

# The Eighteen Questions raised by *Arjuna*, a seeker of Integral Truth:

“There are indeed **three things** in *the Gita* which are spiritually significant, almost symbolic, typical of the profoundest relations and problems of the spiritual life and of human existence at its roots; they are (1) the divine personality of the **Teacher**, (2) his characteristic relations with his **disciple** and (3) the **occasion** of his **teaching**. (1) The **teacher** is God himself descended into humanity; (2) the **disciple** is the first, as we might say in modern language, the representative man of his age, closest friend and chosen instrument of the Avatar, his protagonist in an immense work and struggle the secret purpose of which is unknown to the actors in it, known only to the incarnate Godhead who guides it all from behind the veil of his unfathomable mind of knowledge; (3) the **occasion** is the violent crisis of that work and struggle at the moment when the anguish and moral difficulty and blind violence of its apparent movements forces itself with the shock of a visible revelation on the mind of its representative man and raises the whole question of the meaning of God in the world and the goal and drift and sense of human life and conduct.”<sup>14</sup>

**Sri Aurobindo**

“(1) The **disciple** (*Arjuna*) has to rise beyond this Force and its three modes or *gunas*; he has to become *trigunatita*. (2) Not to her has he to surrender his actions, over which he has no longer any claim or “right”, but into the being of the Supreme. (3) Reposing his mind and understanding, heart and will in Him, with self-knowledge, with God-knowledge, with world-knowledge, with a perfect equality, a perfect devotion, an absolute self-giving, he has to do works as an offering to the Master of all self energisings and all sacrifice. (4) Identified in will, conscious with that consciousness, That shall decide and initiate the action. This is the solution which the Divine Teacher offers to the **disciple**.”<sup>15</sup>

**Sri Aurobindo**

1: “**Arjuna said:** How, O *Madhusudana* shall I strike *Bhisma* and *Drona* with weapons in battle, both being worthy of worship, O slayer of enemies?” The Gita-2.4

**Answer attempted in contemporary language:** The family members, human teachers, elders and other kith and kin represent divisible consciousness. To begin Spiritual life all attachment to the knot of distorted consciousness must be completely destroyed. Self-fulfilment of this existence comes when one is related with the world without attachment, without desire and without ego which are identified as distortion of Divine Love, Divine Delight and Divine Will

respectively. Self-fulfilment with the Divine comes when one is attached in his mind, heart and body only with the Divine, *Majyasakta*.<sup>6</sup>

“*Arjuna* in his reply to *Krishna* admits the rebuke even while he strives against and refuses the command. He is aware of his weakness and yet accepts subjection to it. It is poorness of spirit, he owns, that has smitten away from him his true heroic nature; his whole consciousness is bewildered in its view of right and wrong and he accepts the divine Friend as his teacher; but the emotional and intellectual props on which he had supported his sense of righteousness have been entirely cast down and he cannot accept a command which seems to appeal only to his old standpoint and gives him no new basis for action. He attempts still to justify his refusal of the work and puts forward in its support the claim of his nervous and sensational being which shrinks from the slaughter with its sequel of blood-stained enjoyments, the claim of his heart which recoils from the sorrow and emptiness of life that will follow his act, the claim of his customary moral notions which are appalled by the necessity of slaying his gurus, *Bhishma* and *Drona*, the claim of his reason which sees no good but only evil results of the terrible and violent work assigned to him. He is resolved that on the old basis of thought and motive he will not fight and he awaits in silence the answer to objections that seem to him unanswerable. **It is these claims of *Arjuna*’s egoistic being that *Krishna* sets out first to destroy in order to make place for the higher law which shall transcend all egoistic motives of action.**”<sup>7</sup>

““I am Time the waster of the peoples arisen and increased whose will in my workings is here to destroy the nations. Even without thee all these warriors shall be not, who are ranked in the opposing armies. Therefore arise, get thee glory, conquer thy enemies and enjoy an opulent kingdom. By me and none other already even are they slain, do thou become the occasion only, O Savyasachin. Slay, by me who are slain, *Drona*, *Bhishma*, *Jayadratha*, *Karna* and other heroic fighters; be not pained and troubled. Fight, thou shalt conquer the adversary in the battle.” The fruit of the great and terrible work is promised and prophesied, not as a fruit hungered for by the individual, — for to that there is to be no attachment, — but as the result of the divine will, the glory and success of the thing to be done accomplished, the glory given by the Divine to himself in his *Vibhuti*. Thus is the final and compelling command to action given to the protagonist of the world-battle.”<sup>8</sup>

2: “***Arjuna said:*** It is the poorness of Spirit that has smitten away from me my true heroic higher Nature, my whole consciousness is bewildered by three *gunas* and cannot discern truth and falsehood, right and wrong. I ask Thee how can I discern truth, right and good? —That tell me decisively. I am thy disciple and seek refuge in Thee; enlighten me.” The Gita-2.7

**Answer attempted in contemporary language:** The Lord sets out to destroy *Arjuna's* egoistic being misled by the flowery word of many branching intelligence and desire so that he will be established in purified *buddhi* and subsequently in higher consciousness of essential concentration above *buddhi*. In this pure consciousness, one is able to discern truth and falsehood and can train himself to accept the former and reject the latter.

3: “**Arjuna said:** How can I be liberated from sorrow that dries up the senses, even if I attain the riches and unrivalled kingdom on earth and even all the sovereignty of the kingdom of Gods?” The Gita-2.8

**Answer attempted in contemporary language:** Therefore, O *Arjuna*, arise and go beyond the limitations of three *gunas*, make grief and happiness equal, realise the immortality of the Soul, get the glory, conquer the enemies through righteous battle and enjoy an opulent kingdom. By Me and none other already even are they slain, do thou become the Divine's instrument only.

