

# *Mad-anugrahaya* and Divine Grace in the Bhagavad Gita and the *Spiritual Exercises*

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*Mad-anugrahaya* or Divine Grace in the Bhagavad Gita and the *Spiritual Exercises* is the free and sovereign work of God to do for the human beings what one cannot do for oneself, even though one does not deserve it. God Almighty, by his grace and by his Spirit, does not leave the human person to himself when it comes to enjoying God. He helps the human person. He makes a covenant with the person and says, “For the man who sees in me in everything and everything in me, I am not lost for him and he is not lost for me” (BG 6:30); “I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes” (Ezek 36:27). It is the grace of God that frees a soul from selfishness and empowers not just generosity, but sacrifice. And such sacrifice God will not overlook. In faith, our giving to meet others’ needs becomes an occasion for more divine grace to flood our souls. The greatest joy comes not from time squandered, hoarded, or selfishly spent, but from self-sacrificial love for others to the glory of God, when one pours out his time and energy for the good of others, and finds his joy in theirs. After all, acts of love do not just happen. For the glory of God, the good of others, and the satisfaction of our souls, the aim of human life is one’s coming to share in such godliness – which is “holiness” rightly understood. And all our exertions of effort toward that goal are gifts of grace. Grace keeps breaking through barriers and casting away restraints. Grace justifies. A perfect, unimpeachable, divinely approved, humanly applied righteousness is, in a way, one’s union with Krishna or Jesus. *Mad-anugrahaya* and Divine Grace in the Bhagavad Gita and the *Spiritual Exercises* are “symbolic expressions”<sup>1</sup> in Hindu and Christian theology. They are symbolic not in the sense that they are less real; they are actually more real than they appear to be. These religious symbols are double-edged.

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<sup>1</sup> Symbols, according to Carl Jung, are transforming images, converting energy within the unconscious. Certainly, as religion has always known, the power of symbolism is intended to transform the recipient. The active symbol can deeply affect an individual and can cause a transformation of understanding, of relationship, of life. See R. F. C. HULL, *Symbols of Transformation*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1956, p. 231.

They are directed toward the infinite which they symbolize and toward the finite through which they symbolize it. They force the infinite down to finitude and the finite up to infinity. They open the divine for the human and the human for the divine. True dialogue among religions is a common search for truth. Dialogue is based on hope and love, and will bear fruit in the Spirit. The spirit of love enables the partners to see the others for what they are in such a way that we can meet them as persons. The spirit of hope expects the other to respond in honesty and sincerity and inspires mutual trust. In this article we first deal with *Mad-anugrahaya* in the Bhagavad Gita and then discuss Divine Grace in the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius. In the last part of the article, we will bring the Bhagavad Gita and the *Spiritual Exercises* together, comparing and contrasting them in the spirit of affirmation and focusing on the theme of dialogue between *Mad-anugrahaya* and Divine Grace.

## ***Mad-anugrahaya* in the Bhagavad Gita**

*Mad-anugrahaya* or Divine Grace in the Bhagavad Gita<sup>2</sup> descends from above, but it is not only for the welfare of the world and humanity. *Anugraha* – meaning “grace”, “benediction”, “benevolence”, “graciousness”, “tenderness”, “kindness”, “righteousness”, “blessing” of God, visualized in a personal form – occurs as a very common expression in the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and Ramayana in the Sanskrit lineage, and in the Saiva Siddhanta and the Vaishnavite Agamas of the Tamil lineage on the other. Other expressions such as *daya* derived from the root *da*, meaning “mercy”, “gift”, and “benevolence”; *krupa* from *krup*, meaning “benediction”, “good pleasure”, “blessing”, and “grace”; *karuna*, meaning “forgiveness”, “compassion”, “sympathy”, and “righteousness”; *Prasada*, meaning “benediction”, “good pleasure”, “guidance”, “assistance”, and “protection” are also found frequently in the Sanskrit and Tamil traditions, used to represent the stream of the divine life offered to mankind for support, sustenance and sanctification<sup>3</sup>.

*Mad-anugrahaya* is also salvific. It is *moksha*, salvation from the world by helping the human person to discern and to do the will of God. Though God creates the world and the world depends on him, God does not in any way depend on the world (BG 9:4-5). Krishna, the God of grace, is always available to those who are devoted to him (BG 9:26ff). And so, the God of the Bhagavad Gita is Bhagavan, one who possesses *bhaga*,

<sup>2</sup> The Sanskrit word used for God’s grace is *mad-anugrahaya*. The word *anugraha* means “favour”, “kindness”, “showing favour”, “conferring benefits” and “promoting or furthering a good object”. In the Bhagavad Gita the word *prasadam* is also used to signify grace of God. Its literal meaning is “through the kindness” or “through the favour of” or “to be gracious”. Its compound *prasad* in its accusative case signifies “to fall into the power of” or “to settle down, grow clear and bright, become placid or tranquil”. See also R. V. D’SOUZA, *The Bhagavad Gita and St. John of the Cross*, Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, Anand, 1997, p. 137.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. T. MANICKAM, “Grace: The Stream of Divine Life for Man in the Bhakti Traditions” in *Journal of Dharma*, Dharmaram College, Bangalore, 1987, p. 404.

excellence or loveliness, the blissful One, the adorable One, the Holy. This is the Gracious God who takes an active part in the “sharing” of *bhakti*, who, in fact, takes the initiative. Often six excellences as enumerated as belonging to the Bhagavan, i.e., lordship (*aisvarya*), power (*virya*), glory (*yasas*), splendor (*sri*), knowledge (*jñana*), and, significantly, detachment (*vairagya*) or perhaps unfettered liberty. The designation Bhagavan for God is mostly found in Vaishnava contexts, particularly for Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita (Sri Bhagavan is often translated as “Blessed Lord”)<sup>4</sup>. The divine figure that meets the human being is called the “*Bhagavan*”<sup>5</sup>, which evolves from the verb “*bhaj*”, to share, to divide, to grant. The *Bhagavan* is, therefore, the divine Lord who shares divine life with humans, the God who makes human beings share the divine being, the Lord of redeeming grace-and-love (*avatar*). The Bhagavad Gita would demand that every *yogin*, in the course of his spiritual pilgrimage, should at some stage be touched by the saving grace of the *Bhagavan*, who calls forth total dedication. Surrender to the divine Lord actually means becoming anchored in the divine centre of one’s being and is possible for the *yogin* through any one of the *yogas* (*karma yoga*, *jñana yoga*, *bhakti yoga*). While *deva* and *devata* and even *Ishvara* are used in the plural, Bhagavan is always singular. Bhagavan designates Brahman, the transcendent Ultimate Cause, the Atman, the Ground of Being, the Supreme Ruler and Controller of Nature. Bhagavan is also the good and gracious Lord, the father and friend and lover of the devotee; loving, compassionate, and merciful, he is the “savior” of men and women, their refuge. Bhagavan is supremely beautiful, gracious and charming.

