Ignatius, the spirit plays a key role and has a mysterious affinity with the divine Spirit, which affinity is what makes man be in the image and likeness of God; whereas the flesh makes man one with the rest of creation and subject to its pressures. In the resulting tension, of which St. Paul speaks so feelingly, “God’s Spirit joins himself to our spirits to declare that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16) and “where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there is freedom” (2 Cor. 3:17)¹⁹.

There is an explicit reference to the body in the *Spiritual Exercises*; it occurs in the material for the First Week, devoted to sin. In the first prelude to the first exercise Ignatius asks the exercitant to “see in imagination my soul as a prisoner in this corruptible body, and to consider my whole composite being as an exile here on earth, cast out to live among brute beasts. I said my whole composite being, body and soul” (SE 47). The imagery used here is scriptural (Mk 1:13; Heb. 11:13). He accepted the traditional scholastic interpretation of the day, and it would be surprising had he not been influenced by a dualistic anthropology²⁰. Ignatius also displays a sensitivity to physical penance. In the tenth additional note he makes the point that exterior penance must flow from an interior attitude of sorrow for sin. Physical penance is not a means to an end but a response to the love of God. Ignatius’s attitude to physical penance is summed up in some remarks dictated to Fr. Victoria: “With certain ones I have used liberality in them and it has helped them; and with others, no small austerity, but with all the gentleness of which I was capable”²¹. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, “The words ‘interiorly’ and ‘interior’ occur again and again, but are unfortunately often lost in translation. They refer precisely to the deeper level of the spirit, of the real self, and Ignatius might well have derived the words from the ‘interior homo’ of Paul”²². Thus, it is clear that, while Ignatius uses the scholastic language influenced by Greek philosophy, his major line of thought was that of St. Paul²³. The basic images of the human person that are emphasized in the

afresh (Rom. 1:18). According to the Pauline system, perfect man (*teleios*) consists of three parts: body, soul, spirit (*soma, psyche, pneuma*). Body and soul come by natural birth; spirit is given to the “born-again” Christian alone. See K. Perumpallikunnel, “Mysticism: The Matrix to Transcend ‘Brain, Mind and Soul’” in *Journal of Dharma* 33 (2008) 64.

¹⁹ The ideal of the Christian life, as indeed of all human life, is to attain to full freedom of spirit. And that is what spirituality is all about: freedom of spirit in the Spirit of freedom. For a detailed study on Paul’s understanding on human being, please see P. Divarkar, “Ignatian Loyalty, Jesuit Obedience” in *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* 28 (1998) 53.

²⁰ Cfr. M. Barnes, “The Body in the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola” in *Religion* 19 (1989) 265-266.

²¹ Ignatius’s attitude to asceticism as dictated to Fr. Victoria is taken from D. Townsend, “Digesting the Rule for Eating” in *The Way Supplement* 58 (1987) 102.

²² P. Divarkar, “Ignatian Loyalty, Jesuit Obedience” in *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* 28 (1998) 54.

²³ Ignatius based *his Spiritual Exercises* on his own personal experience of meeting God, and not primarily on spiritual books or cultural heritage. Does this fact alone mean that he has adopted a Pauline anthropology with its division of the human person into spirit, soul and body? If so, has Ignatius been able to avoid the Aristotelian dualism of soul and body? There are certain elements that would lead one

Spiritual Exercises include the following: the person as created, graced, sinful, redeemed, invited to a personal relationship with Christ based on identification with his paschal mystery, invited to share with others in Christ's mission of love in the world, and freed by grace to grow in union with self, God, others and the world (SE 1, 5, 21, 23, 43, 98, 104, 146, 155, 167, 189, 234-237).

Human Person in the Bhagavad Gita

Similarly, the Samkhya categories are often used in the Bhagavad Gita but with a new interpretation and understanding of the human person. The Samkhya philosophy, like Greek philosophy, treats *prakriti* (matter) and *Purusba* (spirit) as completely distinct and independent principles²⁴. The *Purusba* is pure consciousness or conscious soul, and *prakriti* is unconscious evolutive process. They are disparate realities, the first being conscious and static, the latter being unconscious and dynamic. It is only when fused with *prakriti* that *Purusba* falsely thinks of activities of *buddhi*, or the understanding which is the first evolute of *prakriti*, as its own. In the state of liberation, the Samkhya logically concludes that there is no conscious action or enjoyment²⁵. But the Bhagavad Gita, like Paul and Ignatius, conceives human being as a unity of *prakriti* and *Purusba*.

The Samkhya philosophy is used in the Bhagavad Gita with a "new interpretation"²⁶ by establishing a dynamic interdependence of *prakriti* and *purusha*: "Purity, passion and

to believe that Ignatius and Paul come together at the level of experience. The intense periods of interiorization at Loyola and at Manresa helped Ignatius to discover, in his "discernment of spirits" his specifically spiritual dimension. These periods of interiorization also allowed him to discover his interior self as exposed to the action of the Spirit. However, to what extent do the architectonic vision at the Cardoner and the later Christocentric experience of La Storta integrate the great Pauline syntheses? Arnaud affirms that "the findings of modern psychology on human development correspond to the teachings of Paul as handed down by Ignatius". For the critical view on the understanding of human being by Paul and Ignatius, please read J. S. Arnaud, "The Paradox at the Heart of Ignatian Spirituality" in *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* 28 (1998) 64-66.