“This heroic appeal may seem to be on a lower level than the stoical spirituality which precedes and the deeper spirituality which follows; for in the next verse the Teacher bids him to make grief and happiness, loss and gain, victory and defeat equal to his soul and then turn to the battle, —**the real teaching of the Gita**. But *Indian* ethics has always seen the practical necessity of graded ideals for the developing moral and spiritual life of man. The *Kshatriya* ideal, the ideal of the four orders is here placed in its social aspect, not as afterwards in its spiritual meaning. This, says *Krishna* in effect, is my answer to you if you insist on joy and sorrow and the result of your actions as your motive of action. I have shown you in what direction the higher knowledge of self and the world points you; I have now shown you in what direction your social duty and the ethical standard of your order point you, *svadharmaṁ api caveksya*. Whichever you consider, the result is the same. But if you are not satisfied with your social duty and the virtue of your order, if you think that leads you to sorrow and sin, then I bid you rise to a higher and not sink to a lower ideal. Put away all egoism from you, disregard joy and sorrow, disregard gain and loss and all worldly results; look only at the cause you must serve and the work that you must achieve by divine command; “so thou shalt not incur sin.” Thus *Arjuna's* plea of sorrow, his plea of the recoil from slaughter, his plea of the sense of sin, his plea of the unhappy results of his action, are answered according to the highest knowledge and ethical ideals to which his race and age had attained.”<sup>9</sup>

4: “**Arjuna said:** What is the sign of the man in *Samadhi*, man of stable intelligence, *Sthitaprajna*? How does, O *Keshava*, the sage of settled understanding speak, how sit, how walk?” The Gita-2.54

**Answer attempted in contemporary language:** The man of stable intelligence, *sthithaprajna*, after getting established in the Spiritual experience of trance, *Samadhi*, is he who (1) expels all desires from mind and is satisfied in the Self and by the Self; (2) his mind is undisturbed in the midst of sorrows and pleasures and is free from desire, wrath and fear; (3) he is without affection towards good and evil in all things and neither hates nor rejoices with all happenings; (4) he draws away the senses from the objects of sense like tortoise draws in his limbs into the shell; (5) his drawing away from sense does not remove the sense hunger but it ceases when the Supreme is seen; (6) even the mind of the wise man is hurried and carried away by the vehement insistence of the senses; (7) having brought all the senses under control he must sit firm in Yoga wholly consecrating his life to the Divine; (8) he moves among the object of senses which is free from attraction and repulsion and under the control of the Self and he attains supreme felicity; (9) in that felicity all his miseries ceases and he is rapidly established in the steady intelligence; (10) to the self-mastering sage, *samyami*, the higher planes of consciousness is his waking trance in which he gains truth, knowledge and power; (11) he enters peace when all his desire enters into motionless Self like water entering into sea; (12) he who abandons desire, longing and ego attains to peace; this is firm standing in *Brahman*, *Brahmi Sthiti*. Having attained this state one is no longer bewildered, fixed in that state if he practices *Sankhya* self-discipline, attains extinction in *Brahman*, *Brahma-nirvana*.

This *buddhi Yoga* is extensively developed in integral Jnana Yoga. The three impurities of understanding, *buddhi*, which are to be purified first, are identified as

- (1) the intermixture of desire in the thinking functions,
- (2) the illusion of the senses and the intermixture of the sense-mind in the thinking functions,
- (3) improper action of the will to know.

The purification process continues by pacifying the mind and intellect and opening them towards knowledge, by training them to concentrate, contemplate and meditate on the One and by 'perfect equality of mind, in the cultivation of entire intellectual rectitude and in the perfection of mental disinterestedness.'<sup>5</sup> The purified understanding is

- (1) free entirely from any desire and craving,
- (2) is not inclined to any **predilection or distaste for any particular idea or truth**,
- (3) is not attached to those ideas of truth which it is most certain or to lay on them **such an undue stress** as is likely to disturb the balance of integral truth,
- (4) and the purified intelligence will not depreciate the value of other new evolving elements of integral Knowledge.

(5) The purified *buddhi* always dwells in the master idea of surrender of intellect, emotion and volition and helps towards the realisation of total and sincere self-giving.

(6) The purified intellect has the capacity to discern the falsehood of the untransformed physical mind, vital mind, sense mind and emotional mind and can train itself to constantly reject them.

(7) It has also the capacity to discern the truth influence of the higher Mind, Illumined Mind and Intuitive Mind and train itself to receive constantly their Truth vibration.

(8) A *Sadhaka* of *buddhi Yoga* is an equal seeker of Truth, must accept everything, but not cling to anything, not repelled by anything, nor subject himself to the influence of intellect. Thus, through this equality of intelligence of *buddhi Yoga* the Consciousness is established in Spiritual plane and prepares the ground to ascend towards still higher Supermind or *Purushottama* Consciousness.

