

“*Paramabhakti* and Intense Love of God”

A Dialogue between the Bhagavad Gita and the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius

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The striking correspondence between the *paramabhakti* of the Bhagavad Gita and the Christian love of God led some Christian Indologists, in earlier days, to believe that the Bhagavad Gita had borrowed the notion from Christianity. The correspondence is interesting, but it does not justify such a theory. Undoubtedly, the two religions developed independently. The Bhagavad Gita is known almost certainly to be pre-Christian in date. The word *bhakti*, in its strict sense, is derived from the Sanskrit root *bhaj-*, which signifies “to divide”, “to distribute”, “to share with”, “to bestow”, “to serve” and “to adore”¹. *Bhakti* is an elastic term also meaning to be attached to, to be devoted to, or to resort to. The best translation of *bhakti* is “devotional faith” (BG 18:65-66). *Bhakti* may be defined as a love-impulse or love-culture that demands both a vertical commitment (to serve God) and a horizontal involvement (to share with others). “*Bhakti* implies true partnership, true companionship with God. At the same time it breathes always a spirit of universal fellowship”². Love for love’s sake is the motto or formula of a *bhakti-yogin*. God is an embodiment of love, and one attains God by loving God. *Vasanas* (worldly desires) and *trisanas* (cravings) are enemies of *bhakti*. So long as there is in mind any trace of desire for sensual objects, a person cannot have an intense longing for God³. *Bhakti* is also defined as “a supreme attachment to God, a spontaneous longing of the soul for God, and a feeling of the deepest love towards God”⁴. The intense love of

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¹ M. Dhavamony, *Love of God According to Saivasiddhanta* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 13-14.

² B. K. Goswami, *The Bhakti Cult in Ancient India* (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Studies, 1954), 113.

³ *Bhakti* is the chief of sciences. He is wealthy indeed, who has love for the Lord. There is no sorrow other than lack of devotion to the Lord. There is no right course except love of the devotee for the Lord. The name, qualities, and *lilas* of the Lord are the chief things to be remembered. The lotus feet of the Lord are the chief objects of meditation. The *bhakti-yogin* would drink the nectar of divine love forever. Please refer to Swami Sivananda, *All about Hinduism* (Rishikesh: The Sivananda Literature Research Institute, 1961), 171-172.

⁴ *Bhakti* expresses solidarity and oneness with God who alone commands the cheerful devotion of the *bhakti* and it promotes an all round benevolence in the furtherance of the life interests of fellow-

God which the Bible in general and the *Spiritual Exercises* in particular teaches has many similarities at the spiritual and mystical horizon with the *paramabhakti* of the Bhagavad Gita. Thus in this paper, the writer tries to see the points of convergence and divergence between the *paramabhakti* of the Bhagavad Gita and the intense love of God of the *Spiritual Exercises*.

1. *Paramabhakti* in the Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad Gita is the great expression of devotion to a personal God, the Lord as Vishnu, blending the traditions of the Upanishads and the Vedas so that it is a wonderful synthesis of Hindu doctrine: "Give me your mind, give me your heart, your offering and adoration, and thus with your soul in harmony making me your goal supreme, you shall in truth come to me" (BG 18:63). So the Ultimate Reality, the Brahman/Atman, is seen to be manifested in Krishna, the personal God, and the *yogin* is called to give himself totally to him in the worship of *bhakti* (loving devotion). Thus, love is seen to be the culmination of the quest for God. Krishna says, "He who loves me is dear to me" (BG 12:14; 18:68-69). R. C. Zaehner correctly says that this is a new revelation of the love of God for man⁵. In the Bhagavad Gita, it comes out not only that human beings love God, but that God loves human beings. Therefore, Hinduism, through the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, arrives at the idea that God is love.

Ramanuja, one of the greatest Acharyas, indicates seven aids for following the path of loving devotion (*bhakti yoga*) to the Personal Lord Krishna. All these are aimed at securing purity of mind and heart to love the Lord intensely, since this ongoing search is possible only with pure mind and heart.

1. *Viveka* or discernment: By this is meant discrimination among food substances in view of achieving and maintaining the purity of body. If the food is pure, the body is pure; if the body is pure, the mind is pure; and if the mind is pure, constant remembrance of God becomes possible. One who wishes to grow in *bhakti* must abstain from impure food substances.
2. *Vimoka* or freedom from sense pleasures: Passion, anger, infatuation, hatred and other sensual pleasures are the main obstacles to spiritual growth, and so freedom from sense pleasures achieved by conquering them is the second step in *bhaktisadhana*.
3. *Abhyasa* or practice: It is concentrating the mind continuously on God. It is also called *Ishvarapranidhana*, worship of *Ishvara*. This unchanging concentration can be gained only by long practice.

beings and the full realization of a free life for all. For a detailed study on this theme, please see A. K. Dutta, *Bhaktiyoga* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1960), 6-7.

⁵ Cf. R. C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad Gita with a Commentary Based on the Original Sources* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 29.

4. *Kriya* or fivefold actions: It is the fulfilment of the fivefold duties consisting of a) study of sacred Scriptures, b) sacrifice to the gods, c) offerings for the departed, d) providing food for animals and birds, and e) hospitality towards neighbours and guests.
5. *Kalvana* or practice of virtue: It is practice of such higher virtues as truthfulness, compassion, charity, love, justice and non-violence.
6. *Anavasada* or freedom from despair: It is the ability to free oneself from despair even in the face of failure and suffering.
7. *Anuddharsha* or absence of haughtiness: It is the quality of maintaining one's modesty and equanimity at all times, even in victory and joy⁶.

These are the seven *bhaktisadhanas* which help the *bhakta* to move with confidence along his path of loving devotion to the Lord. *Bhakti*, as the very literal meaning of the term indicates, is a "sharing" in the divine object of one's devotion, practising all virtues and qualities proper to the status of divine beings.

Since *bhakti* involves the fulfilment of obligations according to the scriptures and the disciplined study of the scriptures, which is open only for the select, Ramanuja thinks of *prapatti* (the way of self-surrender) of the Bhagavad Gita as being open to all: "Over and above the ways of knowledge and work, Ramanuja envisages a very simple way of reaching the Lord as proposed by the Bhagavad Gita, the way of unqualified and absolute self-surrender known as *prapatti*. It is also called *saranagati*"⁷.

