

Chapter Five

The Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita

The Teaching of the Gita

This world *is* as the Gita describes it, *anityam asukham*, so long as we live in the present world-consciousness; it is only by turning from that to the Divine and entering into the Divine Consciousness that one can possess, through the world also, the Eternal.

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The Gita cannot be described as exclusively a gospel of love. What it sets forth is a Yoga of knowledge, devotion and works based on a spiritual consciousness and realisation of oneness with the Divine and of the oneness of all beings in the Divine. Bhakti, devotion and love of God carrying with it unity with all beings and love for all beings is given a high place but always in connection with knowledge and works.

Apparent Contradictions in the Gita

The language of the Gita in many matters seems sometimes contradictory because it admits two apparently opposite truths and tries to reconcile them. It admits the ideal of departure from sansara into the Brahman as one possibility; also it affirms the possibility of living free in the Divine (in Me, it says) and acting in the world as the Jivanmukta. It is this latter kind of salvation on which it lays the greatest emphasis. So Ramakrishna put the “divine souls” (Ishwarakoti) who can descend the ladder as well as ascend it higher than the ordinary Jivas (Jivakoti) who, once having ascended, have not the strength to descend again for divine work. The full truth lies in the supramental consciousness and the power to work from there on life and matter.

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There is no real contradiction; the two passages¹ indicate in the Gita's system two different movements of its Yoga, the complete surrender being the crowning movement. One has first to conquer the lower nature, deliver the self involved in the lower movement by means of the higher Self which rises into the divine nature; at the same time one offers all one's actions including the inner action of the Yoga as a sacrifice to the Purushottama, the transcendent and immanent Divine. When one has risen into the higher Self, has the knowledge and is free, one makes the complete surrender to the Divine, abandoning all other dharmas, living only by the divine Consciousness, the divine Will and Force, the divine Ananda.

Our Yoga is not identical with the Yoga of the Gita although it contains all that is essential in the Gita's Yoga. In our Yoga we begin with the idea, the will, the aspiration of the complete surrender; but at the same time we have to reject the lower nature, deliver our consciousness from it, deliver the self involved in the lower nature by the self rising to freedom in the higher nature. If we do not do this double movement, we are in danger of making a tamasic and therefore unreal surrender, making no effort, no tapas and therefore no progress; or else we may make a rajasic surrender not to the Divine but to some self-made false idea or image of the Divine which masks our rajasic ego or something still worse.

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It was not your account of the inconsistencies of the Gita, but those that have been urged against the combining of sadhanas of which the Gita is the finest example that I was speaking of. Your objection to Krishna's pouring contradictory sadhanas on Arjuna was, I said, akin to these and not more sustainable.

All the other side questions I consider irrelevant and of no importance. The setting of the Gita is poetic and legendary and I consider it an admirable setting, but if you consider it a bad

¹ *The correspondent asked how to reconcile two passages in the Gita: "Deliver the self by means of the Self" and "Abandon all dharmas, take refuge in Me alone" (Gita 6.5 and 18.66). — Ed.*

one, that does not matter. It makes no difference, even if you are right, to the spiritual excellence of the Gita. I care nothing whether Sanjaya and Krishna and Arjuna of the Mahabharat were myths or real persons. The only thing that is important is that the sadhana of the Gita is a real thing and can be lived and that if spiritually lived, its so-called inconsistencies are no inconsistencies but many well-related aspects of a single Divine Truth — the vision seen by Arjuna included. The rest is a matter of opinion and, as I say, of no spiritual importance.

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The Gita was *not* meant by the writer to be an allegory — you can say, if you like, that now we should dismiss the ancient war element by interpreting it as if it were an allegory. The Gita is Yoga, spiritual truth applied to external life and action — but it may be *any* action and not necessarily an action *resembling* that of the Gita. The *principle* of the spiritual consciousness applied to action has to be kept; the particular example used by the Gita may be treated as a thing belonging to a past world.

