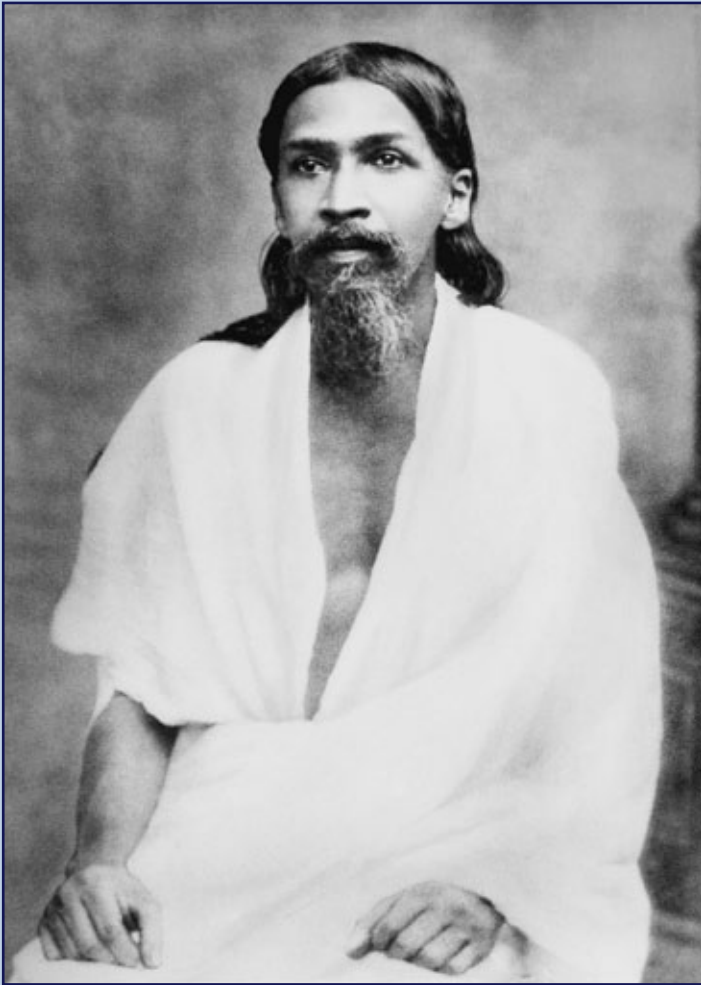


# Essays in Philosophy and Yoga



*Sri Aurobindo*

VOLUME 13

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# Essays in Philosophy and Yoga

Shorter Works

1910–1950



## Publisher's Note

*Essays in Philosophy and Yoga* consists of short works in prose written by Sri Aurobindo between 1909 and 1950 and published during his lifetime. All but a few of them are concerned with aspects of spiritual philosophy, yoga, and related subjects. Short writings on the Veda, the Upanishads, Indian culture, political theory, education, and poetics have been placed in other volumes.

The title of the volume has been provided by the editors. It is adapted from the title of a proposed collection, "Essays in Yoga", found in two of Sri Aurobindo's notebooks. Since 1971 most of the contents of the volume have appeared under the editorial title *The Supramental Manifestation and Other Writings*.

The contents are arranged in five chronological parts. Part One consists of essays published in the *Karmayogin* in 1909 and 1910, Part Two of a long essay written around 1912 and published in 1921, Part Three of essays and other pieces published in the monthly review *Arya* between 1914 and 1921, Part Four of an essay published in the *Standard Bearer* in 1920, and Part Five of a series of essays published in the *Bulletin of Physical Education* in 1949 and 1950.

Many of the essays in Part Three were revised slightly by the author and published in small books between 1920 and 1941. The editors have retained the titles and arrangement of most of those books.

The texts of the pieces have been checked against the texts published in journals and books during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime.



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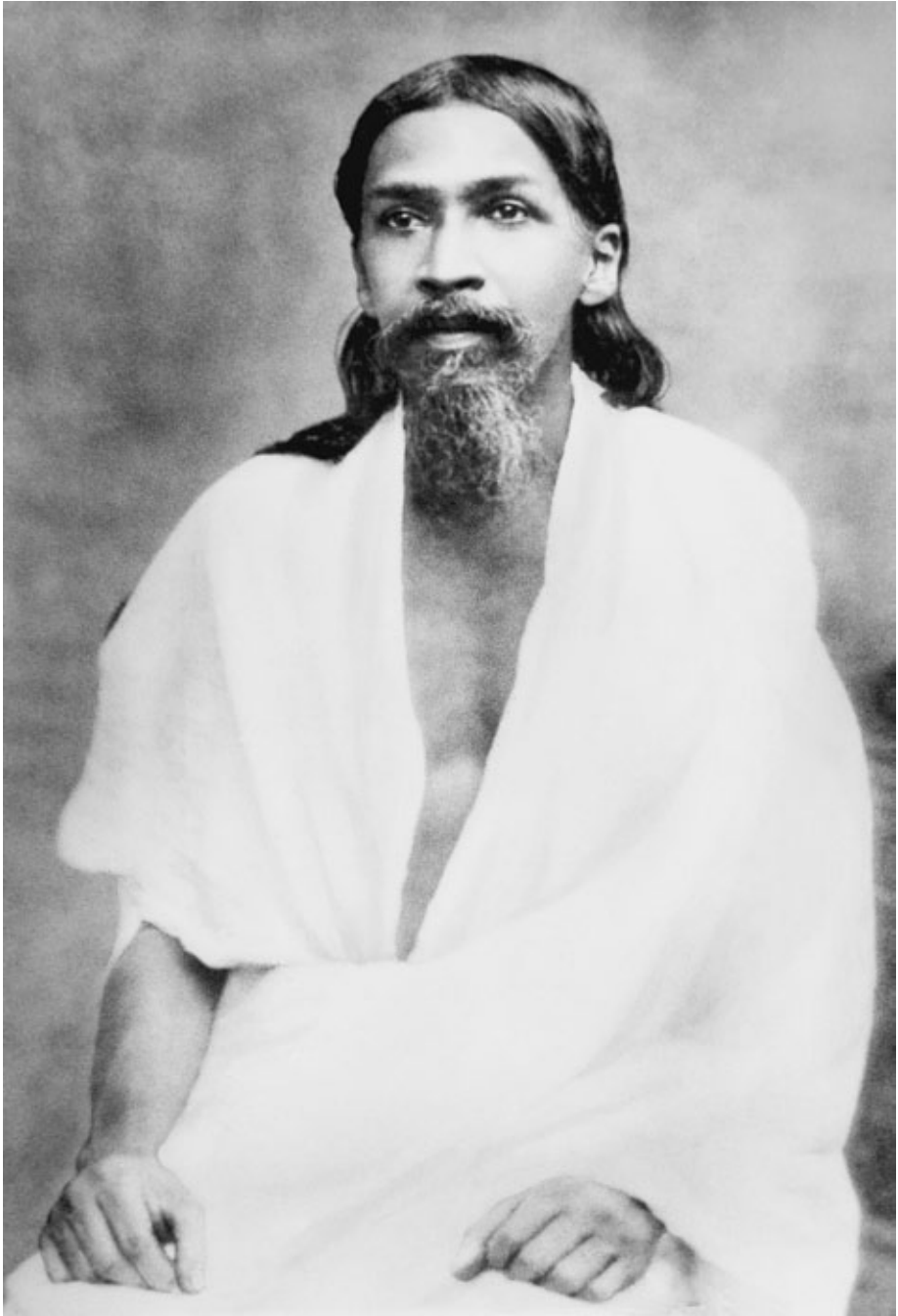
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Part One

Essays from the *Karmayogin*

1909–1910





Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry



## The Ideal of the Karmayogin

**A**NATION is building in India today before the eyes of the world so swiftly, so palpably that all can watch the process and those who have sympathy and intuition distinguish the forces at work, the materials in use, the lines of the divine architecture. This nation is not a new race raw from the workshop of Nature or created by modern circumstances. One of the oldest races and greatest civilisations on this earth, the most indomitable in vitality, the most fecund in greatness, the deepest in life, the most wonderful in potentiality, after taking into itself numerous sources of strength from foreign strains of blood and other types of human civilisation, is now seeking to lift itself for good into an organised national unity. Formerly a congeries of kindred nations with a single life and a single culture, always by the law of this essential oneness tending to unity, always by its excess of fecundity engendering fresh diversities and divisions, it has never yet been able to overcome permanently the almost insuperable obstacles to the organisation of a continent. The time has now come when those obstacles can be overcome. The attempt which our race has been making throughout its long history, it will now make under entirely new circumstances. A keen observer would predict its success because the only important obstacles have been or are in the process of being removed. But we go farther and believe that it is sure to succeed because the freedom, unity and greatness of India have now become necessary to the world. This is the faith in which the *Karmayogin* puts its hand to the work and will persist in it, refusing to be discouraged by difficulties however immense and apparently insuperable. We believe that God is with us and in that faith we shall conquer. We believe that humanity needs us and it is the love and service of humanity, of our country, of the race, of our

religion that will purify our heart and inspire our action in the struggle.

The task we set before ourselves is not mechanical but moral and spiritual. We aim not at the alteration of a form of government but at the building up of a nation. Of that task politics is a part, but only a part. We shall devote ourselves not to politics alone, nor to social questions alone, nor to theology or philosophy or literature or science by themselves, but we include all these in one entity which we believe to be all-important, the *dharma*, the national religion which we also believe to be universal. There is a mighty law of life, a great principle of human evolution, a body of spiritual knowledge and experience of which India has always been destined to be guardian, exemplar and missionary. This is the *sanātana dharma*, the eternal religion. Under the stress of alien impacts she has largely lost hold not of the structure of that *dharma*, but of its living reality. For the religion of India is nothing if it is not lived. It has to be applied not only to life, but to the whole of life; its spirit has to enter into and mould our society, our politics, our literature, our science, our individual character, affections and aspirations. To understand the heart of this *dharma*, to experience it as a truth, to feel the high emotions to which it rises and to express and execute it in life is what we understand by Karmayoga. We believe that it is to make the *yoga* the ideal of human life that India rises today; by the *yoga* she will get the strength to realise her freedom, unity and greatness, by the *yoga* she will keep the strength to preserve it. It is a spiritual revolution we foresee and the material is only its shadow and reflex.

The European sets great store by machinery. He seeks to renovate humanity by schemes of society and systems of government; he hopes to bring about the millennium by an act of Parliament. Machinery is of great importance, but only as a working means for the spirit within, the force behind. The nineteenth century in India aspired to political emancipation, social renovation, religious vision and rebirth, but it failed because it adopted Western motives and methods, ignored the spirit, history and destiny of our race and thought that by taking over



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European education, European machinery, European organisation and equipment we should reproduce in ourselves European prosperity, energy and progress. We of the twentieth century reject the aims, ideals and methods of the Anglicised nineteenth precisely because we accept its experience. We refuse to make an idol of the present; we look before and after, backward to the mighty history of our race, forward to the grandiose destiny for which that history has prepared it.

We do not believe that our political salvation can be attained by enlargement of Councils, introduction of the elective principle, colonial self-government or any other formula of European politics. We do not deny the use of some of these things as instruments, as weapons in a political struggle, but we deny their sufficiency whether as instruments or ideals and look beyond to an end which they do not serve except in a trifling degree. They might be sufficient if it were our ultimate destiny to be an outlying province of the British Empire or a dependent adjunct of European civilisation. That is a future which we do not think it worth making any sacrifice to accomplish. We believe on the other hand that India is destined to work out her own independent life and civilisation, to stand in the forefront of the world and solve the political, social, economical and moral problems which Europe has failed to solve, yet the pursuit of whose solution and the feverish passage in that pursuit from experiment to experiment, from failure to failure she calls her progress. Our means must be as great as our ends and the strength to discover and use the means so as to attain the end can only be found by seeking the eternal source of strength in ourselves.

We do not believe that by changing the machinery so as to make our society the ape of Europe we shall effect social renovation. Widow-remarriage, substitution of class for caste, adult marriage, intermarriages, interdining and the other nostrums of the social reformer are mechanical changes which, whatever their merits or demerits, cannot by themselves save the soul of the nation alive or stay the course of degradation and decline. It is the spirit alone that saves, and only by becoming great and

free in heart can we become socially and politically great and free.

We do not believe that by multiplying new sects limited within the narrower and inferior ideas of religion imported from the West or by creating organisations for the perpetuation of the mere dress and body of Hinduism we can recover our spiritual health, energy and greatness. The world moves through an indispensable interregnum of free thought and materialism to a new synthesis of religious thought and experience, a new religious world-life free from intolerance, yet full of faith and fervour, accepting all forms of religion because it has an unshakable faith in the One. The religion which embraces Science and faith, Theism, Christianity, Mahomedanism and Buddhism and yet is none of these, is that to which the World-Spirit moves. In our own, which is the most sceptical and the most believing of all, the most sceptical because it has questioned and experimented the most, the most believing because it has the deepest experience and the most varied and positive spiritual knowledge, — that wider Hinduism which is not a dogma or combination of dogmas but a law of life, which is not a social framework but the spirit of a past and future social evolution, which rejects nothing but insists on testing and experiencing everything and when tested and experienced turning it to the soul's uses, in this Hinduism we find the basis of the future world-religion. This *sanātana dharma* has many scriptures, Veda, Vedanta, Gita, Upanishad, Darshana, Purana, Tantra, nor could it reject the Bible or the Koran; but its real, most authoritative scripture is in the heart in which the Eternal has His dwelling. It is in our inner spiritual experiences that we shall find the proof and source of the world's Scriptures, the law of knowledge, love and conduct, the basis and inspiration of Karmayoga.

Our aim will therefore be to help in building up India for the sake of humanity — this is the spirit of the Nationalism which we profess and follow. We say to humanity, “The time has come when you must take the great step and rise out of a material existence into the higher, deeper and wider life towards which humanity moves. The problems which have troubled mankind

can only be solved by conquering the kingdom within, not by harnessing the forces of Nature to the service of comfort and luxury, but by mastering the forces of the intellect and the spirit, by vindicating the freedom of man within as well as without and by conquering from within external Nature. For that work the resurgence of Asia is necessary, therefore Asia rises. For that work the freedom and greatness of India is essential, therefore she claims her destined freedom and greatness, and it is to the interest of all humanity, not excluding England, that she should wholly establish her claim.”

We say to the nation, “It is God’s will that we should be ourselves and not Europe. We have sought to regain life by following the law of another being than our own. We must return and seek the sources of life and strength within ourselves. We must know our past and recover it for the purposes of our future. Our business is to realise ourselves first and to mould everything to the law of India’s eternal life and nature. It will therefore be the object of the *Karmayogin* to read the heart of our religion, our society, our philosophy, politics, literature, art, jurisprudence, science, thought, everything that was and is ours, so that we may be able to say to ourselves and our nation, ‘This is our *dharma*.’ We shall review European civilisation entirely from the standpoint of Indian thought and knowledge and seek to throw off from us the dominating stamp of the Occident; what we have to take from the West we shall take as Indians. And the *dharma* once discovered we shall strive our utmost not only to profess but to live, in our individual actions, in our social life, in our political endeavours.”

We say to the individual and especially to the young who are now arising to do India’s work, the world’s work, God’s work, “You cannot cherish these ideals, still less can you fulfil them if you subject your minds to European ideas or look at life from the material standpoint. Materially you are nothing, spiritually you are everything. It is only the Indian who can believe everything, dare everything, sacrifice everything. First therefore become Indians. Recover the patrimony of your forefathers. Recover the Aryan thought, the Aryan discipline, the

Aryan character, the Aryan life. Recover the Vedanta, the Gita, the Yoga. Recover them not only in intellect or sentiment but in your lives. Live them and you will be great and strong, mighty, invincible and fearless. Neither life nor death will have any terrors for you. Difficulty and impossibility will vanish from your vocabularies. For it is in the spirit that strength is eternal and you must win back the kingdom of yourselves, the inner Swaraj, before you can win back your outer empire. There the Mother dwells and She waits for worship that She may give strength. Believe in Her, serve Her, lose your wills in Hers, your egoism in the greater ego of the country, your separate selfishness in the service of humanity. Recover the source of all strength in yourselves and all else will be added to you, social soundness, intellectual pre-eminence, political freedom, the mastery of human thought, the hegemony of the world.”

