

## CONTEMPLATION AND COMPASSION - AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

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### 1. Introduction

Before analyzing contemplation and compassion from the perspective of our Indian tradition, I would like to say a few words about contemplation, as I understand it. For me, contemplation is a way of seeing. Seeing can be in three levels - by our physical eye, our mental eye and our spiritual eye. It is only the intensity of the unifying vision that varies in each level of seeing. In physical vision it is of successive moments, which happen in what we call time. It is limited by its own material structures. In the mental way of seeing, though it is also in time, the union is more extensive, just like I can see the idea of a flower in any flower. The supra-mental

consciousness or spiritual vision is what I really understand by the word 'consciousness' that which is our very soul by nature. In this level, a higher unifying vision is natural, as it is freed from the limitations of mental and physical structures. This is proper to the soul in itself, though the human soul is embodied and lives in time, because of the body. But human soul by nature transcends these limitations and God can communicate to the soul directly, opening a way for contemplative vision, leading to more intimate union and divine transformation.

Hence, contemplative vision, in its ultimacy, transcends the physical and the mental levels, though it is not always com-

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pletely cut away from them. All the three layers are involved in contemplative look, but slowly the role of the physical and the mental 'seeing' becomes less and less, that the vision of the spiritual eye, the eye of faith, becomes predominant.

This aspect is not very evident in our seminary theology, wherein faith is brought down to the level of reason. *Fides quaerens intellectum* (faith questioning the intellect) really downgrades the mysteries of our faith to the level of reason. Mind or reason is not the area of real contemplative prayer. This may be the reason why the mystical authors like St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, speak about the silence, both of the senses and of the mind, in real mystical prayer. Time and again, St. Teresa of Avila speaks about "The sleeping of the faculties" in the experience of contemplative prayer.<sup>1</sup> St. John of the Cross elaborates on the night of the senses and of the spirit before one reaches the higher degrees of prayer and contemplation.

Thus we realize that contemplative prayer is not just saying prayers; it is not even a type of discursive meditation. It is rather largely in the area of faith, that too, experiencing the dark light of faith as unifying, purifying and enlightening. Hence, contemplative vision is an experience

where all the three layers come into play. But slowly the role of the physical and the mental levels becomes less and less, and that of the spiritual eye, the eye of faith, becomes predominant.

With this introduction let us now move on to understanding the Indian way of looking at contemplation and compassion.

## 2. What is Contemplation?

The first problem I face is regarding the distinction between meditation and contemplation. Which Indian word will rightly correspond to the word 'contemplation' which we are using? There is a beautiful passage in the *Chandogya Upanisad* where the student Narada

*Fides quaerens intellectum* (faith questioning the intellect) really downgrades the mysteries of our faith to the level of reason.

approaches the teacher Sanatkumara and requests the wisdom of knowing Atman or Brahman. Sanatkumara asks: "Let me know what you know and I will tell you what is beyond that?" Then Narada narrates all what he has studied, namely, the four *Vedas*, the *vedangas* etc etc. Then Sanatkumara answers: "All that you have been saying is nothing but name." "...Meditate on the name as Brahman." Then the student said: "Yes, sir, I will meditate on the name as Brahman." Narada continued: "But, he who meditates on the name as Brahman will reach only the name. But, sir, is there anything greater than the

name?" S anatkumara said: "Yes, the mind, verily, is greater than the name." Then the seeker's questions go on and on, asking what is still greater than the former. Thus the following words are used in succession as it goes higher and higher namely, mind (*manas*), judgment (*sanglpa*), thought (*citta*), contemplation (*dhyana*) and wisdom (*vijnana*) (Ch. Up. VIII, 1,1-7). In these series of words the well-known indologist Raymundo Panikkar translates the word *dhyana* as contemplation. The Indian word *dhyana* is often translated as meditation. But my feeling is that *dhyana* goes far beyond meditation and also includes what we call contemplation in the Western tradition. In any case, in the given text, *dhyana* goes beyond mind, judgment and thought. Discursive meditation is over by these three steps.