Paramabhakti in the Bhagavad Gita has been described as "primary (*mukhya*), absolute (*nirguna*), pure affection (*ragatmika*), transcendent (*parama*) and perfect (*siddha*)"⁸. The revelation of the totality of God is very gradual in the Bhagavad Gita, which adopts the point of view of *paramabhakti*, from its beginning to its end. This gradual process is the emergence of a loving God out of an impersonal Brahman (BG 2:71-72; 5:16-29; 6:8-47; 7:28; 9:14, 24, 28, 34; 11:24; 14:26-27; 15:19; 18:53-55, 65-69). Ramanuja summarizes his ideas on *paramabhakti* as follows: "We have already declared that the means of attaining God is *paramabhakti* in the form of re-memorization, which is immeasurably and overwhelmingly dear to the devotee. It is achieved by total loving surrender of the devotee to his Personal God"⁹.

⁶ For Ramanuja's *Bhaktisadhanas*, please refer to J. Manickath, "Ramanuja's Devotional Approach to Spirituality," in *Jeevadharma* 14 (1984) 360-367.

⁷ M. Yamunacharya, *Ramanuja's Teachings in His Own Words* (Bombay: Bhavan's Book University, 1963), 114.

⁸ R. C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad Gita with a Commentary Based on the Original Sources*, 27.

⁹ J. A. B. Van Buitinen, *Vedarthasamgraha* (Poona: Deccan College Research Institute, 1956), 141; "Loving devotion is directing the current of the mind to flow constantly to God. Thinking, feeling and willing are each absorbed in Divine consciousness, like the attraction of iron-filings to the magnet or a river to the ocean. The *bhakta*, who fulfils the will of Bhagavan in loving devotion will attain salvation. They will see God face to face, and experience his bliss". See Y. Masih, *Shankara's Universal Philosophy of Religion* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1987), 111-112.

The Bhagavad Gita teaches the salvific nature of true *paramabhakti*. Lord Krishna is the object of devotion and adoration in the Bhagavad Gita. Krishna calls Arjuna a *bhakta* if only Arjuna trusts Krishna's friendly discourses and becomes his loyal disciple. In BG 4:11 Krishna declares that he loves his devotees with the same love with which the devotees approach him. In the Bhagavad Gita, *paramabhakti* is the single-minded attachment to Krishna, and it is total God-centredness aimed at loving surrender to God: "Cast off all works on me" (BG 3:30), exhorts Krishna; "Do the work as an offering to me" (BG 9:27), and "He whose work is unto me, whose goal I am, my devotee free from attachment, void of enmity to any being, he comes to me" (BG 11:35). It is only through *bhakti* that one realizes the true nature of God: "By his loving devotion (*bhakti*) he comes to know me as I am" (BG 18:55). *Paramabhakti* as God-centredness is best expressed in BG 11:55: "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"¹⁰. The Bhagavad Gita underlines the fact that human efforts alone do not make the *yogin* perfect; they must be aided by God's grace (*prasada* BG 18:56). The ultimate experience of God is in the nature of loving, blissful interpersonal communion between the *yogin* and the Lord¹¹. *Paramabhakti*, thus, is a loving attitude towards God and his will; it is selfless attachment and total surrender to God; it is God-centredness.

Paramabhakti in the Bhagavad Gita, as loving God with all one's mind and heart, finds its culmination in the intuitive realization of God. This intuitive realization pervades all the theological pursuits reflecting on the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita. It is a movement from *parabhakti* to *parajnana*, finally leading to the culmination of *paramabhakti*: "*Parabhakti* is the initial stage, where the *yogin* has that love for God which is inherent in the heart of human beings. In *parajnana* the soul's relation to God becomes intimate, and the *yogin* sees the worldly things as worthless in relation to the Divine goodness. *Paramabhakti* is the supreme devotion, and through this uniquely intimate relationship with the Divine, the *yogin* is united with God (BG 11:55). Here *bhakti* is a form of meditation where alone the *yogin* 'sees' the Divine as it is"¹². These stages of the upward progression of the soul's Divinely-oriented journey are organically related. In every stage of *bhakti*, the *yogin* is becoming more at home with the loving God. Through *bhakti*, the soul becomes more and more vividly conscious of its relation to God, until at last it surrenders (*prapatti*) itself to God. Essence of *prapatti* is the transfer of one's own spiritual longings, burdens, and responsibilities to God in utter helplessness, with devout prayer, and with infinite confidence in the love, mercy and grace of God. Thus *bhakti* is an act of complete abandonment of the self to the will of God. In this state there is no longer any self-love or self-seeking in the *yogin*, for it is God who takes the place of self. What others see in the *yogin* is a transfigured life.

¹⁰ T. Manninezhath, "*Bhakti* in the Religious Traditions of Tamil Nadu," in *Jeevadbara* 20 (1990) 414.

¹¹ Cf. S. Karotermprél, *Following Christ in Mission* (Bombay: Pauline Publications, 1995), 263.

¹² M. Yamunacharya, *Ramanuja's Teachings in His Own Words* (Bombay: Bhavan's Book University, 1963), 52.

According to R. C. Zaehner, the real message of the Bhagavad Gita is that the immortal state of Brahman which is Nirvana is imperfect unless and until it is filled out with the love of God and love for God:

Let a man give up all thought of 'I', force, pride, desire and anger and possessiveness, let him not think of anything as 'mine', at peace; if he does this, to becoming Brahman is he conformed. Brahman become, with self serene, he grieves not nor desires; the same to all contingent beings he gains the highest love and loyalty to Me. By love and loyalty he comes to know Me as I really am, how great I am and who; and once he knows Me as I am, he enters Me forthwith... And now again give ear to this my highest Word, of all the most mysterious: 'I love you well'. Therefore will I tell you your salvation? Bear Me in mind, love Me and worship Me, sacrifice, prostrate yourself to Me: so will you come to Me, I promise you truly, for you are dear to Me (18:53-55)¹³.

