

The Main Frame of Traditional and Integral *Bhakti Yoga*

“Respect for the divinity in man, in all men, is not diminished, but heightened and given a richer significance by lifting our eyes to the trail of the great Pioneers who lead or point him by whatever step of attainment towards supermanhood.”¹

Sri Aurobindo

The Gita gives importance to *Bhakti* after *Arjuna* is established through double movement of his sincerity, *dwibidha nistha*,³⁴ in *Karma* and *Jnana Yoga*. Or after *Arjuna* is established in the inactive *Akshara Purusha* and active *Kshara Purusha*, the Lord wanted to give him the knowledge of *Uttama Purusha* through that *Bhakti* which is equipped with integral Knowledge and integral self-giving. Thus in this absolute state of *Bhakti*, His devotees are protected against all evil and destruction, *na me bhaktah pranasyati*¹⁸ and are naturally free from all attachments towards things and individuals, *mad bhaktah sangabarjitah*.¹⁹

Four kind of virtuous men love and adore Me, O *Arjuna*, (1) those in distress, sorrow and suffering, (2) those seeking for good in the world, (3) the seekers after knowledge, and (4) those who have the knowledge of the *Brahman*.² Thus *the Gita* asks the *tamasic* devotees, *arta*, to raise their consciousness to *rajasic* state, *artharathi*, from *rajasic* state to *Sattwic* state, *Jijnasu*, and from *sattwic* state to *trigunatita* state of Consciousness, *Jnani*. The Gita approves the devotees of all the above types as noble Souls, *udarah* and regards the devotion of first three types as good but still inferior and cannot lead the Souls to their culmination as they seek God only for worldly boon and vital-emotional happiness. It lays the seal of full approval towards the fourth kind of devotees, *Jnani*, as *Bhakti* with Knowledge is identified as the greatest of all other forms of devotion and they seek the Divine for His own sake. Integral Yoga accepts above hierarchies in which first three are developing Souls; the third one is in transitional state from which a developing Soul emerges as a developed Soul either in this birth or after many births of preparation. The fourth state of *Jnani*, is further divided into four stages of ascending order of developed Soul that of twice born *Dvija*, instrument, *Yantra*, emanation, *Vibhuti* and the consciousness of an *Avatara*.

In the preliminary state of his *Sadhana*, *Arjuna's tamasic* recoil from the war field and entry into dejection and discouragement is much more injurious and destructive than the *rajasic* principles of strife, struggle and dissociation. So the Lord asks *Arjuna* to ascend from the state of *tamasic* devotee, *arta*, to *rajasic*