²⁴ Cfr. S. Cross, *The Elements of Hinduism*, Element Books Ltd, Shaftesbury, Dorset, 1998, pp. 43-44.

²⁵ Cfr. A. Basu, "Historical Perspectives of Liberation in Hinduism" in *Journal of Dharma* 2 (1977) 92.

²⁶ The soul is naturally unitive in the Bhagavad Gita. The soul is single, and its function is to integrate the whole personality into the immortal self; but the soul can be corrupted and dissipated by the senses acting through the mind, and this is perdition (BG 2:63). Hence any one of the three constituents may predominate in the soul. If goodness predominates, then the soul, because it discriminates correctly between spirit and matter and because it sees that liberation into spirit, into the self, is the only true salvation, remains unitive; but if either of the other constituents predominates, then it will be led astray by wrong views (BG 18:30-32). The soul, whether integrated or not, represents the whole personality, and the soul is the subject that transmigrates, but of all the faculties the soul is the only one that is capable of grasping and apprehending the self in its timeless glory. "When thought by spiritual exercise is checked and comes to rest, and when of self one sees the self in self and finds content therein, that is the utmost joy which transcends sense and which soul alone can grasp" (BG 6:20-21). Soul, too, must control the mind as the mind controls the senses (BG 6:25-26), for the soul is the organ of integration (BG 2:39ff), and by integration a man becomes Brahman and, having become Brahman, he comes to

darkness, the constituents arising out of material nature, bind the imperishable embodied self to the body” (BG 14:5). Liberation is, thus, first of all the separation of the self (*atman*) from its bodily limitation. In this way, the ideal of liberation according to the Bhagavad Gita entails a certain degree of discrimination between the self and the body. And since body in its wider sense represents everything that is material, the discrimination of the self from the body is to be understood as the separation of the self from the material universe²⁷. A minimum degree of discrimination is, therefore, necessary to begin the process of liberation. In other words, liberation at its minimum would mean the individual soul’s non-identification with *prakriti* and its principles and the attainment of the status of the immutable *Purusha*, of a peace that surpasses understanding, of freedom from all attachments. This is only a stage in the soul’s journey to total liberation. The soul must yet find its relationship with the Purushottama, the highest person or the Supreme Lord Krishna. This can be done by devotion to the Lord and by the total surrender of one’s whole being and nature to Lord Krishna who is the Master of our being and the Lord of our hearts²⁸.

Close scrutiny of Vivekananda’s arguments on explaining *atman* show that they are all constructed on implicit premises from the Bhagavad Gita:

The *atman* is the only existence in the human body which is not material. Because it is immaterial, it cannot be a compound, and because it is not a compound, it does not obey the law of cause and effect, and so it is immortal. That which is immortal can have no beginning because everything with a beginning must have an end. It follows also that it must be formless; there cannot be any form without matter... But the self has no form, cannot be bound by the law of beginning and end. It is also existing from infinite time; just as time is eternal, so is the self of man eternal. Secondly, it must be all pervading. It is only form that is conditioned and limited by space; that which is formless cannot be confined in space. So according to the Bhagavad Gita, the self, the *atman*, in you, in me, in everyone, is omnipresent²⁹.

The Bhagavad Gita describes the structure of the human person as follows: “Noble are the senses, nobler than the senses is the mind, nobler than the mind is the *buddhi*, what is beyond the *buddhi* is the Self” (BG 3:42)³⁰. There are two faculties of inner perception: mind and *buddhi*. Mind objectifies everything and analyses reality in its individuality and diversity, while *buddhi* enters into the depth of reality by uniting it with the perceiving subject. Through the mind, the *yogin* is driven to the fascinating diversity of things, while the *buddhi* delves into the mystery of the unity of reality. Mind pursues the logic of reality, while *buddhi* explores the mystique of reality. Mind specu-

God Himself (BG 18:49-54). For deeper understanding see R. C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad Gita with a Commentary Based on the Original Sources*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1969, pp. 21-23.

²⁷ Cfr. F. Vadakethala, “A Yoga for Liberation: Ramanuja’s Approach” in *Journal of Dharma* 2 (1977) 36.

²⁸ Cfr. A. Basu, “Historical Perspectives of Liberation in Hinduism” in *Journal of Dharma* 2 (1977) 88.

²⁹ Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1970, pp. 254-255.

³⁰ Katha Upanishads 6:7-8. It is taken from F. Max Muller, *The Sacred Books of the East*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1898.

lates on the horizontal level and acquires conceptual knowledge of persons and things (*vijñana*), while *buddhi* contemplates reality in its depth dimension and attains intuitive wisdom (*jñana*)³¹. To the *yogin*, Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita communicates “wisdom combined with knowledge” (BG 7:2). Self-integration of the *yogin* demands that the extrovert search of the mind be integrated with the introspective movement of the *buddhi* (BG 2:39; 6:20-23; 18:57).