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It is to be noted that St. John of the Cross makes a clear distinction between meditation and contemplation. While talking about the dark night of the soul, and in dealing with withdrawing the soul from the life of the senses and placing it in that of the spirit, John says: "He brings it from meditation to contemplation – where the soul no longer has the power to work or meditate with its faculties on the things of God. Spiritual persons suffer considerable affliction in this night, owing not so much to the aridities they undergo as to their fear of having gone astray."

Another example for this is the *Gayatri mantra* in which we pray:

om tat savitur varenyam,  
bhargo devasya dhimahi,  
*dhiyo yo nah prajaodayat*

That divine Sun is to be embraced,  
Whose ray I meditate (contemplate)  
That he himself may awaken our mind  
(*Rig Veda*, III, 62, 10).

Here the words *dhimahi* (I meditate) and *dhiyo* (mind) come from the same root *dhy* which means to think, ponder on, to contemplate etc. From the same root originates the word *dhyana*. In the prayer of *Gayathri mantra* the

is not of any rational argumentation, but contemplative look that I may be united with that divine Sun, who may awaken me. The conclusion is that the Sanskrit word *dhyana* denotes not merely a state of rational, argumentative thinking or discursive meditation, but includes a much more contemplative, serene look, something like prayer of the quiet. We have some other words, which are very important in expounding the experience of contemplative prayer. They are *samadhi*, (equanimity) and *stita-prajna* (steady wisdom). We will now see these two words in their context in the *Gita*.

### 3. *Samadhi* and *Stitaprajna* according to the *Gita*

What is *samadhi*? The word *samadhi* is a combination of words, *sama* (equal) and *dhi* (mind). Hence, the meaning of the word is 'equal mindedness' or equanimity. *Samadhi* is a state of consciousness, transcending opposition, reposing in the inner depth, where one finds God as one's own innermost centre. So there is perfect serenity, peace, and divine rhythm running through the entire person and in his actions as well. Effectively, real contemplative prayer should lead us to a state of perfect equilibrium, despite opposing or disturbing situations.

The *Bagavad Gita* says:

When thy intellect, tossed about by the conflict of opinions, has become immovable and firmly established in the Self, then thou shall attain yoga/self-realization (*Gita* 2:53).

Here the word 'yoga' means an accomplished state of self-establishment in the Divine Self (Atman) within one's own individual self. Wondering on this state of mind when Arjuna asks: "How does the man in *samadhi* behave, the man of steady wisdom?" Krishna says:

When a man completely casts away all the desires of the mind, satisfied in

the Self and by the Self alone, then is he said to be of steady wisdom (*Gita* 2:55).

Contemplation should lead us to a kind of equanimity, steady wisdom. Steady wisdom is not an inactive, dead blink of the intellect. It is the participation in the vision of God, in the serenity of God, in the equanimity of God, who abides in the innermost centre of the human soul. The result:

*Samadhi* is a state of consciousness, transcending opposition, reposing in the inner depth, where one finds God as one's own innermost centre.

He whose mind is not shaken by adversity, who does not hanker after happiness, who has become free from affection, fear, and wrath (*vita-raga-bhaya-krodha*), is indeed the *muni* of steady wisdom (*Gita* 2:56).

Compare this text with the short poem of Mother Teresa of Avila:

Let nothing trouble you  
All is fleeting  
God alone is unchanging  
Patience, everything obtains  
Who possess God, nothing wants  
God alone suffices.<sup>3</sup>

In her work *Way of Perfection* she says: "Be sure that if you do what lies in your power, preparing yourself for contemplation with the perfection mentioned, and if he doesn't give it to you (and I believe he will give it, if detachment and humility are truly present)."<sup>4</sup>

I am quoting this only to show that from our part there must be effort and readiness to co-operate, as the *Gita* suggests.

According to the *Gita*, steady wisdom then takes a turn and becomes contemplation of the Lord as the Supreme. The man/woman thus sits in meditation/contemplation is also a *bhakta*, a devotee of the Lord, remaining united with the Lord. So in the chapter on devotion the *Gita* continues:

But those who worship me, resigning all actions in me, regarding me as a supreme goal, meditating on me with single minded yoga – to these whose mind is set on me, verily I become before long the saviour out of the oceans of mortal *samsara* (*Gita* 12:6-7).

The man/woman thus sits in meditation/contemplation is also a *bhakta*, a devotee of the Lord, remaining united with the Lord.