5: “**Arjuna said:** If thou holdest the intelligence to be greater than works, O *Janardana*, why then dost thou, O *Keshava*, appoint me to this terrible work? Thou bewilderest my intelligence with a mixed and tangled speech; tell me decisively the one thing by which I may attain to the supreme good.” The Gita-3.1, 2

**Answer attempted in contemporary language:** Work is identified as affirmative energy of existence whose origin is the Divine Will which is the Creatrix Consciousness of this existence. The objective Divine action of *Karma Yoga* is initiated (through Divine direction, *adesh*), supported and subordinated by subjective Divine action of the Divine Knowledge and Divine Love. Ordinary action is greater than inaction. In Divine action, inaction is transformed into subjective action which appears to be inactive and passive. *The Gita* does not give importance to exclusive pursuance of any of the three *Yogas* rather their reconciliation. The *Buddhi Yoga* or self-liberating intelligent will is fulfilled by *Karma Yoga* or Yoga of desireless work. All works find their culmination in knowledge. Or by going beyond *gunas*, *nistraigunya*, and establishment of experience in *Samadhi* through *buddhi Yoga*, the influence of lower Nature in the form of emotional desire and the desire to enjoy the fruit of action reduces; thus, to pursue the *Bhakti Yoga* and *Karma Yoga* become easy.

6: “**Arjuna said:** But what is this in us that drive a man to sin, as if by force, even against his own struggling will?” The Gita-3.36

**Answer attempted in contemporary language:** The Blessed Lord said: It is desire and wrath born of *Rajas*. They are all-devouring and all-polluting. They are here Soul’s great enemy. Knowledge is enveloped by these eternal enemies as fire is covered by smoke, mirror by dust and embryo by amnion. Sense, mind and

intellect are the seat of desire which bewilders the embodied Soul. So first control the sense to slay the desire who is the destroyer of knowledge and truth discernment.

7: “**Arjuna said:** Recent is Thy birth, far ancient was the birth of Sun God, how then I am to comprehend that Thou declaredst it to him in the beginning?” The Gita-4.4

**Answer attempted in contemporary language:** The Blessed Lord said: From the beginning of the creation, many of My lives and also thine, O *Arjuna*, are past; All of them I know and I am conscious of all life and all Time through conscious Yoga; but thou knowest not your past (and future) births because your all life is an unconscious Yoga of Nature.

“Many are my lives that are past, and thine also, O *Arjuna*; all of them I know, but thou knowest not, O scourge of the foe. Though I am the unborn, though I am imperishable in my self-existence, though I am the Lord of all existences, yet I stand upon my own Nature and I come into birth by my self-Maya. For whensoever there is the fading of the *Dharma* and the uprising of unrighteousness, then I loose myself forth into birth. For the deliverance of the good, for the destruction of the evil-doers, for the enthroning of the Right I am born from age to age. He who knoweth thus in its right principles my divine birth and my divine work, when he abandons his body, comes not to rebirth, he comes to Me, O *Arjuna*. Delivered from liking and fear and wrath, full of me, taking refuge in me, many purified by austerity of knowledge have arrived at my nature of being (*madbhavam*, the divine nature of the *Purushottama*). As men approach me, so I accept them to my love (*bhajami*); men follow in every way my path, O son of *Pritha*.”<sup>10</sup> ‘Therefore, O *Arjuna*, at all time of all life be in Yoga.’<sup>16</sup>

8: “**Arjuna said:** Thou Declarest to me the renunciation of works (*Sankhya/Jnana Yoga*), O *Krishna*; and again, thou declare to me (*Karma*) *Yoga*; which one of these is better way, that tell me with clear decisiveness.” The Gita-5.1

**Answer attempted in contemporary language:** The Blessed Lord said Yoga of Knowledge (Renunciation) and Yoga of Works both brings about Soul’s salvation, but of the two, Yoga of Works is distinguished above the Yoga of Knowledge or the renunciation of works. *Sannyasa* is difficult for embodied beings who must do work as long as they are in the body. So, Yoga of works easily brings the Soul to *Brahman*.

9: “**Arjuna said:** This Yoga which has been declared by Thee of the nature of equality, O *Madhusudana*, I see no stable foundation for it owing to restlessness.

Restless indeed is the mind, O *Krishna*; it is vehement, strong and difficult to bend; I deem it as hard to control as the wind.” The Gita-6.33, 34

**Answer attempted in contemporary language:** Mind can be controlled only by constant practice, *abhyasa*, and non-attachment, *vairagya*. If one will remain in *sattwa*, then there will be urge and interest to do purifying action of sacrifice, askesis and act of giving in a rightly regulated manner. Those who have no control over sense organ and mind for them this Yoga is difficult to attain.

10: “*Arjuna said:* He who takes up Yoga with faith, but cannot control himself with the mind wandering away from Yoga, failing to attain perfection in Yoga, what is his end, O *Krishna*? Does he not, O Mighty-armed, lose both this life and the *Brahmic* consciousness to which he aspires and falling from both perish like a dissolving cloud? Please dispel the doubt of mine completely, O *Krishna*; for there is none other than Thyself who can destroy this doubt.” The Gita-6.37, 38, 39

**Answer attempted in contemporary language:** Those who practice Yoga but fails to pursue it till the last, neither in this life nor hereafter is there any destruction for them. If anyone practices affirmative Yoga, then he in no way suffers any woe or misfortune. Having attained to the worlds of the Heaven or higher planes of consciousness, after long stay there for immemorial years, he who has fallen Spiritually from Yoga, *yogabhrasta*,<sup>12</sup> is born again in the house of the pure and glorious. Or he gets the rare rebirth in the house of wise Yogi. There he recollects and restores the past accumulated Spiritual energy and with that he again endeavours for highest perfection, *siddhi*. By virtue of the practice of the past birth, in this birth in the early part of the life he is drawn towards the knowledge of *Shastra* and sooner or later goes beyond the written truth, *sabdabrahmatibartate*. Due to his assiduous endeavour and purification from sin continuing from past many births, he in this birth attains to the highest goal.