The Bhagavad Gita’s understanding of human person is influenced by the various contemporary religious views of its time. The Bhagavad Gita considers human person as a *dehin* in *deha*, an embodied self in a body (BG 2:18). This self is eternal and cannot be affected by anything. This embodied self is the experience of *deha*, the body. This body belongs to the domain of *Prakriti*. “*Purusha* is seated in *Prakriti*, experiences *Gun*as born of *Prakriti*; attachment to the *gun*as is the cause of his birth in good and evil wombs” (BG 13:21). The three *gun*as, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, bind the embodied self though *Purusha* is changeless (BG 14:5). The *guna* which predominates at the time of death determines his next birth. Human person is in a special way related to the divinity. In his search to fulfill the will of God, human person realizes Krishna as the Lord and creator of all and himself as his creature (BG 14:3)³².

The Bhagavad Gita presents human person as a sacrificer, also. In the early chapters of the Bhagavad Gita, human person is seen as a sacrificer by divine ordination, and the value of vedic sacrifices (*yajña*)³³ is reasserted. Chapter 9 of the Bhagavad Gita explicitly says that the sacrifices are offered to the Supreme and are of great value. But the Bhagavad Gita also stresses the disposition: “Whoever offers me with the devotion, a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, I accept that, the pious offering of the pure in heart. Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you gift away, whatever austerity you practise, do it as an offering to me (BG 9:26-27). Hence both the disposition with which the *yogin* offers and the divinity to whom he offers are very im-

³¹ Mind (*manas*) operates within the subject-object polarity: I encounter the thou/it; *Buddhi* (intellect) transcends this polarity. Mind objectifies everything and analyses reality in its individuality and diversity; *Buddhi* enters into the depth of reality by uniting it with the perceiving subject. Through the mind one is driven to the fascinating diversity of things, while the *buddhi* delves into the mystery of the unity of reality. Mind looks at the structures and qualities of the world, while *buddhi* contemplates the axis of the world. Mind pursues the logic of reality, while *buddhi* explores the mystique of reality. Mind operates on the principle of duality and classifies everything according to structures and qualities, while *buddhi* unfolds on the principle of unity and contemplates everything in terms on universal interrelatedness. For detailed study of the difference between mind and *buddhi*, please see S. Painadath, “Mysticism, The Depth-Dimension of Spirituality” in *Journal of Dharma* 30 (2005) 398-399.

³² V. Manimala, “The Bhagavad Gita and the Gospel” in *The Indian Journal of Theology* 24 (1975) 34-35.

³³ The basic Indian word is *Yajña*, from the root *yaj*, to worship, adore, honour, offer. The cognate word, *agnos* or *agios*, means pure, chaste, holy, in Greek. The purpose of *yajña* was to establish communion with the divine powers and to obtain from them the satisfaction of the various needs. The Bhagavad Gita speaks of the ‘sacrificial wheel’ that interlinks the cosmic, the human and the divine. Also one finds a process of interiorisation: the real sacrifice is said to be the inner attitude of attachment and surrender. See G. Gispert-Sauch, “Yajña” in *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 64 (2000), 724.

portant. The Bhagavad Gita tries to effect a reconciliation between Brahmanic ritualism, Buddhist moralism and Upanishadic Absolutism, emphasizing the role of human person as a sacrificer. In particular the Bhagavad Gita asserts the importance of sacrificial karmas not only as stabilizers of the world-order but also as acts of thankful devotion: “By this shall you prolong your lineage, let this be to you the cow that yields the milk of all that you desire. With this shall you sustain the gods so that the gods may sustain you. Sustaining one another you shall achieve the highest good” (BG 3:10-13). The Bhagavad Gita suggests five *maha-yajñas* to the human person and they are as follows:

1. *Brahma* or *Veda-yajña*: Daily reading and meditation of the sacred scriptures (*sruti* and subsidiarily *smṛiti*).
2. *Pitri-yajña*: Propitiatory libation of water to one’s ancestor.
3. *Deva-yajña*: Fire sacrifice to the gods.
4. *Bhuta-yajña*: Food offered to animals, which represent all created beings, including the five elements (*bhutas*).
5. *Manushya-yajña*: Offerings made to human beings by sheltering the homeless, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, comforting the distressed, and doing other works of mercy³⁴.

The purpose of this fivefold sacrifice is no longer to collaborate with the gods in maintaining the cosmic order and duration, but to acknowledge gratefully the dependence of the human person upon all beings and to secure the continuation of the beneficial activity of all beings. The one supreme God is not specially worshipped, except indirectly in the *Veda-yajña* and implicitly in the general acknowledgement of dependence. The Bhagavad Gita has kept its sway over the masses because it never ceased to put its sacramental seal on family and society and to surround each individual, from conception to cremation, with its consecrating rites. These rites are its roots, watered with the water of *bhakti*, and so long as Hinduism cradles every Hindu child in its embrace, it will not perish. Thus human person in the Bhagavad Gita is presented as searching to find and to embrace a personal God in a personal way.