## Karmayoga

**W**E HAVE spoken of Karmayoga as the application of Vedanta and Yoga to life. To many who take their knowledge of Hinduism secondhand this may seem a doubtful definition. It is ordinarily supposed by “practical” minds that Vedanta as a guide to life and Yoga as a method of spiritual communion are dangerous things which lead men away from action to abstraction. We leave aside those who regard all such beliefs as mysticism, self-delusion or imposture; but even those who reverence and believe in the high things of Hinduism have the impression that one must remove oneself from a full human activity in order to live the spiritual life. Yet the spiritual life finds its most potent expression in the man who lives the ordinary life of men in the strength of the Yoga and under the law of the Vedanta. It is by such a union of the inner life and the outer that mankind will eventually be lifted up and become mighty and divine. It is a delusion to suppose that Vedanta contains no inspiration to life, no rule of conduct, and is purely metaphysical and quietistic. On the contrary, the highest morality of which humanity is capable finds its one perfect basis and justification in the teachings of the Upanishads and the Gita. The characteristic doctrines of the Gita are nothing if they are not a law of life, a *dharmā*, and even the most transcendental aspirations of the Vedanta presuppose a preparation in life, for it is only through life that one can reach to immortality. The opposite opinion is due to certain tendencies which have bulked large in the history and temperament of our race. The ultimate goal of our religion is emancipation from the bondage of material Nature and freedom from individual rebirth, and certain souls, among the highest we have known, have been drawn by the attraction of the final hush and purity to dissociate themselves from life and bodily action in order more swiftly and easily to reach the goal. Standing like

mountain-peaks above the common level, they have attracted all eyes and fixed this withdrawal as the highest and most commanding Hindu ideal. It is for this reason that Sri Krishna laid so much stress on the perfect Yogin's cleaving to life and human activity even after his need of them was over, lest the people, following, as they always do, the example of their best, turn away from their *dharma* and bastard confusion reign. The ideal Yogin is no withdrawn and pent-up force, but ever engaged in doing good to all creatures, either by the flood of the divine energy that he pours on the world or by himself standing in the front of humanity, its leader in the march and the battle, but unbound by his works and superior to his personality.

Moreover the word Vedanta is usually identified with the strict Monism and the peculiar theory of Maya established by the lofty and ascetic intellect of Shankara. But it is the Upanishads themselves and not Shankara's writings, the text and not the commentary, that are the authoritative Scripture of the Vedantin. Shankara's, great and temporarily satisfying as it was, is still only one synthesis and interpretation of the Upanishads. There have been others in the past which have powerfully influenced the national mind and there is no reason why there should not be a yet more perfect synthesis in the future. It is such a synthesis, embracing all life and action in its scope, that the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda have been preparing. What is dimly beginning now is a repetition on a wider stage of what happened once before in India, more rapidly but to smaller issues, when the Buddha lived and taught his philosophy and ethics to the Aryan nations. Then as now a mighty spirit, it matters not whether Avatar or Vibhuti, the full expression of God in man or a great outpouring of the divine energy, came down among men and brought into their daily life and practice the force and impulse of utter spirituality. And this time it is the full light and not a noble part, unlike Buddhism which, expressing Vedantic morality, yet ignored a fundamental reality of Vedanta and was therefore expelled from its prime seat and cradle. The material result was then what it will be now, a great political, moral and social revolution which made India

the Guru of the nations and carried the light she had to give all over the civilised world, moulding ideas and creating forms which are still extant and a living force. Already the Vedanta and the Yoga have exceeded their Asiatic limit and are beginning to influence the life and practice of America and Europe; and they have long been filtering into Western thought by a hundred indirect channels. But these are small rivers and underground streams. The world waits for the rising of India to receive the divine flood in its fullness.

Yoga is communion with God for knowledge, for love or for work. The Yogin puts himself into direct relation with that which is omniscient and omnipotent within man and without him. He is in tune with the infinite, he becomes a channel for the strength of God to pour itself out upon the world whether through calm benevolence or active beneficence. When a man rises by putting from him the slough of self and lives for others and in the joys and sorrows of others; — when he works perfectly and with love and zeal, but casts away the anxiety for results and is neither eager for victory nor afraid of defeat; — when he devotes all his works to God and lays every thought, word and deed as an offering on the divine altar; — when he gets rid of fear and hatred, repulsion and disgust and attachment, and works like the forces of Nature, unhesitating, unceasing, inevitably, perfectly; — when he rises above the thought that he is the body or the heart or the mind or the sum of these and finds his own and true self; — when he becomes aware of his immortality and the unreality of death; — when he experiences the advent of knowledge and feels himself passive and the divine force working unresisted through his mind, his speech, his senses and all his organs; — when having thus abandoned whatever he is, does or has to the Lord of all, the Lover and Helper of mankind, he dwells permanently in Him and becomes incapable of grief, disquiet or false excitement, — that is Yoga. Pranayam and Asans, concentration, worship, ceremonies, religious practice are not themselves Yoga but only a means towards Yoga. Nor is Yoga a difficult or dangerous path, it is safe and easy to all who take refuge with the Inner Guide and Teacher. All men are potentially capable of it, for there is no

man who has not strength or faith or love developed or latent in his nature, and any one of these is a sufficient staff for the Yogin. All cannot, indeed, reach in a single life the highest in this path, but all can go forward; and in proportion as a man advances he gets peace, strength and joy. And even a little of this *dharma* delivers man or nation out of great fear.

स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ।

It is an error, we repeat, to think that spirituality is a thing divorced from life. "Abandon all" says the Isha Upanishad "*that thou mayst enjoy all*, neither covet any man's possession. But verily *do thy deeds in this world* and wish to live thy hundred years; no other way is given thee than this to escape the bondage of thy acts." It is an error to think that the heights of religion are above the struggles of this world. The recurrent cry of Sri Krishna to Arjuna insists on the struggle; "Fight and overthrow thy opponents!" "Remember me and fight!" "Give up all thy works to me with a heart full of spirituality, and free from craving, free from selfish claims, fight! let the fever of thy soul pass from thee." It is an error to imagine that even when the religious man does not give up his ordinary activities, he yet becomes too sattwic, too saintly, too loving or too passionless for the rough work of the world. Nothing can be more extreme and uncompromising than the reply of the Gita in the opposite sense, "Whosoever has his temperament purged from egoism, whosoever suffers not his soul to receive the impress of the deed, though he slay the whole world yet he slays not and is not bound." The Charioteer of Kurukshetra driving the car of Arjuna over that field of ruin is the image and description of Karmayoga; for the body is the chariot and the senses are the horses of the driving and it is through the bloodstained and mire-sunk ways of the world that Sri Krishna pilots the soul of man to Vaicuntha.



## Man — Slave or Free?

**T**HE EXCLUSIVE pursuit of Yoga by men who seclude themselves either physically or mentally from the contact of the world has led to an erroneous view of this science as something mystic, far-off and unreal. The secrecy which has been observed with regard to Yogic practices, — a necessary secrecy in the former stages of human evolution, — has stereotyped this error. Practices followed by men who form secret circles and confine the instruction in the mysteries strictly to those who have a certain preparatory fitness, inevitably bear the stamp to the outside world of occultism. In reality there is nothing intrinsically hidden, occult or mystic about Yoga. Yoga is based upon certain laws of human psychology, a certain knowledge about the power of the mind over the body and the inner spirit over the mind which are not generally realised and have hitherto been considered by those in the secret too momentous in their consequences for disclosure until men should be trained to use them aright. Just as a set of men who had discovered and tested the uttermost possibilities of mesmerism and hypnotism might hesitate to divulge them freely to the world lest the hypnotic power should be misused by ignorance or perversity or abused in the interests of selfishness and crime, so the Yogins have usually preserved the knowledge of these much greater forces within us in a secrecy broken only when they were sure of the previous ethical and spiritual training of the neophyte and his physical and moral fitness for the Yogic practices. It became therefore an established rule for the learner to observe strict reserve as to the inner experiences of Yoga and for the developed Yogin as far as possible to conceal himself. This has not prevented treatises and manuals from being published dealing with the physical or with the moral and intellectual sides of Yoga. Nor has it prevented great spirits who have gained their Yoga not

by the ordinary careful and scientific methods but by their own strength and the special grace of God, from revealing themselves and their spiritual knowledge to mankind and in their intense love for humanity imparting something of their power to the world. Such were Buddha, Christ, Mahomed, Chaitanya, such have been Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. It is still the orthodox view that the experiences of Yoga must not be revealed to the uninitiated. But a new era dawns upon us in which the old laws must be modified. Already the West is beginning to discover the secrets of Yoga. Some of its laws have revealed themselves however dimly and imperfectly to the scientists of Europe while others through Spiritualism, Christian Science, clairvoyance, telepathy and other modern forms of occultism are being almost discovered by accident as if by men groping in the dark and stumbling over truths they cannot understand. The time has almost come when India can no longer keep her light to herself but must pour it out upon the world. Yoga must be revealed to mankind because without it mankind cannot take the next step in the human evolution.

The psychology of the human race has not yet been discovered by Science. All creation is essentially the same and proceeds by similar though not identical laws. If therefore we see in the outside material world that all phenomena proceed from and can be reduced to a single causal substance from which they were born, in which they move and to which they return, the same truth is likely to hold good in the psychical world. The unity of the material universe has now been acknowledged by the scientific intellect of Europe and the high priests of atheism and materialism in Germany have declared the *ekam evādvitīyam* in matter with no uncertain voice. In so doing they have merely reaffirmed the discovery made by Indian masters of the Yogic science thousands of years ago. But the European scientists have not discovered any sure and certain methods, such as they have in dealing with gross matter, for investigating psychical phenomena. They can only observe the most external manifestations of mind in action. But in these manifestations the mind is so much enveloped in the action of the outer objects and seems so

dependent on them that it is very difficult for the observer to find out the springs of its action or any regularity in its workings. The European scientists have therefore come to the conclusion that it is the stimulations of outside objects which are the cause of psychical phenomena, and that even when the mind seems to act of itself and on its own material it is only associating, grouping together and manipulating the recorded experiences from outside objects. The very nature of mind is, according to them, a creation of past material experience transmitted by heredity with such persistence that we have grown steadily from the savage with his rudimentary mind to the civilised man of the twentieth century. As a natural result of these materialistic theories, science has found it difficult to discover any true psychical centre for the multifarious phenomena of mind and has therefore fixed upon the brain, the material organ of thought, as the only real centre. From this materialistic philosophy have resulted certain theories very dangerous to the moral future of mankind. First, man is a creation and slave of matter. He can only master matter by obeying it. Secondly, the mind itself is a form of gross matter and not independent of and master of the senses. Thirdly, there is no real free will, because all our action is determined by two great forces, heredity and environment. We are the slaves of our nature, and where we seem to be free from its mastery, it is because we are yet worse slaves of our environment, worked on by the forces that surround and manipulate us.

It is from these false and dangerous doctrines of materialism which tend to subvert man's future and hamper his evolution, that Yoga gives us a means of escape. It asserts on the contrary man's freedom from matter and gives him a means of asserting that freedom. The first great fundamental discovery of the Yogins was a means of analysing the experiences of the mind and the heart. By Yoga one can isolate mind, watch its workings as under a microscope, separate every minute function of the various parts of the *antahkarana*, the inner organ, every mental and moral faculty, test its isolated workings as well as its relations to other functions and faculties and trace backwards the operations of mind to subtler and ever subtler sources until just as material

analysis arrives at a primal entity from which all proceeds, so Yoga analysis arrives at a primal spiritual entity from which all proceeds. It is also able to locate and distinguish the psychical centre to which all psychical phenomena gather and so to fix the roots of personality. In this analysis its first discovery is that mind can entirely isolate itself from external objects and work in itself and of itself. This does not, it is true, carry us very far because it may be that it is merely using the material already stored up by its past experiences. But the next discovery is that the farther it removes itself from objects, the more powerfully, surely, rapidly can the mind work with a swifter clarity, with a victorious and sovereign detachment. This is an experience which tends to contradict the scientific theory, that mind can withdraw the senses into itself and bring them to bear on a mass of phenomena of which it is quite unaware when it is occupied with external phenomena. Science will naturally challenge these as hallucinations. The answer is that these phenomena are related to each other by regular, simple and intelligible laws and form a world of their own independent of thought acting on the material world. Here too Science has this possible answer that this supposed world is merely an imaginative reflex in the brain of the material world and to any arguments drawn from the definiteness and unexpectedness of these subtle phenomena and their independence of our own will and imagination it can always oppose its theory of unconscious cerebration and, we suppose, unconscious imagination. The fourth discovery is that mind is not only independent of external matter, but its master; it can not only reject and control external stimuli, but can defy such apparently universal material laws as that of gravitation and ignore, put aside and make nought of what are called laws of nature and are really only the laws of material nature, inferior and subject to the psychical laws because matter is a product of mind and not mind a product of matter. This is the decisive discovery of Yoga, its final contradiction of materialism. It is followed by the crowning realisation that there is within us a source of immeasurable force, immeasurable intelligence, immeasurable joy far above the possibility of weakness, above the

possibility of ignorance, above the possibility of grief which we can bring into touch with ourselves and, under arduous but not impossible conditions, habitually utilise or enjoy. This is what the Upanishads call the Brahman and the primal entity from which all things were born, in which they live and to which they return. This is God and communion with Him is the highest aim of Yoga — a communion which works for knowledge, for work, for delight.

## Yoga and Human Evolution

THE WHOLE burden of our human progress has been an attempt to escape from the bondage to the body and the vital impulses. According to the scientific theory, the human being began as the animal, developed through the savage and consummated in the modern civilised man. The Indian theory is different. God created the world by developing the many out of the One and the material out of the spiritual. From the beginning, the objects which compose the physical world were arranged by Him in their causes, developed under the law of their being in the subtle or psychical world and then manifested in the gross or material world. From *kāraṇa* to *sūkṣma*, from *sūkṣma* to *sthūla*, and back again, that is the formula. Once manifested in matter the world proceeds by laws which do not change, from age to age, by a regular succession, until it is all withdrawn back again into the source from which it came. The material goes back into the psychical and the psychical is involved in its cause or seed. It is again put out when the period of expansion recurs and runs its course on similar lines but with different details till the period of contraction is due. Hinduism regards the world as a recurrent series of phenomena of which the terms vary but the general formula abides the same. The theory is only acceptable if we recognise the truth of the conception formulated in the Vishnu Purana of the world as *vijñāna-vijṛmbhitāni*, developments of ideas in the Universal Intelligence which lies at the root of all material phenomena and by its indwelling force shapes the growth of the tree and the evolution of the clod as well as the development of living creatures and the progress of mankind. Whichever theory we take, the laws of the material world are not affected. From aeon to aeon, from *kalpa* to *kalpa* Narayan manifests himself in an ever-evolving humanity which grows in experience by a

series of expansions and contractions towards its destined self-realisation in God. That evolution is not denied by the Hindu theory of *yugas*. Each age in the Hindu system has its own line of moral and spiritual evolution and the decline of the *dharmā* or established law of conduct from the Satya to the Kaliyuga is not in reality a deterioration but a detrition of the outward forms and props of spirituality in order to prepare a deeper spiritual intensity within the heart. In each Kaliyuga mankind gains something in essential spirituality. Whether we take the modern scientific or the ancient Hindu standpoint the progress of humanity is a fact. The wheel of Brahma rotates for ever but it does not turn in the same place; its rotations carry it forward.

The animal is distinguished from man by its enslavement to the body and the vital impulses. *Aśanāyā mṛtyuh*, Hunger who is Death, evolved the material world from of old, and it is the physical hunger and desire and the vital sensations and primary emotions connected with the *prāṇa* that seek to feed upon the world in the beast and in the savage man who approximates to the condition of the beast. Out of this animal state, according to European Science, man rises working out the tiger and the ape by intellectual and moral development in the social condition. If the beast has to be worked out, it is obvious that the body and the *prāṇa* must be conquered, and as that conquest is more or less complete, the man is more or less evolved. The progress of mankind has been placed by many predominately in the development of the human intellect, and intellectual development is no doubt essential to self-conquest. The animal and the savage are bound by the body because the ideas of the animal or the ideas of the savage are mostly limited to those sensations and associations which are connected with the body. The development of intellect enables a man to find the deeper self within and partially replace what our philosophy calls the *dehātmaka-buddhi*, the sum of ideas and sensations which make us think of the body as ourself, by another set of ideas which reach beyond the body, and, existing for their own delight and substituting intellectual and moral satisfaction as the chief objects of life, master, if they cannot entirely silence, the clamour of the lower sensual desires.