devotee, *artharathi*, by activation *Kshetriya* Soul force and to renounce attachment by slaying³ human unenlightened Teacher *Dronacharya*, who represents ego and divisible Consciousness. This indicates that for a secured Spiritual life one should constantly slay²⁵ the inner enemy of desire, ego and ignorance and in collective living he should constantly wage war against the powers of *Adharma*. Then *the Lord* asks *Arjuna* to become *Sattwic* devotee, *jijnasu*, and begin Yoga by renouncing *Prakriti Yajna*, which includes renunciation of all types of external worship and insists him to pursue only *Purusha Yajna* which will establish him *trigunatita* state.⁴ Then He asks him to adore only the highest embodied Divine personality, here represented by Him and discourages him to adore other gods which is meant to satisfy ‘various outer desires of the devotees.’⁵ So the Gita asks the above three bound Souls to become desireless and adore the One, representing highest Consciousness and discourages though does not ban adoration of other godheads representing the distortion of highest comprehensive Consciousness.⁶ Then the Lord points out that even the devotees who worship other Gods, their sacrifice is also received by Him though not according to the true law, *abidhipurbakam*.⁷ If one adores and offers sacrifice to the Divine in *tamasic* state, then that sacrifice goes to elemental powers and grosser spirits, *pretan bhutaganam*; if he offers adoration to the Divine in *rajasic* state of consciousness, then the sacrifice goes to lower godheads and perverse powers, *asuras, yaksa-raksamsi*; if he offers adoration to the Divine concealed in His manifestation in *sattwic* state of Consciousness, then the sacrifice and service is received by partial godheads and not directly by the integral Divinity.¹⁷ A seeker of truth, *Jijnasu*, by the virtue of pursuing *Sadhana* unsuccessfully in past births, takes interest in written truth in this life from early part of his life. Thus he practices sacrifice, askesis and giving which is limited, largely egoistic (*sattwic* ego) and mistaken in its motive and he endeavours to go beyond the written truth. When *Arjuna* ascends to the stairs of twice born Soul, *Dvija*, *the Lord* further insists him to ‘adore the feet of the enlightened *Guru*’⁸ or ‘veneration of the Teacher’⁹ in order to realise the Divine as *Kshara, Akshara and Purushottama*. Then after *Arjuna* is established as developed Soul of *Yantra*, the Lord gives him this knowledge that all concentrated objective action and sacrifice must be supported by ceaseless *Japa*¹⁰ and this habit of *Japa* must be maintained while in action of the war field¹⁶ and also while leaving the earthly body¹¹ in deep *Samadhi* where one’s Soul can take final refuge in the *Param Dhama*. When he ascends to the status of *Vibhuti*, for universalisation of Consciousness and realisation of Divine in all His becomings, the Lord further asks *Arjuna* to worship His manifestation in the Sun, Moon, Star, flower, in every living creature. He has to adore the myriad Gods, *deva*, superior human beings known as twice born *dvija*, man of enlightened knowledge, *prajna*, and the enlightened teacher, *guru*.¹² The Lord points out that adoration of all His manifestations equally, without distinction is the condition of becoming the greatest Yogi.²⁴ When he ascends to the status of *Avatara* Consciousness or *Purushottama* Consciousness through triple consecration, there

triple poise of the Self coexists and the Soul, *Kshara Purusha* possesses the Godhead, *Purushottama*, in totality.

Integral Yoga follows this sequence of *Arjuna* and it stresses adoration of the One to the exclusion of the Many for developing Souls to build Spiritual foundation and asks the developed Souls to reconcile them in order to know and possess the Divine entirely. This adoration of superior human beings hinted in the Gita is applicable in integral Yoga for developed Soul¹³ and this adoration is even further extended to criminal, thief, murderer and outcaste¹⁴ in order to extend the realisation of Divine in Cosmic Consciousness. There will be even 'certain respect'¹⁵ and reverence for physical things, a worship of Divine, the *Brahman* in what one uses, ordered harmony and beauty in the life of Matter in order to complete the realisation of Divine in all things. Thus, through Soul evolution the scope of consecration becomes wide²⁶ and all-pervasive.

So from the above study we conclude that a *Sadhaka* of integral Yoga has to make an imperative choice either to become follower of difficult task of movement towards Their limitless Consciousness of existing *Ashram* living or shrink back to an easier task of becoming leader of limiting Consciousness of new setup. A new establishment of *The Mother's* Centre can be challenging if a *Sadhaka's* swift Spiritual evolution of living alone with the Divine is reconciled with slow evolution of collective living. He should follow, regard, obey and adore the brother Souls those who are ahead of him in cognition and extend compassion, help and guidance to fellow brothers those who are behind him in Consciousness. If he will maintain this status then he will have no narrow carping, *asuya*, no jealousy, *amarsa*, towards individuals having superior Consciousness and develop *Sraddha* towards the Divine and His existence. The Lord considered *Arjuna* fit to receive the supreme Knowledge as he was having complete faith in the personal manifestation of the *Avatara*, *sraddha* and was having no narrow carping, *asuya*, towards brother Souls who were ahead of him in Consciousness.