*Gita* then talks about those who are unable to do this. This again reminds us of Mother Teresa, who says that all are not called for contemplative prayer. According to the *Gita* you are asked to do *abhyasa-yoga* (practice) and if that is difficult, be interested on doing action for the Lord's sake, renouncing the fruits of all action and remain self-controlled, taking refuge in the Lord (*Gita*, 12:9-11).

Reminding us very much of Phil. 2:5 following "Your attitude must be that of

Jesus..." *Gita* almost concludes the last chapter with these words:

Here thou again my supreme word, the profoundest of all: because thou art dearly beloved of me, therefore will I speak what is good to thee.

Be of my mind (*man-mana-bhava*), be devoted to me, sacrifice to me, bow down to me. Thou shall reach myself; truly do I promise unto thee, thou art dear to me (*Gita*, 18:64-65).

The contemplative prayer is well presented in the *Gita* from the perspectives of action, wisdom and devotion (*karma*, *jnana* and *bhakti*).

Now we turn to the next problem regarding how to reach the state of *samadhi*.

The process of reaching the state of *samadhi* is dealt well by Patanjali in his famous work *Yogasutra*. Here I am presenting only three steps of the eight steps of yoga (*Astanga-yoga*) from *Yogasutra*. They are right posture, silencing the senses and silencing the mind. After dealing with *yama* and *niyama* which are principles of self-control and rules of behaviour, Patanjali deals with the steps of meditation. The first one is right posture which should be steady and pleasant (*stira* and *sugha*), then the regulating the rhythm of one's breathing (*pranayama*), silencing

the senses (*pratyahara*) and silencing the mind (*dharana*).

#### 4. The Way to *Samadhi* (from Patanjali's *Yoga-sutra*)

Once the posture is taken and the life force within us is settled by breathing exercise, Patanjali turns to two important factors of contemplative look into one's own self. The word *pratyahara* means withdrawing all the sense faculties from their objects. Patanjali defines *pratyahara* as follows:

*Pratyahara* means withdrawal of mind and sense organs from their respective sense objects and abidance there in, where by the senses become sublimated into the very form of consciousness (*Yogasutra*, II. 54).

"Silencing is thus a sort of resting. Putting the senses to rest is the beginning of concentration and meditative prayer."

This can be explained as follows:

The universe, the outermost layer of man's being, is simply made up of the objects of the senses. The senses have to withdraw themselves from the objects. This means silencing the senses of the body. The silence of the tongue or lip is the most obvious phenomenon of this silencing process and this is what we generally understand by the word silence. But silence is not only of lips. It should involve all the senses. All senses must withdraw themselves from their objects and find rest in them-

selves. This is *pratyahara*. The senses are active when they are contact with the objects. Dissociated from them they rest. Silencing is thus a sort of resting. Putting the senses to rest is the beginning of concentration and meditative prayer.<sup>5</sup>

The oriental mystic Philotheus of Sinai writes:

The first door leading into the Jerusalem of mind or mental silence is the external silence of the lips; the second is abstinence from food, drink, and sleep; and the third door, which purifies both the body and mind, is meditation on death.<sup>6</sup>

Patanjali sees this as a necessary condition for true meditation/contemplation. Therefore, he says that the senses should be silenced by withdrawing their attention from all the sense objects.

After his instructions regarding the silencing the senses, Patanjali moves to the silencing of the mind. This is known as *dharana*: concentration. Patanjali has already defined yoga as *citta-vrtti-nirodha*: cessation of the mental process (*Yoga-sutra* 1.2). If we want to achieve concentration, which is to fix the mind on one object, the first lesson we have to learn is to stop the mind's process of continuous transformation of the objects that it looks at and absorbs. In *dharana* the mind

stabilizes this process and moves to a state of one-pointedness of attention (*ekagrata*) and remains there in contemplation. You are free to choose what you want to concentrate on or contemplate about, and slowly get transformed into that - and to achieve this, the mind is fixed on the *Ishta-devata* (one's favourite deity) for concentration. "What you contemplate that you slowly become", is a famous Indian dictum. Thus, both the lower faculties of the senses and the higher faculty of the mind must be silenced or put to rest for the attaining of the next stage, *dhyana* contemplation.

Remember what John of the Cross says:

"What you contemplate that you slowly become."