11: “*Seven Questions raised by Arjuna:* (1) What is *tad brahma*, (2) what is *adhyatma* and (3) what is *karma*, O *Purushottama*? (4) What is declared to be *adhibhuta*, (5) what is called *adhidaiva*? (6) What is *adhiyajna* in this body? O *Madhusudana*? (7) And how in the critical moment of departure from physical existence, art Thou to be known by the self-controlled?” The Gita-8.1, 2

**Answer attempted in contemporary language:** The Blessed Lord said: The *Akshara* or the Immutable is the supreme *Brahman*; *svabhava* is called *adhyatma*, *Karma* is the name given to the creative movement, *visargah* which brings into existence all beings and their subjective and objective states. *Adhibhuta* is *ksharo bhavah* or mutable state, *adhidaiva* is *Purusha* or Soul within Nature; I myself am the lord of sacrifice, *adhiyajna* here in the body. Whoever leaves his body and

departs remembering Me at the time of his death, comes to My status of being, *madbhava*; there is no doubt about that.

12: “**Arjuna said:** *Thou* shouldest tell me of Thy Divine Self-manifestations, all without exception, Thy *Vibhutis* by which Thou standest pervading these worlds. How shall I know Thee, O Yogin, by thinking of Thee everywhere at all moments and in what pre-eminent becomings should I think of Thee, O Blessed Lord? In detail tell me of Thy *Yoga* and *Vibhuti* O *Janardana*; tell me ever more of it; it is nectar of immortality to me, and however much of it I hear, I am not satiated.” The Gita-10.16, 17, 18

**Answer attempted in contemporary language:** The full reply of this question is not possible as the manifestations of His *Vibhutis* are infinite. The Lord speaks of His *Vibhutis*. They are *Vishnu* among the *Adityas*, Sun among the lights and splendours, *Marichi* among the *Marutas*, Moon among the asterisms, *Sama Veda* among the *Vedas*, *Indra* among the Gods, mind among the senses, consciousness among the living beings, *Shiva* among the *Rudras*, *Kubera* among *Yakshas* and *Rakshasas*, *Agni* among *Vasus*, *Meru* among mountain peaks, *Brihaspati* among the Priests, *Skanda* among leader of armies, ocean among lakes, *Bhirgu* among great *Rishis*, Om among words, *Japa-Yajna* among *Yajnas*, *Himalaya* among the immovables, *Aswatha* among plants and trees, *Narada* among divine *Rishis*, *Chitraratha* among the *Gandharvas*, *Kapila* among the *Siddhas*, *Uchchaisravas* among the horses, *Airavata* among elephants, king among men, *Vraja* among weapons, *kamadhuk* among cows, *Kandarpa* among progenitors, *Vasuki* among serpents, *Ananta* among *Nagas*, *Varuna* among the peoples of the sea, *Aryaman* among fore-fathers, *Yama* among those who maintain rule and law, *Prahlad* among the Titans, Time among those who reckon and measure, lion among beasts, *Garuda* among birds, wind among purifiers, *Rama* among warriors, alligator among fishes, *the Ganges* among the rivers, I am glory, beauty, speech, memory, intelligence, steadfastness and forgiveness among feminine qualities, *Brihat-Sama* among the hymns of *Sama*, *Gayatri* among poetic metres, *Margasiesha* among months, spring among seasons, I am *Krishna* among the *Vrishnis*, *Arjuna* among *Pandavas*, *Vyasa* among the sages, *Ushanas* among the seer poets, spectre of the rulers, wise policy those who seek to succeed and conquer, silence of the secret things and knowledge of the knower. Whatever is glorious, beautiful, mighty and forceful are born from a fragment of My splendour.

13: “**Arjuna said:** This word concerning the highest spiritual secret of existence which Thou hast spoken out of compassion for me; by this my delusion is dispelled. The birth and passing away of existences have been heard by me in detail from Thee, O Lotus-eyed, and also Thy imperishable greatness. As Thou hast declared Thyself to be, O Supreme Lord even so it is, (still) I desire to see Thy Divine form and body of *Purushottama*. If Thou thinkest that it can be seen



by me, O Lord, show me then, O Master of Yoga, Thy imperishable Self.” The Gita-11.1, 2, 3, 4

**Answer attempted in contemporary language:** The Blessed Lord said: (1) Behold, O *Partha* My hundreds and thousands of Divine forms, various in kind, various in shape and hue; (2) Behold *the Adityas, the Vasus, the Rudras*, the two *Aswins* and *the Maruts*; behold many wonders never seen before; (3) behold the whole world with all that is moving and unmoving, unified in My body and whatever else thou wilt see; (4) thou cannot see Me in these sense eyes, I give thee the eye Divine, the third eye, the subtle vision; (5) the Divine showed to *Arjuna* of many mouths and eyes, of many wonderful visions, with many divine ornaments, with many divine uplifted weapons; (6) wearing divine garlands and raiments, anointed with the divine perfumes, the infinite and all-wonderful Godhead with faces everywhere; (7) if the light of a thousand suns were to blaze forth all at once in the sky, that might resemble the splendour of that Great Soul; (8) he saw the universe with its manifold divisions, yet situated unified in the body of the God of gods; (9) *Arjuna* said: I see all the gods, all the *Rishis*, creator Lord *Brahma* seated in the Lotus, divine Serpents in Thy body; (10) I see Thee, infinite in forms on all sides, with numberless arms and bellies and eyes and faces; I see not Thy end nor Thy middle, nor thy beginning; (11) Thou art a luminous mass of energy on all sides of me, an encompassing blaze, a sun-bright fire-bright Immeasurable...