That animal ignorance which is engrossed with the cares and the pleasures of the body and the vital impulses, emotions and sensations is tamasic, the result of the predominance of the third principle of nature which leads to ignorance and inertia. That is the state of the animal and the lower forms of humanity which are called in the Purana the first or tamasic creation. This animal ignorance the development of the intellect tends to dispel and it assumes therefore an all-important place in human evolution.

But it is not only through the intellect that man rises. If the clarified intellect is not supported by purified emotions, the intellect tends to be dominated once more by the body and to put itself at its service and the lordship of the body over the whole man becomes more dangerous than in the natural state because the innocence of the natural state is lost. The power of knowledge is placed at the disposal of the senses, *sattva* serves *tamas*, the god in us becomes the slave of the brute. The disservice which scientific Materialism is unintentionally doing the world is to encourage a return to this condition; the suddenly awakened masses of men, unaccustomed to deal intellectually with ideas, able to grasp the broad attractive innovations of free thought but unable to appreciate its delicate reservations, verge towards that reeling back into the beast, that relapse into barbarism which was the condition of the Roman Empire at a high stage of material civilisation and intellectual culture and which a distinguished British statesman declared the other day to be the condition to which all Europe approached. The development of the emotions is therefore the first condition of a sound human evolution. Unless the feelings tend away from the body and the love of others takes increasingly the place of the brute love of self, there can be no progress upward. The organisation of human society tends to develop the altruistic element in man which makes for life and battles with and conquers *aśanāyā mṛtyuḥ*. It is therefore not the struggle for life, or at least not the struggle for our own life, but the struggle for the life of others which is the most important term in evolution, — for our children, for our family, for our class, for our community, for our race and nation, for humanity. An ever-enlarging self takes the place of



the old narrow self which is confined to our individual mind and body, and it is this moral growth which society helps and organises.

So far there is little essential difference between our own ideas of human progress and those of the West except in this vital point that the West believes this evolution to be a development of matter and the satisfaction of the reason, the reflective and observing intellect, to be the highest term of our progress. Here it is that our religion parts company with Science. It declares the evolution to be a conquest of matter by the recovery of the deeper emotional and intellectual self which was involved in the body and overclouded by the desires of the *prāṇa*. In the language of the Upanishads the *manaḥkoṣa* and the *buddhikoṣa* are more than the *prāṇakoṣa* and *annakoṣa* and it is to them that man rises in his evolution. Religion farther seeks a higher term for our evolution than the purified emotions or the clarified activity of the observing and reflecting intellect. The highest term of evolution is the spirit in which knowledge, love and action, the threefold *dharma* of humanity, find their fulfilment and end. This is the *ātman* in the *ānandakoṣa*, and it is by communion and identity of this individual self with the universal self which is God that man will become entirely pure, entirely strong, entirely wise and entirely blissful, and the evolution will be fulfilled. The conquest of the body and the vital self by the purification of the emotions and the clarification of the intellect was the principal work of the past. The purification has been done by morality and religion, the clarification by science and philosophy, art, literature and social and political life being the chief media in which these uplifting forces have worked. The conquest of the emotions and the intellect by the spirit is the work of the future. Yoga is the means by which that conquest becomes possible.

In Yoga the whole past progress of humanity, a progress which it holds on a very uncertain lease, is rapidly summed up, confirmed and made an inalienable possession. The body is conquered, not imperfectly as by the ordinary civilised man, but entirely. The vital part is purified and made the instrument of the higher emotional and intellectual self in its relations with

the outer world. The ideas which go outward are replaced by the ideas which move within, the baser qualities are worked out of the system and replaced by those which are higher, the lower emotions are crowded out by the nobler. Finally all ideas and emotions are stilled and by the perfect awakening of the intuitive reason which places mind in communion with spirit the whole man is ultimately placed at the service of the Infinite. All false self merges into the true Self. Man acquires likeness, union or identification with God. This is *mukti*, the state in which humanity thoroughly realises the freedom and immortality which are its eternal goal.

## Yoga and Hypnotism

**W**HEN the mind is entirely passive, then the force of Nature which works in the whole of animate and inanimate creation, has free play; for it is in reality this force which works in man as well as in the sun and star. There is no doubt of this truth whether in Hinduism or in Science. This is the thing called Nature, the sum of cosmic force and energy, which alone Science recognises as the source of all work and activity. This also is the Prakriti of the Hindus to which under different names Sankhya and Vedanta agree in assigning a similar position and function in the Universe. But the immediate question is whether this force can act in man independently of man's individual will and initiative. Must it always act through his volition or has it a power of independent operation? The first real proof which Science has had of the power of action independent of volition is in the phenomena of hypnotism. Unfortunately the nature of hypnotism has not been properly understood. It is supposed that by putting the subject to sleep the hypnotist is able in some mysterious and unexplained way to substitute his will for the subject's. In a certain sense all the subject's activities in the hypnotic state are the results of his own volition, but that volition is not spontaneous, it is used as a slave by the operator working through the medium of suggestion. Whatever the hypnotist suggests that the subject shall think, act or feel, he thinks, acts or feels, and whatever the hypnotist suggests that the subject shall become, he becomes. What is it that gives the operator this stupendous power? Why should the mere fact of a man passing into this sleep-condition suspend the ordinary reactions of mind and body and substitute others at the mere word of the man who has said to him, "Sleep"? It is sometimes supposed that it is the superior will of the hypnotist which overcomes the will of the other and makes it a slave. There

are two strong objections to this view. It does not appear to be true that it is the weak and distracted will that is most easily hypnotised; on the contrary the strong concentrated mind forms a good subject. Secondly, if it were the operator's will using the will of the subject, then the results produced must be such as the latter could himself bring about, since the capacities of the instrument cannot be exceeded by the power working through the instrument. Even if we suppose that the invading will brings with it its own force still the results produced must not exceed the sum of its capacity plus the capacity of the instrument. If they commonly do so, we must suppose that it is neither the will of the operator nor the will of the subject nor the sum of these two wills that is active, but some other and more potent force. This is precisely what we see in hypnotic performance.

What is this force that enables or compels a weak man to become so rigid that strong arms cannot bend him? that reverses the operations of the senses and abrogates pain? that changes the fixed character of a man in the shortest of periods? that is able to develop power where there was no power, moral strength where there was weakness, health where there was disease? that in its higher manifestations can exceed the barriers of space and time and produce that far-sight, far-hearing and far-thinking which shows mind to be an untrammelled agent or medium pervading the world and not limited to the body which it informs or seems to inform? The European scientist experimenting with hypnotism is handling forces which he cannot understand, stumbling on truths of which he cannot give a true account. His feet are faltering on the threshold of Yoga. It is held by some thinkers, and not unreasonably if we consider these phenomena, that mind is all and contains all. It is not the body which determines the operations of the mind, it is the mind which determines the laws of the body. It is the ordinary law of the body that if it is struck, pierced or roughly pressed it feels pain. This law is created by the mind which associates pain with these contacts, and if the mind changes its *dharma* and is able to associate with these contacts not pain but insensibility or pleasure, then they will bring about those results of insensibility or pleasure and no other. The pain

and pleasure are not the result of the contact, neither is their seat in the body; they are the result of association and their seat is in the mind. Vinegar is sour, sugar sweet, but to the hypnotised mind vinegar can be sweet, sugar sour. The sourness or sweetness is not in the vinegar or sugar, but in the mind. The heart also is the subject of the mind. My emotions are like my physical feelings, the result of association, and my character is the result of accumulated past experiences with their resultant associations and reactions crystallising into habits of mind and heart summed up in the word, character. These things like all the rest that are made of the stuff of associations are not permanent or binding but fluid and mutable, *anityāḥ sarvasaṃskārāḥ*. If my friend blames me, I am grieved; that is an association and not binding. The grief is not the result of the blame but of an association in the mind. I can change the association so far that blame will cause me no grief, praise no elation. I can entirely stop the reactions of joy and grief by the same force that created them. They are habits of the mind, nothing more. In the same way though with more difficulty I can stop the reactions of physical pain and pleasure so that nothing will hurt my body. If I am a coward today, I can be a hero tomorrow. The cowardice was merely the habit of associating certain things with pain and grief and of shrinking from the pain and grief; this shrinking and the physical sensations in the vital or nervous man which accompany it are called fear, and they can be dismissed by the action of the mind which created them. All these are propositions which European Science is even now unwilling to admit, yet it is being proved more and more by the phenomena of hypnotism that these effects can be temporarily at least produced by one man upon another; and it has even been proved that disease can be permanently cured or character permanently changed by the action of one mind upon another. The rest will be established in time by the development of hypnotism.

The difference between Yoga and hypnotism is that what hypnotism does for a man through the agency of another and in the sleeping state, Yoga does for him by his own agency and in the waking state. The hypnotic sleep is necessary in order

to prevent the activity of the subject's mind full of old ideas and associations from interfering with the operator. In the waking state he would naturally refuse to experience sweetness in vinegar or sourness in sugar or to believe that he can change from disease to health, cowardice to heroism by a mere act of faith; his established associations would rebel violently and successfully against such contradictions of universal experience. The force which transcends matter would be hampered by the obstruction of ignorance and attachment to universal error. The hypnotic sleep does not make the mind a tabula rasa but it renders it passive to everything but the touch of the operator. Yoga similarly teaches passivity of the mind so that the will may act unhampered by the *samskāras* or old associations. It is these *samskāras*, the habits formed by experience in the body, heart or mind, that form the laws of our psychology. The associations of the mind are the stuff of which our life is made. They are more persistent in the body than in the mind and therefore harder to alter. They are more persistent in the race than in the individual; the conquest of the body and mind by the individual is comparatively easy and can be done in the space of a single life, but the same conquest by the race involves the development of ages. It is conceivable, however, that the practice of Yoga by a great number of men and persistence in the practice by their descendants might bring about profound changes in human psychology and, by stamping these changes into body and brain through heredity, evolve a superior race which would endure and by the law of the survival of the fittest eliminate the weaker kinds of humanity. Just as the rudimentary mind of the animal has been evolved into the fine instrument of the human being so the rudiments of higher force and faculty in the present race might evolve into the perfect *buddhi* of the Yogin.

*Yo yacchraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ.* According as is a man's fixed and complete belief, that he is, — not immediately always but sooner or later, by the law that makes the psychical tend inevitably to express itself in the material. The will is the agent by which all these changes are made and old *samskāras* replaced by new, and the will cannot act without faith. The question then

arises whether mind is the ultimate force or there is another which communicates with the outside world through the mind. Is the mind the agent or simply the instrument? If the mind be all, then it is only animals that can have the power to evolve; but this does not accord with the laws of the world as we know them. The tree evolves, the clod evolves, everything evolves. Even in animals it is evident that mind is not all in the sense of being the ultimate expression of existence or the ultimate force in Nature. It seems to be all only because that which is all expresses itself in the mind and passes everything through it for the sake of manifestation. That which we call mind is a medium which pervades the world. Otherwise we could not have that instantaneous and electrical action of mind upon mind of which human experience is full and of which the new phenomena of hypnotism, telepathy etc. are only fresh proofs. There must be contact, there must be interpenetration if we are to account for these phenomena on any reasonable theory. Mind therefore is held by the Hindus to be a species of subtle matter in which ideas are waves or ripples, and it is not limited by the physical body which it uses as an instrument. There is an ulterior force which works through this subtle medium called mind. An animal species develops, according to the modern theory, under the subtle influence of the environment. The environment supplies a need and those who satisfy the need develop a new species which survives because it is more fit. This is not the result of any intellectual perception of the need nor of a resolve to develop the necessary changes, but of a desire, often though not always a mute, inarticulate and unthought desire. That desire attracts a force which satisfies it. What is that force? The tendency of the psychical desire to manifest in the material change is one term in the equation; the force which develops the change in response to the desire is another. We have a will beyond mind which dictates the change, we have a force beyond mind which effects it. According to Hindu philosophy the will is the Jiva, the Purusha, the self in the *ānandakoṣa* acting through *vijñāna*, universal or transcendental mind; this is what we call spirit. The force is Prakriti or Shakti, the female principle in Nature

which is at the root of all action. Behind both is the single Self of the universe which contains both Jiva and Prakriti, spirit and material energy. Yoga puts these ultimate existences within us in touch with each other and by stilling the activity of the *samskāras* or associations in mind and body enables them to act swiftly, victoriously, and as the world calls it, miraculously. In reality there is no such thing as a miracle; there are only laws and processes which are not yet understood.

Yoga is therefore no dream, no illusion of mystics. It is known that we can alter the associations of mind and body temporarily and that the mind can alter the conditions of the body partially. Yoga asserts that these things can be done permanently and completely. For the body conquest of disease, pain and material obstructions, for the mind liberation from bondage to past experience and the heavier limitations of space and time, for the heart victory over sin and grief and fear, for the spirit unclouded bliss, strength and illumination, this is the gospel of Yoga, is the goal to which Hinduism points humanity.



## The Greatness of the Individual

**I**N ALL movements, in every great mass of human action it is the Spirit of the Time, that which Europe calls the Zeitgeist and India Kala, who expresses himself. The very names are deeply significant. Kali, the Mother of all and destroyer of all, is the Shakti that works in secret in the heart of humanity manifesting herself in the perpetual surge of men, institutions and movements, Mahakala the Spirit within whose energy goes abroad in her and moulds the progress of the world and the destiny of the nations. His is the impetus which fulfils itself in Time, and once there is movement, impetus from the Spirit within, Time and the Mother take charge of it, prepare, ripen and fulfil. When the Zeitgeist, God in Time, moves in a settled direction, then all the forces of the world are called in to swell the established current towards the purpose decreed. That which consciously helps, swells it, but that which hinders swells it still more, and like a wave on the windswept Ocean, now rising, now falling, now high on the crest of victory and increase, now down in the troughs of discouragement and defeat, the impulse from the hidden Source sweeps onward to its preordained fulfilment. Man may help or man may resist, but the Zeitgeist works, shapes, overbears, insists.

The great and memorable vision of Kurukshetra when Sri Krishna manifesting his world-form declared himself as destroying Time, is significant of this deep perception of humanity. When Arjuna wished to cast aside his bow and quiver, when he said, "This is a sin we do and a great destruction of men and brothers, I will forbear," Sri Krishna after convincing his intellect of error, proceeded by that marvellous vision described in the eleventh canto of the Gita to stamp the truth of things upon his imagination. Thus run the mighty stanzas:

कालोऽस्मि लोकक्षयकृत् प्रवृद्धो  
 लोकान् समार्हतमिह प्रवृत्तः ।  
 ऋतेऽपि त्वां न भविष्यन्ति सर्वे  
 येऽवस्थिताः प्रत्यनीकेषु योधाः ॥  
 तस्मात्त्वमत्तिष्ठ यशो लभस्व  
 जित्वा शत्रून् भङ्ग्यं राज्यं समृद्धम् ।  
 मयैवैते निहताः पूर्वमेव  
 निमित्तमात्रं भव सव्यसाचिन् ॥

“I am Time who waste and destroy the peoples; lo, I have arisen in my might, I am here to swallow up the nations. Even without thee all they shall not be, the men of war who stand arrayed in the opposing squadrons. Therefore do thou arise and get thee great glory, conquer thy foes and enjoy a great and wealthy empire. For these, they were slain even before and it is I who have slain them; be the occasion only, O Savyasachin.”