For Ramanuja, *bhakti* is supreme and *karma* and *jñana* become preliminaries. By *bhakti* he means the steady remembrance of God. *Bhakti*, as Ramanuja understands it, has as its preliminaries *karma* (action) and *jñana* (knowledge), which involve the fulfillment of the obligations according to the scriptures and the disciplined study of the scriptures, which is open to the higher castes, is a difficult and arduous path. It is possible only for the select. But Ramanuja thinks of *paramabhakti* (the way of total self-surrender in love) as being open to all: "Over and above the ways of *jñana*, *karma* and

¹³ Some of the relevant passages on *paramabhakti* from the Bhagavad Gita are as follows:

- 7:17: "Of these the man of wisdom, ever integrated, who loves and worships One alone excels: for the man of wisdom I am exceeding dear and he is dear to Me".
- 7:28: "But some there are for whom all ill is ended, doers of what is good and pure: released at last from the confusion of duality, steady in their vows, they love and worship Me".
- 8:14: "How easily am I won by him who bears Me in mind unceasingly, thinking of nothing else at all – an athlete of the spirit ever integrated in himself".
- 9:14: "Me do they ever glorify, for Me they strive, full firm their vows; to Me do they bow down, devoted in their love, and integrated ever in themselves they pay Me worship".
- 9:34: "On Me your mind, on Me your loving service, for Me your service, to Me your prostrations: now that you have thus integrated self, your striving bent on Me, to Me you will surely come".
- 10:10-11: "To these men who are ever integrated and commune with Me in love I give that integration of the soul by which they may draw nigh to Me. Out of compassion for those same men all darkness born of ignorance I dispel with wisdom's shining lamp, abiding ever in my own true nature".
- 11:54-55: "But by worship of love addressed to Me, none other, Arjuna, can I be known and seen in such a form and as I really am: so can my lovers enter into Me. 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".
- 14:26-27: "And as to those who do Me honour with spiritual exercise, in loyalty and love undeviating, passed clean beyond these constituents, to becoming Brahman they are conformed. For I am the base supporting Brahman – immortal Brahman which knows no change – supporting too the eternal law of righteousness and absolute beatitude".
- 15:19: "Whoever thus knows Me, unconfused, as the Person All-Sublime, knows all and knowing all communes with Me with all his being, all his love". R. C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad Gita with a Commentary Based on the Original Sources*, 36, 289-290.

bhakti, Ramanuja envisages a very simple way of reaching the Lord, the way of unqualified and absolute self-surrender known as *paramabhakti*¹⁴. In the Commentary on Bhagavad Gita 3:26, Vishvanatha Chakravartin explains that the performance of work (*karma*) even without desire may serve some extrinsic purpose, but neither work (*karma*) nor knowledge (*jñana*) is integral to the fundamental religious goal, loving devotion (*bhakti*) to Krishna: “Knowledge depends upon purity of mind and this purity depends upon performing work without desire. Devotion, however, depends upon its own efficacy and is not dependent upon anything, not even purity of mind”¹⁵. The way of *paramabhakti* is that of resignation: “It is an attitude which enables the individual soul to discover that God is the ultimate end of realization and that the means to that realization also lies through God”¹⁶. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna is the *avatar* of God himself. Krishna’s attributes as God are numerous: He is the best in all categories of beings (BG 10:21-38). He is the origin of all existents and the Lord of all beings; He supports the whole universe. Krishna is the God of gods and the Lord of the whole universe. In the 11th Chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna reveals himself in his proper and awe-inspiring form – a form with many mouths and eyes, with many divine ornaments, with many uplifted divine weapons, with faces on all sides, with a splendor as if of a thousand suns, etc (BG 11:10-12). The Bhagavad Gita’s conception of divinity is revealed through countless titles attributed to Lord Krishna¹⁷. Perhaps *Purushottama* – the Supreme Person – is the most popular of them all (BG 15:16-17) because, in *Purushottama*, Krishna becomes the Personal Lord and the *yogin* can surrender himself totally to the feet of the Lord in *paramabhakti* (BG 11:43; 18.53-55).

2. Intense love of God in the *Spiritual Exercises*

In the *Spiritual Exercises*, God is presented as a loving Father and the human beings as his adopted sons and daughters through Jesus Christ. A human being is considered as created by God in His own image and likeness. As in the Bhagavad Gita, the human soul is not eternal, but created by God. It has a beginning, but after its creation lives for eternity. Man has only one birth and death; the *Spiritual Exercises* does not admit of transmigration. The Bhagavad Gita’s conception that human being has to surrender totally to God in a personal way is endorsed by the *Spiritual Exercises*, too. Love, for Ignatius, is a stream which finds its source in the Trinity and returns to the Trinity. Creation is the self-exteriorization of the Divine Love of the Trinity, implying no external necessi-

¹⁴ M. Yamunacharya, *Ramanuja’s Teachings in His Own Words*, 114.

¹⁵ Vishvanatha Chakravartin composed the Sarartha-varshini, a commentary upon the Bhagavad Gita, toward the end of the seventeenth century. Vishvanatha considers work and knowledge to be effective at all only mixed with loving devotion. Please see B. L. Smith, *Hinduism: New Essays in the History of Religions* (Netherlands: E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1976), 45.

¹⁶ K. D. Bharadwaj, *The Philosophy of Ramanuja* (New Delhi: Voice of India Publications, 1958), 201.

¹⁷ Cf. D. L. Gosling, “Christian Response within Hinduism,” in *Religious Studies* 10 (1974) 435.

ty but a purely internal, spontaneous urge. Hence, creation is the free and loving act of God (SE 23, 230-237). He is its source, support and goal. God's complete and perfect self-expression is the Logos, whose externalization in history is Jesus Christ. And so, for any person who loves, love involves a sense of limitlessness whereby none of his desires is ever totally fulfilled: "Our hearts are restless until they rest in God". For the apostle Paul, this desire to love God includes the conviction of having done nothing up to the present and of always wishing to do "more". "The great love of God shown through the Incarnation (SE 101-109), through the Kingdom of Christ (SE 91-98), through the public life of Jesus, through the Three Kinds of Humility (SE 165-167), through suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus (SE 190-229) is shown in deeds rather than words"¹⁸.

The focus of the Second Week of the *Spiritual Exercises* is the following of Christ, not merely a willingness to continue his mission but actually continuing that mission in and with him: "To ask for an interior knowledge of our Lord who became human for me, that I may love him more intensely and follow him more closely" (SE 104). This grace to enter into a loving relationship (discipleship-friendship) with Christ directs the dynamics of the Second Week, creating, through its repetition, a logic of the heart, symbolized by the series of colloquies found in the Kingdom of Christ (SE 98), and then in the triple colloquies after the Two Standards (SE 147), the Three Classes of Men (SE 156), and the Three Kinds of Humility (SE 168)¹⁹. The exercitant's experience of love in the Contemplation to Attain Love (SE 230-237) has changed from those first moments of the Principle and Foundation (SE 23), when God was not a clear image, the gifts were gently held, and his openness to God was more of the intellect than the heart.