14: “*Arjuna said:* Those seekers of *Bhakti Yoga* who thus by a constant union seek after Thy personal Form and those seekers of *Jnana Yoga* who seek after Thy unmanifest Immutable impersonal Form, which of them are greater Yoga?” The Gita-12.1

**Answer attempted in contemporary language:** “The Blessed Lord said those who are constantly most united, *nityayukta*, with Me and adore My manifest form, *Saguna Brahman*, emotional mind settled in Me and possessed of supreme faith of *Bhakti Yoga*, I consider them to be **the greatest Yogi**. And those *Jnana Yogis*, who seek after the Immutable, the Infinite, the Unmanifest, *Nirguna Brahman*, the Omnipresent, the Unthinkable, the high-seated Self, the Immobile, the Permanent, all their senses under control, equal visioned everywhere, intent on welfare of all beings, they also attain to My *Purushottama* state.” The Gita-12.2, 3, 4

15: “*Six Questions raised by Arjuna:* (1) The Field, *Kshetra*, and (2) the Knower of the Field, *Kshetrajna*, (3) Knowledge, *Jnana*, and (4) the object of Knowledge, *Jneya*, (5) Nature, *Prakriti* and (6) Self, *Purusha*, these I would like to learn, O *Keshava*.” The Gita-13.1

**Answer attempted in contemporary language:** (1) This body, Matter, is called the Field, O son of *Kunti*. The unmanifest Nature, the five great elements, the ten senses, the five objects of senses, mind, intelligence and ego, these twenty-four *tattvas* are the **Field, Kshetra**. The seven-fold deformations of the Field, *vikara*, are liking and disliking, pleasure and pain, collocation, consciousness and steadfastness.” The Gita-13.2, 4, 5

(2) “That which takes cognizance of the Field is called the Knower of the Field, *Kshetrajna*.” The Gita-13.2, “Know Me as the **Knower of all Fields, Kshetrajna**.” The Gita-13.3 “All manifestation, *sthabarajangamam*, takes place by union between Field, Matter, *Kshetra* and Knower of the Field, Spirit, *Kshetrajna*.” The Gita-13.27

(3) “**Knowledge** is knowledge of *Kshetra* and *Kshetrajna*. Absence of pride and arrogance, non-violence, forgiveness, straightforwardness, purity of mind, vital and body, steadfastness, self-control, veneration of the Teacher, detachment from the objects of the senses, absence of egoism, the awareness of the evil of birth, death, old age, disease and pain; absence of attachment and my-ness for son, wife, home, and a constant equal-mindedness in the midst of all desirable and undesirable happening, unswerving devotion for Me with exclusive union, resort to solitary places, absence of interest for crowds and assemblies of men, constancy in the spiritual knowledge, direct perception of the true sense of the real knowledge, this is declared to be **knowledge, jnana**, and all that is otherwise, ignorance.” The Gita-13.3, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

(4) “I shall now describe that which is to be known, and by knowing which one gets immortality; the beginningless supreme *Brahman*, called neither Sat (Existence) nor *Asat* (Non-existence). With His hands and feet everywhere, with eyes, heads and mouths on all sides, with ears everywhere, He dwells enveloping all in this world. Without any senses but reflected in all the senses and their qualities; unattached and yet all-supporting; beyond all *gunas* (qualities), and yet the enjoyer of the *gunas*. Inside all beings and outside, the moving and the unmoving, the far and the very near, all this He is at once; He is too subtle to be perceptible. He stands undivided in beings and yet as if divided. He is to be known as the Creator, Preserver and Devourer of beings. That, the Light of all lights, is said to be beyond darkness. That Knowledge of the Unknowable, the **object of knowledge, jneya, Parmatma**, is seated in the heart of all being.” The Gita-13.13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18

“Thus, the knowledge of the Field, Knowledge and object of Knowledge have been briefly told by Me. My devotee knowing this attains to My (Supramental) Divine Nature, *Madbhava*.” The Gita-13.19

(5 & 6) “Both *Purusha*, Soul and (*Para*) *Prakriti*, Nature are beginning-less, *anadi*, and eternal. The mutable *Apara Prakriti* has a beginning and an end and originates from *Para-prakriti*. The seven-fold deformations and three *Gunas* are born of (*Apara*) *Prakriti*. (*Para*) *Prakriti* is said to be the chain of cause and effect of *Apara Prakriti* and sense of doer ship of all action. *Purusha* is said to be cause or witness of the enjoyment of pleasure and pain of *Apara Prakriti*. The *Purusha* within the *Prakriti* enjoys the three *Gunas* born of (*Apara*) *Prakriti*. Attachment to three *Gunas* is the cause of the birth of good and evil wombs. The Supramentalised *Kshara Purusha* or Supramentalised Psychic Being is at once the Witness, *Sakhi*, Sanctioner, *Anumanta*, Sustainer, *Varta*, Enjoyer, *Vokta*, almighty Lord, *Maheswara*, supreme Self, *Purushottama*, seated in this body (heart), *Kshetra*, *Prakriti*. He who knows the irreconcilable (*Kshara*, *Akshara* and *Uttama*) *Purusha* and (*Para and Apara*) *Prakriti* with her three *gunas*, however he lives and acts, he shall not be born again or after realisation of *Purushottama* a *Yogi* has no unfinished task left and he concentrates on his escape to final resting place of *Param dham*.” The Gita-13.20, 21, 22, 23, 24 An integral *Yogi* reconciles (*Kshara*, *Akshara* and *Uttama*) *Purusha* with *Para* and *Apara Prakriti* and hence this Divine unfinished task continues through many births till *Apara Prakriti* is completely Divinised.