Of receivers of his grace Bhagavan Krishna says:

- There are many, free of passion, fear and anger, at one with me, taking refuge in me, who, refined in the heat of knowledge, have come to my state of being (BG 4:10).
- For the man who sees in me in everything and everything in me, I am not lost for him and he is not lost for me (BG 6:30).
- He who acts for me, who makes me the highest goal, who is devoted to me, who has abandoned attachment, who is without hatred for any being, comes to me (BG 11:55).

The grace in the Upanishads implies enlightenment, correct reality-perception and judgment, the gift of discernment between the eternal and the temporal. This is the

<sup>4</sup> Later Hindu grammarian theologians artificially relate the different syllables of Bhagavan to different aspects of God’s functions, e.g., *bha* designates the cherisher or supporter of the universe, *ga* the leader or impeller, *va* the universal spirit in which all things rest (Vishnu Purana VI.5). See G. GISPERSAUCH, “Bhagavan” in *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, Academy Press, Noida, 2001, p. 80.

<sup>5</sup> *Bhagavan* means “the one who is full of glory”, “Lord”, “the exalted one” or “the supreme one”. *Bhagavan* is the Supreme One to some sects, notably the Bhagavata sect, and was identified with the Lord Vishnu. See F. W. BUNCE, *An Encyclopedia of Hindu Deities, Demi-Gods, Godlings, Demons and Heroes*, D. K. Printworld Ltd, New Delhi, 2000, p. 76; *Bhagavan* is he in whom ever exist in their fullness, all powers, all dharma, all glory, all success, all renunciation and all freedom. Also he that knows the origin and dissolution and the future of all beings, as well as knowledge and ignorance, is called *Bhagavan*. Please see SWAMI SWARUPANANDA, *Shrimad-Bhagavad-Gita – With Text, Word-for-Word Translation, English Rendering and Comments*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1956, p. 226.

greatest wisdom to be obtained from the Lord, according to the Mundaka Upanishad: “This Self (Atman) cannot be obtained by instruction, nor by sacrifice, nor by intellect, nor by much learning. He is to be obtained by him alone whom He chooses; to him the Self reveals His own real form” (3.2.3). In the Katha Upanishad the notion of divine grace as *mad-anugrahaya* or *prasada* is positively stated: “More subtle than the subtle, greater than the great, the Self is hidden in the heart of creatures; the man without desire, all sorrow spent, beholds it, the majesty of the Self, by the grace of the Creator” (2.20). It is obvious from the above citations that it is ordinarily difficult to know the ultimate reality of God. But to those who are sincere and open in their attitude to God, he chooses to reveal himself as a gift of his benevolence to his devotee: “Through the grace of the Creator, one sees the Lord and his greatness” (Mahanarayaniya Upanishad 8.3)<sup>6</sup>. God of the Bhagavad Gita is related to human beings in the world not according to a stern law of retribution, but by love of those who respond to that love and depend upon his divine grace, *prasada* (BG 12:14-20; 18:64-73). Individual (human) souls are not the equivalent of the Atman of the Upanishads, but they are of divine origin (BG 15:7), and their highest goal is to return to God (BG 9:5-11)<sup>7</sup>. Human beings are called upon to find the meaning of life in terms of personal relationship to God, rather than of the abstract operations of a neuter principle. They must, therefore, take proper action towards winning the favor of God. This grace can be given only to the *yogin* who has a deep longing for God, according to the eclectic Bhagavad Gita, by the paths of knowledge, work and devotion (*jñana*, *karma* and *bhakti*).

But there are various forms of grace, according to the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, corresponding to the efforts made by the three types of *yogins*:

The lowest form of grace (*adbhama*), which is acquired through *karma*, leads to *svarga* and not *moksha*. The second or middle form of grace (*madhyama*) is invoked by hearing (*shravana*) about the real nature of God and this leads to *janaloka* (earth). The third and supreme form of grace (*mad-anugrahaya*) renders the soul free from the bondage of *karma*. The soul leaves the body and the world at death and lives forever in heaven (*Vaikuntha*) enjoying the presence of God and the eternal bliss of communion with him. Thus, it is only the supreme grace of God (*mad-anugrahaya*) that is the ultimate instrument in the attainment of *moksha*<sup>8</sup>.

In the Bhagavad Gita, grace appears to be in the form of *bhakti*, the divine impulse initiated by the Lord himself in the inner spirit of the *yogin*. If the *yogin* is disposed and prepared to serve God and humanity, God is ready to bestow upon him the boon of “tranquility of mind” (BG 2:64-65; 18:37), “kindness and compassion” (BG 18:56, 62, 73), “discernment and supreme peace” (BG 18:62), and many other fine human as well

<sup>6</sup> The citations of Mundaka Upanishad, Katha Upanishad and Mahanarayaniya Upanishad are taken from F. MAX MÜLLER, *The Sacred Books of the East*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1884.

<sup>7</sup> Cfr. A. BESANT, *Bhagavad Gita – With Sanskrit Text, Free Translation into English*, The Theosophical Publishing House, Madras, 1950, pp. 160-161 & 265.

<sup>8</sup> S. KULANDRAN, *Grace: A Comparative Study of the Doctrine in Christianity and Hinduism*, Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1964, p. 127.

as divine virtues<sup>9</sup>. The basic conditions expected on the part of *yogin* are to have complete trust in the grace of God, to act with conviction and commitment, and offer to God all the fruits of his actions. Above all, the true gift of *avatar* for the *bhakta* is not only helping him in his discernment process, but also the offer of liberation (*moksha*). The basic condition that is expected on the part of *bhakta* is to choose total surrender in loving devotion (*bhakti*) towards the *avatar*, to have complete trust in the power of *avatar*, acting with conviction and commitment to the *avatar*, and offer to *avatar* all the results or fruits of his actions (BG 18:56-58)<sup>10</sup>. In the Bhagavad Gita, the Lord of grace is also called *Ishvara*. The basic root *ish* means to rule, to be master, to be able to, to govern or to control, to own, etc. The Bhagavad Gita uses *isha* twice in the Vishvarupadarsanam, once identified with Brahma, the Creator (BG 11:15), and once in the prayer of final surrender of Arjuna to Krishna (BG 11:14). *Ishvara* occurs four times in relation to Krishna, specifically as *avatar* (BG 4:6) to shower his choicest graces when his *bhakta* is in trouble. *Ishvara* also occurs in relation to God in general as immanent in the body or in creation<sup>11</sup>. *Ishvara*, the Lord of grace, is extremely close to the *bhakta*, owns him while making him free, and rules him without overpowering him. According to the Bhagavad Gita, all those, regardless of class and race, who seek refuge in the Lord of grace, *Ishvara* Krishna, will be saved by his grace; they shall also gain eternal life in an individualized soul (BG 2:12)<sup>12</sup>.