It is not as the slow process of Time that Sri Krishna manifests himself; it is as the *Zeitgeist* consummating in a moment the work carefully prepared for decades that He appears to Arjuna. All have been moving inevitably towards the catastrophe of Kurukshetra. Men did not know it: those who would have done everything possible to avert the calamity, helped its coming by their action or inaction; those who had a glimpse of it strove in vain to stop the wheels of Fate; Sri Krishna himself as the *niṣkāma karmayogin* who does his duty without regard to results, went on that hopeless embassy to Hastinapura; but the *Zeitgeist* overbore all. It was only afterwards that men saw how like rivers speeding towards the sea, like moths winging towards the lighted flame all that splendid, powerful and arrogant Indian world with its clans of Kings and its weapons and its chariots and its gigantic armies were rushing towards the open mouths of the destroyer to be lost in His mighty jaws, to be mangled between His gnashing teeth. In the *lilā* of the Eternal there are movements that are terrible as well as movements that are sweet and beautiful. The dance of Brindaban is not complete without the death-dance of Kurukshetra; for each is a part of that great

harmonic movement of the world which progresses from discord to accord, from hatred and strife to love and brotherhood, from evil to the fulfilment of the evolution by the transformation of suffering and sin into beauty, bliss and good, *śivam, śāntam, śuddham, ānandam*.

Who could resist the purpose of the Zeitgeist? There were strong men in India then by the hundred, great philosophers and Yogins, subtle statesmen, leaders of men, kings of thought and action, the efflorescence of a mighty intellectual civilisation at its height. A little turning to the right instead of to the left on the part of a few of these would, it might seem, have averted the whole catastrophe. So Arjuna thought when he flung aside his bow. He was the whole hope of the Pandavas and without him their victory must seem a mere dream and to fight an act of madness. Yet it is to him that the Zeitgeist proclaims the utter helplessness of the mightiest and the sure fulfilment of God's decree. "Even without thee all they shall not be, the men of war who stand arrayed in the opposing squadrons." For these men are only alive in the body; in that which stands behind and fulfils itself they are dead men. Whom God protects who shall slay? Whom God has slain who shall protect? The man who slays is only the occasion, the instrument by which the thing done behind the veil becomes the thing done on this side of it. That which was true of the great slaying at Kurukshetra is true of all things that are done in this world, of all the creation, destruction and preservation that make up the *līlā*.

The greatness of this teaching is for the great. Those who are commissioned to bring about mighty changes are full of the force of the Zeitgeist. Kali has entered into them and Kali when she enters into a man cares nothing for rationality and possibility. She is the force of Nature that whirls the stars in their orbits, lightly as a child might swing a ball, and to that force there is nothing impossible. She is *aghaṭana-ghaṭana-paṭīyasī*, very skilful in bringing about the impossible. She is the *devātmaśaktiḥ svaguṇair nigūḍhā*, the Power of the Divine Spirit hidden in the modes of its own workings, and she needs nothing but time to carry out the purpose with which she is commissioned. She

moves in Time and the very movement fulfils itself, creates its means, accomplishes its ends. It is not an accident that she works in one man more than in another. He is chosen because he is a likely vessel, and having chosen him she neither rejects him till the purpose is fulfilled nor allows him to reject her. Therefore Sri Krishna tells Arjuna:

यदहङ्कारमाश्रित्य न योत्स्य इति मन्यसे ।  
मिथ्यैष व्यवसायस्ते प्रकृतिस्त्वां नियोक्ष्यति ॥

“The thought which thou thinkest and takest refuge in egoism saying ‘I will not fight,’ this thy resolve is a vain thing; Nature will yoke thee to thy work.” When a man seems to have rejected his work, it merely means that his work is over and Kali leaves him for another. When a man who has carried out a great work is destroyed, it is for the egoism by which he has misused the force within that the force itself breaks him to pieces, as it broke Napoleon. Some instruments are treasured up, some are flung aside and shattered, but all are instruments. This is the greatness of great men, not that by their own strength they can determine great events, but that they are serviceable and specially-forged instruments of the Power which determines them. Mirabeau helped to create the French Revolution, no man more. When he set himself against it and strove, becoming a prop of monarchy, to hold back the wheel, did the French Revolution stop for the backsliding of France’s mightiest? Kali put her foot on Mirabeau and he disappeared; but the Revolution went on, for the Revolution was the manifestation of the Zeitgeist, the Revolution was the will of God.

So it is always. The men who prided themselves that great events were their work, because they seemed to have an initial hand in them, go down into the trench of Time and others march forward over their shattered reputations. Those who are swept forward by Kali within them and make no terms with Fate, they alone survive. The greatness of individuals is the greatness of the eternal Energy within.

## The Process of Evolution

THE END of a stage of evolution is usually marked by a powerful recrudescence of all that has to go out of the evolution. It is a principle of Nature that in order to get rid of any powerful tendency or deep-seated association in humanity, whether in the mass or in the individual, it has first to be exhausted by *bhoga* or enjoyment, afterwards to be dominated and weakened by *nigraha* or control and, finally, when it is weak, to be got rid of by *samyama*, rejection or self-dissociation. The difference between *nigraha* and *samyama* is that in the first process there is a violent struggle to put down, coerce and, if possible, crush the tendency, the reality of which is not questioned, but in the second process it is envisaged as a dead or dying force, its occasional return marked with disgust, then with impatience, finally with indifference as a mere ghost, vestige or faint echo of that which was once real but is now void of significance. Such a return is part of the process of Nature for getting rid of this undesirable and disappearing quantity.

*Samyama* is unseasonable and would be fruitless when a force, quality or tendency is in its infancy or vigour, before it has had the enjoyment and full activity which is its due. When once a thing is born it must have its youth, growth, enjoyment, life and final decay and death; when once an impetus has been given by Prakriti to her creation, she insists that the velocity shall spend itself by natural exhaustion before it shall cease. To arrest the growth or speed unseasonably by force is *nigraha*, which can be effective for a time but not in perpetuity. It is said in the Gita that all things are ruled by their nature, to their nature they return and *nigraha* or repression is fruitless. What happens then is that the thing untimely slain by violence is not really dead, but withdraws for a time into the Prakriti which sent it forth, gathers an immense force and returns with extraordinary violence

ravening for the rightful enjoyment which it was denied. We see this in the attempts we make to get rid of our evil *samskāras* or associations when we first tread the path of Yoga. If anger is a powerful element in our nature, we may put it down for a time by sheer force and call it self-control, but eventually unsatisfied Nature will get the better of us and the passion return upon us with astonishing force at an unexpected moment. There are only two ways by which we can effectively get the better of the passion which seeks to enslave us. One is by substitution, replacing it whenever it rises by the opposite quality, anger by thoughts of forgiveness, love or forbearance, lust by meditation on purity, pride by thoughts of humility and our own defects or nothingness; this is the method of Rajayoga, but it is a difficult, slow and uncertain method; for both the ancient traditions and the modern experience of Yoga show that men who had attained for long years the highest self-mastery have been suddenly surprised by a violent return of the thing they thought dead or for ever subject. Still this substitution, slow though it be, is one of the commonest methods of Nature and it is largely by this means, often unconsciously or half-consciously used, that the character of a man changes and develops from life to life or even in the bounds of a single lifetime. It does not destroy things in their seed and the seed which is not reduced to ashes by Yoga is always capable of sprouting again and growing into the complete and mighty tree. The second method is to give *bhoga* or enjoyment to the passion so as to get rid of it quickly. When it is satiated and surfeited by excessive enjoyment, it becomes weak and spent and a reaction ensues which establishes for a time the opposite force, tendency or quality. If that moment is seized by the Yogin for *nigraha*, the *nigraha* so repeated at every suitable opportunity becomes so far effective as to reduce the strength and vitality of the *vṛtti* sufficiently for the application of the final *samīyama*. This method of enjoyment and reaction is also a favourite and universal method of Nature, but it is never complete in itself and, if applied to permanent forces or qualities, tends to establish a see-saw of opposite tendencies, extremely useful to the operations of Prakriti but from the point

of view of self-mastery useless and inconclusive. It is only when this method is followed up by the use of *samyama* that it becomes effective. The Yogin regards the *vr̥tti* merely as a play of Nature with which he is not concerned and of which he is merely the spectator; the anger, lust or pride is not his, it is the universal Mother's and she works it and stills it for her own purposes. When, however, the *vr̥tti* is strong, mastering and unspent, this attitude cannot be maintained in sincerity and to try to hold it intellectually without sincerely feeling it is *mīthyācāra*, false discipline or hypocrisy. It is only when it is somewhat exhausted by repeated enjoyment and coercion that Prakriti or Nature at the command of the soul or Purusha can really deal with her own creation. She deals with it first by *vairāgya* in its crudest form of disgust, but this is too violent a feeling to be permanent; yet it leaves its mark behind in a deep-seated wish to be rid of its cause, which survives the return and temporary reign of the passion. Afterwards its return is viewed with impatience but without any acute feeling of intolerance. Finally supreme indifference or *udāsīnatā* is gained and the final going out of the tendency by the ordinary process of Nature is watched in the true spirit of the *samyamī* who has the knowledge that he is the witnessing soul and has only to dissociate himself from a phenomenon for it to cease. The highest stage leads either to *muk̥ti* in the form of *laya* or disappearance, the *vr̥tti* vanishing altogether and for good, or else to another kind of freedom when the soul knows that it is God's *līlā* and leaves it to Him whether He shall throw out the tendency or use it for His own purposes. This is the attitude of the Karmayogin who puts himself in God's hands and does work for His sake only, knowing that it is God's force that works in him. The result of that attitude of self-surrender is that the Lord of all takes charge and according to the promise of the Gita delivers His servant and lover from all sin and evil, the *vr̥ttis* working in the bodily machine without affecting the soul and working only when He raises them up for His purposes. This is *nirliptatā*, the state of absolute freedom within the *līlā*.

The law is the same for the mass as for the individual. The process of human evolution has been seen by the eye of inspired

observation to be that of working out the tiger and the ape. The forces of cruelty, lust, mischievous destruction, pain-giving, folly, brutality, ignorance were once rampant in humanity, they had full enjoyment; then by the growth of religion and philosophy they began in periods of satiety such as the beginning of the Christian era in Europe to be partly replaced, partly put under control. As is the law of such things, they have always reverted again with greater or less virulence and sought with more or less success to reestablish themselves. Finally in the nineteenth century it seemed for a time as if some of these forces had, for a time at least, exhausted themselves and the hour for *samyama* and gradual dismissal from the evolution had really arrived. Such hopes always recur and in the end they are likely to bring about their own fulfilment, but before that happens another recoil is inevitable. We see plenty of signs of it in the reeling back into the beast which is in progress in Europe and America behind the fair outside of Science, progress, civilisation and humanitarianism, and we are likely to see more signs of it in the era that is coming upon us. A similar law holds in politics and society. The political evolution of the human race follows certain lines of which the most recent formula has been given in the watchwords of the French Revolution, freedom, equality and brotherhood. But the forces of the old world, the forces of despotism, the forces of traditional privilege and selfish exploitation, the forces of unfraternal strife and passionate self-regarding competition are always struggling to reseat themselves on the thrones of the earth. A determined movement of reaction is evident in many parts of the world and nowhere perhaps more than in England which was once one of the self-styled champions of progress and liberty. The attempt to go back to the old spirit is one of those necessary returns without which it cannot be so utterly exhausted as to be blotted out from the evolution. It rises only to be defeated and crushed again. On the other hand the force of the democratic tendency is not a force which is spent but one which has not yet arrived, not a force which has had the greater part of its enjoyment but one which is still vigorous, unsatisfied and eager for fulfilment. Every attempt to coerce it



in the past reacted eventually on the coercing force and brought back the democratic spirit fierce, hungry and unsatisfied, joining to its fair motto of “Liberty, Equality and Fraternity” the terrible addition “or Death”. It is not likely that the immediate future of the democratic tendency will satisfy the utmost dreams of the lover of liberty who seeks an anarchist freedom, or of the lover of equality who tries to establish a socialistic dead level, or of the lover of fraternity who dreams of a world-embracing communism. But some harmonisation of this great ideal is undoubtedly the immediate future of the human race. On the old forces of despotism, inequality and unbridled competition, after they have been once more overthrown, a process of gradual *samyama* will be performed by which what has remained of them will be regarded as the disappearing vestiges of a dead reality and without any further violent coercion be transformed slowly and steadily out of existence.

## Stead and the Spirits

CONSIDERABLE attention has been attracted and excitement created by the latest development of Mr. W. T. Stead's agency for communicant spirits which he calls Julia's Bureau. The supposed communications of Mr. Gladstone, Lord Beaconsfield and other distinguished politicians on the question of the Budget have awakened much curiosity, ridicule and even indignation. The ubiquitous eloquence of Lord Curzon has been set flowing by what he considers this unscrupulous method of pressing the august departed into the ranks of Liberal electioneering agents, and he has penned an indignant letter to the papers in which there is much ornate Curzonian twaddle about sacred mysteries and the sanctities of the grave. If there is anything at all in the alleged communications from departed souls which have become of increasing interest to the European world, it ought to be fairly established that the grave is nothing but a hole in the earth containing a rotting piece of matter with which the spirit has no farther connection, and that the spirit is very much the same after death as before, takes much interest in small, trivial and mundane matters and is very far from regarding his new existence as a solemn, sacred and mysterious affair. If so, we do not see why we either should approach the departed spirit with long and serious faces or with any more unusual feelings than curiosity, interest and eagerness to acquire knowledge of the other world and communication with those we knew and loved in this, in fact, the ordinary human and earthly feelings existing between souls sundered by time and space, but still capable of communication. But Lord Curzon still seems to be labouring under the crude Christian conception of the blessed dead as angels harping in heaven whose spotless plumes ought not to be roughly disturbed by human breath and of spiritual communication as a sort of necromancy, the spirit of

Mr. Gladstone being summoned from his earthy bed and getting into it again and tucking himself up comfortably in his coffin after Julia and Mr. Stead have done with him. We should have thought that in the bold and innovating mind of India's only Viceroy these coarse European superstitions ought to have been destroyed long ago.

It is not, however, Lord Curzon but Mr. Stead and the spirits with whom we have to deal. We know Mr. Stead as a pushing and original journalist, not always over-refined or delicate either in his actions or expressions, skilful in the advertisement of his views, excitable, earnest, declamatory, loud and even hysterical, if you will, in some of his methods, but certainly neither a liar nor a swindler. He does and says what he believes and nothing else. It is impossible to dismiss his Bureau as an imposture or mere journalistic *réclame*. It is impossible to dismiss the phenomena of spirit communications, even with all the imposture that unscrupulous moneymakers have imported into them, as unreal or a deception. All that can reasonably be said is that their true nature has not yet been established beyond dispute. There are two conceivable explanations, one that of actual spirit communication, the other that of vigorously dramatised imaginary conversations jointly composed with wonderful skill and consistency by the subconscious minds, whatever that may be, of the persons present, the medium being the chief dramaturge of this subconscious literary Committee. This theory is so wildly improbable and so obviously opposed to the nature of the phenomena themselves, that only an obstinate unwillingness to admit new facts and ideas can explain its survival, although it was natural and justifiable in the first stages of investigation. There remains the explanation of actual spirit communication. But even when we have decided on this hypothesis as the base of our investigation, we have to be on our guard against a multitude of errors; for the communications are vitiated first by the errors and self-deceptions of the medium and the sitters, then by the errors and self-deceptions of the communicant spirits, and, worst of all, by deliberate deceit, lies and jugglery on the part of the visitants from the other world. The element of deceit and

jugglery on the part of the medium and his helpers is not always small, but can easily be got rid of. Cheap scepticism and cheaper ridicule in such matters is only useful for comforting small brains and weak imaginations with a sense of superiority to the larger minds who do not refuse to enquire into phenomena which are at least widespread and of a consistently regular character. The true attitude is to examine carefully the nature of the phenomena, the conditions that now detract from their value and the possibility of removing them and providing perfect experimental conditions which would enable us to arrive at a satisfactory scientific result. Until the value of the communications is scientifically established, any attempt to use them for utilitarian, theatrical or yet lighter purposes is to be deprecated, as such misuse may end in shutting a wide door to potential knowledge upon humanity.