16: “*Arjuna said*: By what signs is he marked, O Lord, who has risen above the three *Gunas*? How he acts and behaves and how does he go beyond the three *Gunas*?” The Gita-14.21 Or this question may be put in contemporary language as how can one break the golden chain of three *gunas*?

**Answer attempted in contemporary language:** The man who has gone beyond the three modes of Nature, *Gunas*, is freed from birth, death, old age and suffering; he remains young and enjoys immortality of Self; (1) he does not abhor illumination nor impulsion to action, nor delusion when they occur, nor strives after them when they cease; (2) he stands apart, unwavering, unconcerned and unperturbed by the movement of three *gunas* by knowing that it is only *Gunas* that act; (3) he is established in the Self, imperturbable, equal in suffering and happiness, regards gold, mud and stone alike, equal before praise and blame, equal before honour and dishonour, and to whom faction of enemies and faction of friends are alike, and he has abandoned all initiation of work; (4) he loves and strives after the Divine by undeviating *Bhakti Yoga* and prepares himself to become the Divine, *Brahmabhuta*, which is the foundation of the *Brahman*, immortality, imperishable existence, eternal *Dharma* and utter Bliss of happiness.

*The Gita* prescribes a new method of self-discipline through which the **golden chain** of three *gunas* can be broken. “It is to stand back in oneself from the action and the modes and observe this unsteady flux as the Witness seated above the surge of the forces of Nature. He is one who watches but is impartial and

indifferent, aloof from them on their own level and in his native posture high above them. As they rise and fall in their waves, the Witness looks, observes, but neither accepts nor for the moment interferes with their course. First there **must be** the freedom of the impersonal Witness; afterwards there can be the control of the Master, the *Ishwara*.”<sup>4</sup>

17: “*Arjuna said:* Those who offer sacrifice full of faith (*sraddha*) but abandoning the rule of the *Shastra*, what is that concentrated will of devotion, *nistha*, in them, O *Krishna*? Is it *Sattwa*, *Rajas* or *Tamas*?” The Gita-17.1 Or this question may be put in following language, “Lord, You have insisted of rising above the three *gunas*, while yet one remains in action of all type, *sarva karmani*, and You have not explained me sufficiently the diversities in which the *gunas* work, and unless I know that, it will be difficult for me to discern with sincerity and rise beyond them.” Or this question may be put in the language of *The Synthesis of Yoga*, ‘Lord, You have insisted to trace out ‘the full account’<sup>13</sup> of my imperfection before striving to attend perfection. How can I know them fully in terms of triple divisible consciousness of *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattwa* that have strongly possessed this mind, life and body?’

**Answer attempted in contemporary language:** Those seekers of truth, *jijnasu*, who have no comprehensive knowledge of *Shastra*, their austerities become violent and their all resolves of sacrificial action become (*tamasic* and *rajasic*) *asuric*. Knowledge of *Shastra* makes action, sacrifice, gift, askesis, food, consciousness, fruits of action, doer of action, renunciation, understanding, persistence of will or sincerity, happiness and faith *Sattwic* and rightly regulated.

*Sattwa*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* are three *Gunas* born from the movement of *Prakriti* and they bind the Soul to the *Apara-prakriti*.

*Sattwa* is the giver of illumination, calmness, equality, order, accomplished harmony and well-being. It **binds the Soul** by attachment to limited happiness and limited knowledge. When through all the doors of the body, light of knowledge shines forth, there is increase of *Sattwa* and it imposes on itself an impersonal ethical, social and religious law, a *Dharma*, a *Shastra*, right understanding and a disinterested search of truth. When in *Sattwa* **one leaves the body**, he attains the spotless worlds of the knowers of the Highest. In this state **fruit of the work** is rightly and naturally enjoyed. Those who dwell in *Sattwa*, their **consciousness** rises upward and knowledge is gained. *Sattwic* man **offers sacrifice** to God or partial Godhead. This true sacrifice is extended according to the right principle, without desire for fruit, with a mind concentrated and fixed on the truth of things. The **food** that augments life, vitality, strength, health, joy and cheerfulness, which are succinct, soft, sustaining and agreeable, are dear to *sattwic* persons. **Askesis** done with faith and with no desire for fruit is said to be *sattwic*. Serenity of mind, gentleness, silence, self-control, purity of feeling, regular study of *Shastra*,

translation into mother tongue, restatement and practice of *Shastra* through concentration, contemplation and meditation are called *sattwic askesis of mind*. The writing/oration which gives no offence, truthful, pleasant and beneficial are *sattwic askesis of the vital/speech*. The **true *sattwic askesis of the body*** is done through purity, straightforwardness, virginity, non-violence and the worship offered to Godhead, Teacher, Wise and the twice born Soul. When the **gift** is given for the sake of giving to one from whom no benefit in return is expected, and in the right place, at the right time and to the right person, that gift is said to be *sattwic*. When one Imperishable Being is seen in all Beings and one indivisible Being is realised among the multiplicities of divisions, know that **knowledge** as *sattwic*. An **action** which is rightly regulated by renouncing the fruit of action, attachment and without liking and disliking, know that work as *sattwic* action. When one performs rightly regulated action by renouncing attachment of action and fruit of action, and renounces desire, ego, duality, three gunas and attachment, know that as *sattwic renunciation*. One who is free from attachment, egoless, endowed with steadfastness and zeal, unaffected by success and failure, is a *sattwic doer*. ‘The *sattwic doer* is free from all this attachment, this egoism, this violent strength or passionate weakness; his is a mind and will unelated by success, undepressed by failure, full of a fixed impersonal resolution, a calm rectitude of zeal or a high and pure and selfless enthusiasm in the work that has to be done.’<sup>1</sup> That which knows in essence action and withdrawal from action, what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, fear and fearlessness, bondage and liberation, clarity of mind, that **understanding** is *sattwic*. That unwavering **persistence** by which one controls the activities of mind, life and senses, know that persistence of mastering intelligence as *sattwic*. That **happiness** which seems like a poison initially but ends as nectar, that happiness is said to be *sattwic* born out of clear understanding.