For R. C. Zaehner, the clearest account of how God's grace is said to work is to be found in BG 12:6-8: "But for those who resign every action to me, who, intent on me and meditating on me, with exclusive discipline worship me, I am the one who rapidly hauls them out of the ocean of death and continual rebirth, Partha, for their thoughts are engrossed in me. Fix your mind on me alone, let your intelligence enter me: you will live in me thereafter, there is no doubt of that"<sup>13</sup>. Through these verses Krishna gives

<sup>9</sup> The great obstacles which block the flow of grace to man from God is man's ignorance about the ultimate concerns of life, the inability of some people to distinguish between the real and the unreal, and attachment to one's own personal performance and its accompanying vainglory and pride, which may lead one to sin. In the Bhagavad Gita, the Lord assures the devotee of the offer of the grace which aids one to see the truth and reality of life in the light of the ultimate concerns of human existence. See T. MANICKAM, "Grace: The Stream of Divine Life for Man in the Bhakti Traditions" in *Journal of Dharma*, Dharmaram College, Bangalore, 1987, pp. 411-412.

<sup>10</sup> Cfr. T. J. SOLOMON, "Life Divine in the Theistic Theologies of Hinduism" in *Journal of Dharma*, Dharmaram Research Association, Bangalore, 1987, p. 362.

<sup>11</sup> Cfr. G. GISPERSAUCH, "Ishvara" in *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, Academy Press, Noida, 2002, p. 560.

<sup>12</sup> Cfr. N. GIER, "The Saviour Archetype: A Study in the Eschatological Vision of Religions" in *Journal of Dharma*, Dharmaram College, Bangalore, 1979, p. 262.

<sup>13</sup> R. C. ZAEHNER, *The Bhagavad Gita with a Commentary Based on the Original Sources*, Oxford University Press, London, 1973, p. 28; God of the Bhagavad Gita chooses to have mercy because of his concern for the welfare of others. God is *Sesi*, ruler by right over what belongs to him, and man is *sesa*, liege or vassal, or one who by right is dependent on the one he serves. However, although they are his property, God is not obliged to save them. Within this feudal and social metaphor of liege-vassal, Ram-anuja tries to resolve the conflict between the image of God who is not personally concerned with the destiny of humankind and the image of a God who looks upon his creatures with mercy and intends

assurance of his divine assistance to the *bhakta* who will obtain the eternal grace of God-realization. The divine grace, in this text in particular and in the Bhagavad Gita in general, indicates the dynamic initiative of the Lord to show favour to and to confer benefits on the *bhakta* who tires on his spiritual journey of yogic consciousness. This makes clear that Krishna is dynamically involved in the love relationship with his devotees and that it is he who grants the ultimate liberation in his loving relationship through his grace. The meaning of loving relationship (*paramabhakti*) with that of grace (*prasaada*) of God is best understood through the following quotation:

*Paramabhakti* is thus a direct and independent means to *moksha*. The only requisite for *paramabhakti* is the change of heart or contrition on the part of the one who desires *moksha* and his absolute confidence in the saving grace of the Lord (*rakshaka*). It is not the possession of merit that is the operative cause of grace or *daya*, but the sense of one's unworthiness and the sinfulness of sin. The Lord is the only way and goal to the one who desires *moksha* and *para bhakti* is the act of self-surrender to His grace. It is not a juristic conception of debit and credit account between the soul (*jiva*) as the doer of *karma* and *Ishvara* as the giver of boons, nor is it an undeserved favor of the Lord. It implies an intimate relation between the self-gift of the one who desires *moksha* and the flow of divine mercy of *daya*. Redemption is a justification by faith or *mahavishvasa*, and not by works, and it is not won by merit as the result of a continuous process. It is the essence of the Bhagavad Gita on *paramabhakti* that the Lord of grace (*prasaada*) seeks the one who surrenders (*prapanna*) and draws him to Himself<sup>14</sup>.

Finally, regarding divine grace and its working on the liberation of *yogin* as taught in the Bhagavad Gita, the following observation of R. C. Zaehner seems appropriate in this context:

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 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 Me as I really am, how great I am and who; and once he knows Me as I am, he enters Me forthwith (BG 18: 53-55). 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 and prostrate yourself to me: so will you come to me, I promise you truly, for you are dear to me. This is the message of the Bhagavad Gita – search and find God, and thereby the union of man with God<sup>15</sup>.

Thus in the Bhagavad Gita, the Self-realization or God-realization in our lives is the gift and grace of God. That is the reason why Krishna says to Arjuna: "Though continually performing all actions, his refuge is in me, and through my grace he attains the

good for them. See J. CARMAN, *The Theology of Ramanuja: An Essay in Interreligious Understanding*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1974, p. 179.

<sup>14</sup> P. N. SRINIVASACHARI, *The Philosophy of Vishistadvaita*, Adyar Press, Madras, 1946, p. 383.

<sup>15</sup> R. C. ZAEHNER, *The Bhagavad Gita with a Commentary Based on the Original Sources*, Oxford University Press, London, 1973, p. 36.

eternal, imperishable home” (BG 18:56). The role of grace can also be noted from such verses as BG 4:16; 7:3; 9:1, 28; 18:66. To act dispassionately is not easy for human nature and is not in line with the tendency of the human being. He needs divine grace to proceed along his path of becoming a sincere *yogin*: “Among thousands of men but one, may be, will strive for self perfection, and even among these athletes who have won perfection but one, may be, will come to know me, as I really am” (BG 7:3)<sup>16</sup>. The Bhagavad Gita not only stresses that the personal God (*Ishvara*) is a God of grace (*prasadā*) but also that God has the capacity to deliver human beings through his grace. Divine grace is an ever-existent reality and is indistinguishable from God’s essence. *Madanugrahaya* is a continuously operative factor in the spiritual life of *yogin* to search for the will of God from the beginning, and it is the ultimate factor that brings about liberation (*moksha*). Assisted by this grace of Krishna, Arjuna finally confesses in the Bhagavad Gita as follows: “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 18:73).