From this point of view Mr. Stead's bizarre experiments are to be deprecated. The one redeeming feature about them is that, as conducted, they seem to remove the first elementary difficulty in the way of investigation, the possibility of human deceit and imposture. We presume that he has got rid of professional mediums and allows only earnest-minded and honourable investigators to be present. But the other elements of error and confusion are encouraged rather than obviated by the spirit and methods of Mr. Stead's Bureau. First, there is the error and self-deception of the sitters. The spirit does not express himself directly but has to give his thoughts at third hand; they come first to the intermediary spirit, Julia or another, by her they are conveyed to the human medium and through him conveyed by automatic or conscious speech or writing to the listeners. It is obvious how largely the mind of the medium and, to a smaller but still great extent, the thought-impressions of the other sitters must interfere, and this without the least intention on their part, rather in spite of a strong wish in the opposite direction. Few men really understand how the human mind works or are fitted to watch the processes of their own conscious and half-conscious thought even when the mind is disinterested, still less when it is active and interested in the subject of communication. The sitters interfere, first, by putting in their own thoughts and expressions

suggested by the beginnings of the communication, so that what began as a spirit conversation ends in a tangle of the medium's or sitters' ideas with the little of his own that the spirit can get in now and then. They interfere not only by suggesting what they themselves think or would say on the subject, but by suggesting what they think the spirit ought dramatically to think or say, so that Mr. Gladstone is made to talk in interminable cloudy and circumambient periods which were certainly his oratorical style but can hardly have been the staple of his conversation, and Lord Beaconsfield is obliged to be cynical and immoral in the tone of his observations. They interfere again by eagerness, which sometimes produces replies according to the sitters' wishes and sometimes others which are unpleasant or alarming, but in neither case reliable. This is especially the case in answers to questions about the future, which ought never to be asked. It is true that many astonishing predictions occur which are perfectly accurate, but these are far outweighed by the mass of false and random prediction. These difficulties can only be avoided by rigidly excluding every question accompanied by or likely to raise eagerness or expectation and by cultivating entire mental passivity. The last however is impossible to the medium unless he is a practised Yogin, or in a trance, or a medium who has attained the habit of passivity by an unconscious development due to long practice. In the sitters we do not see how it is to be induced. Still, without unemotional indifference to the nature of the answer and mental passivity the conditions for so difficult and delicate a process of communication cannot be perfect.

Error and self-deception from the other side of the veil cannot be obviated by any effort on this side; all that we can do is to recognise that the spirits are limited in knowledge and cabined by character, so that we have to allow for the mental and moral equation in the communicant when judging the truth and value of the communication. Absolute deception and falsehood can only be avoided by declining to communicate with spirits of a lower order and being on guard against their masquerading under familiar or distinguished names. How far Mr. Stead and his circle have guarded against these latter errors we cannot

say, but the spirit in which the sittings are conducted, does not encourage us to suppose that scrupulous care is taken in these respects. It is quite possible that some playful spirit has been enacting Mr. Gladstone to the too enthusiastic circle and has amused himself by elaborating those cloudy-luminous periods which he saw the sitters expected from the great deceased Opportunist. But we incline to the view that what we have got in this now famous spirit interview, is a small quantity of Gladstone, a great deal of Stead and a fair measure of the disembodied Julia and the assistant psychics.

## Stead and Maskelyne

THE VEXED question of spirit communication has become a subject of permanent public controversy in England. So much that is of the utmost importance to our views of the world, religion, science, life, philosophy, is crucially interested in the decision of this question, that no fresh proof or disproof, establishment or refutation of the genuineness and significance of spirit communications can go disregarded. But no discussion of the question which proceeds merely on first principles can be of any value. It is a matter of evidence, of the value of the evidence and of the meaning of the evidence. If the ascertained facts are in favour of spiritualism, it is no argument against the facts that they contradict the received dogmas of science or excite the ridicule alike of the enlightened sceptic and of the matter-of-fact citizen. If they are against spiritualism, it does not help the latter that it supports religion or pleases the imagination and flatters the emotions of mankind. Facts are what we desire, not enthusiasm or ridicule; evidence is what we have to weigh, not unsupported arguments or questions of fitness or probability. The improbable may be true, the probable entirely false.

In judging the evidence, we must attach especial importance to the opinion of men who have dealt with the facts at first hand. Recently, two such men have put succinctly their arguments for and against the truth of spiritualism, Mr. W. T. Stead and the famous conjurer, Mr. Maskelyne. We will deal with Mr. Maskelyne first, who totally denies the value of the facts on which spiritualism is based. Mr. Maskelyne puts forward two absolutely inconsistent theories, first, that spiritualism is all fraud and humbug, the second, that it is all subconscious mentality. The first was the theory which has hitherto been held by the opponents of the new phenomena, the second the

theory to which they are being driven by an accumulation of indisputable evidence. Mr. Maskelyne, himself a professed master of jugglery and illusion, is naturally disposed to put down all mediums as irregular competitors in his own art; but the fact that a conjuror can produce an illusory phenomenon, is no proof that all phenomena are conjuring. He farther argues that no spiritualistic phenomena have been produced when he could persuade Mr. Stead to adopt conditions which precluded fraud. We must know Mr. Maskelyne's conditions and have Mr. Stead's corroboration of this statement before we can be sure of the value we must attach to this kind of refutation. In any case we have the indisputable fact that Mr. Stead himself has been the medium in some of the most important and best ascertained of the phenomena. Mr. Maskelyne knows that Mr. Stead is an honourable man incapable of a huge and impudent fabrication of this kind and he is therefore compelled to fall back on the wholly unproved theory of the subconscious mind. His arguments do not strike us as very convincing. Because we often write without noticing what we are writing, mechanically, therefore, says this profound thinker, automatic writing must be the same kind of mental process. The one little objection to this sublimely felicitous argument is that automatic writing has no resemblance whatever to mechanical writing. When a man writes mechanically, he does not notice what he is writing; when he writes automatically, he notices it carefully and has his whole attention fixed on it. When he writes mechanically, his hand records something that it is in his mind to write; when he writes automatically, his hand transcribes something which it is not in his mind to write and which is often the reverse of what his mind would tell him to write. Mr. Maskelyne farther gives the instance of a lady writing a letter and unconsciously putting an old address which, when afterwards questioned, she could not remember. This amounts to no more than a fit of absent-mindedness in which an old forgotten fact rose to the surface of the mind and by the revival of old habit was reproduced on the paper, but again sank out of immediate consciousness as soon as the mind returned to the present. This is a mental phenomenon



essentially of the same class as our continuing unintentionally to write the date of the last year even in this year's letters. In one case it is the revival, in the other the persistence of an old habit. What has this to do with the phenomena of automatic writing which are of an entirely different class and not attended by absent-mindedness at all? Mr. Maskelyne makes no attempt to explain the writing of facts in their nature unknowable to the medium, or of repeated predictions of the future, which are common in automatic communications.

On the other side Mr. Stead's arguments are hardly more convincing. He bases his belief, first, on the nature of the communications from his son and others in which he could not be deceived by his own mind and, secondly, on the fact that not only statements of the past, but predictions of the future occur freely. The first argument is of no value unless we know the nature of the communication and the possibility or impossibility of the facts stated having been previously known to Mr. Stead. The second is also not conclusive in itself. There are some predictions which a keen mind can make by inference or guess, but, if we notice the hits and forget the misses, we shall believe them to be prophecies and not ordinary previsions. The real value of Mr. Stead's defence of the phenomena lies in the remarkable concrete instance he gives of a prediction from which this possibility is entirely excluded. The spirit of Julia, he states, predicted the death within the year of an acquaintance who, within the time stated, suffered from two illnesses, in one of which the doctors despaired of her recovery. On each occasion the predicting spirit was naturally asked whether the illness was not to end in the death predicted, and on each she gave an unexpected negative answer and finally predicted a death by other than natural means. As a matter of fact, the lady in question, before the year was out, leaped out of a window and was killed. This remarkable prophecy was obviously neither a successful inference nor a fortunate guess, nor even a surprising coincidence. It is a convincing and indisputable prophecy. Its appearance in the automatic writing can only be explained either by the assumption that Mr. Stead has a subliminal self, calling

itself Julia, gifted with an absolute and exact power of prophecy denied to the man as we know him, — a violent, bizarre and unproved assumption, — or by the admission that there was a communicant with superior powers to ordinary humanity using the hand of the writer. Who that was, Julia or another, ghost, spirit or other being, is a question that lies beyond. This controversy, with the worthlessness of the arguments on either side and the supreme worth of the one concrete and precise fact given, is a signal proof of our contention that, in deciding this question, it is not *a priori* arguments, but facts used for their evidential value as an impartial lawyer would use them, that will eventually prevail.

## Fate and Free-Will

**A** QUESTION which has hitherto divided human thought and received no final solution, is the freedom of the human being in his relation to the Power intelligent or unintelligent that rules the world. We strive for freedom in our human relations, to freedom we move as our goal, and every fresh step in our human progress is a further approximation to our ideal. But are we free in ourselves? We seem to be free, to do that which we choose and not that which is chosen for us; but it is possible that the freedom may be illusory and our apparent freedom may be a real and iron bondage. We may be bound by predestination, the will of a Supreme Intelligent Power, or blind inexorable Nature, or the necessity of our own previous development.

The first is the answer of the devout and submissive mind in its dependence on God, but, unless we adopt a Calvinistic fatalism, the admission of the guiding and overriding will of God does not exclude the permission of freedom to the individual. The second is the answer of the scientist; Heredity determines our Nature, the laws of Nature limit our action, cause and effect compel the course of our development, and, if it be urged that we may determine effects by creating causes, the answer is that our own actions are determined by previous causes over which we have no control and our action itself is a necessary response to a stimulus from outside. The third is the answer of the Buddhist and of post-Buddhistic Hinduism. "It is our fate, it is written on our forehead, when our Karma is exhausted, then alone our calamities will pass from us";— this is the spirit of tamasic inaction justifying itself by a misreading of the theory of Karma.

If we go back to the true Hindu teaching independent of Buddhistic influence, we shall find that it gives us a reconciliation

of the dispute by a view of man's psychology in which both Fate and Free-will are recognised. The difference between Buddhism and Hinduism is that to the former the human soul is nothing, to the latter it is everything. The whole universe exists in the spirit, by the spirit, for the spirit; all we do, think and feel is for the spirit. Nature depends upon the Atman, all its movement, play, action is for the Atman.

There is no Fate except insistent causality which is only another name for Law, and Law itself is only an instrument in the hands of Nature for the satisfaction of the spirit. Law is nothing but a mode or rule of action; it is called in our philosophy not Law but Dharma, holding together, it is that by which the action of the universe, the action of its parts, the action of the individual is held together. This action in the universal, the parts, the individuals is called Karma, work, action, energy in play, and the definition of Dharma or Law is action as decided by the nature of the thing in which action takes place, — *svabhāva-niyatam karma*. Each separate existence, each individual has a swabhava or nature and acts according to it, each group, species or mass of individuals has a swabhava or nature and acts according to it, and the universe also has its swabhava or nature and acts according to it. Mankind is a group of individuals and every man acts according to his human nature, that is his law of being as distinct from animals, trees or other groups of individuals. Each man has a distinct nature of his own and that is his law of being which ought to guide him as an individual. But beyond and above these minor laws is the great dharma of the universe which provides that certain previous karma or action must lead to certain new karma or results.

The whole of causality may be defined as previous action leading to subsequent action, Karma and Karmaphal. The Hindu theory is that thought and feeling, as well as actual speech or deeds, are part of Karma and create effects, and we do not accept the European sentiment that outward expression of thought and feeling in speech or deed is more important than the thought or feeling itself. This outward expression is only part of the thing expressed and its results are only part of the Karmaphal. The

previous karma has not one kind of result but many. In the first place, a certain habit of thought or feeling produces certain actions and speech or certain habits of action and speech in this life, which materialise in the next as good fortune or evil fortune. Again, it produces by its action for the good or ill of others a necessity of happiness or sorrow for ourselves in another birth. It produces, moreover, a tendency to persistence of that habit of thought or feeling in future lives, which involves the persistence of the good fortune or evil fortune, happiness or sorrow. Or, acting on different lines, it produces a revolt or reaction and replacement by opposite habits which in their turn necessitate opposite results for good or evil. This is the chain of karma, the bondage of works, which is the Hindu Fate and from which the Hindus seek salvation.

If, however, there is no escape from the Law, if Nature is supreme and inexorable, there can be no salvation; freedom becomes a chimaera, bondage eternal. There can be no escape, unless there is something within us which is free and lord, superior to Nature. This entity the Hindu teaching finds in the spirit ever free and blissful which is one in essence and in reality with the Supreme Soul of the Universe. The spirit does not act, it is Nature that contains the action. If the spirit acted, it would be bound by its action. The thing that acts is Prakriti, Nature, which determines the Swabhava of things and is the source and condition of Law or dharma. The soul or Purusha holds up the swabhava, watches and enjoys the action and its fruit, sanctions the law or dharma. It is the king, Lord or Ishwara without whose consent nothing can be done by Prakriti. But the king is above the law and free.

It is this power of sanction that forms the element of free will in our lives. The spirit consents not that itself shall be bound, but that its enjoyment should be bound by time, space and causality and by the swabhava and the dharma. It consents to virtue or sin, good fortune or evil fortune, health or disease, joy or suffering, or it refuses them. What it is attached to, that Nature multiplies for it; what it is weary of, has *vairāgya* for, that Nature withdraws from it. Only, because the enjoyment is in

space and time, therefore, even after the withdrawal of consent, the habitual action continues for a time just as the locomotive continues to move after the steam is shut off, but in a little while it slows down and finally comes to a standstill. And because the enjoyment is in causality, the removal of the habit of action is effected not spontaneously and freely, but by an established process or one of many established processes. This is the great truth now dawning on the world, that Will is the thing which moves the world and that Fate is merely a process by which Will fulfils itself.

But in order to feel its mastery of Nature, the human soul must put itself into communion with the infinite and universal Spirit. Its will must be one with the universal Will. The human soul is one with the universal Spirit, but in the body it stands out as something separate and unconnected, because a certain freedom is permitted it in order that the swabhava of things may be diversely developed in different bodies. In using this freedom the soul may do it ignorantly or knowingly. If it uses it ignorantly, it is not really free, for ignorance brings with it the illusion of enslavement to Nature. Used knowingly, the freedom of the soul becomes one with surrender to the universal Will. Either apparent bondage to Fate in Nature or realised freedom from Nature in the universal freedom and lordship of the Paramatman and Parameshwara, this is the choice offered to the human soul. The gradual self-liberation from bondage to Nature is the true progress of humanity. The inert stone or block is a passive sport of natural laws, God is their Master. Man stands between these two extreme terms and moves upward from one to the other.

## The Three Purushas

THE GREATEST of all the philosophical problems which human thought has struggled to solve, is the exact nature and relation to us of the conscious Intelligence in the phenomenal existence around. The idealist denies the phenomenal existence, the materialist denies the conscious Intelligence. To the former, phenomenon is a passing shadow on the luminous calm of the single universal Spirit: to the latter, intelligence is a temporary result of the motions of Matter. The idealist can give no satisfactory explanation of the existence of the shadow; he admits that it is inexplicable, a thing that is and yet is not: the materialist can give no satisfactory explanation of the existence of intelligence; he simply tries to trace the stages of its development and the methods of its workings, and covers over the want of an explanation by the abundant minuteness of his observations. But the soul of Man, looking out and in, is satisfied neither with Shankara nor with Haeckel. It sees the universal existence of phenomena, it sees the universal existence of Intelligence. It seeks a term which will admit both, cover both, identify both; it demands, not an elimination of either, but a reconciliation.

The Upanishads do not deny the reality of the world, but they identify it with Brahman who transcends it. He is the One without a second; He is the All. If all is Brahman, then there can be nothing but Brahman, and therefore the existence of the All, *sarvam idam*, does not contradict the unity of Brahman, does not establish the reality of *bheda*, difference. It is one Intelligence looking at itself from a hundred view-points, each point conscious of and enjoying the existence of the others. The shoreless stream of idea and thought, imagination and experience, name and form, sensation and vibration sweeps onward for ever, without beginning, without end, rising into view, sinking

out of sight; through it the one Intelligence with its million self-expressions pours itself abroad, an ocean with innumerable waves. One particular self-expression may disappear into its source and continent, but that does not and cannot abolish the phenomenal universe. The One is for ever, and the Many are for ever because the One is for ever. So long as there is a sea, there will be waves.