In the early chapters of the Bhagavad Gita, human person is essentially social, and his social dimension is expressed through actions (*karma*). He stands in his appointed station as a hub of horizontal and vertical relationships of complementarity and reciprocity through which the *karma yogin* finds his wholesomeness and integration. The *karma yogin* completes his social obligations without expecting the fruit of his actions (*nishkama karma*). In opposition to this paragon of social participation (*karma*), the renouncer (*jñana yogin*) stands in the quasi-modern stance of the pure individual who dedicates himself to the exclusive search of God’s will in knowledge (*jñana*). The *jñana yogin*, through the path of knowledge (*jñana yoga*), tries to see the self (*atman*) in the Self (Brahman).

³⁴ R. V. DeSmet, “The Indian Understanding of Man” in *Indian Ecclesiastical Studies* 10 (1971) 102.

In the last part of the Bhagavad Gita, human person (*bhakti yogin*) searches for and finds the will of God through loving devotion (*bhakti yoga*). It is the total aspiration of *bhakta* made to achieve himself in the self-surrender of love answering divine love. Through this I-Thou relationship, the *bhakti yogin* endures beyond even the highest transcendence. Each one of these successive views of human person in the Bhagavad Gita stresses some important aspect of his complex being. One can enumerate his relatedness and openness in the three directions: social (*karma*), individual (*jñana*) and divine (*bhakti*); his complementarity with others and his dynamism towards integration on all possible levels through actions (*karma yoga*); his radical freedom, which enables him to refuse and to reject whatever he deems worthless and to see his self in the Self (*jñana yoga*); his intrinsic worth as an end in himself, proved by the fact that he is a desirable object of love for God himself (*bhakti yoga*)³⁵. For some, these three dimensions of human person have been thought about as alternatives rather than as aspects of a possible unitary view of human person. But for many, they appear to have been reconciled in diverse combinations of complementarity.

The Bhagavad Gita also suggests three aids for the *yogin* to be in perfect union with God: ascetical outlook on life (*tapas*), devotion to Lord Krishna (*bhakti*) and intense pursuit of meditation (*dhyana*). Through *tapas* the *yogin* develops the inner energy to control the senses (BG 5:7; 6:8), to bring the mind to the focus (BG 6:12), to streamline the movements of the subconscious mind (BG 6:18-20) and to open the *buddhi* to the inner self (BG 18:51)³⁶. Thus *tapas* is means of purification of the soul from sin and its

³⁵ Cfr. R. V. DeSmet, "The Indian Understanding of Man" in *Indian Ecclesiastical Studies* 10 (1971) 102.

³⁶ The place of *buddhi* in the Bhagavad Gita is central. Krishna advises Arjuna to "seek refuge in *buddhi*" (BG 2:49). "To them who are constantly integrated worshipping me with love, I gave that *buddhi* by which they may draw near to me" (BG 10:10). Later in the process of summing up his entire teaching, Krishna says again, "Renouncing mentally all actions to me, making me your goal, relying on *buddhi*, become constantly mindful of me. Mindful of me, you will overcome all obstacles by my grace. But if because of self-centredness you will not listen, you will perish" (BG 18:57-58). *Buddhi* derives from the root *budh*, meaning to wake up, in the sense of discerning, becoming awake and realizing. In the Bhagavad Gita, *buddhi* is clearly distinguished from *manas* (mind) which is the faculty of thinking. *Manas* stands in an hierarchical order of subtlety and priority between the senses and *buddhi*. It is fickle, unsteady, impetuous, and difficult to control – as difficult as the wind (BG 3:42; 6:34). It can, however, be controlled and brought to rest in the self by *buddhi* which would help the *yogin* to search for and to fulfill the will of the Supreme Being. When *buddhi* functions in the right internal order of discerning the will of God, it has a quickness which can bring the unsteady mind back to stillness in the self. Such a *yogin*, whose mind is stilled and who is free of blemish, enjoys the highest bliss and becomes Brahman (BG 6:2, 24-27). *Buddhi* in the Bhagavad Gita is a faculty which needs to be trained, purified and unified, and which in turn can integrate the whole of oneself – body, heart and mind. This faculty alone, which functions rightly only when educated by *yoga*, can have higher knowledge (*jñana*, as distinct from *vidya* which generally means mental knowledge), higher feelings (faith and *bhakti*, love-and-dedication) and the higher will of fulfilling the will of God in action (as contrast with desire-will). *Buddhi* is thus the discriminative intellect which perceives correctly the will of God and acts accordingly; it is intelligent and sensitive will in harmony with dharma and the will of the Supreme Being. For a detailed study on *buddhi* and its role in self-integration and self-transformation, please refer to A. H. Armstrong, "The Dimensions of the Self: *Buddhi* in the Bhagavad Gita and *Psyché* in Plotinus" in *Religious Studies* 15 (1979) 329-334.