## Divine Grace in the *Spiritual Exercises*

Divine grace in the Christian tradition is *charis*<sup>17</sup>, a free gift, a gracious self-communication from God to the human self, rendering it pleasing and acceptable and raising it to a divine level of existence. Such a concept has full relevance only in the context of God-man interpersonal relationship on which the whole Christian religion in general and the *Spiritual Exercises* in particular is built up.

The great change from the Old Testament to the New Testament in the perception of grace is the shift of emphasis from the signs and deeds of God to the personal presence of God in Jesus Christ, in whom the human race encountered God in flesh and blood. Redemption itself is the human experience of God’s gracious holiness in action, meeting human need and establishing right human relationships (1 Jn 1:1-2). Grace is Christ; it is the new life human beings gained through Christ. The beginning of all grace was the birth of Christ and its culmination was his resurrection. Transformed by the anointing by the Father and by the

<sup>16</sup> F. VADAKETHALA, “A Yoga for Liberation: Ramanuja’s Approach” in *Journal of Dharma*, Dharmaram College, Bangalore, 1977, p. 41.

<sup>17</sup> Grace (*charis*) occurs very rarely in the Gospels. It does not occur in Mark and Mathew. The few times it is used in Luke it means “thanks” and the Old Testament sense of “favour” (Lk 1:30). In John it occurs in the Prologue referring to the fullness of truth and grace in Christ from which we received grace upon grace (Jn 1:14, 16, 17). Grace is an abstraction having a wide variety of meanings such as thanks, charm, kindness and favour. The Gospels are more interested in stating in concrete idioms what has been accomplished in Jesus Christ. The parables and miracles of Christ are signs of the new kingdom, the personal presence of the Son of God in the midst of people, the encounter between the need of man and the gracious love of God. On this theme of Grace in the Gospels, please refer to J. B. CHETHIMATTAM, “Grace in Christian Religious Traditions” in *Journal of Dharma*, Dharmaram College, Bangalore, 1987, pp. 333-340.

work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ becomes the head of human beings, able to give them his own Spirit and to make them members of his body<sup>18</sup>.

In the Autobiography of Ignatius, we are told of a Trinitarian mystical grace (no: 29): “Another time he was shown the manner in which God created the world. In this he experienced great spiritual joy. It seemed that he saw something white, producing certain rays out of which God created light”<sup>19</sup>. Then Ignatius’s progression goes on, from creation-centred prayer to Christ-centred prayer, then Church-centred prayer, as Jerónimo Nadal expressly states. That we may not consider these mystical graces his own self-willed invention but gifts, that “fifth” in Ignatius’s review, that final and complete grace of Manresa, as described in Autobiography nn: 30-31:

One day, to satisfy his thirst for devotion, he went to a church, one mile from Manresa. I believe it is St. Paul’s Church. He walked along the river that leads to the church, deep in his pious thoughts. After a while he sat down. He turned his face toward the river, which flowed deep below him. The eyes of his mind began to open. He did not have a vision, but he grasped and understood many questions concerning the spiritual life, and matters of faith and learning, and this was with such clarity, that all seemed to be new. It is impossible to indicate everything he understood at this time, however much it was. But it is certain that his soul was filled with such brightness that he thought if he could unite all the graces he had received in his life up to the age of sixty-two and all the knowledge he possessed, he did not receive as much as on this one occasion. As a result of these experiences, his mind was so illuminated that he thought he was a different man and had another mind. As this illumination lasted quite a while, he went to a cross that stood nearby, and knelt down to give thanks to God<sup>20</sup>.

According to Jerónimo Nadal, Ignatius “had received the exceptional grace of being able to pray without effort and to relax in contemplation of the Most Holy Trinity”<sup>21</sup>. He also says, “At times, grace led him to contemplate the whole Trinity, bringing him close to It and uniting him with It, with his whole heart and with great sentiments of devotion and spiritual delight; at other times, he would contemplate the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit”<sup>22</sup>. To Isabel Roser, a noble and well-known matron of Barcelona, Ignatius writes in 1532: “May the most Holy Trinity grant you in all your trials and in everything else in which you can serve God all the grace that I desire for myself, and may no more be given to me than I desire for you” and to Sister Teresa Rejadell, a religious of noble family from the Monastery of Santa Clara, he expresses at the end of his letter: “In closing I beg

<sup>18</sup> B. O. McDERMOTT, *What are They Saying about the Grace of Christ?*, Paulist Press, New York, 1984, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> W. J. YOUNG, *St. Ignatius’ Own Story – As told to Luís Gonçalves de Câmara*, Loyola University Press, Chicago, 1980, pp. 22-23.

<sup>20</sup> W. J. YOUNG, *St. Ignatius’ Own Story – As told to Luís Gonçalves de Câmara*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>21</sup> *Mon Nadal IV*, 651 is taken from G. DUMEIGE, “The Mystery of the Trinity in the life of St. Ignatius” in *CIS*, *Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis*, Rome, 1982, p. 81.

<sup>22</sup> *Annotationes in Examen*, n. 79 is taken from M. NICOLAU, “What Nadal Meant by ‘Contemplativus in Actione’” in *CIS*, *Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis*, Rome, 1977, p. 7.



the most Holy Trinity to bestow upon us all plentiful grace to know God's most holy will and perfectly to fulfil it"<sup>23</sup>. Ignatius terminated many of his letters with that same conclusion, begging the Trinity to shower all plentiful grace to fulfil God's will.

It is interesting to note, in the Directory of Juan Alfonso de Polanco, that there are three important requirements when the exercitant wants to experience the grace of God.

- First, that out of a heart which is truly generous and worthy of our adoption by our eternal Father, and of a right intention of pleasing him, we strive after things that are truly great.
- Second, that we strive to obtain these things by the means that are appropriate and have been ordained by divine providence.
- Third, that we duly cooperate with divine providence by contributing energetic efforts of our own and doing all that lies in our own power, as is fitting, in order to obtain them<sup>24</sup>.

The grace of God, for Ignatius, is always grace offered, but not always grace accepted by human beings. The Ignatian key which makes possible the free and gratuitous self-communication of God to the exercitant is this: "the surrender of self-love and will and interests, through gratitude, abnegation, humility and poverty. Surrendering self-love, will and interests is not primarily an ascetical programme. It is more the condition of a promise: that God, the world and ourselves have become transparent to each other. Without surrendering one cannot experience the God's grace, one does not see well, one can neither seek nor find the will of God, things deny us their secrets"<sup>25</sup>. Rightly, Ignatius saw in this surrender of oneself the most authentic thermometer of all spiritual life, the key to all existence that seeks to reveal the being and activity of God in this world. Given that the Ignatian key meditations in the *Spiritual Exercises* are means for obtaining the virtues and God's grace, and given that the way the grace is acquired is by acts emanating from the dictate of the will, achievement of the purpose of the *Spiritual Exercises* requires that the will be enkindled with longing for God's grace once the intellect has come to know it<sup>26</sup>. Inflamed with a desire to obtain God's grace, it will labour effectively and steadily until it does so, or least obtains help and grace from God for attaining it.