In the oceanic stir and change of universal Nature the soul or Purusha is the standing-point, stable, unmoving, unchanging, eternal, — *nityaḥ sarvagataḥ sthāṇur aśalo'yaṁ sanātanaḥ*. In the whole, the Purusha or soul is one, — there is One Spirit which supports the stir of the Universe, not many. In the individual the One Purusha has three stages of personality; He is One, but triple, *trivṛt*. The Upanishads speak of two birds on one tree, of which one eats the fruit of the tree, the other, seated on a higher branch, does not eat but watches its fellow; one is *īśa* or lord of itself, the other is *anīśa*, not lord of itself, and it is when the eater looks up and perceives the greatness of the watcher and fills himself with it that grief, death, subjection, — in one word *māyā*, ignorance and illusion, ceases to touch him. There are two unborn who are male and one unborn who is female; she is the tree with its sweet and bitter fruit, the two are the birds. One of the unborn enjoys her sweetness, the other has put it away from him. These are the two Purushas, the *akṣara*, or immutable spirit, and the *kṣara*, or apparently mutable, and the tree or woman is Prakriti, universal Energy which the Europeans call Nature. The *kṣara puruṣa* is the soul in Nature and enjoying Nature, the *akṣara puruṣa* is the soul above Nature and watching her. But there is One who is not seated on the tree but occupies and possesses it, who is not only lord of Himself, but lord of all that is: He is higher than the *kṣara*, higher than the *akṣara*, He is Purushottama, the Soul one with God, with the All.

These three Purushas are described in the fifteenth chapter of the Gita. “There are two Purushas in the world, the *akṣara* and the *kṣara*, — the *kṣara* is all creatures, the *akṣara* is called *kūṭastha*, the one on the summit. There is another Purusha, the highest (*uttama*), called also the Paramatma or Supreme Spirit,



who enters into the three worlds, (the worlds of *susupti*, *svapna*, *jāgrat*, otherwise the causal, mental and physical planes of existence), and sustains them as their imperishable lord.” And in the thirteenth chapter, while drawing the distinction between the lower Purusha and the higher, Sri Krishna defines more minutely the relations of God and the individual soul to Nature. “Prakriti is the basic source of cause, effect and agency; the Purusha, of the sense of enjoyment of happiness and grief; for it is the soul in Nature (Purusha in Prakriti) that enjoys the threefold workings of things caused by Nature, (the play of conservation, creation and destruction; reception, reaction and resistance; illumination, misconception and obscuration; calm, work and inertia; all being different manifestations of three fundamental forces called the *gunas* or essential properties of Prakriti), and it is the attachment of the soul to the *gunas* that is the cause of births in bodies good and evil. The highest Purusha in this body is the one who watches, who sanctions, who enjoys, who upholds, who is the mighty Lord and the Supreme Soul.”

The personality of the Supreme Soul is universal, not individual. Whatever is in all creatures, character, idea, imagination, experience, sensation, motion, is contained by Him as an object of spiritual enjoyment without limiting or determining Him. He is all things at once. Such a universality is necessary to support and supply individual existence, but it cannot be the determining limit of individual existence. Something has to be reserved, something put forward, and this partial manifestation is the individual. “It is verily an eternal part of Me that in the world of individual existence becomes the *Jiva* or individual.” The *Jiva* or individual is *kṣara puruṣa*, and between him and the Supreme stands the *akṣara puruṣa*, the bird on the summit of the tree, joyous in his own bliss, undisturbed by the play of Nature, impartially watching it, receiving its images on his calm immovable existence without being for a moment bound or affected, eternally self-gathered, eternally free. This *akṣara puruṣa* is our real self, our divine unity with God, our inalienable freedom from that which is transient and changing. If it did not exist, there would be no escape from the bondage of life and

death, joy and grief, sin and virtue; we should be prisoners in a cage without a door, beating our wings against the bars in vain for an exit; life and death, joy and grief, sin and virtue would be eternal, ineffugable realities, not temporary rules determining the great game of life, and we should be unwilling actors, not free playmates of God able to suspend and renew the game when we will. It is by realising our oneness with the *akṣara puruṣa* that we get freedom from ignorance, freedom from the cords of desire, freedom from the imperative law of works. On the other hand if the *akṣara puruṣa* were all, as the Sankhya philosophy contends, there would be no basis for different experience, no varying personality, every individual existence would be precisely like every other individual existence, the development and experience of one soul in Nature an exact replica of the development and experience of another soul. It is the *kṣara puruṣa* who is all creatures, and the variety of experience, character and development is effected by a particular part of the universal swabhava or nature of conscious existence in phenomena being attached to a particular individual or Jiva. This is what is meant by saying that it is a part of God which becomes the Jiva. This swabhava, once determined, does not change; but it manifests various parts of itself, at various times, under various circumstances, in various forms of action and various bodies suited to the action or development it has to enjoy. It is for this reason that the Purusha in Nature is called *kṣara*, fluid, shifting, although it is not in reality fluid or shifting, but constant, eternal and immutable, *sanātana*. It is the variety of its enjoyment in Time, Space and Causality that makes it *kṣara*. The enjoyment of the *akṣara puruṣa* is self-existent, beyond Time, Space and Causality, aware of but undisturbed by the continual multitudinous flux and reflux of Prakriti. The enjoyment of Purushottama is both in Prakriti and beyond it, it embraces and is the reality of all experience and enjoyment.

Development is determined by the *kṣara puruṣa*, but not conducted by him. It is Prakriti, the Universal Energy, that conducts development under the law of cause and effect, and is the

true agent. The soul is not the agent, but the lord who enjoys the results of the action of his agent, Prakriti or Nature; only by his attachment to Prakriti he forgets himself and identifies himself with her so as to have the illusion of agency and, by thus forgetting himself, ceases to be lord of himself, becomes subject to Causality, imprisoned in Time and Space, bound by the work which he sanctions. He himself, being a part of God, is made in His image, of one nature with Him. Therefore what God is, he also is, only with limitation, subject to Time, Space and Causality, because he has, of his own will, accepted that bondage. He is the witness, and if he ceased to watch, the drama would stop. He is the source of sanction, and what he declares null and void, drops away from the development. He is the enjoyer, and if he became indifferent, that individual development would be arrested. He is the upholder, and if he ceased to sustain the *ādhāra*, the vehicle, it would fall and cease. He is the lord, and it is for his pleasure that Nature acts. He is the spirit, and matter is only his vehicle, his robe, his means of self-expression. But all his sanctions, refusals, behests act not at once, not there and then, not by imperative absolute compulsion, but subject to lapse of time, change of place, working of cause to effect. The lapse may be brief or long, a moment or centuries; the change small or great, here or in another world; the working direct or indirect, with the rapid concentration of processes which men call a miracle or with the careful and laboured evolution in which every step is visibly ordered and deliberate; but so long as the Jiva is bound, his lordship is limited and constitutional, not despotic and absolute. His sanction and signature are necessary, but it is the Lords spiritual and temporal of his mind and body, the Commons in his external environment who do the work of the State, execute, administer, legislate.

The first step in self-liberation is to get rid of the illusion of agency, to realise that Nature acts, not the soul. The second is to remove the siege of phenomenal associations by surrendering lordship to God, leaving Him alone to uphold and sanction by the abdication of one's own independent use of these powers, offering up the privilege of the enjoyer to Him. All that is then

left is the attitude of the *akṣara puruṣa*, the free, blissful self-existence, watching the action of Prakriti, but outside it. The *kṣara* withdraws into the *akṣara*. When the *sākṣī* or witness withdraws into God Himself, that is the utter liberation.

## The Strength of Stillness

**T**HERE are two great forces in the universe, silence and speech. Silence prepares, speech creates. Silence acts, speech gives the impulse to action. Silence compels, speech persuades. The immense and inscrutable processes of the world all perfect themselves within, in a deep and august silence, covered by a noisy and misleading surface of sound — the stir of innumerable waves above, the fathomless resistless mass of the ocean's waters below. Men see the waves, they hear the rumour and the thousand voices and by these they judge the course of the future and the heart of God's intention; but in nine cases out of ten they misjudge. Therefore it is said that in History it is always the unexpected that happens. But it would not be the unexpected if men could turn their eyes from superficialities and look into substance, if they accustomed themselves to put aside appearances and penetrate beyond them to the secret and disguised reality, if they ceased listening to the noise of life and listened rather to its silence.

The greatest exertions are made with the breath held in; the faster the breathing, the more the dissipation of energy. He who in action can cease from breathing, — naturally, spontaneously, — is the master of Prana, the energy that acts and creates throughout the universe. It is a common experience of the Yogin that when thought ceases, breathing ceases, — the entire kumbhak effected by the Hathayogin with infinite trouble and gigantic effort, establishes itself easily and happily, — but when thought begins again, the breath resumes its activity. But when the thought flows without the resumption of the inbreathing and outbreathing, then the Prana is truly conquered. This is a law of Nature. When we strive to act, the forces of Nature do their will with us; when we grow still, we become their master. But there are two kinds of stillness — the helpless stillness of

inertia, which heralds dissolution, and the stillness of assured sovereignty which commands the harmony of life. It is the sovereign stillness which is the calm of the Yogin. The more complete the calm, the mightier the yogic power, the greater the force in action.

In this calm, right knowledge comes. The thoughts of men are a tangle of truth and falsehood, *satyam* and *anṛtam*. True perception is marred and clouded by false perception, true judgment lamed by false judgment, true imagination distorted by false imagination, true memory deceived by false memory. The activity of the mind must cease, the chitta be purified, a silence fall upon the restlessness of Prakriti, then in that calm, in that voiceless stillness illumination comes upon the mind, error begins to fall away and, so long as desire does not stir again, clarity establishes itself in the higher stratum of the consciousness compelling peace and joy in the lower. Right knowledge becomes the infallible source of right action. *Yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*.

The knowledge of the Yogin is not the knowledge of the average desire-driven mind. Neither is it the knowledge of the scientific or of the worldly-wise reason which anchors itself on surface facts and leans upon experience and probability. The Yogin knows God's way of working and is aware that the improbable often happens, that facts mislead. He rises above reason to that direct and illuminated knowledge which we call *vijñānam*. The desire-driven mind is emmeshed in the intricate tangle of good and evil, of the pleasant and the unpleasant, of happiness and misfortune. It strives to have the good always, the pleasant always, the happiness always. It is elated by fortunate happenings, disturbed and unnerved by their opposite. But the illuminated eye of the seer perceives that all leads to good; for God is all and God is *sarvamāṅgalam*. He knows that the apparent evil is often the shortest way to the good, the unpleasant indispensable to prepare the pleasant, misfortune the condition of obtaining a more perfect happiness. His intellect is delivered from enslavement to the dualities.

Therefore the action of the Yogin will not be as the action of the ordinary man. He will often seem to acquiesce in evil,

to avoid the chance of relieving misfortune, to refuse his assent to the efforts of the noble-hearted who withstand violence and wickedness; he will seem to be acting *piśācavat*. Or men will think him *jaḍa*, inert, a stone, a block, because he is passive, where activity appears to be called for; silent, where men expect voicefulness; unmoved, where there is reason for deep and passionate feeling. When he acts, men will call him *unmatta*, a madman, eccentric or idiot; for his actions will often seem to have no definite result or purpose, to be wild, unregulated, regardless of sense and probability or inspired by a purpose and a vision which is not for this world. And it is true that he follows a light which other men do not possess or would even call darkness; that what is a dream to them, is to him a reality; that their night is his day. And this is the root of the difference that, while they reason, he knows.

To be capable of silence, stillness, illuminated passivity is to be fit for immortality — *amṛtatvāya kalpate*. It is to be *dhīra*, the ideal of our ancient civilisation, which does not mean to be tamasic, inert and a block. The inaction of the tamasic man is a stumbling-block to the energies around him, the inaction of the Yogin creates, preserves and destroys; his action is dynamic with the direct, stupendous driving-power of great natural forces. It is a stillness within often covered by a ripple of talk and activity without, — the ocean with its lively surface of waves. But even as men do not see the reality of God's workings from the superficial noise of the world and its passing events, for they are hidden beneath that cover, so also shall they fail to understand the action of the Yogin, for he is different within from what he is outside. The strength of noise and activity is, doubtless, great, — did not the walls of Jericho fall by the force of noise? But infinite is the strength of the stillness and the silence, in which great forces prepare for action.

## The Principle of Evil

**T**HE PROBLEM of evil is one that has taxed human thought and evolved various and conflicting solutions. To the rationalist who does not believe in anything not material, the problem does not exist. Everything is in nature as the result of evolution. Nature is blind and unintelligent and has therefore no conception of good or evil; the conception belongs to the human mind and is the result of the social sense and the ideas of pleasure and pain developed in human beings by a perfectly intelligible natural process. It is to men who believe in Intelligence as governing and developing the world that the problem exists. Why did evil come into existence and what is its purpose?

The unwillingness of the devout soul to admit that evil can have its existence in God, has led to variations of the Manichean theory which sees a double control in the world, God as the Principle of good and Satan as the Principle of evil. Those who regard the belief in the existence of an intelligent evil power as superstition, find the origin of evil in man who abuses his freedom and by his revolt and self-will gives birth to sin. This solution solves nothing, for it does not explain why there should have been a possibility of evil at all. Unless we limit our conception of God as the source and creator of all, that from which all proceeds, we must admit that evil as part of the economy of the world must have proceeded from Him no less than good. Even if we violently posit another creative force in the world limiting His universality, we shall have to assume that He, having the power to prevent evil, permits it; for He is omnipotent, and none can do anything except by the permission of His all-wise and overruling Providence. And if we limit the omnipotence of God, we reduce Him to a mere Demiurgus, a great Artificer of things struggling amongst forces over which He has not entire



control. Such a conception is unphilosophical and contrary to the universal spiritual experience of mankind. The problem remains why, if He is God, All-Love, *sarvamangalam*, He creates evil or, if He does not create it, permits it.

To our mind there is no escaping from the belief that, if God exists, He is All. All proceeds from Him; from what other source can it proceed? All exists in Him; in what other being or continent can it exist? Therefore evil must proceed from Him, evil must exist in Him. Since He is All-Wise, for all knowledge is His, it must exist for some wise and perfect purpose. Since He is All-Love, it must exist for good and not for anything which contradicts the good. Only, His is an infinite wisdom, ours a finite, His perfect, ours undeveloped. His is an infinite and all-wise love, ours a finite and unwise love, a love imperfectly informed by knowledge, full of *māyā*, attachment to passing happiness and pleasure. God's love looks beyond, ours fixes its eyes on the moment.

Experience must always be the basis of true knowledge, but it must be experience illuminated by true perception, not experience dominated by surface impressions. The experience of the mind which has compassed calm and is able to preserve its tranquillity under the most strenuous assaults of pain, misfortune and evil, is alone worth having. The mind which is not *dhīra*, which feels grief and thinks under the influence of affection and passion, even if it be noble affection and passion, cannot arrive at the *samyag jñānam*, the complete and perfect truth. Emotion is for the heart, it should not besiege the intellect; for the proper business of the intellect is to observe and understand, not to be obscured by the slightest prejudice, the least trace of feeling. One who is *dhīra* will look narrowly at every incident and, if he cannot see at once, wait for enlightenment as to its ultimate purpose and issue; so waiting, so calmly considering, the meaning of life dawns on the mind, an infinite purpose reveals itself in things small and great, in occurrences good and bad: omniscient Providence reveals itself in the fall of the sparrow and the death of the ant as well as in the earthquake that destroys great cities and the floods that make thousands destitute and homeless. Rudra and

Shiva reveal themselves as one. The Yogin sees God in all things, not only in all beings but in all events. He is the flood, He is the earthquake, He is Death that leads to a higher life, He is Pain that prepares us for a higher bliss. This is a thing that cannot be argued; it has to be seen. *Paripaśyanti dhīrāḥ*. And sight is only possible to the calm heart and the unperturbed understanding.

The materialist is not wrong when he holds good and evil to be merely operations of Nature which she uses impartially and without making a distinction, and that the distinction is an evolution in the human mind. Evil is good disintegrating to prepare for a higher good. That which is now tyranny, was once necessary to consolidate human society. What was once an ideal state of society, would now be barbarous and evil. Morality progresses, religion widens with the growing manifestation of that which is divine in the human race. As with the individual, so with the race and the world, evil tends to good, it comes into existence in order that men may reject the lesser good and rise to the higher.