"The exercitant now knows love as it is freely given to him in creation, in relationships, in moments, in Jesus, in all things. As the exercitant weaves the gifts of love together, the tapestry of God's love becomes quite brilliant. The exercitant's experience of love is also an experience of merging with God. The clarity he normally has gets lost in the love of God. The exercitant finds the experience of love very difficult to express; often, such experiences are indescribable because they are a unity, a completeness, a fullness, and a total absorption"²⁰.

¹⁸ Love consists in a mutual sharing of goods: God is constantly revealing himself, constantly revealing to human beings. It is a sharing that goes on in love; love cannot be without sharing in one's deeds. See O. Warnke, "The Contemplation to Attain Divine Love," in *The Way Supplement* 58 (1987) 75.

¹⁹ "Each meditation is to conclude with a colloquy with Christ or with a triple colloquy with Mary, Christ and God in the metaphor of Father. In suggesting this method of ending with a colloquy, Ignatius revealed his conviction about the power of life-giving dialogue and the energy of the affections to draw us to communion with a God who is redemptively involved in human history. In other words, growth is dialogical and relational". Please see A. Callahan, "The Human Person: Contemporary Theology and the Exercises," in *The Way Supplement* 76 (1993) 89; "I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my father. You did not choose me but I chose you" (Jn 15:15-16). For a detailed study on the dynamics of the Second Week on discipleship-friendship, please see H. Gray, "Changing Structures," in *The Way Supplement* 76 (1993) 80-81.

²⁰ B. Bedolla, "Presenting the Key Meditations," in *The Way Supplement* 49 (1984) 31-32.

For Ignatius, “Discernment is an embodiment of love. It is an awareness of the limits within us, an awareness that forces us to choose the better service from among numerous possibilities and which expresses limitless divine love in a precise human action. It is the humble searching for what God wants here and now”²¹. And so, the love to which Ignatius refers in the discernment of spirits is not any ordinary love for God and for creatures in God. It is an unusual experience in which the nature of Christian love appears most obviously to the person who experiences it. It is the experience the person has when he begins to be “inflamed with love of his Creator and Lord” (*inflamarse en amor de su Criador y Señor*) (SE 316), when the act of love is enriched with intense feelings (spiritual and sensible) of warmth, and when the affective sensibility is, so to speak, set afire. In such an experience, “love shows its power more clearly to us – to us who are so dependent on feeling if we are to believe that our own love is genuine love for God and to find joy in the loving. The sure sign and test for Ignatius are that the person is so disposed toward creatures by an all-consuming love for God is the consequent disposition for doing the will of God (SE 316-324, 329-336)”²². Thus, love without discernment is only a dream, a figment that does not use the ordinary paths which humankind must take and which loses itself in feelings of love for God without any real content. On the other hand, discernment without love is cold and detached analysis that is incapable of grasping the finality of human action and is swallowed up in activism.

Ignatian service of God is the outcome of allowing oneself “to be embraced in the love of God” (SE 15). This idea is forcefully brought out in the Contemplation to Attain Love (SE 230-237), which is an exercise that forms a person to live according to the *Spiritual Exercises*. While the grace the exercitant asks for is that “I may become able to love and serve the Divine Majesty in all things” (SE 233), the whole exercise focuses on God’s love for him²³. The reason behind this focus is “that the exercitant loves in the way he experiences himself being loved. He will never come to love and serve God in all things until he experiences God loving and serving him in all things and in all creation. Thus, at the beginning of the Contemplation to Attain Love (SE 230) as in the Principle and Foundation (SE 23), Ignatius explains that, while love manifests itself in deeds,

²¹ J. W. Padberg, “Personal Experience and the Spiritual Exercises: The Example of Saint Ignatius” in *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 10 (1978) 311.

²² The “love of God” (*amor de Dios*) is used in the following numbers of the *Spiritual Exercises*: SE 15, 65, 150, 184, 230, 234, 284, 316, 317, 320, 322, 330, 338, 370. “Love in general” (*amor en general*) is used as follows: SE 230, 231, 233, 234, 322. The verb “to love” (*amar*) is used by Ignatius in the following: SE 233, 316, 338, 363. For a detailed study on this theme, see I. Iparraguirre, *Vocabulario de Ejercicios Espirituales – Ensayo de hermenéutica Ignaciana* (Roma: Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis, 1978), 11-27.

²³ In his “Contemplation to Attain Love”, Ignatius indicates its goal: It is “to ask for inner knowledge of the many blessings I have received, that I may, so enlightened, be filled with gratitude for them, and in all things love and serve his Divine Majesty”. See L. J. Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius – Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1952), 101.

ultimately love consists in mutual sharing of self with the beloved”²⁴. And since for Ignatius, one’s service is a response of love, service starts first and foremost by “choosing what is more pleasing to the beloved” (SE 151, 152). Ignatius also describes the third Kind of Humility as the most perfect (SE 167) because it entails a personal love for Christ no matter what the cost and a total commitment to the redemptive mission of the Kingdom by choosing total availability for the will of God²⁵. Serving God, therefore, means integrating one’s life into the redemptive mission of God and the love for God. God is with the exercitant in love not for idle contemplation but for inviting the exercitant to share in Christ’s work of creating and saving, of uniting and fulfilling in himself this vast world²⁶.

“The unity of three moments – interior knowledge or realization, love or affectivity, service or action – constitutes the full goal of the Ignatian key meditations in general and the Contemplation to Attain Love in particular. The Contemplation to Attain Love is not an understanding of the sources and implications of love, but rather the personal experience of a development, of a history in which the source is apprehended and its implications accepted. Knowledge, love and service are moments of a single line of interpersonal surrender to God and to his will. Just as a knowledge that did not issue in love would not be interior, so also a love that did not embody itself in service would be deceptive”²⁷.

Thus, the word “serve” carries, for Ignatius, the connotation of loyalty, dedication, and loving and generous commitment to the person and mission of Jesus. The integration of human meaning, affectivity and action allows the exercitant to respond authentically to the will of God in a personal surrender that is both expression and experience of love. What Ignatius means by service is the response to the call of Jesus with no other desire but to be part of a mission that is supremely important and radically challenging: “Give me your love and your grace; that is enough for me” (SE 234). God is with the exercitant in love to help him to search for and to fulfil the will of God in his concrete life situation.

²⁴ The value of our life as a Jesuit does not depend on how much energy we invest in what we do, but on how much love we have, even if one is totally helpless to be able to do anything. It is only service out of love that is a worthy response to love, it is only service out of love that is an expression of “giving self” and so is life generating. See C. Azzopardi, “Loving Him in All Creatures and All Creatures in Him: The Ignatian *Marga* to God,” in *Ignis* 36 (2007) 34.