<sup>23</sup> W. J. YOUNG, *Letters of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, Loyola University Press, Chicago, 1959, pp. 11 & 24.

<sup>24</sup> For a detailed on the requirements to receive God's grace, please read the *Directory of Juan Alfonso de Polanco*. The abovementioned idea of Polanco is taken from M. E. PALMER, *On Giving the Spiritual Exercises – The Early Jesuit Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599*, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, ST. Louis, 1996, pp. 118-119.

<sup>25</sup> The "surrendering of self-love and our own will and interests" of the *Spiritual Exercises*, in the Constitutions Ignatius calls abnegation and continual mortification in all things possible. Then centre of the sense, the interior and the external, is not occupied by myself, with its old fits of greed, vain honour and pride, but rather by God. From the place of adoration and encounter, our self opens to the interests of God and to his kingdom. See JESUIT WORKING GROUP, "Ignatius, Faber, Xavier: Welcoming the Gift, Urging the Mission" in *Review of Ignatian Spirituality*, CIS, Rome, 2006, p. 22.

<sup>26</sup> For a detailed study on God's grace in the *Spiritual Exercises*, please refer to J. M. FONDEVILLA, "Grace and the Spiritual Exercises" in *Woodstock Letters*, Woodstock, Maryland, 1963, pp. 165-170.

In general, grace (*gracia*) is used in the *Spiritual Exercises* as the total manifestation of the love of God: “SE 25, 43 (twice), 46, 50 (twice), 54, 61, 63, 87, 91, 147, 152, 221, 234, 240 (twice), 243, 248, 262, 271, 320, 322, 324 (twice), 366 and 369”<sup>27</sup>. Ignatius sometimes combines grace with another term, as in “graces and gifts” (*gracias y dones* [SE 20]), “graces or gifts” (*gracias o dones* [SE 87]) and “love and grace” (*amor y gracia* [SE 234]). In the *Spiritual Diary*, Ignatius writes with precision about the different kinds of graces that he received from the Trinity:

The infused gift of tears, spiritual joy and rest, intense consolation, elevation of spirit, impressions, divine illuminations, spiritual intelligences and visitations, motions, visions, a reverential love, a deep silence, a mysterious interior and exterior ‘*loquela*’, a reverential and worshipful respect, caresses and recollections, a coloured clarity, a warm and as if red devotion<sup>28</sup>.

When Ignatius explains the rule for spiritual consolation in the *Spiritual Exercises*, he says, “Under the word consolation I include every increase in hope, faith and charity, and every interior joy which calls and attracts one toward heavenly things and to the salvation of one’s soul, by bringing it tranquillity and peace in its Creator and Lord” (SE 316: 4), which is none other than a type of divine grace<sup>29</sup>. It is clear that the dominant image of Christ in the *Spiritual Exercises* is that of Christ as Provider and Creator, as the Lord of grace who gives the exercitant all the graces that he needs so that he can search for and find the will of God and fulfil it through his service (SE 23). This image is expressed in the *Spiritual Exercises* in both explicit imagery (SE 74, 91-98, 136-148) and in the more traditional faith terms of creation. Thus Christ is the King (SE 91-98) who has given the exercitant many graces (SE 74); Christ is the Creator who has created all for the exercitant so that he can search for and fulfil the will of God by serving Christ the poor and humble (SE 23, 167)<sup>30</sup>. The grace that the exercitant receives from Christ is seen as Christ’s continuous activity and as a work of Christ not just to give gifts and graces but ultimately to give himself: “I will ponder with great affection how much God our Lord has done for me, and how much He has given me of what He possesses, and finally, how much, as far as He can, the same Lord desires to give Himself to me according to His divine decrees” (SE 234).

<sup>27</sup> J. RICKABY, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola – Spanish and English*, Burns & Oates Limited, London, 1915, p. 154.

<sup>28</sup> This abundance of expressions translates the wealth of graces received and the effort of human language to express the unutterable. Please see G. DUMEIGE, “The Mystery of the Trinity in the Life of St. Ignatius” in *CIS*, Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis, Rome, 1982, pp. 98-100.

<sup>29</sup> The Autograph Directory of St. Ignatius explains consolation as follows: “The members of consolation are interior peace (*paz interior*), spiritual joy (*alegría espiritual*), hope (*esperanza*), faith (*fe*), love (*amor*), tears (*lágrimas*) and elevation of mind (*elevación de mente*) which are purely “gift and grace of the Holy Spirit” (*don y gracia del Espíritu Santo*). For further studies, see A. CODINA, *Exercitia Spiritualia S. Ignatii ... et eorum Directoria*, Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu, Madrid, 1919, p. 780; M. GIULIANI, *Las mociones del Espíritu*, Secretariado de Ejercicios, Madrid, 1979, p. 5.

<sup>30</sup> Cfr. R. L. SCHMITT, “The Christ-Experience and Relationship Fostered in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola” in *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, American Assistancy Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality, St. Louis, 1974, p. 235.

The preparatory prayer of each meditation asks for “the grace that all my intentions, actions and works may be directed purely to the service and praise of His Divine Majesty” (SE 46)<sup>31</sup>. This orients the exercitant in a general way. The (second or) third Ignatian prelude specifies this general request by “asking for a definite grace which varies with particular meditation”<sup>32</sup>. The exercitant must pray for “what I want and desire” (*lo que quiero y deseo*) (SE 48). He requests: “joy with Christ rejoicing” (SE 48), “tears, pain and suffering with Christ suffering” (SE 48), “an ever increasing and intense sorrow and tears for my sins” (SE 56), “a deep awareness of the pain suffered by the damned” (SE 65), “that I may not be deaf to His call, but prompt and diligent to accomplish His most holy will” (SE 91), “an interior knowledge (*conocimiento interno*) of our Lord” (SE 104)<sup>33</sup>, “a knowledge of the deceits of evil chieftain ... and a knowledge of the true life ... the grace to imitate Christ” (SE 139), “the grace that I may be received under His standard” (SE 147), “the grace to choose what is for the greater glory of His Divine Majesty and the salvation of my soul” (SE 152)<sup>34</sup>, “sorrow, affliction and confusion because the Lord is going to His passion on account of my sins” (SE 193), “that I may feel intense joy and

<sup>31</sup> The *Spiritual Exercises*, in their entirety, are addressed only to willing or eager exercitants, whom they stimulate to open themselves to the Holy Spirit’s advances; to seek God’s will and to carry it out with vigour; to come to big decisions like the choice of a state of life without being moved by disordered attachments and to cooperate with Him in achieving His redemptive plan; and to carry on by one’s own inner energies in cooperation with the grace of God. See G. E. GANNS, “Authentic Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: A Brief History of their Practice and Terminology” in *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, American Assistancy Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality, St. Louis, 1983, p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> H. D. EGAN, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon*, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, St. Louis, 1976, p. 74.