The problem of pain remains. Was it necessary that the process should be accompanied with pain to the individual? At one time the capacity for pain, physical and mental, was infinitely less than it is now, so little that it might be pronounced to be nil. It is a remarkable fact that disease, pain and grief have grown keener with the growing fineness of the human organisation. Obviously this can only be a temporary development necessary to prepare a higher race which shall rise above pain to a higher capacity for pleasure and happiness. The lower organisation resisted the *samskāra* of pain and grief by the coarseness of its composition, it rejected pain in the sense of not knowing it. The higher organisation of the future will not be below it, but rise above it. It was the knowledge of good and evil that brought grief and sin into the world; when that knowledge is surmounted, man will rise above grief and sin. Before he ate the forbidden fruit, he had the innocence of the animal; when he shall cease to eat it, he will have the innocence of the God. Is it not so that in nature pain is a possibility which has to be exhausted and man has been selected as the instrument to bring it into existence, in a limited

space, for a limited time, and work it out of the cosmos? In the light of this idea the Christian doctrine of the Son of Man on the cross acquires a new significance and man himself becomes the Christ of the universe.

Another question occurs. Is pain real or a shadow? The Vedantist believes that the soul is a part of God or one with God Himself, and cannot feel pain or grief, but only *ānanda*, bliss. The *jīva* or soul takes the *rasa*, the delight of the dualities, and it changes to bliss in his nature; but this is veiled by the ignorance and separates the *jīva* in his *svarūpa* from the mind and the heart. Pain is a negative *vikāra* or corruption of true experience in the mind, pleasure a positive *vikāra*. The truth is *ānanda*. But this is a knowledge for which mankind is not ready. Only the Yogin realises it and becomes *sama*, like-minded to pain and pleasure, good or evil, happiness or misfortune. He takes the *rasa* of both and they give him strength and bliss; for the veil between his mind and his soul is removed and the apparent man in him has become one with the *svarūpa* or real man. If mankind as a whole came too early by that knowledge, the evolution of the perfect good would be delayed. The utter sweetness of *dayā* and *prema*, pity and love, might never be extracted from the *līlā*.

## The Stress of the Hidden Spirit

**T**HE WORLD is a great game of hide and seek in which the real hides behind the apparent, spirit behind matter. The apparent masquerades as real, the real is seen dimly as if it were an unsubstantial shadow. The grandeur of the visible universe and its laws enslaves men's imaginations. "This is a mighty machine," we cry, "but it moves of its own force and needs neither guide nor maker; for its motion is eternal." Blinded by a half truth we fail to see that, instead of a machine without a maker, there is really only an existence and no machine. The Hindus have many images by which they seek to convey their knowledge of the relation between God and the world, but the idea of the machine does not figure largely among them. It is a spider and his web, a fire with many sparks, a pool of salt water in which every particle is penetrated by the salt. The world is a waking dream, an embodied vision, a mass of knowledge arranged in corporeal appearances expressing so many ideas which are each only a part of one unchanging truth. Everything becomes, nothing is made. Everything is put out from latency, nothing is brought into existence. Only that which was, can be, not that which was not. And that which is, cannot perish; it can only lose itself. All is eternal in the eternal spirit.

What was from of old? The spirit. What is alone? The spirit. What shall be for ever? The spirit. All that is in Space and Time, is He; and whatever there may be beyond Space and Time, that too is He. Why should we think so? Because of the eternal and invariable unity which gives permanence to the variability of the many. The sum of matter never changes by increase or diminution, although its component parts are continually shifting; so is it with the sum of energy in the world, so is it with the spirit. Matter is only so much mobile energy vibrating intensely into form. Energy is only so much spirit manifesting the motion that

we call energy. Spirit is Force, Spirit Existence, — matter and energy are only motions in Spirit. Force and Existence made one in Bliss, Sachchidanandam, this is the eternal reality of things. But that Force is not motion, it is Knowledge or Idea. Knowledge is the source of motion, not motion of knowledge. The Spirit therefore is all, It is alone. Idea or Force, Existence, Bliss are only its triune manifestations, existence implying idea which is force, force or idea implying bliss.

The Spirit manifest as Intelligence is the basis of the world. Spirit as existence, Sat, is one; as Intelligence it multiplies itself without ceasing to be one. We see that tree and say “Here is a material thing”; but if we ask how the tree came into existence, we have to say, it grew or evolved out of the seed. But growth or evolution is only a term describing the sequence in a process. It does not explain the origin or account for the process itself. Why should the seed produce a tree and not some other form of existence? The answer is, because that is its nature. But why is that its nature? Why should it not be its nature to produce some other form of existence, or some other kind of tree? That is the law, is the answer. But why is it the law? The only answer is that it is so because it is so; that it happens, why no man can say. In reality when we speak of Law, we speak of an idea; when we speak of the nature of a thing, we speak of an idea. Nowhere can we lay our hands on an object, a visible force, a discernible momentum and say “Here is an entity called Law or Nature.” The seed evolves a tree because tree is the idea involved in the seed; it is a process of manifestation in form, not a creation. If there were no insistent idea, we should have a world of chances and freaks, not a world of law — there would be no such idea as the nature of things, if there were not an originating and ordering intelligence manifesting a particular idea in forms. And the form varies, is born, perishes; the idea is eternal. The form is the manifestation or appearance, the idea is the truth. The form is phenomenon, the idea is reality.

Therefore in all things the Hindu thinker sees the stress of the hidden spirit. We see it as Prajna, the universal Intelligence, conscious in things unconscious, active in things inert.

The energy of Prajna is what the Europeans call Nature. The tree does not and cannot shape itself, the stress of the hidden Intelligence shapes it. He is in the seed of man and in that little particle of matter carries habit, character, types of emotion into the unborn child. Therefore heredity is true; but if Prajna were not concealed in the seed, heredity would be false, inexplicable, impossible. We see the same stress in the mind, heart, body of man. Because the hidden spirit urges himself on the body, stamps himself on it, expresses himself in it, the body expresses the individuality of the man, the developing and conscious idea or varying type which is myself; therefore no two faces, no two expressions, no two thumb impressions even are entirely alike; every part of the body in some way or other expresses the man. The stress of the spirit shows itself in the mind and heart; therefore men, families, nations have individuality, run into particular habits of thought and feeling, therefore also they are both alike and dissimilar. Therefore men act and react, not only physically but spiritually, intellectually, morally on each other, because there is one self in all creatures expressing itself in various idea and forms variously suitable to the idea. The stress of the hidden Spirit expresses itself again in events and the majestic course of the world. This is the *Zeitgeist*, this is the purpose that runs through the process of the centuries, the changes of the suns, this is that which makes evolution possible and provides it with a way, means and a goal. "This is He who from years sempiternal hath ordered perfectly all things."

This is the teaching of the Vedanta as we have it in its oldest form in the Upanishads. Adwaita, Vishishtadwaita, Dwaita are merely various ways of looking at the relations of the One to the Many, and none of them has the right to monopolise the name Vedanta. Adwaita is true, because the Many are only manifestations of the One. Vishishtadwaita is true because ideas are eternal and having manifested, must have manifested before and will manifest again, — the Many are eternal in the One, only they are sometimes manifest and sometimes unmanifest. Dwaita is true, because although from one point of view the One and the Many are eternally and essentially the same, yet,

from another, the idea in its manifestation is eternally different from the Intelligence in which it manifests. If Unity is eternal and unchangeable, duality is persistently recurrent. The Spirit is infinite, illimitable, eternal, and infinite, illimitable, eternal is its stress towards manifestation filling endless space with innumerable existences.





## Part Two

# The Yoga and Its Objects

Circa 1912



## The Yoga and Its Objects

THE YOGA we practise is not for ourselves alone, but for the Divine; its aim is to work out the will of the Divine in the world, to effect a spiritual transformation and to bring down a divine nature and a divine life into the mental, vital and physical nature and life of humanity. Its object is not personal Mukti, although Mukti is a necessary condition of the yoga, but the liberation and transformation of the human being. It is not personal Ananda, but the bringing down of the divine Ananda — Christ's kingdom of heaven, our Satyayuga — upon the earth. Of *mokṣa* we have no personal need; for the soul is *nityamukta* and bondage is an illusion. We play at being bound, we are not really bound. We can be free when God wills; for he, our supreme Self, is the master of the game, and without his grace and permission no soul can leave the game. It is often God's will in us to take through the mind the *bhoga* of ignorance, of the dualities, of joy and grief, of pleasure and pain, of virtue and sin, of enjoyment and renunciation: for long ages, in many countries, he never even thinks of the yoga but plays out this play century after century without wearying of it. There is nothing evil in this, nothing which we need condemn or from which we need shrink, — it is God's play. The wise man is he who recognises this truth and knowing his freedom, yet plays out God's play, waiting for his command to change the methods of the game.

The command is now. God always keeps for himself a chosen country in which the higher knowledge is through all chances and dangers, by the few or the many, continually preserved, and for the present, in this Chaturyuga at least, that country is India. Whenever he chooses to take the full pleasure of ignorance, of the dualities, of strife and wrath and tears and weakness and selfishness, the tamasic and rajasic pleasures, of the play of the Kali in short, he dims the knowledge in India and puts her down

into weakness and degradation so that she may retire into herself and not interfere with this movement of his Lila. When he wants to rise up from the mud and Narayana in man to become once again mighty and wise and blissful, then he once more pours out the knowledge on India and raises her up so that she may give the knowledge with its necessary consequences of might, wisdom and bliss to the whole world. When there is the contracted movement of knowledge, the yogins in India withdraw from the world and practise yoga for their own liberation and delight or for the liberation of a few disciples; but when the movement of knowledge again expands and the soul of India expands with it, they come forth once more and work in the world and for the world. Yogins like Janaka, Ajatashatru and Kartavirya once more sit on the thrones of the world and govern the nations.

God's Lila in man moves always in a circle, from Satyayuga to Kali and through Kali to the Satya, from the Age of Gold to the Age of Iron and back again through the Iron to the Gold. In modern language the Satyayuga is a period of the world in which a harmony, stable and sufficient, is created and man realises for a time, under certain conditions and limitations, the perfection of his being. The harmony exists in its nature, by the force of a settled purity; but afterwards it begins to break down and man upholds it, in the Treta, by force of will, individual and collective; it breaks down further and he attempts to uphold it in the Dwapara by intellectual regulation and common consent and rule; then in the Kali it finally collapses and is destroyed. But the Kali is not merely evil; in it the necessary conditions are progressively built up for a new Satya, another harmony, a more advanced perfection. In the period of the Kali which has passed, still endures in its effects, but is now at an end, there has been a general destruction of the ancient knowledge and culture. Only a few fragments remain to us in the Vedas, Upanishads and other sacred works and in the world's confused traditions. But the time is at hand for a first movement upward, the first attempt to build up a new harmony and perfection. That is the reason why so many ideas are abroad for the perfection of human society,

knowledge, religion and morals. But the true harmony has not yet been found.

It is only India that can discover the harmony, because it is only by a change — not a mere readjustment — of man's present nature that it can be developed, and such a change is not possible except by yoga. The nature of man and of things is at present a discord, a harmony that has got out of tune. The whole heart and action and mind of man must be changed, but from within, not from without, not by political and social institutions, not even by creeds and philosophies, but by realisation of God in ourselves and the world and a remoulding of life by that realisation. This can only be effected by Purnayoga, a yoga not devoted to a particular purpose, even though that purpose be Mukti or Ananda, but to the fulfilment of the divine humanity in ourselves and others. For this purpose the practices of Hatha and Raja Yoga are not sufficient and even the Trimarga will not serve; we must go higher and resort to the Adhyatmayoga. The principle of Adhyatmayoga is, in knowledge, the realisation of all things that we see or do not see but are aware of, — men, things, ourselves, events, gods, titans, angels, — as one divine Brahman, and in action and attitude, an absolute self-surrender to the Paratpara Purusha, the transcendent, infinite and universal Personality who is at once personal and impersonal, finite and infinite, self-limiting and illimitable, one and many, and informs with his being not only the Gods above, but man and the worm and the clod below. The surrender must be complete. Nothing must be reserved, no desire, no demand, no opinion, no idea that this must be, that cannot be, that this should be and that should not be; — all must be given. The heart must be purified of all desire, the intellect of all self-will, every duality must be renounced, the whole world seen and unseen must be recognised as one supreme expression of concealed Wisdom, Power and Bliss, and the entire being given up, as an engine is passive in the hands of the driver, for the divine Love, Might and perfect Intelligence to do its work and fulfil its divine Lila. *Ahankāra* must be blotted out in order that we may have, as God intends us ultimately to have, the perfect bliss, the perfect calm and knowledge and the perfect activity of

the divine existence. If this attitude of perfect self-surrender can be even imperfectly established, all necessity of Yogic *kriyā* inevitably ceases. For then God himself in us becomes the sadhaka and the siddha and his divine power works in us, not by our artificial processes, but by a working of Nature which is perfectly informed, all-searching and infallibly efficient. Even the most powerful Rajayogic *samīyama*, the most developed *prāṇāyāma*, the most strenuous meditation, the most ecstatic Bhakti, the most self-denying action, mighty as they are and efficacious, are comparatively weak in their results when set beside this supreme working. For those are all limited to a certain extent by our capacity, but this is illimitable in potency because it is God's capacity. It is only limited by his will which knows what is best for the world and for each of us in the world and apart from it.

The first process of the yoga is to make the *saṅkalpa* of *ātmasamarpaṇa*. Put yourself with all your heart and all your strength into God's hands. Make no conditions, ask for nothing, not even for *siddhi* in the yoga, for nothing at all except that in you and through you his will may be directly performed. To those who demand from him, God gives what they demand, but to those who give themselves and demand nothing, he gives everything that they might otherwise have asked or needed and in addition he gives himself and the spontaneous boons of his love.

The next process is to stand aside and watch the working of the divine power in yourself. This working is often attended with disturbance and trouble in the system, therefore faith is necessary, though perfect faith is not always possible at once; for whatever impurity is in you, harboured openly or secretly lurking, is likely to rise at first and be repeated so long as it is not exhaustively swept out, and doubt in this age is an almost universal impurity. But even when doubt assails, stand by and wait for it to pass, availing yourself if possible of the *satsaṅga* of those who are already advanced on the path, but when that is absent, still holding fast to the principle of the yoga, self-surrender. When distressed within or assailed from without, remember the words of the Gita,

मच्चित्तः सर्वदुर्गाणि मत्प्रसादात् तरिष्यसि ।

“By giving thyself up in heart and mind to Me, thou shalt cross over all difficulties and perils by My grace,” and again,

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।  
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शत्रुः ॥

“Abandon all *dharma*s (all law, rule, means and codes of every kind whether formed by previous habit and belief or imposed from outside) and take refuge in Me alone; I will deliver thee from all sin and evil, — do not grieve.” “I will deliver”, — you have not to be troubled or struggle yourself as if the responsibility were yours or the result depended on your efforts, a mightier than you is busy with the matter. Neither disease nor calamity nor the rising of sin and impurity in you should cause any alarm. Hold fast only to him. “I will deliver thee from all sin and evil.” But the release does not come by a sudden miracle, it comes by a process of purification and these things are a part of the process. They are like the dust that rises in clouds when a room long uncleaned is at last swept out. Though the dust seem to choke you, yet persevere, *mā śucaḥ*.

In order to stand aside, you must know yourself as the Purusha who merely watches, consents to God’s work, holds up the Adhar and enjoys the fruits that God gives. The work itself is done by God as Shakti, by Kali, and is offered up by her as a Yajna to Sri Krishna; you are the Yajamana who sees the sacrifice done, whose presence is necessary to every movement of the sacrifice and who tastes its results. This separation of yourself, this renunciation of the *karṛtva-abhimāna* (the idea of yourself as the doer) is easier if you know what the Adhar is. Above the *buddhi* which is the highest function of mind is the higher *buddhi*, or *vijñāna*, the seat of the *satyadharma*, truth of knowledge, truth of *bhāva*, truth of action, and above this ideal faculty is the *ānanda* or cosmic bliss in which the divine part of you dwells. It is of this *vijñāna* and this *ānanda* that Christ spoke as the kingdom of God that is within you.