effects and of consequent union of the soul with God. Fasting removes the guilt which human person has incurred by committing sin and restores his moral integrity. Although fasting has also a juridical aspect, the moral aspect is more extensive and important. It is this aspect that directly and immediately helps the human person to fulfill the will of God and, in turn, helps him to be in total union with God³⁷. The positive aspect of fasting is sacrifice, and it is the sacrifice of oneself to God. This sacrifice is a visible sign of the human person's self-gift and self-commitment to God. Through this self-consciousness (*atmabodha*) that evolves in the *buddhi*, the *yogin* reaches inner integration. The interiorly integrated *yogin* realizes that the divine Master is the ultimate subject of his activities: "In the body the supreme divine *purusha* is the Lord that perceives, supports, approves and experiences everything. Through meditation one realizes the inner Self in oneself through the grace of the Self" (BG 13:23, 25). Hence the *yogin* is invited to "surrender all the activities to the divine Lord in devotion" (BG 12:6; 18:57). Devotion to the Lord leads to contemplation of the divine Self, and contemplation manifests itself in devotion. Loving self-surrender to the Lord Krishna and ecstatic meditation on him are complementary; *jñana* and *bhakti* merge into one. In this way, the three aids proposed by the Bhagavad Gita help the human person to be a self-integrated *yogin* (BG 2:54-72; 12:7-11, 13-20; 14:22-26; 16:1-5; 17:14-16)³⁸.

Dialogue Between the *Spiritual Exercises* and the Bhagavad Gita

Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises* states the following about the human person: "Let him desire and seek nothing except the greater praise and glory of God our Lord as the aim of all he does. For every one 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 self-will and self-interest" (SE 189). And this echoes with the understanding of St. Paul with regard to those who have attained to freedom of spirit: "You were called to be free; do not use your freedom as an opening for self-indulgence, but serve one another in love" (Gal. 5:13). In the First Week of the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius presents the human person as the image of God in creation, having a unique dignity in the eyes of God and a no less unique responsibility before him. This human person, whom God has created in his own image, God also calls to enter into a personal relationship with him. Man's creation in God's image, for Ignatius, is, in fact, ordained to this relationship: man must grow after God's likeness. In the light of this relationship to the living God who is

³⁷ Fasting (*tapas*) has been looked upon as one among the several means of expiating sin and purifying man from the consequences of sin with which fasting has always been associated. The other important means for expiating sins are public confession of sins, repentance, austerity, prayer, sacrifice, almsgiving, pilgrimage, etc. Please see F. Max Muller, *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. II, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1897, p. 80.

³⁸ Cfr. S. Painadath, "Integration through Spirituality according to the Bhagavad Gita" in *Jnana-deepa* 7 (2004) 20-21.

Christ, the horizontal dimension of man as person-in-the-world takes on deeper meaning; the human person is defined spiritually by his vertical communion with God, and it is within this intimate relationship with God that human person encounters the world and his fellow-men (SE 230-237). Human person's being-in-the-world is essential to his nature; but it takes on its true, personal significance only within the frame of his relationship with God. Ignatius's understanding of human person distinguishes two spiritual movements in the *Spiritual Exercises*, namely, differentiation and integration. These two movements complement each other, both being simultaneously present in the lives of human persons³⁹. In the movement of differentiation, the human person discovers his identity in his presence with other beings. The movement of differentiation calls him to face his world of experience (SE 23). This process of differentiation would discourage the exercitant and throw him out of focus were it not complemented by the other movement. This differentiation can lead to an integration of all that comes in his experiential field. "Integration leads to unity just as differentiation leads to diversity. Integration unifies and makes whole, whereas differentiation initially breaks up this wholeness"⁴⁰. The letters of Ignatius reveal his insight that this differentiation has its effect on practical reality external to but affecting the person, whereas integration has its effects in the internal state. The dynamic life of the exercitant will always manifest both differentiation and integration (SE 230-237). Through the key meditations of the *Spiritual Exercises* (SE 23; 91-98; 136-147; 149-156; 165-167; 230-237), Ignatius intends a well-balanced totality of human person as a whole.

In a similar way, the Bhagavad Gita enriches the human person with a new vista where work and religion become the means of *lokasamgraha*. It teaches that human person is transformed by work done in a spirit of sacrifice (*yajña*). In the context of the Bhagavad Gita, the term "*yajña*" is to be understood in a comprehensive sense⁴¹. Life itself becomes a *yajña*. It is a sacrificial action by which human person dedicates his wealth and deeds to the service of God in all. Persons with such a sacrificial spirit will accept even death gladly, though unjustly meted out to them, so that the world may grow through their sacrifice (BG 17:11). *Yajña* means an act directed to the welfare of others,

³⁹ Cfr. J. Padberg, "Personal Experience and the Spiritual Exercises" in *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 10/5 (1978) 311.

⁴⁰ A. Van Kaam, *Religion and Personality*, Image Books, New York, 1968, p. 14.