<sup>33</sup> Interior knowledge (*conocimiento interno*) occurs three times in the *Spiritual Exercises*, and always in a key position. “The first mention of the term interior knowledge is in the triple colloquy (SE 63) of the First Week: the exercitant is to ask for an interior knowledge of the sins committed. In SE 104, the interior knowledge of the Lord is marked by the expression ‘for me’, thus giving it a profoundly personal dimension. The expression ‘knowing the Lord personally’ means loving him and following him. This grace of interior knowledge of our Lord runs right through the rest of the month till the very last Contemplation to Attain Love, where the exercitant is to ask for the grace of interior knowledge of many blessings received (SE 233)”. For a detailed study, please refer to V. MALPAN, “Affectivity and the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises” in *Ignis*, Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, Anand, 2002, p. 23.

<sup>34</sup> The “what I want and desire” (*demandar lo que quiero*) prelude in the meditation on the Three Classes of Men, i.e., “the grace to choose what is more for the glory of His Divine Majesty and the salvation of my soul” (*gracia para elegir lo que más a Gloria de su divina majestad y salud de mi ánima sea*) [SE 152], is the backbone of this meditation. Its dynamism sets the exercitant’s prayerful search in motion by focusing his deepest desires. This prelude also awakens his inordinate attachments, because he must now make room for God’s will. This very specific “grace to choose what is more for the glory of his Divine Majesty and the salvation of my soul” requires an attempt to render the exercitant connatural with the saving truths. Although derived from God’s *a posteriori*, historical deeds and words, the “what I want and desire” grace from this meditation also corresponds to the exercitant’s deepest and most authentic yearning for perfect indifference for the greater glory of God. The “what I want and desire” prelude makes the exercitant fall into line with the deepest desires of his true self, eliminates inordinate affections and subjective deformities, and promotes his greatest growth in indifference in his search for and finding of God’s will. See H. D. EGAN, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon*, p. 74.

gladness for the greater glory and joy of Christ our Lord” (SE 221) and “a deep knowledge of the many blessings I have received” (SE 233)<sup>35</sup>. The “what I want and desire” prelude coaxes the exercitant into line with the deepest desires of his true self, eliminates inordinate affections and subjective deformities, reduces subjective orientations and promotes his greatest growth. The “what I want and desire”, as a saving grace, corresponds to and fulfills the anthropocentric demands of the fully recollected, integral person.

The meditation on the Kingdom of Christ (SE 90-98) has three possible roles to play in the life of the exercitant: “(1) It offers a focus or perspective to aid the exercitant in contemplating Christ’s life; (2) It is a bridge between the first and second weeks, combining the experience of Christ’s saving grace with the realization of new possibilities to respond to him; (3) It is to see if the exercitant is ready to search for and to find the call of Christ that would involve great sacrifice”<sup>36</sup>. Thus, through this meditation on the Kingdom of Christ, Ignatius helps the exercitant to receive the grace of Christ to search for and to find the call of Christ in his life. The challenge on decision making coming from the Three Classes of Men (SE 149-156) leads directly to the important challenge arising from the Three Kinds of Humility (SE 165-167). What is the basic movement of following Christ? The most basic movement of following Christ is our growing identity with Christ and fulfilling his will. It is true that God’s grace is what draws the exercitant to this intimacy with Christ<sup>37</sup>. But two aspects of discipleship remain challenges for the exercitant: how much does he pray for the grace of drawing closer to Jesus, and what response does he make to the invitation God extends to him? The discernment in making a decision to search for, to find and to fulfil God’s will is always based on whether the exercitant is thereby drawn closer to Christ<sup>38</sup>. The ninth rule of the Discernment of Spirits (SE 322) shows how clearly conscious Ignatius was of the mysterious collaboration of natural and supernatural causality. “This rule alone is enough to refute the often raised objection that the primacy of grace and the unconditional sovereignty of God do not receive their due in the *Spiritual Exercises*”<sup>39</sup>. There may not be any number which would explain better the prime importance of God’s grace than SE 234, where Ignatius asks the exercitant to accept God’s grace by his total gift of self: “Take, Lord, and re-

<sup>35</sup> For a detailed study on “asking for what I want and desire”, please read L. BYRNE, “Asking for the Grace” in *The Way Supplement* 64, Heythrop College, London, 1989, p. 31; H. COATHALEM, *Commentaire du livre des Exercices*, Paris, 1965, p. 291.

<sup>36</sup> R. L. SCHMITT, “The Christ-Experience and Relationship Fostered in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola” in *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, American Assistancy Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality, St. Louis, 1974, p. 255.

<sup>37</sup> For a detailed study, please read K. RAHNER, “The Ever Greater Glory of God” in *Woodstock Letters*, Woodstock College Press, Maryland, 1968, pp. 390-393.

<sup>38</sup> Cfr. D. L. FLEMING, “Refounding the Society of Jesus: New Beginnings” in *Ignis*, Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, Anand, 2001, p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> F. WULF (ed), *Ignatius of Loyola His Personality and Spiritual Heritage*, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, St. Louis, 1977, p. 217; The intense or abundant grace (*gracia intensa o abundante*), used in SE 320 and 322, shows the divine help for the exercitant. See I. IPARRAGUIRRE, *Vocabulario de Ejercicios Espirituales – Ensayo de hermenéutica Ignaciana*, Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis, Roma, 1978, pp. 121-122.

ceive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. Thou hast given to me. To Thee, O Lord, I return it. All is Thine, dispose of it wholly according to Thy will. Give me Thy love and Thy grace, for this is sufficient for me". This grace of the Contemplation to Attain Love comes to the exercitant whom the forgiveness of sin has liberated into a contemplative relationship to Christ (SE 90-98) and under the banner of Christ (SE 136-147) and ready to identify himself totally with Christ the poor and humble (SE 165-167), and who, in the Election (SE 169-188), has chosen profoundly to search for, to find and to fulfil the will of God<sup>40</sup>. The grace of the Contemplation to Attain Love (loving and serving God in all things by fulfilling the will of God) and the grace of the preparatory prayer (that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to the praise and service of His Divine Majesty – SE 46) are closely interrelated. The wording of the special grace of the Contemplation to Attain Love shows that the interior knowledge of the exercitant is a means to achieve the "end" of the *Spiritual Exercises*, which consists in the total ordering of one's love to fulfil the will of God<sup>41</sup>. Favoured by the gracious God, the exercitant can experience in the Contemplation to attain Love (SE 230-237) the grace specific to the Fourth Week, either by being given an experience of Jesus as abundantly alive and involved in the world or by being given a new and invigorating experience of the Church as, indeed, the living body of Christ in history.