- 1) "I am equal in all existences, none is dear to Me, none hated; yet those who worship Me with devotion, they are in Me and I also in them. If even a man of very evil conduct, not fit to pursue Yoga, turns to Me with a sole and entire love, he must be regarded as a saint, for the settled will of endeavour in him is a right and complete will. Swiftly does he become a soul of righteousness and obtains peace. Know it for certain, O *Kaunteya*, that My devotee never perishes. Those who take refuge in Me, O *Partha*, though outcastes, born from the womb of the sin, harlots, *Vaishyas*, even *Shudras*, representing inferior *tamasic* state of consciousness, they also attain to the highest goal. What then to say of the holy *Brahmins* and devoted king sages representing higher *Sattwic* state of consciousness. So you, who have come to this transient and

unhappy world, turn to Me and worship Me. Become My minded, My lover and adorer, a sacrifice to Me, thus united with Me in the Self thou shalt come to Me, having Me as thy supreme goal.”¹⁸

- 2) The above injunction indicates that those who are unfit to pursue *dhyana Yoga*, *Karma Yoga* and *Jnana Yoga*, they can adhere to *Bhakti Yoga* by turning their emotion Godward. Divine does not reject their imperfect devotion. “As men approach Me with all his construction of mind, imperfect names and images of the Godhead, so I accept them to My love, *bhajami*; men follow in every way My path, O son of Pritha... Whatever form of Me any devotee with faith desires to worship, I make that faith of his firm and undeviating. He endowed with that faith worships that form of the Godhead; when by the force of that faith in his cult and worship he gets his desires, it is I Myself who in that form gives these fruits. But these fruits of desire are temporary and transient in Nature, sought after by those who are of petty intelligence and unformed reason. To the myriad Gods go the worshipers of that faith but My worshippers come to Me.”²³
- 3) “Neither by the study of *the Vedas*, nor by severe austerities, nor by charity and ceremonial rites, nor by sacrifice can My *Viswa Rupa* be seen by you. By that *Bhakti* which regards, adores and loves Me alone in all things, can My *Viswa Rupa* be thus seen, known and even entered into, *O Parantapa*.”¹⁹ “An (integral) Yogi goes beyond the sacred fruit received through practice of written truth, sacrifices, austerities and charitable gifts and attains the supreme and eternal status of Consciousness, *Param Sthanam*.”²⁰
- 4) “He who loves and strives after Me with an undeviating Yoga of devotion, *avyabhichari Bhaktiyoga*, he passes beyond three *gunas* and is prepared for becoming the *Brahman*.”²¹
- 5) “When one has become the *Brahman*, when one, serene in the Self, neither grieves nor desires, when one is equal to all beings, then one gets the supreme love and devotion (*Para Bhakti*) to Me. By devotion he comes to know Me, who and how much I am in all reality and principles of My Being and Becoming. Having thus known My Becoming he enters into Me.”²²

The Injunction issued to the Seekers of integral Yoga of Devotion:

“When unity is won, when strife is lost
And all is known and all is clasped by Love
Who would turn back to ignorance and pain?”

Savitri-633

“Wherever love and light and largeness lack,
These crooked fashioners take up their task.”

Savitri-153

“Wrong could not come where all was light and love.”

Savitri-314

The integral *Bhakti Yoga* is the extensive extension of the Gita’s teachings of traditional *Bhakti Yoga*.