⁴¹ *Yajña* means a religious rite, sacrifice, worship, or an action done with a good and spiritual motive. It also means Vishnu Himself. There are different types of *Yajña*: *Deva-Yajña*: offering sacrifices to the gods; *Brahma-Yajña*: teaching and reciting the scriptures; *Pitri-Yajña*: offering libations of water to one's ancestors; *Nri-Yajña*: the feeding of the hungry; *Bhuta-Yajña*: the feeding of the lower animals. These are the five daily duties enjoined on householders. The performance of these duties frees them from fivefold sins, inevitable to a householder's life, due to the killing of life, from the use of, 1) the pestle and mortar, 2) the grinding-stone, 3) the oven, 4) the water-jar, 5) the broom. *Yajña* denotes not only the sacrificial deeds but also the subtle principle into which they are converted, after they have been performed, to appear, later on, as their fruits. This is technically known as *Apurva*. On the theme *Yajña*, please read Swami Swarupananda, *Shrimad-Bhagavad-Gita – With Text, Word-for-Word Translation, English Rendering and Comments*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1956, pp. 78-79.

done without receiving or deriving return from it, whether of a temporal or spiritual nature⁴². *Lokasamgraha* stands for the unity of the world, the interconnectedness of society. If the world is not to sink into a condition of physical misery and moral degradation, if the common life is to be decent and dignified, religious ethics must control social action. The aim of religion is to spiritualize society, to establish brotherhood on earth⁴³. With a holistic vision of reality, the human person perceives not only the universal immanence of the Divine but also the transforming power and presence of the Lord. Since the universe is the body of the Lord, works done in surrender to the “word of the Lord” (BG 18:73) is participation in the divine work. It teaches the eternal need for work and service performed with diligence, for work done as a process of reaching the self-consciousness.

The Bhagavad Gita describes this divine work in terms of reinstating *dharma*: integration in all realms of life (BG 4:8; 14:27). Human participation in this salvific divine work thereby gets a new motivation: work becomes liberative only if it is fulfilled with a concern for bringing about the integral welfare of the world (*Lokasamgraha*, BG 3:20, 25; 4:23). Self-realization means realization of one’s self in the wider life of our fellow human beings. The Bhagavad Gita teaches that there cannot be self-realization without the integration of the individual self with the larger social self⁴⁴. The *yogin* is not only united in communities at various levels, but also lives and functions in society. In a spirit of human, social and international solidarity (*lokasamgraha*), when one has become totally one and integral, one will work for the welfare of all (*lokashema*). This is done by the practice of *dharma* (righteousness) in socio-economic-political as well as cultural-religious spheres (BG 5:18, 25)⁴⁵. One cannot do better than recall Swami Vivekananda’s words: “The poor, the ignorant, the illiterate, the afflicted, let these be your God; know that service to these is the highest religion”⁴⁶ and “The *karma yogin* wants everyone to be saved before himself. His own salvation is to help others to salvation... This true worship leads to intense self-sacrifice”⁴⁷. Thus the *Spiritual Exercises* and the Bhagavad Gita turn

⁴² Cfr. M. Desai, *The Gita According to Gandhi*, Ahmedabad, 1956, p. 177.

⁴³ Cfr. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavad Gita – With an Introductory Essay, Sanskrit Text, English Translation and Notes*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd, London, 1948, p. 139.

⁴⁴ The *yogin* should see God inside and outside of all beings. He should see God as the Self, immanent within himself. He should know God as uncontaminated as the sky. He who resorts to pure knowledge, sees and honours all beings as God, is considered a wise man. He sees a Brahmin or a tribal man, a thief or a sage, the sun or a spark of fire, a kind man or a cruel man as equals. A man’s jealousy, envy and contempt together with his ego disappear when he always sees all other human beings as God. He should continue to practice such worship with body and mind until he sees God as immanent in all beings. For a detailed study on the qualities of *yogin* who has *lokasamgraha*, please see R. D. Ranade, *Pathway to God in Bhagavata*, Mrs Nandini Sathaye Publishers, Pune, 2003, pp. 261-262.

⁴⁵ Cfr. D. S. Amalorpavadass, “Integration and Interiorization” in *Studies in Spirituality 2* (1991) 249-250.

⁴⁶ Swami Vivekananda’s insight on *lokasamgraha* is taken from M. G. Bhagat, *Ancient Indian Asceticism*, p. 250.

⁴⁷ Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 2, Advaita Ashram, Calcutta, 1985, p. 384.

humanity into a temple of worship to which the human person should dedicate himself, serving the humanity by fulfilling the will of God in his concrete life situation (SE 23; 91-98; 136-147; 149-156; 165-167; 230-237 = BG 3:20, 25; 4:8; 5:18, 25; 14:27; 17:11; 18:73).

Ignatius, like St. Paul, does not imply the rejection or suppression of the flesh, but its transformation, spiritualization and divinisation by the power of God's spirit at work in our spirit (SE 313-336) so that the human person will discern and do the will of God. Similarly in the Bhagavad Gita, the three *yogas*, *karma yoga*, *jñana yoga* and *bhakti yoga*, do not have any intention to repress flesh (*sarira*)⁴⁸ but to divinise it so that the human person will become one with Krishna through yogic consciousness and will do the will of God without any hesitation: "Krishna asked: Partha, have you listened to this single-mindedly? Has your delusion born of ignorance been dispelled? Arjuna said to Krishna: My delusion has been obliterated, and through your grace I have remembered myself. I stand, my doubt dispelled. I shall do as you say" (BG 18:72-73 = SE 313-336).