In this way, the graces of the *Spiritual Exercises* that began with the clarification of one's relationship with God and a personal interior purification that ends in "an exclamation of wonder and surging emotions" (SE 60). The entire focus of the exercitant is on fulfilling the will of God by following Christ, on praying "not to be deaf to his call, but ready and diligent to accomplish his most holy will" (SE 91), and on demanding "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). Embracing the will of God climaxes in the "grace to rejoice and be glad intensely at so great glory and joy of Christ our Lord" (SE 221) and co-mingle with the will of God "like the rays of the sun and the sun, the waters of the fountain and the fountain" (SE 237)<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> Cfr. B. O. McDERMOTT, "With Him, In Him: The Graces of the Spiritual Exercises" in *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, American Assistancy Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality, St. Louis, 1986, p. 25.

<sup>41</sup> The interior knowledge of the many blessings received fills the exercitant's heart with gratitude. This gratitude springs from the experience of "entirely re-knowing" (recognition) or acknowledging the blessings one has received from the Lord. It is this "re-knowing" of things in the Lord that moves the exercitant to love and serve the Divine Majesty in all things (*en todo amar y servir a su divina majestad*). Please refer to V. MALPAN, "Bhakti-yoga of the Bhagavad Gita and the Ignatian Contemplation to Attain Love" in *Ignis*, Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, Anand, 2008, p. 25.

<sup>42</sup> Cfr. P. COUTINHO, "The Ignatian Prayer of Expectation and Demand" in *Ignis*, Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, Anand, 2006, p. 2.

## Dialogue between *Mad-anugrahaya* and Divine Grace

“I want to see your divine form” (BG 11:3): This humble prayer of Arjuna in the battlefield of Kurukshetra<sup>43</sup> expresses the longing of all humanity for a direct vision of the Divine Reality.

*Darshana*, the act of seeing, is the most popular sacrament through which the devotees of many religions are put in contact with the divine. *Darshana* involves an insight, a seeing in faith, into the deeper dimensions of things. After the great *Vishvarupadarshanam*, the ‘Vision of the Universal Form’ which has been called the ‘prophetic core’ of the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says that such vision cannot be obtained by ordinary religious practices, but only by a single-minded love and God’s grace<sup>44</sup>.

With it Arjuna was able “to know, to see and to enter” into Krishna – three verbs that describe the essence of the *darshana* (BG 11:52, 54). In the Semitic tradition, God manifested himself preferentially through the Word. Yet the prophets were called “seers”. The psalmists seek “the face of God” (Ps 24:6), to “behold his beauty” (Ps 27:4) in the temple. Then Jesus came as the great epiphany of God, so that one can say, “we have seen with our eyes his glory...full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14; 1 Jn 1:1)<sup>45</sup>. This NT seeing is similar to the Indian *darshana*: it is enlivened by faith, it is an insight, a seeing that is believing. The ultimate goal is, of course, the beatific vision, to see God face to face, clearly reserved for another mode of our existence. Ignatius too explains his “Great Illumination” at river Cardoner in his Autobiography:

As he went along occupied with devotions, he sat down for a little while with his face toward the river...the eyes of his understanding began to be opened. Not that he saw any vision; rather, understanding and knowing many things, both spiritual things and matters of

<sup>43</sup> “Kurukshetra is a plain not far from Delhi, the ancient Hastinapura. It formed part of the larger Dharmakshetra which lay between the rivers Yamuna and Sarasvati, and was held in ancient days to be of peculiar sanctity. It is to be noted that many interpreters of the Bhagavad Gita, while not denying the historicity of the episode, lay greater stress upon its value of allegory. And it cannot be denied that the author broadly identified the Kauravas with *adharma*, or evil, and the Pandavas with *dharma*, or good”. See W. D. P. HILL, *The Bhagavad Gita*, Oxford University Press, Madras, 1953, p. 73; Kurukshetra is the land of the Kurus, a leading clan of the period. Life is a battle, a warfare against the spirit of evil. Creative process is one of perpetual tension between two incompatibilities, each standing against the other. By their mutual conflict, the development is advanced and the cosmic purpose furthered. In this world are elements of imperfection, evil and irrationality, and through discernment process, we have to choose the will of God and convert the elements, which are opaque to reason, transparent to thought. Kurukshetra is also called *tapakshetra*, the field of penance, of discipline. Please refer to S. RADHAKRISHNAN, *The Bhagavad Gita – With an Introductory Essay, Sanskrit Text, English Translation and Notes*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd, London, 1948, p. 80.

<sup>44</sup> G. GISPERT-SAUCH, “Darshana” in *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, Academy Press, Noida, 2000, p. 804.

<sup>45</sup> Cfr. G. GISPERT-SAUCH, “Darshana” in *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, p. 804.

<sup>46</sup> Autobiography n. 15 is taken from W. J. YOUNG, *St. Ignatius’ Own Story – As told to Luís Gonçalves de Câmara*, Loyola University Press, Chicago, 1980.

faith and learning, with so intense an enlightenment that everything seemed new to him. Though there were many, he cannot set forth the details that he understood then, except that he experienced a great clarity in his understanding (Autobiography n. 15)<sup>46</sup>.

Both the “Vision of the Universal Form” of Arjuna and the “Great Illumination” of Ignatius are extremely significant in their lives (BG 11:52-54 = Autobiography n. 15). Each has been for them a sort of Pentecost that marked an end of their past and illuminates the vision of a different future. This great illumination Ignatius had it at river Cardoner<sup>47</sup> that gave him “the new understanding” also presented him with an insight into the architectonic fabric of all reality in the world and of every mystery of faith. In the great clarity of his spirit, he could examine and evaluate all things proceeding from the Triune God and coming to himself. Thus at Manresa was established both the formula of finding God in all things and the pattern for discernment of Spirits to do the will of God, during an “hour of grace of inconceivable fruitfulness” for Ignatius which was similar to the God experience of Arjuna in Chapter 11 of the Bhagavad Gita and to his total surrender to do the will of God through the “*mad-anugrahaya* of Krishna” in Chapter 18 of the Bhagavad Gita.