The higher portion of my soul being like the lower part also at rest, with respect to its desires and faculties, I went forth to the divine union of the love of God.

With regard to the need of silencing the lower faculties, including the mind, both Patanjali and John of the Cross agree, but the way come to this stage is differently explained.

After putting the faculties of senses and mind to silence, Patanjali defines *dhyana* as "the steadied evenness of mind in *dharana* (concentration)" (*Yogasutra*, III, 2).

Ramanuja describes meditation as follows:

Meditation (*dhyana*) is the steady remembrance, that is, the continuity of the steady remembrance, uninterrupted like the flow of oil, in agreement with the spiritual passage that declares steady remembrance to be the means of relish - on the attainment of remembrance all ties are loosened' (Chand. VI 26.2). Such remembrance is of the same character of seeing (intuition).<sup>8</sup>

Ramanuja's use of the word 'remembrance' takes us to Luke's presentation of Mary.

Mary remembered all these things and thought deeply about them (Lk. 2:90).

Yes, Mary's remembrance was contemplative prayer.

According to Patanjali, the net result of *dhyana* is *samadhi*, which has its western equivalence as *neptis*, *hesychia* and also ecstasy. Both *neptis* and *hesychia* mean "mental sobriety, a mental balance, an internal disposition of attention to the movement of God's spirit leading you to true discernment of how you should react to a given situation."<sup>9</sup>

## 5. The Upanisadic Contemplation of the Atman

Upanisads are one of means through which the world intensely searches into the abiding Spirit of God within us. I am presenting here a few texts on the contem-

plative vision of the abiding Atman as the inner centre of our soul.

Two introductory notes:

- 1) Why the word Atman? The Sanskrit root *at, an* means to move, to breathe. Atman is breath. This reminds us of the Latin word *spiritus*, which also means breath.
- 2) Atman is translated as the Self. Indian Philosophy makes a distinction between the Absolute Self (*param-atman*) and the individual self (*Jiva-atman*). The individual self is more or less an equivalent of what we call the soul. God is abiding in us not as the object of our mind, but as the innermost subject within us. He is the inner Self, as the vine in the branches (Jn. 15:1). He should control all our actions. Therefore, we rightly call him the *antaryamin* (the inner controller).

This agrees with what Jesus says about the Holy Spirit:

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine;

therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you (Jn 16:13-15)

The Spirit, according to Jesus, is not an idea in our mind, but an agent, who teaches us, consoles us, pleads for us as an advocate and guides us to our final goal.

This divine Spirit is what the Indians call the Atman, the Self. The human soul is also atman, the self, because it too is the subject and not object of our mind. But the human soul is finite and embodied; the divine Atman is infinite, immortal and all embracing.

God is abiding in us not as the object of our mind, but as the innermost subject within us.

With his mind purified, with his consciousness purified, with patience, thinking "I am He," and with patience when he has attained the consciousness of "I am He," he

is established by wisdom in the supreme *atman* who is to be known in the heart, and when his body has attained the state of peace, then the spirit with its light, the mind, becomes void. For what is the use of milk for one who is filled with nectar? What is the use of the study of the Vedas for one who has seen the Self? For the yogin who is filled with the nectar of knowledge there is nothing left to be achieved. If there still remains something, then he is not a man who has realized truth. He remains aloof, but not aloof, in the body, but not in the body; his inmost Self becomes the all-pervading. Having purified his heart and accomplished his perfect thinking, the yogin sees: I am the all,

the highest bliss (*Paingala Up.*, IV, 9).

This text does not mean that the *yogin* is no more in the world. He is very much in the world, and like any other person he is also subject to the pains and tribulations the world brings. He suffers all, accepts all, and surrenders all to God with serenity of mind, peace and equanimity. The highest bliss mentioned in the text does not come from outside but from the inner joy of having seen the abiding Spirit directly.

(Having reached) the last order of life, (one should sit) in a solitary place, in a relaxed posture, with pure heart, with head, neck, and body straight, controlling all the sense organs, having bowed with devotion to the master.

“Brahman has not an earlier or a later, has neither inside nor outside.”

Meditating on the heart-lotus in the center, which is free from passion, pure, inconceivable, beyond sorrow, unthinkable, unmanifest, of eternal form, benevolent, peaceful, immortal, the source of Brahma (*Kaivalya Up.*, 2:5-6).