The Gita, the Divine Mother and the Purushottama

The Gita does not speak expressly of the Divine Mother; it speaks always of surrender to the Purushottama — it mentions her only as the Para Prakriti who becomes the Jiva, i.e., who manifests the Divine in the multiplicity and through whom all these worlds are created by the Supreme and he himself descends as the Avatar. The Gita follows the Vedantic tradition which leans entirely on the Ishwara aspect of the Divine and speaks little of the Divine Mother because its object is to draw back from world-nature and arrive at the supreme realisation beyond it; the Tantrik tradition leans on the Shakti or Ishwari aspect and makes all depend on the Divine Mother, because its object is to possess and dominate the world-nature and arrive at the supreme realisation through it. This Yoga insists on both the aspects; the surrender to the Divine Mother is essential, for without it there is no fulfilment of the object of the Yoga.

In regard to the Purushottama the Divine Mother is the supreme divine Consciousness and Power above the worlds, Adya Shakti; she carries the Supreme in herself and manifests the Divine in the worlds through the Akshara and the Kshara. In regard to the Akshara she is the same Para Shakti holding the Purusha immobile in herself and also herself immobile in him at the back of all creation. In regard to the Kshara she is the mobile cosmic Energy manifesting all beings and forces.

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I do not know that there is anything like a Purushottama consciousness which the human being can attain or realise *for himself*, — for, in the Gita, the Purushottama is the Supreme Lord, the Supreme Being who is beyond the Immutable and the Mutable and contains both the One and the Many. Man, says the Gita, can attain the Brahmic consciousness, realise himself as an eternal portion of the Purushottama and live in the Purushottama. The Purushottama consciousness is the consciousness of the Supreme Being and man by loss of ego and realisation of his true essence can *live in it*.

The Gita and the Integral Yoga

It is not a fact that the Gita gives the whole base of Sri Aurobindo's message; for the Gita seems to admit the cessation of birth in the world as the ultimate aim or at least the ultimate culmination of Yoga; it does not bring forward the idea of spiritual evolution or the idea of the higher planes and the supramental Truth-Consciousness and the bringing down of that consciousness as the means of the complete transformation of earthly life.

The idea of the supermind, the Truth-Consciousness is there in the Rig Veda according to Sri Aurobindo's interpretation and in one or two passages of the Upanishads, but in the Upanishads it is there only in seed in the conception of the being of knowledge, *vijñānamaya puruṣa*, exceeding the mental, vital and physical being; in the Rig Veda the idea is there but in

principle only, it is not developed and even the principle of it has disappeared from the Hindu tradition.

It is these things among others that constitute the novelty of Sri Aurobindo's message as compared with the Hindu tradition, — the idea that the world is not either a creation of Maya or only a play, *līlā*, of the Divine, or a cycle of births in the ignorance from which we have to escape, but a field of manifestation in which there is a progressive evolution of the soul and the nature in Matter and from Matter through Life and Mind to what is beyond Mind till it reaches the complete revelation of Sachchidananda in life. It is this that is the basis of the Yoga and gives a new sense to life.

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To the question in your last letter there can be no reply except that it is only either a single-minded faith or a fixed will that can give you the open road to the Yoga. It is because your ideas and your will are in a constant state of flux or of oscillation that you do not succeed. Even with a deficient faith, a fixed mind and will can carry one on and bring the experiences by which an uncertain faith is changed into certitude.

It is the reason why it is difficult for me to answer your questions about the different alternatives. I may say that the way of the Gita is itself a part of the Yoga here and those who have followed it, to begin with or as a first stage, have a stronger basis than others for this Yoga. To look down on it therefore as something separate and inferior is not a right standpoint. But whatever it is, you must yourself choose, nobody can do it for you. Those who go and come, can do so profitably only if or because they have made the decision and keep to it; when they are here, it is for the Yoga that they come, when they are elsewhere, the will for the Yoga remains with them there. You have to get rid of your constant reasonings and see whether you can do without the impulse towards Yoga or not — if you cannot, then it is useless thinking of the ordinary life without Yoga — your nature will compel you to seek after it even if you have to seek all your life with a small result. But the small result

is mainly due to the mind which always came in the way and the vital weakness which gives it its support for its reasonings. If you fixed your will irrevocably, that would give you a chance — and whether you followed it here or elsewhere would make only a minor difference.

I suggested the Gita method for you because the opening which is necessary for the Yoga here seems to be too difficult for you. If you made a less strenuous demand upon yourself, there might be a greater chance. In any case, if you cannot return to the ordinary life, it seems, in the absence of an opening to the Power that is here, the only course for you.