On the levels of human functioning, too, there is a similarity of approach between the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius and the Bhagavad Gita. Unlike his contemporary theologians and philosophers, Ignatius follows the understanding and perspective of St. Paul with regard to the three levels of human functioning: "May the God who gives us peace make you holy in every way and keep your whole being – spirit, soul and body – free from every fault at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you will do it, because he is faithful" (1 Thess. 5:23-24). Ignatius learned to distinguish these three levels of human functioning at his conversion, and levels provided the framework, so to speak, for his own spiritual progress and for his subsequent spiritual doctrine: the mental, the affective, and the deeper or personal level. The personal level is missing from the Greek definition of a human person as a rational animal⁴⁹. The Bhagavad Gita agrees with the understanding of Ignatius and conceives human person as a unity of spirit (*purusha*) and matter (*prakriti*). This *purusha* (spirit, soul, self, atman) is the higher part of human person and *prakriti* (field, matter) is the lower part of human person. Unlike the Samkhya system, the Bhagavad Gita is of the opinion that God is the source of matter and spirit⁵⁰. Ramanuja, like Ignatius, believes that the human soul in its pristine purity possess all the auspicious qualities of God. The difference between human soul and God can be summarized as follows: "(1) The human soul, which belong exclusively to the domain of God, is not influenced whatsoever by the transitory moments of the world; (2) The soul is of atomic and finite whereas God is vast and all-

⁴⁸ *Sarira* has the same import as flesh in the Gospel according to John and in the letters of Paul, for example in John 1:14 where it is said, "The Word became flesh and dwelt in us". The important point, both in the context of Bhagavad Gita and in the Christian context (John, Paul and Ignatius) is that the spiritual element called *Purusha*, Atman or *Logos* is above the whole psychosomatic complex of the human person. Please refer to R. Ravindra, *The Yoga of the Christ in the Gospel according to St. John*, Element Books, Shaftesbury, 1990, pp. 56-58.

⁴⁹ Cfr. J. M. García-Lomas, *Ejercicios Espirituales y Mundo de Hoy*, Mensajero – Sal Terrae, Bilbao-Santander, 1992, p. 142.

⁵⁰ Cfr. R. C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad Gita with a Commentary Based on the Original Sources*, p. 13.

pervading; (3) The soul can be influenced by the evil whereas God remains eternally free from contact with any evil”⁵¹.

Thus both the traditions agree on the general division: The Bhagavad Gita calls “the higher part” *purusha* or *atman* and Ignatius names it *alma* (soul) and *espíritu* (spirit). Its immortality is claimed by both the traditions. The Bhagavad Gita calls “the lower part” *prakriti* and Ignatius names it *cuervo* (body with exterior senses). Both the discernment of spirits of the *Spiritual Exercises* and the yogic consciousness of the Bhagavad Gita admit the need for the unity of these different levels of human person for attaining Self-realization (SE 314-315 = BG 6:23-27). Both the traditions consider human person as an integrated form of *atman* (Spirit), *buddhi* (soul), *manas* (mind) and *prakriti* (physical body) and agree that the soteriological perspective should be to search for and to find the will of God and to fulfil it⁵². Both the traditions believe that an absolute union cannot be achieved between God and the human soul, and yet hold that the final goal of the purified soul is communion with God.

The *Spiritual Exercises* and the Bhagavad Gita agree on the “lower part” of human person as the aggregation of senses, i.e., the five senses. The “*manas*” (mind) in the Bhagavad Gita coincides with the interior faculty “*memoria*” (memory) of the *Spiritual Exercises*.

According to Zaehner, “*Buddhi* corresponds more or less exactly with what in the West is called ‘soul’, since it is not only intellect but also will”⁵³. The soul (*buddhi*), as the organ of integration, is that which brings the whole human personality into subjection to the self: its true function is to spiritualize matter, for it is ideally the bridge between spirit and matter in both the discernment of spirits of the *Spiritual Exercises* and the yogic consciousness of the Bhagavad Gita.

The human person in the *Spiritual Exercises* is a relational self (SE 23)⁵⁴, and he is looked at four levels of relationship – intrapersonal, interpersonal, societal and cosmic. These four dimensions of human person are interlinked and interpenetrated with each other. The liberation of the human person is possible when he fulfils the will of God by the right use of creatures and indifference with regard to creatures that is required for their right use⁵⁵. Thus the *Spiritual Exercises* helps the exercitant to become a man of

⁵¹ Liberation (*moksha*) means release from the effects of *karma*, which can only come when the body is dead and the soul, through mediation, devotion or *bhakti*, has realized its true nature. On the difference between the human soul and God, please see M. H. Siddiqi, “Ramanuja and Al-Ghazali” in *Journal of Dharma* 6 (1981) 275.

⁵² For a detailed study of the soteriological context of human beings, please refer to J. Plamthodathil, “Soteriological Perspectives in Hindu Religion and Culture” in *Journal of Dharma* 12 (1987) 417-420.

⁵³ R. C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad Gita with a Commentary Based on the Original Sources*, p. 23.