The person in search of contemplation has to follow certain basic principles of self-discipline, which are clearly mentioned in the text. That is, first of all the body should be in perfect control and rhythm, and the mind should be set on the divine master who abides in the lotus within the heart and the person should fix his total attention on the abiding spirit who is

unmanifest because he is formless, but could be experienced and relished by the subtle intelligence characterized by faith.

The atman is honey of all beings, and all beings are honey for the atman. The shining immortal person who dwells in the atman and who dwells in your self, He indeed is the Atman, the Immortal, Brahman, the all. This Atman is the Lord of all beings, the King of all beings. Just as the spokes are fixed in the hub and the rim of a chariot wheel, in the same way all these beings, all the gods, all the worlds, all life breath, all these selves, are fixed in the Atman. Brahman has not an earlier or a later, has neither inside nor outside. Brahman is the Atman, the all-experiencing, this is the instruction (*Br. Up.*, II: 5, 14-15, 19).

This Atman is not attained by instruction or by intelligence or by learning. By him whom he chooses is the atman attained. To him the Atman reveals his own being. The one who has not turned away from wickedness, who has no peace, who is not concentrated, whose mind is restless – he cannot realize the Atman, who is known by wisdom (*Katha Up.*, II: 23-24).

This text is a good corrective for many Christian thinkers who say that the Indian contemplation is self-made and the Christian contemplation is a gift of God. This is not true. The text says that the atman reveals his own being to those whom he

chooses. This is similar to what Jesus said: "No one knows the Father except the Son and the one whom he makes him revealed" (Lk. 10:20). Also according to the Christian tradition, the aspirants of contemplation (*yogarthi*) have to prepare themselves with a spirit of austerity and self-control to receive the gift of contemplative prayer. Mystic theologians like St. John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila very clearly say this time and again.

## 6. From Contemplation to Compassion

The word compassion originates from the Latin root *pati* which means to suffer, to be affected etc. Compassion is therefore to suffer with, to feel with, and to be affected by what is happening to others. Action proceeds from the level of consciousness we have. Jesus came down because he had compassion for the people in the world struggling to put all things right, after losing the divine rhythm of paradise. Hence he came down from heaven, took upon himself the sufferings of humanity, and became an example of compassionate love. Thus, he showed us how to put order or divine rhythm back into our life. So the divine action of salvation was the result of a very compassionate love.

But love can be ego-centered or God-centered. Accordingly our actions differ. Divine actions will not proceed from a consciousness that is not characterized by divine love. Contemplation if it leads us to divine union or transformation naturally it

will be characterized by divine consciousness and the consequent flow of love from this soul will be always selfless, altruistic, sacrificing and therefore compassionate.

Coming to the Indian scene we find that the human being is covered up by layers of consciousness. This is our age-old theory of *pancha-kosa*. I am just mentioning this here so that we can see from which layer of awareness our action proceeds. The five layers of awareness are the following:

The *Pancha-kosa*: The Five Layers of the Abiding Spirit

1. The food layer
2. The life layer
3. The mind layer
4. The faith layer
5. The bliss layer

The three outer layers are human layers and the three inner, that is, including the atman, are divine layers. Now from which layer does our action proceed? It always depends on the level of our awareness and our willingness to give in.

The rich fool of the Gospel, who did not care for the poor Lazarus in front of his house, is an example of selfish awareness. For such a person his wealth, and his pleasures were the things that he valued most. His actions naturally proceeded from the first two layers of food and life. Whether his mind layer was occupied or

<sup>S</sup>involved, is not mentioned in the Gospel.  
<sup>m</sup>There is perfect silence in the inner, more  
<sup>C</sup>divine layers. According to the parable of  
<sup>r</sup>Jesus, the rich fool is outside the kingdom  
<sup>d</sup>of God. Why? The parable does not men-  
<sup>r</sup>tion any sin he has committed except for  
<sup>d</sup>the fact that a poor man lived in front of  
<sup>r</sup>his house. In other words, he had no com-  
<sup>d</sup>passion for the human being, helpless and  
<sup>r</sup>poor, in front of him. His actions, proceed-  
<sup>n</sup>ing from the outer layers of food, pleasure  
<sup>r</sup>etc never bothered about it.