²⁵ The higher motive of personal love for another and of self-dedication to a cause which transcends strictly personal interests is alone the reason why Ignatius can regard the third Kind of Humility as more perfect than the second. Furthermore, as a practical disposition for making an election, the motive of self-dedication seems preferable to that of legitimate self-interest, because in actual practice an exercitant is thereby more receptive to the influences of divine grace. Please refer to J. A. Bracken, “The Double ‘Principle and Foundation’ in the Spiritual Exercises,” in *Woodstock Letters* 98 (1969) 341-343.

²⁶ Cf. J. Neuner, “The Spiritual Quest: Point of Departure,” in *Ignis* 18 (1989) 47.

²⁷ Knowledge, love, and its commensurate expression in discipleship formed the constant and repeated petition of the Second Week of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Presumably, the interior knowledge has grown to such an affective identification that one is assimilated to Christ in the sorrow of his passion and in the enormous joy of his resurrection. Please see M. Buckley, “The Contemplation to Attain Love,” in *The Way Supplement* 24 (1975) 96.

In the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius sees the consequence of unselfish love to be of pivotal importance, as does Vyasa in the Bhagavad Gita. If love is pure love for God and powerful enough to unify all a person's loves, the lover will have one all consuming desire that unifies all desires, the desire for whatever is God's will. "As long as one loves God, no object of desire can be attractive except insofar as it appears to be God's will. Therefore, the lover will also have one basic choice that in principle settles all choices, the choice of whatever alternative in any concrete situation for choice is God's will – or what comes to the same thing for Ignatius, whatever is more for the glory of God, more for the praise and service for God"²⁸ (SE 1, 23, 166, 169, 177, 179-180, 184). The Contemplation to Attain Love (SE 230-237) states that

"love 'depends on actions' more than words, and that it consists in a mutual sharing of resources, things and works. 'Depends' here means 'shows itself', since the proper effects of love are actions more than words. As for love's consisting in a sharing of resources does not mean that such sharing is love's essence, but rather its effect. For love itself properly consists in the affection of the lover considered as an act or passion in him. But since to love is to will the other's good, its effect and goal is the good we wish for the beloved, whether in the sharing of our resources or of other goods with him"²⁹.

The great offering of "Take, Lord, and Receive" (SE 234) is indeed a loving surrender to the loving God. Through this decisive surrender (of memory, understanding, will and all that one is and all that one has), the exercitant becomes actually transformed and disposes of himself according to the will of God³⁰. The surrender of self-will spoken of in SE 189 is sought for and symbolized in the "Suscipe" – "Take, Lord, and Receive...my entire will" (SE 234). "It is a prayer of perfect surrender and self-divestment – a truly Eucharistic prayer. In response to the God who has perfectly divested himself in Jesus, the one who says, 'Take and receive, this is my Body and Blood, my all', the exercitant divests himself in return and says, 'Take, Lord, and receive my all'"³¹. Karl Rahner has put it quite poignantly: "Whoever can say the 'Suscipe' with his whole heart and soul and mean every word of it...has broken away from himself in the following of Christ; he has arrived at that point where Ignatius wants him to be at the end of the *Spiritual Exercises*"³².

The four points of the Contemplation to Attain Love (SE 234-237) help the exercitant to see God as lover in all God's giving in creation; to see God as lover in Jesus, God's

²⁸ J. J. Toner, *A Commentary on Saint Ignatius' Rules for the Discernment of Spirits: A guide to the Principles and Practice* (St Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1982), 97.

²⁹ Note from the *Directory of Juan Alfonso de Polanco* is taken from M. E. Palmer, *On Giving the Spiritual Exercises – The Early Jesuit Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 144.

³⁰ Cf. V. Malpan, "Bhakti-yoga of the Bhagavad Gita and the Ignatian Contemplation to Attain Love," in *Ignis* 37 (2008) 23.

³¹ J. Udris, "Surrender: The Ignatian Principle for Growth in Christlikeness," in *Studies in Spirituality* 9 (1998) 194.

³² K. Rahner, *Spiritual Exercises* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1966), 266.

personal, self-revealing presence with us; to see God as lover in the continuing labours of redemption; and to see God as lover in the total outpouring of all goodness³³. The Contemplation to Attain Love itself brings into synthesis what has gone before it, with the four points of its process summarizing the four weeks of the *Spiritual Exercises*. What is achieved by the Contemplation to Attain Love, then, is a fourfold, comprehensive unity in the love of God: “1) within the human person: of knowledge, love and activity in the surrender to God; 2) within all that is in the goodness and service of God; 3) between the human person and God: of the lover and the beloved in the intercommunion of giving; 4) within the development of the *Spiritual Exercises*: of all four weeks reaching their dynamic integrity in this self-transcending contemplation”³⁴. Among all these disparate terms and experiences, there is a steady movement towards comprehension and integrity, a union in which all things are included and dynamically integrated in a love which catches up all that is and that has gone before. The purpose of the Contemplation to Attain Love is finally attained when the exercitant can love and serve the Divine Majesty in all things by fulfilling God’s will (*pueda en todo amar y server a su divina majestad*).

“The exercitant discovers that everything begins and ends in the love of God. He bursts into that profound expression of interior freedom thus: ‘*ésta me basta*’ (that is enough for me). The exercitant believes in a God of love, ‘unconditional love’, then it follows the choices that he makes in his life are deep down all about his seeking and finding the will of the Giver of these gifts. If some gifts seem to lead to him away from God, no matter how good the gift, he decides that these gifts are not helpful to him and so he turns away from them. Ignatius seems to indicate that our behaviour follows upon our grasp that God loves us into existence”³⁵.

³³ Cf. D. L. Fleming, “Being Colleagues and Co-laborers,” in *Ignis* 27 (1998) 7.

³⁴ Everything speaks of God as it resembles him, and calls back to God as the image calls back to its reality. This is to catch some glimpse of Who is giving, Who is present, Who is working and laboring for human beings. The last point of the Contemplation to Attain Love recognizes that all things speak of God who has given them, who dwells within them, who works in them for the liberation of human beings. Each of the points contains a moment in which recognition gives way to love and love to concrete surrender: each of them contains the *Suscipe*. For a detailed study between the four points of the Contemplation to Attain Love and the four weeks of the *Spiritual Exercises*, please see M. Buckley, “The Contemplation to Attain Love,” in *The Way Supplement* 24 (1975) 97-99 & 101-103.