The grace that Ignatius desires in the *Spiritual Exercises* can be put in a single point, that is, “To discern and do the will of God by imitating Christ in one’s life by loving and following him closely through God’s grace” (SE 104 & 234). On this point of “divine grace” or “*mad-anugrahaya*”, there is a convergence between the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius and the Bhagavad Gita, because, as one has seen above, the Bhagavad Gita is the song of Krishna to give abundant grace (*mad-anugrahaya*) to Arjuna to come out of his ignorance and to do the will of God by loving and following Krishna closely, and the *Spiritual Exercises* helps the exercitant to discern and to choose the will of God by loving, imitating and following Christ through divine grace. According to the Bhakti tradition of the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna accepts the soul not in spite of its defects but because of them<sup>48</sup> – an attitude reminiscent of the Easter ‘O Happy Fault’ echoed by Ignatius in the First Week of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Also, in both the Ignatian and the Gita traditions, the grace of God builds on nature; it does not destroy it. Under the influence of God’s grace, the natural endowments of the exercitant or the *yogin*, both inherited and developed, undergo a remarkable transformation that frees him from all self-centredness and leads him to the discovery of his true self in God and in doing the

<sup>47</sup> The five graces, as Ignatius mentioned in the Autobiography, are found in nn. 28-31 and can be codified as follows: 1) Seeing the Most Holy Trinity in the form of three keys; 2) Receiving an understanding of how God had created the world; 3) Seeing Jesus Christ Our Lord in the most holy sacrament; 4) Seeing with his interior eyes the humanity of Christ; 5) Seeing all things new to him at river Cardoner. For a detailed study please see J. A. MUNITZ, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola – Personal Writings*, Penguin Books, London, 2004, pp. 25-27.

<sup>48</sup> “The greatness of the mediator lies in not merely ignoring the soul’s defects and lack of good qualities, but in making this very lack of merit as the very reason for accepting the soul” (Sri Vacana Bhasanam Sutra 15). Please see J. G. MARTIN, “Theologies of Feminine Mediation: Hindu and Christian” in *Journal of Dharma*, Dharmaram College, Bangalore, 1981, p. 389.

will of God. The flowering of the personality of the exercitant or the *yogin* is arrived at not by disowning his human qualities, but by letting Christ or Krishna guide him in the right direction. This grace of God consists not only in giving the exercitant or the *yogin* life and sustenance but also in transforming and moulding him into the image of God. This is God's labour of love in both the traditions.

In the Biblical tradition and in the Ignatian key meditations of the *Spiritual Exercises*, the grace of God is known in certain historical events<sup>49</sup>. In the Old Testament, deliverance from Egypt, the covenant at Sinai and the return from Exile are special occasions for the manifestation of the grace of God. In the New Testament and in the *Spiritual Exercises*, grace is inseparably related to a historical person: "grace came in and through Jesus Christ". This is the central difference between grace in Christianity and grace in Hinduism. The inseparable relationship of grace with the historical person Jesus Christ (SE 104) gives an actuality and definiteness to the meaning of grace which cannot be found in any other situation. In the Bhagavad Gita's exposition of *paramabhakti*, *prasada* and *vishvasa* (self-surrender, grace and faith)<sup>50</sup> we do hear many familiar notes, but

<sup>49</sup> While considering the Principle and Foundation, the exercitant should have received a dual grace: (a) since God is the Lord of history, it is his prerogative to demand that we serve him at each specific moment of history; (b) since we are dependent creatures, we are relieved of the oppressive burden of autonomous agents serving rather as instruments of the Source of all being and activity. This balanced dual-grace enables him to be both accountable and yet not over-anxious. For further study on the dual-grace in historical events, please refer to D. L. FLEMING, *Notes on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, Review for Religious, St. Louis, 1981, pp. 136-137.

<sup>50</sup> 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 spirituality. God gives all human beings sufficient grace to search for and 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). On *paramabhakti*, please see M. DHAVAMONY, "Christian Approaches to Hinduism: Points of Contact and Difficulties" in *Gregorianum*, Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Roma, 1972, p. 106; Love is not forced; it is evoked. the *Bhakti yoga* in the Bhagavad Gita is the approach of love to a personal Lord who is Krishna; its foundation is faith (*sraddha*), and the response with which it meets is grace (*prasada*). This being so, it is evident that *bhakti* can only manifest itself in human being when God is conceived as personal, a Saviour worthy of trust and ready to be gracious. On *prasada*, please see SWAMI SWARUPANANDA, *Shrimad-Bhagavad-Gita – With Text, Word-for-Word Translation, English Rendering and Comments*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1956, p. 226; Redemption is a justification by faith or *mahavishvasa*, and not by works, and it is not won by merit as the result of a continuous process. On *vishvasa*, please refer to R. C. ZAEHNER, *The Bhagavad Gita with a Commentary Based on the Original Sources*, Oxford University Press, London, 1973, p. 36.



reference to a specific historic occasion and historic person is absent. Grace in the Bhagavad Gita is recognized by the *yogin* as the gift of God, to be received in faith and to be experienced in a continuous relationship of trust and communion with God, but it is not rooted in history and in a historical person, as in Christianity<sup>51</sup>.

Both the divine grace of the Ignatian tradition and *mad-anugrahaya* of the Gita tradition express the tender maternal compassion that the Lord has for the soul. God's grace is not a response to the greatness of the human being but is freely bestowed. The nature of this graciousness is most clearly seen in both the traditions when the Lord seeks the soul that is still immersed in sin (SE 46; 104; 106; 116; 193; 234 = BG 4:16; 7:3; 9:1, 28; 18:56, 66, 73).

The sense of obedience and obligation, as the human side of the divine movement of grace, is not dominant in the Bhagavad Gita. Further, in the *Spiritual Exercises*, grace is experienced and understood in terms of the relationship not only between the believer and Christ but also that between the believers. A community of faith is essential to the apprehension and actualization of grace as it is understood in Christianity. In the Bhagavad Gita, the emphasis is to a large extent on the emotional attachment of the *yogin* to Lord Krishna. Any context of community in Hinduism is incidental.

As a concept, grace is not the monopoly of Christian. The distinctiveness that the Christians can claim is the distinctiveness that belongs to the incarnation and passion, to Christ as a person and as an event in history who calls into being a community in which the grace of God is actualized and known.

<sup>51</sup> Cfr. M. P. JOHN, "The Problem of History in the New Testament – A Discussion in the Indian Context" in *The Indian Journal of Theology*, Bishop's College, Calcutta, 1967, p. 52.