

Chapter I

Love and the Triple Path

WILL, KNOWLEDGE and love are the three divine powers in human nature and the life of man, and they point to the three paths by which the human soul rises to the divine. The integrality of them, the union of man with God in all the three, must therefore, as we have seen, be the foundation of an integral Yoga.

Action is the first power of life. Nature begins with force and its works which, once conscious in man, become will and its achievements; therefore it is that by turning his action Godwards the life of man best and most surely begins to become divine. It is the door of first access, the starting-point of the initiation. When the will in him is made one with the divine will and the whole action of the being proceeds from the Divine and is directed towards the Divine, the union in works is perfectly accomplished. But works fulfil themselves in knowledge; all the totality of works, says the Gita, finds its rounded culmination in knowledge, *sarvaṁ karmākhilāṁ jñāne parisamāpyate*. By union in will and works we become one in the omnipresent conscious being from whom all our will and works have their rise and draw their power and in whom they fulfil the round of their energies. And the crown of this union is love; for love is the delight of conscious union with the Being in whom we live, act and move, by whom we exist, for whom alone we learn in the end to act and to be. That is the trinity of our powers, the union of all three in God to which we arrive when we start from works as our way of access and our line of contact.

Knowledge is the foundation of a constant living in the Divine. For consciousness is the foundation of all living and being, and knowledge is the action of the consciousness, the light by which it knows itself and its realities, the power by which, starting from action, we are able to hold the inner results

of thought and act in a firm growth of our conscious being until it accomplishes itself, by union, in the infinity of the divine being. The Divine meets us in many aspects and to each of them knowledge is the key, so that by knowledge we enter into and possess the infinite and divine in every way of his being, *sarvabhāvena*,¹ and receive him into us and are possessed by him in every way of ours.

Without knowledge we live blindly in him with the blindness of the power of Nature intent on its works, but forgetful of its source and possessor, undivinely therefore, deprived of the real, the full delight of our being. By knowledge arriving at conscious oneness with that which we know, — for by identity alone can complete and real knowledge exist, — the division is healed and the cause of all our limitation and discord and weakness and discontent is abolished. But knowledge is not complete without works; for the Will in being also is God and not the being or its self-aware silent existence alone, and if works find their culmination in knowledge, knowledge also finds its fulfilment in works. And, here too, love is the crown of knowledge; for love is the delight of union, and unity must be conscious of joy of union to find all the riches of its own delight. Perfect knowledge indeed leads to perfect love, integral knowledge to a rounded and multitudinous richness of love. “He who knows me” says the Gita “as the supreme Purusha,” — not only as the immutable oneness, but in the many-souled movement of the divine and as that, superior to both, in which both are divinely held, — “he, because he has the integral knowledge, seeks me by love in every way of his being.” This is the trinity of our powers, the union of all three in God to which we arrive when we start from knowledge.

Love is the crown of all being and its way of fulfilment, that by which it rises to all intensity and all fullness and the ecstasy of utter self-finding. For if the Being is in its very nature consciousness and by consciousness we become one with it, therefore by perfect knowledge of it fulfilled in identity, yet is delight the

¹ Gita.

nature of consciousness and of the acme of delight love is the key and the secret. And if will is the power of conscious being by which it fulfils itself and by union in will we become one with the Being in its characteristic infinite power, yet all the works of that power start from delight, live in the delight, have delight for their aim and end; love of the Being in itself and in all of itself that its power of consciousness manifests, is the way to the perfect wideness of the Ananda. Love is the power and passion of the divine self-delight and without love we may get the rapt peace of its infinity, the absorbed silence of the Ananda, but not its absolute depth of richness and fullness. Love leads us from the suffering of division into the bliss of perfect union, but without losing that joy of the act of union which is the soul's greatest discovery and for which the life of the cosmos is a long preparation. Therefore to approach God by love is to prepare oneself for the greatest possible spiritual fulfilment.