1) All Life is Yoga of Nature through Love. ‘All life turned into this cult of love, all actions done in the love of the Divine and in the love of the world and its creatures seen and felt as the Divine manifested in many disguises become by that very fact part of an integral Yoga.’²⁷ The three stages through which all life is transformed are; firstly the Integral *Bhakti Yoga* turns all transient worldly normal emotional relation of human life into the joy of the All-Loving, the All-Beautiful and the All-Blissful. Worship, prayer and meditation are used only for the preparation and increase of intensity of the divine relationship. Integral *Bhakti Yoga* is catholic in its use of all emotional relations, so that even enmity and opposition to God, considered as an intense, impatient and perverse form of Love, is conceived as a possible means of realisation and salvation. ‘It is for this reason that the worship of god, the worship of idol, the human magnet or ideal are not to be despised; for these are steps through which the human race moves towards that blissful passion and ecstasy of the Infinite which, even in limiting it, they yet represent for our imperfect vision when we have still to use the inferior steps Nature has hewn for our feet and admit the stages of our progress. Certain idolatries are even indispensable for development of our emotional being; the man who knows be hasty at any time to shatter the images unless he can replace it in the heart of the worshipper by the Reality it figures.’²⁸ Secondly, Integral *Bhakti Yoga* recommends development of seven fold Divine personalities during its contact and active personal relation with the Divine as All Friend and All Master of Integral Karma Yoga, All *Guru* of Integral *Jnana Yoga*, All Father or *Paramatma or Prajapati Brahma* of Integral Vedantic teaching, All Mother or *Para-Shakti* of Integral Tantric Yoga, All Playmate and All Lover of Integral *Bhakti Yoga*. Thirdly, All Love, Human and Divine have Spiritual force veiled and revealed respectively. It is an adoration offered initially to limited and ignorant object and form and culminates in all-inclusive and all-embracing Integral Divine. Human love is defined as the entry into exclusive enjoyment by entire separation from World, Self and God. This love begins with the craving of the flesh and when it tries to become Divine through complete self-giving culminates with the realisation of one Soul in two bodies (Spiritual realisation) and rapturous fusing of two Souls into one body (Psychic realisation). The Divine love is defined as entry into same exclusive enjoyment without separation from World, Self and God. It begins with the realisation where human love ends and culminates

with the realisation of all Souls in one body and realisation of all bodies in one Soul. The former is realised through *Vedic* sacrifice of adoration and consecration of all as the becoming of the Divine and the latter is realised through Vedantic sacrifice of adoration and consecration of all as the Being of the Divine. In Supramental consciousness the object of all emotion would be fully satisfied by embracing all contact of human relation in a purified flame force.

2) *Bhaktya mamvijanati jaban jaschasmi tatwatah*, (The Gita-18.55) by devotion he comes to know Me, who and how much I am in all reality and principles of My being. *Bhakti* is that which regards, adores, loves the Divine alone in all things, by that *Bhakti* He can be known, seen, and ever entered in to. *The Gita* further confirms that of all Yogin he who with all his inner self given up to Me, for Me has love and faith, him I hold to be the most united with Me in Yoga. Integral *Bhakti* is considered as highest element of Integral Yoga which is the crown of Integral *Karma* Yoga and flowering of the Integral *Jnana* Yoga.

3) The traditional *Bhakti* Yoga leads away from world-existence to an absorption, in the Transcendent and Supra-cosmic. The path of Integral *Bhakti* Yoga aims at the enjoyment of the supreme Love and Bliss and utilises normally the conception of the supreme Lord in His personality as the divine Lover and enjoyer of the universe. The world is then realised as a play of the Lord, with our human life as its final stage, pursued through the different phases of self-concealment and self-revelation. This larger application of Yoga of Devotion may be so used as to lead to the elevation of the whole range of human emotion, sensation and aesthetic perception to the divine level, its Spiritualization and the justification of the cosmic labour towards love and joy in our humanity. As in the other Yogas, so in integral Yoga, one comes to see Divine everywhere and in all and to pour out the realisation of the Divine in all one's inner activities and outward actions. But all is supported by the primary force of emotional union: for it is by love that the entire self-consecration and the entire possession is accomplished, and thought and action become shapes and figures of the divine love which possesses the Spirit and its members.