⁵⁴ Michael O’Sullivan observes that in the Principle and Foundation Ignatius attests that all of mankind is created to praise, reverence and serve our Lord, and in this way to serve all of humanity. For a detailed study on the ‘relational self’ of human person, please see M. J. O’Sullivan, *Towards a Social Hermeneutics of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola in Present Day Application*, Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis, Rome, 1992, p. 57.

⁵⁵ Cfr. H. Coathalem, *Ignatian Insights*, Kuangchi Press, Taiwan, 1971, pp. 63-65.

integrity, total and harmonious, being and becoming humanly mature, a man of discernment, a man for others and man with others similar to the integrated human person of the Bhagavad Gita (SE 23, 230-237 = BG 3:20, 25; 4:23).

However, certain elements differ in the understanding of human person between these two traditions. For the Bhagavad Gita, “*Purusha* is never born, it never dies; being, it will never again cease to be. It is unborn, invariable, eternal and primeval. It is not killed when the body is killed” (BG 2:20). It is immortal and forms part of God. Also, there is no essential difference among God, human soul and the material world. The Bhagavad Gita accepts the reality of material world and human body, as did Ramanuja, while Sankara holds the view that they are illusion. But for Ignatius, body and matter are the gifts of God and can help the exercitant in his ascent to God, although their misuse can lead to destruction (SE 210-217). Also, the soul is created by God and does not form part of God. Pre-existence of the soul is, for Catholic Christians, a heretical view, and Ignatius does not hold this view.

Conclusion

The dialogue between the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius and the Bhagavad Gita on the “Human Person” is “to discern and find out” (*discernir y ballar*) both the convergent and the divergent elements that are present in either one or both of these traditions and to analyse what can bring these traditions together for an open and sincere dialogue. The comparison between these two worldviews in no way aims to show that one religion is superior and the other is inferior. This dialogue is a listening to and a responding to truth and thus leads to a mutual transformation of human person⁵⁶.

On this way, both the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius and the Bhagavad Gita reach out toward the ultimate goal of that sharing in the divine infinity in which the human person finds his fulfilment, even though this goal may be visualized in different images. There is an ultimate and most profound parallelism between the *Spiritual Exercises* and the Bhagavad Gita on the human person, and this complementarity on the basis of love exists in spite of all differences in doctrine and cultus. Both the *Spiritual Exercises* and the Bhagavad Gita want the human person to live in a world filled with God’s love and to be extensions of God’s love in the everyday world. And so Ignatius and Vyasa invite the human person, through the *Spiritual Exercises* and the Bhagavad Gita, into the experience of that same vision which they had, of a world charged with the grandeur of God.

⁵⁶ The dialogue between believers of various faiths always will imply some sort of conversion – a spiritual process of change, a more generous submission to the Divine. It brings about a kind of mutual incorporation, an experience of growing into closer communion. One enters into dialogue primarily to learn. There has to be rootedness and openness at the same time. Please see J. Kavunkal, “Dialogue and Conversion” in *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 54 (1990) 182-183.

Kindle love divine in thy heart, for this is the immediate way to the Kingdom of God.
Pray to the Lord. Sing His glory. Recite His Name. Become a channel of His grace.
Seek His will. Do His will. Surrender to His will. You will become one with the cosmic will.
Surrender unto the Lord. He will become your charioteer on the field of life.
He will drive your chariot well. You will reach the destination, the Abode of Immortal Bliss⁵⁷.

⁵⁷ H. Staffner, *Dialogue – Stimulating contacts with Hindus*, Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, Anand, 1993, p. 73.

Keeping this in mind, the present study aims at comparing and contrasting the teachings of the Bhagavad-Gita and the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola on the process of spiritual liberation. It is striking that in these two books under investigation the process of spiritual liberation is interwoven with the vision of service, the knowledge of God and His ways, and the experience of the love of God. After the Second Vatican Council, there has been within the Indian Church a growing interest in and concern for whatever is of perennial value in Hinduism. Keeping this in mind, the present study aims at comparing and contrasting the teachings of the Bhagavad-Gita and the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola on the process of spiritual liberation. The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola (Latin original: *Exercitia spiritualia*), composed 1522–1524, are a set of Christian meditations, contemplations, and prayers written by Ignatius of Loyola, a 16th-century Spanish priest, theologian, and founder of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). Divided into four thematic "weeks" of variable length, they are designed to be carried out over a period of 28 to 30 days. They were composed with the intention of helping participants in religious retreats to The Bhagavad Gita is one of the ancient scriptures on the philosophy of life. It was narrated to the confused Prince Arjuna in the middle of a battlefield. This scripture transformed the prince into an unstoppable warrior, who was relieved of his dilemma and went on to win the war. Hatred and aversion only make you weaker. A person filled with hatred may appear to be angry and very strong on the outside, but in reality, he gets shaken, and the mind becomes weak and unsteady. When you fight, do not fight out of hatred and feverishness; instead, fight with a firm determination and steady mind. There is a vast difference between these two states. When you compete, fight with complete enthusiasm and also with total awareness. This is the spiritual path; this is Dharma.