³⁵ When we live in God’s unconditional love, this world is hardly a valley of tears. Rather, we see in it a world of God’s gifting. But God’s loved creation does cry out for us to act with God to bring it to a fulfillment and so to bring about the Kingdom of God, a reign of justice and love. We humans often obscure a world of God’s gifts by wasting them, polluting them, hoarding them, destroying them. So it is not the world of gifts that is questionable; it is the human use of God’s gifts. With the defining life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God has entered all of us into the assured victorious struggle against every limiting factor. All of this way of thinking is included in the words of the Ignatian Principle and Foundation and in the Contemplation to Attain Love. Please see D. L. Fleming, “Becoming Ignatian,” in *Ignis* 32 (2003) 29.

3. Dialogue between the Bhagavad Gita and the *Spiritual Exercises*

There is a striking correspondence between the *Paramabhakti* of the Bhagavad Gita and Christian love of (for) God. *Paramabhakti* and the intense love for God are leading the *bhakta* and the exercitant with the following feelings: satisfaction, contentment, sense of security, peace, tranquillity, repose, delight, rejoicing, sweetness, warmth, tears of love and joy (SE 315, 329, 335 = BG 11:54; 12:6-8; 18:55, 66). Being-in-love with God is, in the *Spiritual Exercises*, the first principle of man's thoughts, feelings and actions, of his hopes and fears, joys and sorrows. As one has already seen, this intense love for (of) God is found not only in Christian spirituality but also in Gita spirituality³⁶. God gives all human beings sufficient grace to find his will for salvation. Both Ignatian spirituality and Gita spirituality affirm that love cannot be forced and that it emerges spontaneously from consciousness. An elevation of consciousness gives way naturally to a heightening of love. One has only to realize what God is doing out of love for him, and this recognition itself constitutes a new power within the exercitant or the *yogin*. It enables him to do what otherwise would have been impossible: to be so caught up in God, to be so attracted and drawn by him, that he finds that he loves him (SE 167, 234 = BG 11:35, 55; 18:55). Love is not forced; it is evoked.

The devotion or the *bhakti* to the object of worship is seen in the decision of the *bhakta* to embrace the loving God. The *bhakta* is the devotee offering his service, similar to that which a loyal servant offered to his master. The *bhakta* is one who shares the "*bhaga*", that is, the wealth of the Bhagavan³⁷. *Bhakti* is a loving devotion, and it includes total self-surrender: "a readiness on the part of the *bhakta* to let go of oneself into the bountifulness of the divine, motivated by love. It is not a mere intellectual exercise to attain theoretical knowledge about the ultimate reality but an attempt to know and experience that reality by a commitment in love, which, ultimately, turns out to be loving devotion culminating in total self-surrender"³⁸. The vast majority of Hindus con-

³⁶ A basic component of religious involvement among Christians is God's gift of his love. This is true also of the basic component of religious involvement in world religions. Especially so in Hinduism. It is from the time of the Bhagavad Gita that the religion of being in love with God develops in Hinduism. As this Hindu religion of love is essential and vital for the meeting of the two religions. Please refer to M. Dhavamony, "Christian Approaches to Hinduism: Points of Contact and Difficulties," in *Gregorianum* 53 (1972) 106.

³⁷ "If these truths have been told to a high-minded man, who feels the highest devotion for God, and for his Guru as for God, then they will shine forth, - then they will shine forth indeed" (Sweta Upanishad VI, 23). Thus *bhakti* means a share or portion of the divine benevolence. As such, it was equated with religious devotion. This part of Sweta Upanishad is taken from F. Max Müller, *The Sacred Books of the East* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1884), 267.

³⁸ *Bhakti* shall not adopt a method of analysis but synthesis, not division but unity and harmony, as love and surrender cannot perpetuate divisiveness and disintegration within reality. It is not an attempt to spend life in a spiritual frenzy, as it is sometimes made out to be; far more, it aims at a transformation

ceive of God as the supreme object of man's worship and loving devotion, best referred to, perhaps, as Bhagavan, the Personal Lord. God is to be reached in a personal way by the *bhakta's* opening himself to this relationship of loving devotion. Bhagavan descends to *bhakta* in various forms. Bhagavan is the Personal Lord to whom the *bhakta* must surrender all he has, including his will and understanding. This surrender reveals the earnest desire to find the divine will and to fulfill it. Bhagavan is gracious to all who worship him truly and reveals his love and compassion unreservedly in times of need³⁹. Ardent worship, unqualified devotion, loving service, and complete self-surrender to the personal Lord will lead the *bhakta* to be in union with him, which eventually will mean the realization of the Absolute. Like the kinship of a clan or a tribe, so also is seen the religious kinship between the *bhakta* and the Bhagavan. The Christian tradition offers a similar relationship or spiritual progress, for example, "In the case of the healed born-blind man it was a gradual development of a ripening relationship (Jn 9:11-38). When the blind man was healed, he recognized Jesus first as a man (Jn 9:11), next he came to know him as a prophet (Jn 9:17), next, while in dispute with the Jewish leaders, the man born blind affirmed that Jesus was 'one sent from God' (Jn 9:33, 33), and finally, when he was put out of the synagogue and again met Jesus, the once blind man confessed him as the Lord (Jn 9:38). In the life of Ignatius, he was first Ignatius the courtier (Loyola), then Ignatius the Pilgrim (Manresa), then Ignatius the student (Paris), then Ignatius the mystic (La Storta), and finally Ignatius the saint (Rome). He thus progresses from blindness to purification, and then to illumination, and then to union"⁴⁰. In the Bhagavad Gita also one finds references to such steps of development in the relationship between the *yogin* and Lord Krishna. "The first stage is referred as '*samipyā*' or nearness; the second stage is referred as '*salokya*' or friendship; the third stage as '*sayujya*' or partnership; and the final stage as '*Samadhi*' or oneness"⁴¹. So the

of the life of *bhakta*, as the self surrender calls for attuning the *bhakta's* life to that which is loved and worshipped. Please refer to S. Chackalackal, "Modern Saints of *Bhakti* Tradition," in *Journal of Dharma* 29 (2004) 274-275.

³⁹ A positive response of man to God has a soteriological consequences whether it is conceived as a return journey of realization of the Absolute as the "Ground and Principle" of existence, or seen as the process of reaching Paramatman through self-realization or knowing God as Bhagavan at a personal level through loving devotion, self surrender and worship. Please see J. Plamthodathil, "Soteriological Perspectives in Hindu Religion and Culture," in *Journal of Dharma* 12 (1987) 424.

⁴⁰ Cf. R. H. Strachan, *The Fourth Gospel* (London: SCM Press, 1920), 142.