Love fulfilled does not exclude knowledge, but itself brings knowledge; and the completer the knowledge, the richer the possibility of love. "By Bhakti" says the Lord in the Gita "shall a man know Me in all my extent and greatness and as I am in the principles of my being, and when he has known Me in the principles of my being, then he enters into Me." Love without knowledge is a passionate and intense, but blind, crude, often dangerous thing, a great power, but also a stumbling-block; love, limited in knowledge, condemns itself in its fervour and often by its very fervour to narrowness; but love leading to perfect knowledge brings the infinite and absolute union. Such love is not inconsistent with, but rather throws itself with joy into divine works; for it loves God and is one with him in all his being, and therefore in all beings, and to work for the world is then to feel and fulfil multitudinously one's love for God. This is the trinity of our powers, the union of all three in God to which we arrive when we start on our journey by the path of devotion with Love for the Angel of the Way to find in the ecstasy of the divine delight of the All-Lover's being the fulfilment of ours, its secure home and blissful abiding-place and the centre of its universal radiation.

Since then in the union of these three powers lies our base of perfection, the seeker of an integral self-fulfilment in the Divine must avoid or throw away, if he has them at all, the misunderstanding and mutual depreciation which we often find existent between the followers of the three paths. Those who have the cult of knowledge seem often, if not to despise, yet to look downward from their dizzy eminence on the path of the devotee as if it were a thing inferior, ignorant, good only for souls that are not yet ready for the heights of the Truth. It is true that devotion without knowledge is often a thing raw, crude, blind and dangerous, as the errors, crimes, follies of the religious have too often shown. But this is because devotion in them has not found its own path, its own real principle, has not therefore really entered on the path, but is fumbling and feeling after it, is on one of the bypaths that lead to it; and knowledge too at this stage is as imperfect as devotion, dogmatic, schismatic, intolerant, bound up in the narrowness of some single and exclusive principle, even that being usually very imperfectly seized. When the devotee has grasped the power that shall raise him, has really laid hold on love, that in the end purifies and enlarges him as effectively as knowledge can; they are equal powers, though their methods of arriving at the same goal are different. The pride of the philosopher looking down on the passion of the devotee arises, as does all pride, from a certain deficiency of his nature; for the intellect too exclusively developed misses what the heart has to offer. The intellect is not in every way superior to the heart; if it opens more readily doors at which the heart is apt to fumble in vain, it is, itself, apt to miss truths which to the heart are very near and easy to hold. And if when the way of thought deepens into spiritual experience, it arrives readily at the etherial heights, pinnacles, skiey widenesses, it cannot without the aid of the heart fathom the intense and rich abysses and oceanic depths of the divine being and the divine Ananda.

The way of Bhakti is supposed often to be necessarily inferior because it proceeds by worship which belongs to that stage of spiritual experience where there is a difference, an insufficient

unity between the human soul and the Divine, because its very principle is love and love means always two, the lover and the beloved, a dualism therefore, while oneness is the highest spiritual experience, and because it seeks after the personal God while the Impersonal is the highest and the eternal truth, if not even the sole Reality. But worship is only the first step on the path of devotion. Where external worship changes into the inner adoration, real Bhakti begins; that deepens into the intensity of divine love; that love leads to the joy of closeness in our relations with the Divine; the joy of closeness passes into the bliss of union. Love too as well as knowledge brings us to a highest oneness and it gives to that oneness its greatest possible depth and intensity. It is true that love returns gladly upon a difference in oneness, by which the oneness itself becomes richer and sweeter. But here we may say that the heart is wiser than the thought, at least than that thought which fixes upon opposite ideas of the Divine and concentrates on one to the exclusion of the other which seems its contrary, but is really its complement and a means of its greatest fulfilment. This is the weakness of the mind that it limits itself by its thoughts, its positive and negative ideas, the aspects of the Divine Reality that it sees, and tends too much to pit one against the other.