*Rajas* springs from craving, lower ego motive, vital attachment, false knowledge and all devouring *asuric* mind. It **binds the embodied Soul** to action. Greed, kinesis, despair, initiative to action, ambition, selfishness, lust, cruelty, beast wrath, hypocrisy, treachery, ingratitude, unrest, hatred, jealousy, fierce reaction to the pressure of the environment, struggle with the world in which one lives, conquer, create, accumulate, craving of desire come forth when there is increase of *Rajas*. When **one leaves the body** during the prevalence of *Rajas*, he is born among those who are **attached to action**. In this state the **fruit of work** brings grief. Those who dwell in *rajas*, their **consciousness** remain in the middle. *Rajasic* man **offers sacrifice** to *Yakshas* and *Rakshasas*. This sacrifice is **offered** with the intention of getting fruit and ostentation. The **foods** that are bitter, sour, too hot, pungent, rough and burning and which produce pain, grief and disease are liked by *rajasic* persons. **Askesis** performed for ostentation, for the sake of gaining respect, honour and worship is *rajasic*. The **gift** which is given grudgingly for the sake of a return or with a view to fruit and reward is said to be *rajasic*. The

**knowledge** which experiences the multiplicity of Beings in their separateness and variety of operation without the sense of one indivisible Being, know that knowledge as *rajasic*. ‘*Rajas* perverts **knowledge**, makes our reason the accomplice of falsehood and the abettor of every wrong movement, disturbs and twists our life-force and its impulses, oversets the balance and health of the body. *Rajas* captures all high-born ideas and high-seated movements and turns them to a false and egoistic use; even divine Truth and divine influences, when they descend into the earthly plane, cannot escape this misuse and seizure.’<sup>3</sup> **Action** done for the satisfaction of desire and ego and with an excess of laborious effort, aggressive push of work, know that action as *rajasic*. He who gives up work because they bring sorrow, fear and physical suffering, know that as *rajasic* **renunciation**. One, who is passionate, eagerly seeks the fruit of actions, greedy, violent, impure, and moved by joy and sorrow, such a **doer** is *rajasic*. ‘The *rajasic* **doer** of action on the contrary is one eagerly attached to the work, bent on its rapid completion, passionately desirous of fruit and reward and consequence, greedy of heart, impure of mind, often violent and cruel and brutal in the means he uses; he cares little whom he injures or how much he injures others so long as he gets what he wants, satisfies his passions and will, vindicates the claims of his ego. He is full of an incontinent joy in success and bitterly grieved and stricken by failure.’<sup>1</sup> That **understanding** by which one knows incorrectly the right law and the wrong law and also what ought to be done and what ought not be done, is *rajasic*. That **persistence** by which one becomes desirous of the fruit, one holds fast *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kama*, that is *rajasic*. That **happiness** born from the contact of the senses with their many coloured homes of pleasure, which is like nectar at the first but poison in the end, know that happiness as *rajasic*.

*Tamas* is born of Ignorance and it **binds the Soul** by indolence, negligence and sleep. Obscurity, inertia, delusion, fear, weakness, incapacity, cowardly recoil, submission to the pressure of environment, insensible to beauty, love and delight come forth when there is increase of *Tamas*. And if **dissolved** during the prevalence of *Tamas*, he is born in the inferior wombs of beings involved in nescience. In this state **fruit of the work** brings Ignorance. Those who dwell in *tamas*, their **consciousness** move downward towards Spiritual fall, decay and destruction. *Tamasic* man **offers sacrifice** to ghosts and elemental spirits. This **sacrifice** is performed without observance of the right rule, without giving of food, without the *Mantra*, without gifts to the noble Souls and empty of faith. ‘Note that a *tamasic* **surrender** refusing to fulfil the conditions and calling on God to do everything and save one all the trouble and struggle is a deception and does not lead to freedom and perfection.’<sup>11</sup> That which is spoiled, tasteless, putrid, stale, left half-eaten by others and impure, is the **food** dear to *tamasic* persons. The **askesis** done with a deluded obstinacy, with self-torture or a view to hurt others is said to be *tamasic*. The **gift** which is given at an improper place and time and to an unworthy person, with desire and contempt, is said to be *tamasic*. The **knowledge**