⁴¹ The original meaning of *Samadhi* is "the state of intense concentration induced by meditation in which union with the Absolute Being is attained, the last stage of *Yoga*". The etymology of the word is simple: two prefixes followed by the root *dha* that means to put, place, lay in or on. The prefix *sam*, like its Latin (*cum*) and Greek (*syn*) counterparts, has the meaning of totality, concentration, while '*a*' suggests reverse motion, i.e., one of returning to the centre rather than dispersing itself into an outward search. It has been translated as "absorption", and more technically as "entasis", contrasting with "ecstasy" used in the Western mystical writing: the *yogin* in *Samadhi* "stands inside" rather than "outside" the self. In both cases there is a movement, a change: in ecstasy from the ego to the One "out there"; in *Samadhi*, from the ego to the One "inside", the real Self. In the Bhagavad Gita, *Samadhi* occurs three times (BG 2:44, 53, 54) more or less in the sense it has in *yoga*. That is, in the process of concentration

exercitant in the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *yogin* in the Bhagavad Gita move from nearness to purification, and then to illumination, and then to union.

In the rules for the Second Week, when Ignatius explains the consolation without preceding cause⁴², he speaks of it as, “drawing the exercitant totally into love of his Divine Majesty” (SE 330) and in his letter of June 18, 1536 to Teresa Rejadell he mentions “lifting the person up totally to his divine love”⁴³. The word “totally” seems to be a key word, pointing to what is most distinctive in this consolation without preceding cause. It belongs solely to God to enter the creature and to convert his or her love into a total love of God himself⁴⁴ (SE 330, 336). Such love is, without doubt, a total love for God, leaving no room for any love, even for self, which is not in God, and rendering the lover free of any desire except the desire to do what God wills. There is a convergence also on this point with the idea of *paramabhakti* of the Bhagavad Gita. In the culmination of *bhakti yoga*, one notices that “Krishna’s teaching holds out to his disciple a hope of ultimate attainment to that highest devotion (*paramabhakti*) which is release, where perfect love and perfect knowledge coincide, where entry into Krishna’s being and to be Brahman are one”⁴⁵. Only the worship of love addressed to Krishna can result in real knowledge of God (BG 11:54). It was love that made Arjuna capable of obtaining grace in the presence of Krishna. It is by love of God that Arjuna receives the celestial eye to behold the transfiguration of Krishna, a rare and unique grace (BG 11:5-8). This genuine love deepens one’s knowledge of God and reveals the deepest secrets of God’s mysteries to man. Sri Ramakrishna says, “A talk arose whether man can see God with his physical eyes. When *bhakti* is practised, the *sadhaka* develops a superior sense organ, which has the power to see and hear supermundane things. With that spiritual eye, God is beheld and the devo-

(*dharana*) and attention (*dhyanam*) a stage comes, where the *yogin* does not possess the object but the object possesses the *yogin*, so that he is transformed into it by the effect of the one-pointed attention and is unconscious of anything else. Please refer to G. Gispert-Sauch, “Samadhi,” in *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theology* 66 (2002) 790; O. M. Rao, “The Dynamics of Belief Compared between the Fourth Gospel and the Bhagavad Gita,” in *The Indian Journal of Theology* 33 (1984) 29.

⁴² In the *Spiritual Diary* of Ignatius, he speaks of the intense love of God which might be consolations without preceding cause: “Entering the chapel and overwhelmed with a great devotion to the Most Holy Trinity, with very increased love and intense tears, without seeing the Persons distinctly, as in the last two days, but perceiving in one luminous clarity a single Essence, I was drawn entirely to its love, and later, while preparing the altar and vesting, great devotion and tears, grace always assisting with much satisfaction of soul” (SD 99-100).

“Later, the thought occurring to me that tomorrow I should say the Mass of the Most Holy Trinity, to determine what was to be done, or to end it altogether, many movements came upon me and tears, and from moment to moment over some space of time, great movements, sobs and floods of tears, drawing me entirely to the love of the Most Holy Trinity, with many colloquies” (SD 130).

These experiences of the intense love of God of Ignatius are taken from W. J. Young, *The Spiritual Journal of St. Ignatius of Loyola* (Maryland: Woodstock, 1958), 22 & 29.

⁴³ W. J. Young, *The Spiritual Journal of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, 84.

⁴⁴ Cf. J. J. Toner, *A Commentary on Saint Ignatius’ Rules for the Discernment of Spirits: A guide to the Principles and Practice*, 220 & 309.

⁴⁵ W. D. P. Hill, *The Bhagavad Gita* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 68.

tee is commingled with Him”⁴⁶. Thus the *bhakta* crosses over to Krishna-realization through integrated and intensified love alone, as does the exercitant who has consolation without preceding cause. “*Bhakti* as the supreme end or as the liberated state implies union with and surrender to God; it is the felt participation of the soul in the total being of God”⁴⁷. At this stage, time and space cease, and there is no need of any structure to explain the experience one enjoys in God forever (BG 18:55-56 = SE 316, 330, 336) and this shows the intensity of *paramabhakti* or the intense love of God on the human person⁴⁸.

One aspect of the experience of divine love is total surrender: “Surrender implies the gift of oneself; while the gift...is itself always to a certain extent a surrender, it is therefore the outward act pertaining to the inward experience...it follows that love always presupposes love in return, exactly as the gift presupposes a counter-gift. Or rather, as man’s gift is always a counter-gift, so too his love is always love in return”⁴⁹. The ambiguity of love as total surrender to the will of God has been movingly portrayed in the key meditations of the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *bhakti yoga* of the Bhagavad Gita. As one has already seen, *paramabhakti* of the Bhagavad Gita and the intense love of the *Spiritual Exercises* do not only mean man’s love for God but also God’s love for man. The God of the *Spiritual Exercises* and the God of the Bhagavad Gita intervene personally to save human persons from sins and other bondages (SE 102-108 = BG 18:58, 66, 73); he instructs and attracts them by means of his descent to earth and is ever active in human persons and in history (SE 91-98; 143-147; 230-237 = BG 4:11; 5:29; 12:14-20); he gives them supreme peace and salvation (SE 155; 167; 169 = BG 18:56, 62, 66).

Thus *paramabhakti* of the Bhagavad Gita or the intense love of God of the *Spiritual Exercises* softens the heart and removes jealousy, hatred, lust, anger, egoism, pride and arrogance. Each infuses joy, divine ecstasy, bliss, peace and knowledge. All cares, worries and anxieties, fears, mental torments and tribulations entirely vanish. The *yogin* or the exercitant is freed from all bondage and attains the immortal abode of everlasting peace, bliss and knowledge.