4) So the method with which *Bhakti* Yoga can begin is simple and straight which is always a seeking after the Divine, a longing after some kind of touch, closeness or possession. When this comes on us, the adoration becomes always primarily an inner worship; we begin to make ourselves a temple of the Divine, our thoughts and feelings a constant prayer of aspiration and a seeking, our whole life an external service and worship. It is as this change, this new soul tendency grows, that the religion of the devotee becomes Yoga, a growing contact and union. It does not follow that outward worship will necessarily be dispensed with, but it will increasingly become only a physical expression or outflowing of the inner devotion and adoration, the wave of the Soul throwing itself out in speech

and symbolic act. ‘Therefore that there may be at all any possibility of a Yoga of devotion, we must assume first (first method of Yoga of Integral *Bhakti*) that the supreme Existence is not an abstraction or a state of existence, but a conscious Being; secondly, that he meets us in the universe and is in some way immanent in it as well as its source,--otherwise, we should have to go out of cosmic life to meet him; thirdly, he is capable of personal relations with us and must therefore be not incapable of personality; finally, that when we approach him by our human emotions, we receive a response in kind.’²⁹ ‘The more intimate yoga of *Bhakti* resolves itself simply into these four movements, (first) the desire of the Soul when it turns towards God and the straining of its emotion towards him, (second) the pain of love and the divine return of love, (third) the delight of love possessed and the play of that delight, (fourth) and the eternal enjoyment of the divine Lover which is the heart of celestial bliss.’³⁰ ‘There are supposed by those who systematize to be three stages of seeking through the devotion of the mind, first, the constant hearing of the Divine name, qualities and all that has been attached to them, secondly, the constant thinking on them or on the divine being or personality, thirdly, the settling and fixing of the mind on the object; and by this comes the full realisation.’³¹

5) ‘The way of the integral Yoga of *Bhakti* will be to universalise this conception of the Deity, to personalise him intimately by a multiple and an all-embracing relation, to make Him constantly present to all the being and to devote, give up, surrender the whole being to Him, so that He shall dwell near to us and in us and we with Him and in Him. *Manana* and *darsana*, a constant thinking of Him in all things and seeing of Him always and everywhere is essential to this way of devotion.’³² ‘On the contrary, the *sadhaka* of the integral Yoga will not be satisfied until he has included all other names and forms of Deity in his own conception, seen his own *Ishta Devata* in all others, unified all *Avatars* in the unity of Him who descends in the *Avatara*, welded the truth in all teachings into the harmony of the Eternal Wisdom.’²⁶ ‘We may keep even our relation with the personal Deity in His forms and names; if for instance, our work is predominantly a work of Love it is as the Lord of Love that we can seek to serve and express Him, but we shall have at the same time an integral realisation of Him in all His names and forms and qualities and not mistake the front of Him which is prominent in our attitude to the world for all the infinite Godhead.’³³

Recapitulation:

A traditional *Bhakti Yogi* is considered great when he reconciles his devotion with sacrificial action and realises the *Kshara Purusha* or Psychic being in the heart. A Greater *Bhakti Yogi* reconciles his devotion of personal Godhead with the Impersonal Godhead of *Jnana Yoga* and realises *Akshara Purusha* or Spiritual Being in addition to the earlier realisation of *Kshara Purusha*. The greatest *Bhakti Yogi* realises *Kshara* and *Akshara Purushas*’ union with the

Purushottama, who finally consents to live in the heart, which is also the dual meeting ground of *Uttama Purusha* and *Para Prakriti*. The realisation of this dual Godhead in the heart is the beginning of realisation of Bliss Self which is beyond the Supramental action on earth. An integral *Bhakti Yogi* will direct the Supramental energy dynamised due to his relatively stronger part of Divine Love, Beauty and Delight towards relatively weaker parts of his untransformed volitional and intellectual Nature.

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References:

- 1: CWSA-19/Essays on the Gita-375,
- 2: The Gita-7.16,
- 3: The Gita-2.4,
- 4: The Gita-2.45,
- 5: The Gita-7.20,
- 6: The Gita-7.20 to 7.25,
- 7: The Gita-9.23,
- 8: The Gita-4.34,
- 9: The Gita-13.8,
- 10: The Gita-17.24,
- 11: The Gita-8.13,
- 12: The Gita-17.14,
- 13: “For the seeker of the integral Yoga... will meet him (the Divine) in the faces of the Gods, his cosmic personalities supporting the World-Play, detect him behind the mask of the *Vibhutis*, embodied World-Forces or human Leaders, reverence and obey him in the *Guru*, worship him in the *Avatar*.” CWSA/23/The Synthesis of Yoga-130,
- 14: “When I knew nothing, then I abhorred the criminal, sinful and impure, being myself full of crime, sin and impurity; but when I was cleansed and my eyes unsealed, then I bowed down in my spirit before the thief and murderer and adored the feet of the harlot; for I saw that these souls had accepted the terrible burden of evil and drained for all of us the greater portion of the churned poison of the world-ocean.” *Sri Aurobindo*, SABCL/17/The Hour of God-94-95. This statement of *Sri Aurobindo* is a restatement from the following words of *the Gita* and *Essays on the Gita*, “Those who take refuge in Me, O *Partha*, be they out-castes, born from the womb of sin (even a man of very evil conduct, The Gita-9.30), women, *Vaisyas*, even *Shudras*, they also attain to the highest Goal.” The Gita-9.32. “A divine compassion for the ignorance of the struggling mind, a divine will to pour forth on it all light and power and happiness there will be, indeed, for the apparent man; but for the divine Soul within him there will be more, there will be adoration and love. For from all, from the thief and the harlot and the outcaste as from the saint and the sage, the Beloved looks forth and cries to us, “This is I.” “He who loves Me in all beings,” — what greater word of power for the utmost intensities

and profundities of divine and universal love, has been uttered by any philosophy or any religion?" CWSA/19/Essays on the Gita-208. "If *Narayana* is without difficulty visible in the sage and the saint, how shall he be easily visible to us in the sinner, the criminal, the harlot and the outcaste?" CWSA/19/Essays on the Gita-359, Thus equal adoration of all, is the condition of becoming the greatest Yogi.

15: CWSA/22/The Life Divine/1022,

16: The Gita-8.7,

17: The Gita-17.4,

18: The Gita-9.29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34,

19: The Gita-11.48, 53, 54,

20: The Gita-8.28,

21: The Gita-14.26,

22: The Gita-18.54, 55,

23: The Gita-4.11, 7.21, 22, 23,

24: The Gita-6.32,

25: "Outwardly also, the nation or community or race which shrinks too long from destroying and replacing its past forms of life, is itself destroyed, rots and perishes and out of its debris other nations, communities and races are formed. By destruction of the old giant occupants man made himself a place upon earth. By destruction of the Titans the gods maintain the continuity of the divine Law in the cosmos. Whoever prematurely attempts to get rid of this law of battle and destruction, strives vainly against the greater will of the World-Spirit. Whoever turns from it in the weakness of his lower members, as did *Arjuna* in the beginning, — therefore was his shrinking condemned as a small and false pity, an inglorious, an un-Aryan and unheavenly feebleness of heart and impotence of spirit, *klaibyam, ksudram hridaya-daurbalyam*, — is showing not true virtue, but a want of spiritual courage to face the sterner truths of Nature and of action and existence. Man can only exceed the law of battle by discovering the greater law of his immortality." CWSA/19/Essays on the Gita-384-85,

26: "On the contrary, the sadhaka of integral Yoga will not be satisfied until he has included all other names and forms of Deity in his own conception, seen his own *Ishta Devata* in all others, unified all Avatars in the unity of Him who descends in the Avatar, welded the truth in **all teachings** into the harmony of the Eternal Wisdom." CWSA/23/The Synthesis of Yoga-66,

27: CWSA/23/The Synthesis of Yoga-165,

28: CWSA/23/The Synthesis of Yoga-159,

29: CWSA/24/The Synthesis of Yoga-557,

30: CWSA/24/The Synthesis of Yoga-571,

31: CWSA/24/The Synthesis of Yoga-574,

32: CWSA/24/The Synthesis of Yoga-601,

33: CWSA/23/The Synthesis of Yoga-382,

34: The Gita-3.3.

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Regd.No-146/24.11.97. Vill: Ramachandrapur, PO: Kukudakhandi-761100,
Via: Brahmapur, Dist: Ganjam, State: Odisha, India