Thought in the mind, *vicāra*, the philosophic trend by which mental knowledge approaches the Divine, is apt to lend a greater importance to the abstract over the concrete, to that which is high and remote over that which is intimate and near. It finds a greater truth in the delight of the One in itself, a lesser truth or even a falsehood in the delight of the One in the Many and of the Many in the One, a greater truth in the impersonal and the Nirguna, a lesser truth or a falsehood in the personal and the Saguna. But the Divine is beyond our oppositions of ideas, beyond the logical contradictions we make between his aspects. He is not, we have seen, bound and restricted by exclusive unity; his oneness realises itself in infinite variation and to the joy of that love has the completest key, without therefore missing the joy of the unity. The highest knowledge and highest spiritual experience by knowledge find his oneness as perfect in his

various relations with the Many as in his self-absorbed delight. If to thought the Impersonal seems the wider and higher truth, the Personal a narrower experience, the spirit finds both of them to be aspects of a Reality which figures itself in both, and if there is a knowledge of that Reality to which thought arrives by insistence on the infinite Impersonality, there is also a knowledge of it to which love arrives by insistence on the infinite Personality. The spiritual experience of each leads, if followed to the end, to the same ultimate Truth. By Bhakti as by knowledge, as the Gita tells us, we arrive at unity with the Purushottama, the Supreme who contains in himself the impersonal and numberless personalities, the qualitless and infinite qualities, pure being, consciousness and delight and the endless play of their relations.

The devotee on the other hand tends to look down on the sawdust dryness of mere knowledge. And it is true that philosophy by itself without the rapture of spiritual experience is something as dry as it is clear and cannot give all the satisfaction we seek, that its spiritual experience even, when it has not left its supports of thought and shot up beyond the mind, lives too much in an abstract delight and that what it reaches, is not indeed the void it seems to the passion of the heart, but still has the limitations of the peaks. On the other hand, love itself is not complete without knowledge. The Gita distinguishes between three initial kinds of Bhakti, that which seeks refuge in the Divine from the sorrows of the world, *ārta*, that which, desiring, approaches the Divine as the giver of its good, *arthārthī*, and that which attracted by what it already loves, but does not yet know, yearns to know this divine Unknown, *jijñāsu*; but it gives the palm to the Bhakti that knows. Evidently the intensity of passion which says, "I do not understand, I love," and, loving, cares not to understand, is not love's last self-expression, but its first, nor is it its highest intensity. Rather as knowledge of the Divine grows, delight in the Divine and love of it must increase. Nor can mere rapture be secure without the foundation of knowledge; to live in what we love, gives that security, and to live in it means to be one with it in consciousness, and oneness of consciousness is the perfect condition of knowledge. Knowledge of the Divine

gives to love of the Divine its firmest security, opens to it its own widest joy of experience, raises it to its highest pinnacles of outlook.

If the mutual misunderstandings of these two powers are an ignorance, no less so is the tendency of both to look down on the way of works as inferior to their own loftier pitch of spiritual achievement. There is an intensity of love, as there is an intensity of knowledge, to which works seem something outward and distracting. But works are only thus outward and distracting when we have not found oneness of will and consciousness with the Supreme. When once that is found, works become the very power of knowledge and the very outpouring of love. If knowledge is the very state of oneness and love its bliss, divine works are the living power of its light and sweetness. There is a movement of love, as in the aspiration of human love, to separate the lover and the loved in the enjoyment of their exclusive oneness away from the world and from all others, shut up in the nuptial chambers of the heart. That is perhaps an inevitable movement of this path. But still the widest love fulfilled in knowledge sees the world not as something other and hostile to this joy, but as the being of the Beloved and all creatures as his being, and in that vision divine works find their joy and their justification.

This is the knowledge in which an integral Yoga must live. We have to start Godward from the powers of the mind, the intellect, the will, the heart, and in the mind all is limited. Limitations, exclusiveness there can hardly fail to be at the beginning and for a long time on the way. But an integral Yoga will wear these more loosely than more exclusive ways of seeking, and it will sooner emerge from the mental necessity. It may commence with the way of love, as with the way of knowledge or of works; but where they meet, is the beginning of its joy of fulfilment. Love it cannot miss, even if it does not start from it; for love is the crown of works and the flowering of knowledge.