Both the traditions agree that *paramabhakti* and the intense love of God are the pleasant, smooth, direct road to God. This intense love of (for) God is sweet in the beginning, sweet in the middle, and sweet in the end. It gives the highest, undecaying bliss. The *paramabhakti* or the intense love of God is the most superior way to God. 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 exercitant or the *yogin* finds his fulfilment, even though this goal may be visualized in different images.

⁴⁶ S. Chidbhavananda, *The Bhagavad Gita* (Tamilnadu: Tirumalai-Tirupati Devashrams Press, 1991), 638.

⁴⁷ M. Dhavamony, *Love of God According to Saivasiddhanta* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 44.

⁴⁸ G. Parrinder points to two doctrines in the Bhagavad Gita that he considers helpful to Christian theology and they are ‘belief in survival of death, and faith in Personal God of Love’. For a detailed study, please refer to E. G. Parrinder, *The Significance of the Bhagavad Gita for Christian Theology* (London: Dr. William’s Trust, 1968), 21.

⁴⁹ G. Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestations* (London: Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1938), 509.

Most of the schools of Hinduism which say that God is love, except Sankara and his followers⁵⁰, make God dependent on the creature in some way. There is no one to love God but the creature, and so God is dependent on the creature. The Christian doctrine of Trinity introduces, in this regard, something which no other doctrine offers. In the Christian doctrine God is love because there is relationship in the Godhead: a relationship of knowledge and a relationship of love. The love of God the Creator is an overflow and expression of that love which is in the Trinity. The love of God in us is God's own love: the Father's love for the Son and the Son's love for the Father in the Holy Spirit, which is itself the communication of the love of God.

“What we want to suggest is that if we really view the Bhagavad Gita in this light, we can come to a profound understanding of the Hindu experience of God and we can see that it is fundamentally consistent with our own Christian experience of God. What we are trying to do is to read the Bhagavad Gita in the light of Christ, not in the sense of trying to read Christian doctrine into them; but just as the Apostles and Fathers for that matter, read the Old Testament in the light of Christ and brought out a meaning in the Old Testament which could not be seen before, but which was really there, so we think we can bring out a fullness of meaning in the Bhagavad Gita and give it a consistency which is perhaps not altogether there”⁵¹.

One has to recognize that behind all Hinduism, behind all its vast multiplicity of doctrines and rituals, there is a wonderful mystical experience which has been experienced age after age, right down to the present day. It is the awareness of the presence of God in Hinduism, and this awareness is what the Hindus are seeking through *advaita*⁵², *vishistadvaita*⁵³, and *dvaita*⁵⁴. All of these three schools have a certain insight and a cer-

⁵⁰ In order to preserve the absolute independence of God, Sankara felt that you had to deny any real relationship between God and creation, and so he cannot say that God is love.

⁵¹ B. Griffiths, “The Advaitic Experience and the Personal God in the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita,” in *Indian Theological Studies* 15 (1978) 85.

⁵² Few words are so characteristic of the classical theological tradition of India as the word *advaita* which, in some form or other, defines most of the Vedanta school and much of the *Bhakti* tradition. *Advaita* literally means non-duality. It is a negative word which denies that Brahman and the world can be counted as two. Sankara's *advaita* is, first of all, a paradoxical affirmation of the Otherness and yet the Selfness of the Source of the universe. It is “without a second” because it is non-other. It is ungraspable. Only a liberating knowledge, really graced act of faith, enables the *yogin* to experience the mystery of the divine Self-Existent at the heart of what he perceives. *Advaita* has been used to express our divine filiation. Please refer to G. Gispert-Sauch, “Advaita,” in *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 64 (2000) 644.

⁵³ Ramanuja is identified as the foremost proponent of “qualified non-dualism” or “modified monism” (*vishistadvaita*). It seems that Ramanuja's monism is basically modified by theism. Ramanuja conceived of reality in three parts: the Supreme God, the individual soul and matter. He believes that individual souls and matter are real and not illusory. They are in some degree independent, although not completely independent of Brahman. The problem of the intricate relationship between these realities then becomes one of the critical questions of Ramanuja's *vishistadvaita*. For a detailed study on *vishistadvaita*, please read V. A. Sukhtankar, *The Teachings of Vedanta According to Ramanuja* (Wien: Druck von Adolph Holzhausen, 1908), 20-21.

⁵⁴ The *dvaita* (dualism) of Madhva refers to the fundamental difference between God, the Supreme Being who is *Svatantra* or independent reality, and the *Paratantra* or dependent realities, the souls and

tain value; none of these three, we think, is finally adequate, as no human doctrine can be. Christians can bring to it an insight from the New Testament which will enable one to realize two things:

“First of all it can help us to realize Christ more deeply and see him from a new point of view; and secondly it can help us to interpret the Bhagavad Gita in a new way. What we really hope for is that we realize the Reality of this mystical experience, the experience of the Absolute in our lives. Then we Christians may meet the Hindus in the heart of their religion, and in the heart of our religion. Thus the Hindu-Christian meeting point would be in the cave of the heart, i.e., in the love of God”⁵⁵.

In this way Jesuits of India, who have the rich experience of the *Spiritual Exercises*, have the particular vocation to bring God experience of the *Spiritual Exercises* into our lives, as far as we can as limited human beings, and to open ourselves to this experience, to assimilate it, so that we enrich our own Christian experience and, at the same time, open ourselves to the Hindu at his deepest level of experience and help him to realize himself more fully.

There is an ultimate and most profound parallelism between the *Spiritual Exercises* and the Bhagavad Gita, 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 exercitant and the *yogin* 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 of the intense love of God which they had, of a world charged with the grandeur of God.

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 Bliss⁵⁶.

the world. Each soul is distinct from every other and from God. The world is an emanation from God and exists eternally as a distinct entity. There are five real and eternal distinction for Madhya’s dualism: (1) between God and the individual soul; (2) between God and matter; (3) between soul and matter; (4) between one soul and another; (5) between one particle of matter and another. Please see T. J. Solomon, “Life Divine in the Theistic Theologies of Hinduism,” in *Journal of Dharma* 12 (1987) 354-355.

⁵⁵ B. Griffiths, “The Advaitic Experience and the Personal God in the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita,” in *Indian Theological Studies* 15 (1978) 86.

⁵⁶ H. Staffner, *Dialogue – Stimulating contacts with Hindus* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1993), 73.