which is petty and clings to single idea as if it were the whole, without reason, without grasping the essential significance, know that knowledge as *tamasic*. ‘*Tamas* obscures and prevents the light of the divine **knowledge** from penetrating into the dark and dull corners of our nature. *Tamas* incapacitates and takes away the power to respond to divine impulse and the energy to change and the will to progress and make ourselves plastic to a greater *Shakti*.’<sup>3</sup> **Action** initiated under the delusion without regard to one’s capacity, consequences, loss or injury or harm done to others, that work is said to be *tamasic*. To renounce the rightly regulated action out of delusion and a weak rejection of lower nature is *tamasic renunciation*. One who is discordant, vulgar, obstinate, deceitful, malicious, despondent, lazy, shrinking from endeavour and delaying in action, that **doer** is *tamasic*. ‘The *tamasic doer* of action is one who does not put himself really into the work, but acts with a mechanical mind, or obeys the most vulgar thought of the herd, follows the common routine or is wedded to a blind error and prejudice. He is obstinate in stupidity, stubborn in error and takes a foolish pride in his ignorant doing; a narrow and evasive cunning replaces true intelligence; he has a stupid and insolent contempt for those with whom he has to deal, especially for wiser men and his betters. A dull laziness, slowness, procrastination, looseness, want of vigour or of sincerity mark his action. The *tamasic* man is ordinarily slow to act, dilatory in his steps, easily depressed, ready soon to give up his task if it taxes his strength, his diligence or his patience.’<sup>1</sup> That which is enveloped in darkness, conceives as right law what is wrong, follows a routine of dull customary intelligence and sees all things in a perverted way, that **understanding** is *tamasic*. That **persistence** by which one does not give up sleep, fear, worry, grief and also pride, know that as *tamasic*. That **happiness** by which the Soul is deluded in the beginning and also in the end and which arises from sleep, sloth and negligence; that is *tamasic*.

18: “*Arjuna said*: I desire to know, O Mighty-armed, the essence of asceticism, *Sannyasa* and renunciation, *Tyaga*, O *Hrishikesh*, and their difference, O *Keshinisudana*.” The Gita-18.1 Or this question may be put in following language, “How, while absorbed and continually forced outward by the engrossing call of its active nature, is it to get back to its real self and spiritual existence?”<sup>2</sup>

**Answer attempted in contemporary language:** A *Sannyasi* rejects attachment of life/home, *aniketa*, and gives up work as it is prompted by desire, *sarabarambha parityagi*. A *Tyagi* renounces fruits of action, desire, ego, attachment to action, duality, three *gunas* and doer of action. In integral Yoga both are synthesised; the latter is indispensable askesis and the former is dispensable part of its self-discipline.

“The ascetic renunciation and the way of *the Gita* are both agreed that it must first of all renounce this absorption, must cast from it the external solicitation of outward things and **separate silent self from active nature**; it must identify

itself with the immobile Spirit and live in the silence. It must arrive at an inner inactivity, *naiskarmya*. It is therefore this saving inner passivity that *the Gita* puts here as **the first object of its Yoga**, the first necessary perfection in it or *Siddhi*.”<sup>2</sup>

### Recapitulation:

“For the methods of the integral Yoga must be mainly spiritual, and dependence on physical methods or fixed psychic or psycho-physical processes on a large scale would be the substitution of a lower for a higher action.”<sup>17</sup>

**Sri Aurobindo**

**Savitri book** confirms that both *Paramatma Satyavan* and *Para prakriti Savitri*’s main method of Yoga was Spiritual by pacifying the active mind in which Consciousness moves vertically between Psychic and Spiritual planes. We can observe it in the following verse:

“In the enormous emptiness of thy mind  
Thou shalt see the Eternal’s body in the world,  
Know him in every voice heard by thy soul,  
In the world’s contacts meet his single touch;  
All things shall fold thee into his embrace.”

Savitri-476

“In a **simple purity of emptiness**  
Her mind knelt down before the unknowable.”

Savitri-522

“Her **divine emptiness** was their instrument.”

Savitri-553

“An **impersonal emptiness** walked and spoke in her.”

Savitri-552

“**Annul thyself** that only God may be.”

Savitri-538

The Self-disciplines of sattwic renunciation, *tyaga*, of sattwic faith, *sraddha*, of sattwic sincerity, *Nistha*, and of sattwic surrender, *Yajna*, are not the main methods of the Gita but its main method is self-control by ‘the strong immobility of an immortal spirit.’<sup>18</sup> These sattwic methods are accepted as substitute self-disciplines of integral Yoga, pursued till Spiritual method evolves. So, the faith, sincerity and surrender born out of Psychic (Kshara Purusha) and Spiritual (Akshara Purusha) opening are identified as the method or self-disciplines of integral Yoga and through this higher method, the consciousness is moved consciously between Psychic and Spiritual plane. In integral Yoga the substitute method of movement of consciousness between three gunas will be replaced by movement consciousness between Psychic and Spiritual planes. And after a long period of this movement, the Consciousness will ascend to the



Supramental plane (Purushottama) and then there is the conscious movement of consciousness between the Psychic, Spiritual and Supramental planes. Through this action, the Psychic being is Spiritualised and Supramentalised or the Spiritual Mother and Supramental Mother consent to live permanently in the Psychic heart centre.

*OM TAT SAT*

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- 2: CWSA/19/Essays on the Gita-528-29,
- 3: CWSA/23/The Synthesis of Yoga-236-237,
- 4: CWSA/23/The Synthesis of Yoga-238,
- 5: CWSA/23/The Synthesis of Yoga-313-314-15,
- 6: The Gita-7.1,
- 7: CWSA/23/The Synthesis of Yoga-60,
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- 9: CWSA/23/The Synthesis of Yoga-66,
- 10: CWSA/23/The Synthesis of Yoga-146-47,
- 11: CWSA/25/The Mother-8,
- 12: The Gita-6.41,
- 13: “But whatever his aim, however exalted his aspiration, he has to **begin** from the law of his present imperfection, to take **full account** of it and see how it can be converted to the law of a possible **perfection**.” CWSA/24/The Synthesis of Yoga-631,
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Via: Brahmapur, Dist: Ganjam, State: Odisha, India  
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