<sup>S</sup>Actions can also proceed from the  
<sup>r</sup>mind layer, where one's ideas become  
<sup>d</sup>important and of value. Once again, this  
<sup>r</sup>could be man-centered, rather than God-  
<sup>d</sup>centered. The logic of human reason is not  
<sup>r</sup>always rooted in compassionate love,  
<sup>n</sup>many a time it is the result of other factors,  
<sup>r</sup>like the execution of a very cruel law. When  
<sup>d</sup>the elders of the Jewish community brought  
<sup>r</sup>the woman, caught in adultery to be stoned  
<sup>n</sup>to death, the logic of the law was there.  
<sup>r</sup>They did not look at the woman with com-  
<sup>d</sup>passionate love; whereas Jesus had a dif-  
<sup>r</sup>ferent approach. Com-<sup>passion</sup> is to allow  
<sup>n</sup>yourself to be affected by the feeling of  
<sup>r</sup>the other person, by the situation she is  
<sup>d</sup>caught up in. How to save her? This is  
<sup>r</sup>compassionate thinking. Here the actions  
<sup>n</sup>of Jesus proceed, neither from the logic of  
<sup>r</sup>reason nor from the command of the law,  
<sup>d</sup>but from a human mind characterized by  
<sup>r</sup>divine love. According to the theory of lay-  
<sup>n</sup>ers (*pancha-kosa*), such actions do not  
<sup>r</sup>proceed from any of the three outer lay-  
<sup>d</sup>ers, but from the inner Atman whose light

and delight enters into the soul, transforms  
the soul, allows the action to proceed from  
the divine consciousness, pass through the  
soul's transformed consciousness to the  
mind and then through the senses to reach  
the world of action. Divinely transformed  
consciousness will naturally prefer com-  
passionate love over mere logic of rea-  
son.

## 7. Models

Indian mode of compassionate love  
can be seen in a *sadhu*, a wandering monk,  
who has abandoned everything - wealth,  
family, home and all amenities of life. He is  
a *sadhu* in the sense that he is not attached  
to anything, nor does he cause pain to any-  
one. He is free from all bondages, selfish  
desires of possessiveness. Naturally his  
actions proceed from a divinely trans-  
formed consciousness. He is compassion-  
ate, ever loving, ever self-giving. This  
moots the question - What does he give  
others? The answer is that he gives him-  
self to the ordinary people of the villages;  
sharing his God-experience with them  
through simple stories, anecdotes and  
events of life. Ordinary people like these  
interactions and are religiously educated  
in the process. This is his gift to the world  
and the people. Think of the last days of  
Jesus' life - wandering monk like a monk,  
meeting people, visiting houses and doing  
well to them. The love that proceeded  
from the heart of Jesus was always com-  
passionate.

Here is a description of a *sadhu* who is a *bhakta* of the Lord:

He who hates no creature, and is friendly and compassionate towards all, who is free from the feelings of "I and mine", even-minded in pain and pleasure, forbearing, ever content, steady in meditation, self-controlled, and possessed of firm conviction, with mind and intellect fixed on Me – he who is thus devoted to Me, is dear to Me (Gita XII, 13-14).

According to the Indian thought actions should not proceed from the superficial consciousness of the periphery, but from the deeper level of consciousness, where God abides and in whose consciousness the contemplative person participates.

This does not mean that compassionate love can never be expressed in liberative action. Liberative actions are welcome, provided that the agent of the action remains completely selfless and is filled with divine consciousness. In the *Gita* Ch. III: 30 we have the following beautiful text:

Renouncing all actions to me (depositing all actions on me), with your mind filled with my spirit, getting rid of all desires and selfish motivations, fight this war for justice, free from the fever of anxiety and excitement.<sup>10</sup>

It is clear that compassionate actions do not mean just doing some charity

works. Organized action is necessary to face a well-organized standing injustice and it is not done for the sake of getting some material advantage for the one who is fighting. The *Gita* says in III: 25 as a prologue to the text we quoted:

As the worldly people are working for enjoying the fruit of their works, so the spiritual people should work, devoid of attachments, desirous of guiding the world to a better future.

## 8. Conclusion

I would like to conclude this paper with a reference to the passage from *Chandogya* Upanisad, which I have quoted in the beginning, in order to clarify the meaning of the word contemplation and its Indian equivalent. This passage continues further and many other words are used denoting eternal values in an ascending order, where the next one greater than the previous one. Thus it comes to the following words such as, truth (*satya*), intellect (*mati*), faith (*sraddha*), action (*krti*), happiness (*sukha*), fullness (*purnam*), and self (*Atman*). The text concludes by saying that only one who has happiness can perform sacred actions. And only one who has discovered fullness is happy. "Where one does not see another, or hear another or know another – that is fullness. But where one sees another, hears another or knows another – that is limitation. That which is fullness is immortal, but that which is limited is mortal." To the question, "In what, sir, is fullness established?" The an-

swer was, "In its own greatness, or not even in greatness."

Contemplative vision is a unifying vision. All are seen in one and one is seen in all. "Not one thing was made without him. All that was made was made by him and for him" (Jn. 1:3). Therefore, Christians, united to Christ, in consciousness as well as in life-style, easily develop a unifying vision of the entire universe, seeing Christ in everything and everything in Christ.

What is called greatness on earth consists of cows and horses, elephants and gold, servants and wives, fields and houses. I do not speak of this, he said, for there one thing is depending upon another (Ch. Up. VII, 1,24).

If actions are generated from the desire to have greatness on earth, as described in the text quoted above, it is hardly possible that they are compassionate actions. Rather they will be focused on the enlargement of the human self. If on the contrary, when action proceeds from the fullness and happiness which have been experienced in the depth of one's own heart, then this person longs nothing for himself/herself, but only wants to share this fullness that he is already in possession of, with others. Such action is always a compassionate action. This passage in the *Chandogya Upanishad* concludes as follows:

The man who sees in this way, who thinks in this way, who knows in this

way – from his *atman* proceeds life, from his *atman* hope, from his *atman* memory, from his *atman* space, from his *atman* radiance, from his *atman* water, from his *atman* proceed the manifestation and disappearance (of the world), from his *atman* proceeds food, from his *atman* energy, from his *atman* wisdom, from his *atman* contemplation, from his *atman* thought, from his *atman* purpose, from his *atman* mind, from his *atman* the word, from his *atman* name, from his *atman* prayer, from his *atman* **sacred actions**, from his *atman* comes all this (Ch. Up., VII, 1,26, 1).

Let our actions proceed from this Atman abiding in us, for then, they will naturally be full of compassionate love.

#### Endnotes:

All references to quotes from Bible and other classical works are given along with the texts. Abbreviations are used for longer titles, eg. BR. Up for Brahadaraniya Upanishad and CH for Chandogya Upanishad.

<sup>1</sup> Teresa of Avila, *The Book of Her Life*, Collected Works, vol. 1, Trivandrum: Carmel International Publishing House, 2001, pp. 108-9.

<sup>2</sup> The Dark Night, *Complete Works of St. John of the Cross*, Trivandrum: Carmel Publishing Centre, 1996, p. 316.

<sup>3</sup> *Complete Works*, vol. III, P. 386.

<sup>4</sup> Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection*, Vol. II, p. 101.

<sup>5</sup> V.F. Vineeth, *Yoga of Spirituality*, Bangalore: Vidyavanam Publications, 1995, p. 120.

<sup>6</sup> Author unknown, *The Way of the Pilgrim*, Appendix, p. 191.

<sup>7</sup> *Dark Night of the Soul*, Trans. by Allison Peers, Book II, XXIV, p. 190.

<sup>8</sup> *Shri Bhasya, Sacred Books of the East*, by Max Mueller (Ed.), vol. XLVII, Oxford, 1904, pp. 14-15.

<sup>9</sup> George A Maloney, *Journey into Contemplation*, New York: Living Flame Press, 1983, p. 58.

<sup>10</sup> The word used for 'to deposit' is *samnyasi*. The root is *ni+as (nyas)*, which means to place. *Sannyas (sam +nyas)* is to place well. The word *sannyas* has originated from this word and means depositing everything on God. *Sannyasin* (or *sanyasin*) is a person who deposits everything on God, that is, effectively renounces all worldly wealth and find his joy in the Lord alone.