We at present are awake, *jāgrat*, in the lower movements but *susūpta*, fast asleep, in the *vijñāna* and *ānanda*; we have to awaken these levels of consciousness within us and their awakening and unmixed activity is the *siddhi* of the yoga. For when that happens, we gain the condition of being which is called in the Gita dwelling in God, of which Sri Krishna speaks when he says, *mayi nivasiṣyasiyeva*, “Verily thou shalt dwell in Me.” Once it is gained, we are free and blessed and have everything towards which we strive.

The third process of the yoga is to perceive all things as God. First, as a rule, in the process of knowledge one comes to see pervading all space and time one divine impersonal Existence, Sad Atman, without movement, distinction or feature, *śāntam alakṣaṇam*, in which all names and forms seem to stand with a very doubtful or a very minor reality. In this realisation the One may seem to be the only reality and everything else Maya, a purposeless and inexplicable illusion. But afterwards, if you do not stop short and limit yourself by the impersonal realisation, you will come to see the same Atman not only containing and supporting all created things, but informing and filling them, and eventually you will be able to understand that even the names and forms are Brahman. You will then be able to live more and more in the knowledge which the Upanishads and the Gita hold up as the rule of life; you will see the Self in all existing things and all existing things in the Self, *ātmānam sarvabhūteṣu sarvabhūtāni cātmani*; you will be aware of all things as Brahman, *sarvam khalvidam brahma*. But the crowning realisation of this yoga is when you become aware of the whole world as the expression, play or Lila of an infinite divine personality, when you see in all, not the impersonal Sad Atman which is the basis of manifest existence, — although you do not lose that knowledge, — but Sri Krishna who at once is, bases and transcends all manifest and unmanifest existence, *avyakto ’vyaktāt parah*. For behind the Sad Atman is the silence of the Asat which the Buddhist Nihilists realised as the *śūnyam* and beyond that silence is the Paratpara Purusha (*puruṣo vareṇya ādityavarnas tamasaḥ parastāt*). It is he who has made this world out of his



being and is immanent in and sustains it as the infinite-finite Ishwara, *ananta* and *sānta*, Shiva and Narayana, Sri Krishna the Lilamaya who draws all of us to him by his love, compels all of us by his masteries and plays his eternal play of joy and strength and beauty in the manifold world.

The world is only a play of his being, knowledge and delight, *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*. Matter itself, you will one day realise, is not material, it is not substance but form of consciousness, *guṇa*, the result of quality of being perceived by sense-knowledge. Solidity itself is only a combination of the *guṇas*, *samhati* and *dhṛti*, cohesion and permanence, a state of conscious being, nothing else. Matter, life, mind and what is beyond mind, it is all Sri Krishna the Ananta-guna Brahman playing in the world as the Sachchidananda. When we have this realisation, when we dwell in it securely and permanently, all possibilities of grief and sin, fear, delusion, internal strife and pain are driven puissantly from our being. We realise in our experience the truth of the Upanishads,

आनन्दं ब्रह्मणो विद्वान् न विभेति कतश्चन ।

“He who possesses the delight of the Brahman has no fear from anything in the world,” and that other in the Isha Upanishad,

यस्मिन् सर्वाणि भूतानि आत्मैवाभूद् विजानतः ।  
तत्र को मोहः कः शोक एकत्वमनःपश्यतः ॥

“When all created things become one with a man’s self by his getting the knowledge (*vijñāna*), thereafter what bewilderment can he have or what grief, when in all things he sees their oneness?” The whole world then appears to us in a changed aspect, as an ocean of beauty, good, light, bliss, exultant movement on a basis of eternal strength and peace. We see all things as *śubha*, *śiva*, *maṅgala*, *ānandamaya*. We become one in soul with all beings, *sarvabhūtātma-bhūtātma*, and, having steadfastly this experience, are able by contact, by oneness, by the reaching out of love, to communicate it to others, so that we become a centre

of the radiation of this divine state, *brāhmī sthiti*, throughout our world.

It is not only in things animate but in things inanimate also that we must see Narayana, experience Shiva, throw our arms around Shakti. When our eyes, that are now blinded by the idea of Matter, open to the supreme Light, we shall find that nothing is inanimate, but all contains, expressed or unexpressed, involved or evolved, secret or manifest or in course of manifestation, not only that state of involved consciousness which we call *annam* or Matter, but also life, mind, knowledge, bliss, divine force and being, — *prāṇa, manas, vijñāna, ānanda, cit, sat*. In all things the self-conscious personality of God broods and takes the delight of his *gūnas*. Flowers, fruits, earth, trees, metals, all things have a joy in them of which you will become aware, because in all Sri Krishna dwells, *praviśya*, having entered into them, not materially or physically, — because there is no such thing, Space and Time being only conventions and arrangements of perception, the perspective in God's creative Art, — but by *cit*, the divine awareness in his transcendent being.

ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वं यत् किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।

“All this world and every object in this world of Prakriti has been created as a habitation for the Lord.”

Nor is it enough to see him in all things and beings, *sarva-bhūteṣu*; you must see him in all events, actions, thoughts, feelings, in yourself and others, throughout the world. For this realisation two things are necessary: first, that you should give up to him the fruit of all your actions, secondly, that you should give up to him the actions themselves. Giving up the fruits of action does not mean that you must have the *vairāgya* for the fruits, turn away from them or refuse to act with a given end before you. It means that you must act, not because you want this or that to happen or think it necessary that this or that should happen and your action needed to bring it about, but because it is *kartavyam*, demanded by the Master of your being and must be done with whatever result God is pleased to give.

You must put aside what you want and wish to know what God wants; distrust what your heart, your passions or your habitual opinions prefer to hold as right and necessary, and passing beyond them, like Arjuna in the Gita, seek only to know what God has set down as right and necessary. Be strong in the faith that whatever is right and necessary will inevitably happen as the result of your due fulfilment of the *kartavyam karma*, even if it is not the result that you preferred or expected. The power that governs the world is at least as wise as you and it is not absolutely necessary that you should be consulted or indulged in its management; God is seeing to it.

But what is the *kartavyam karma*? It is very difficult to say, — *gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ*. Most people would translate *kartavyam karma* by the English word and idea, *duty*; if asked to define it, they would say it is the right and moral action, what people understand by right and morality, what you yourself conscientiously think to be right or else what the good of society, the nation or mankind demands of you. But the man who remains bound by these personal or social ideas of duty, necessary as they are for the ignorant to restrain and tame their clamorous desires or their personal egoism, will be indeed what is called a good man, but he will never attain to the fulfilment of this yoga. He will only replace the desire for one kind of fruit by the desire for another kind; he will strive, even more passionately perhaps, for these higher results and be more bitterly grieved by not attaining them. There is no passion so terrible as the passion of the altruist, no egoism so hard to shake as the fixed egoism of virtue, precisely because it is justified in its own eyes and justified in the sight of men and cannot see the necessity for yielding to a higher law. Even if there is no grieving over the results, there will be the labour and strife of the rajasic *kartā*, struggling and fighting, getting eager and getting exhausted, not *triguṇātīta*, always under bondage to the *guṇas*.

It was under the domination of these ideas of personal virtue and social duty that Arjuna refused to fight. Against his reasonings Sri Krishna sets two different ideas, one inferior for the use of the man bound but seeking liberation, another superior

for the liberated man, the Shastra and surrender not only of the fruits of the work but of the work itself to God. The virtue of the Shastra is that it sets up a standard outside ourselves, different from our personal desires, reasonings, passions and prejudices, outside our selfishness and self-will, by living up to which in the right spirit we can not only acquire self-control but by reducing even the sattwic *ahankāra* to a minimum prepare ourselves for liberation. In the old days the Shastra was the Vedic Dharma based upon a profound knowledge of man's psychology and the laws of the world, revealing man to himself and showing him how to live according to his nature; afterwards it was the law of the Smritis which tried to do the same thing more roughly by classifying men according to the general classes of which the Vedas speak, the *cāturvarṇya*; today it is little more than blind mechanical custom and habitual social observance, a thing not sattwic but tamasic, not a preparatory discipline for liberation, but a mere bondage.

Even the highest Shastra can be misused for the purposes of egoism, the egoism of virtue and the egoism of prejudice and personal opinion. At its best it is a great means towards the preparation of liberation. It is *śabda-brahma*. But we must not be satisfied with mere preparation, we must, as soon as our eyes are opened, hasten on to actual freedom. The liberated soul and the sadhak of liberation who has surrendered even his actions to God, gets beyond the highest Shastra, *śabdabrahmātivartate*.

The best foundation for the surrender of action is the realisation that Prakriti is doing all our actions at God's command and God through our *svabhāva* determines the action. From that moment the action belongs to him, it is not yours nor the responsibility yours; there is indeed no responsibility, no bondage of Karma, for God has no responsibility, but is in every way master and free. Our actions become not only like the Shastric man's *svabhāvaniyata*, regulated by nature and therefore *dharma*, but the *svabhāva* itself is controlled like a machine by God. It is not easy for us, full as we are of the Sanskaras of ignorance, to arrive at this stage of knowledge, but there are three stages by

which it can be rapidly done. The first is to live in the spirit of the *śloka*, —

त्वया हृषीकेश हृदि स्थितेन यथा नियत्कोऽस्मि तथा करोमि ।

“According as I am appointed by Thee, O Hrishiksha! seated in my heart, so I act.” When this has entered into your daily life, it will be easier to accomplish the second stage and live in the knowledge of the Gita,

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।  
भ्रामयन् सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया ॥

“God stands in the heart of all beings, whirling round all, as on a wheel, by the Maya of the three *guṇas*.” You will then be able to perceive the action of the three *guṇas* in you and watch the machinery at its work, no longer saying, *tathā karomi*, I do, but *guṇā vartanta eva*, it is merely the *guṇas* that work. One great difficulty in these stages, especially before you can distinguish the action of the *guṇas*, is the perception of the impurity of the *svabhāva*, the haunting idea of sin and virtue. You must always remember that, since you have put yourself in God’s hands, he will work out the impurities and you have only to be careful, as you cannot be attached either to *pāpa* or *puṇya*, sin or virtue. For he has repeatedly given the *abhaya vacana*, the assurance of safety. “*Pratijānīhi*,” he says in the Gita, “*na me bhaktaḥ pranaśyati*, he who is devoted to Me cannot perish.”

The third stage comes out of the second, by full realisation of God, or of itself by the grace of God. Not only will the Purusha stand apart and be *triguṇātīta*, beyond the three *guṇas*, but the Prakriti, though using the *guṇas*, will be free from their bondage. Sattwa, as we know it, will disappear into pure *prakāśa* and *jyotiḥ*, and the nature will live in a pure, free and infinite self-existing illumination. Tamas, as we know it, will disappear into pure *śama* or *śānti*, and the nature will take its firm stand on an infinite and ineffable rest and peace. Rajas, as we know it, will disappear into pure *tapas*, and the nature will flow in

a free and infinite ocean of divine force. On that foundation of calm and in that heaven of light, action will occur as the spontaneous objective expression of God's knowledge, which is one with God's will. This is the condition of infinity, *ānantya*, in which this struggle of bound and limited sattwa, rajas and tamas is replaced by a mighty harmony of free *prakāśa*, *tapas* and *śama*. And even before you reach that condition, on the way to it, you will find that some mighty force not your own, not situated in your body though possessing and occupying it, is thinking for you, feeling for you, acting for you, your very body as well as your mind and heart being moved by that force and not by yourself. You will enjoy that thought, feeling, action, but will neither possess nor be possessed by it, — *karmāṇi pravīṇyante*, your actions will disappear without leaving in you mark or trace, as a wave disappears from the surface of the sea, as water falls from the lotus leaf. Your mind, heart, body will not be yours, but God's; you yourself will be only a centre of being, knowledge and bliss through which God works in that Adhar. This is the condition in which one is utterly *taccittaḥ*, given up in all his conscious being to God, in which there is utter fulfilment of the description,

यस्य नाहंकृतो भावो बद्धिर्यस्य न लिप्यते ।

“One whose state of being is free from egoism and whose understanding receives no stain.” This is the surrender of action to which Sri Krishna gives so much importance.

मयि सर्वाणि कर्माणि संन्यस्याध्यात्मचेतसा ।  
निराशीर्निर्ममो भूत्वा यथ्यस्व विगतज्वरः ॥

“Laying down all actions upon Me, with thy whole conscious being in *adhyātmayoga*, become free from desire and the sense of belongings; fight, let the fever of thy soul pass from thee.” For this great and complete liberation it is necessary that you should be *niḥspṛha*, *nirduandva* and *nirahaṅkāra*, without the longing and reaching after things, free from the *saṁskāra* of the dualities

and free from egoism; for these three things are the chief enemies of self-surrender. If you are *nirvandva*, you can be *niḥspṛha*, but hardly otherwise, for every *dvandva* creates in the mind by the very nature of the mind some form of *rāgadveṣa*, like and dislike, attraction and repulsion, whether they are the lowest dualities that appeal to the mind through the body, hunger and thirst, heat and cold, physical pleasure and pain, or the middle sorts that appeal to it through the feelings and desires, success and failure, victory and defeat, fortune and misfortune, pleasure and displeasure, joy and grief, hate and love, or the highest which appeal to the mind through the discriminating *buddhi*, virtue and sin, reason and unreason, error and truth. These things can only be put under our feet by complete knowledge, the knowledge that sees God in all things and thus comes to understand the relations of things to each other in his great cosmic purpose, by complete Bhakti which accepts all things with joy, — thus abolishing the *dvandvas*, — because they come from the Beloved or by perfect action offering up all works as a sacrifice to God with an entire indifference to these dualities of success, failure, honour, disgrace, etc., which usually pursue all Karma. Such knowledge, such Bhakti, such Karma come inevitably as the eventual result of the *saṅkalpa* of self-surrender and the practice of it.

But it is *ahaṅkāra* that by making the relation and effect of things on ourselves or on things connected with us the standard of life, makes the *dvandvas* a chain for our bondage. *Ahaṅkāra* in its action on our life and sadhana will be seen to be of three kinds, rajasic, tamasic and sattwic. Rajas binds by desire and the craving in the nature for occupation and activity, it is always reaching after action and the fruit of action; it is in order that we may be free from the rajasic *ahaṅkāra* that we have the command, “Do not do works from the desire of fruit,” *mā karma-phala-hetur bhūḥ*, and the command to give up our actions to God. Tamas binds by weakness and the craving in the nature for ease and inaction; it is always sinking into idleness, depression, confusion of mind, fear, disappointment, despondency and despair; it is in order that we may get rid of the tamasic

*ahaṅkāra* that we are given the command, “Let there be no attachment to inaction,” and the instruction to pursue the yoga always, whether we seem to advance or seem to be standing still or seem even to be going back, always with a calm faith and patient and cheerful perseverance, *anirvinṇacetasā*. Sattwa binds by knowledge and pleasure; it is always attaching itself to some imperfect realisation, to the idea of one’s own virtue, the correctness of one’s own opinions and principles or at its highest, as in the case of Arjuna, opposing some personal idea of altruism, justice or virtue against the surrender of our will that God demands of us. It is for the escape from the sattwic *ahaṅkāra* that we have to pass beyond the attachment to the duality of virtue and sin, *ubhe sukṛtaduṣkṛte*.

Each of the *guṇas* working on the *ahaṅkāra* has its particular danger for the sadhak who has made the *saṅkalpa* of self-surrender, but has not yet attained to the full accomplishment of the surrender. The danger of the *rajoguṇa* is when the sadhak is assailed by the pride that thinks, “I am a great sadhak, I have advanced so far, I am a great instrument in God’s hands,” and similar ideas, or when he attaches himself to the work as God’s work which must be carried out, putting himself into it and troubling himself about it as if he had more interest in God’s work than God himself and could manage it better. Many, while they are acting all the while in the spirit of rajasic *ahaṅkāra*, persuade themselves that God is working through them and they have no part in the action. This is because they are satisfied with the mere intellectual assent to the idea without waiting for the whole system and life to be full of it. A continual remembrance of God in others and renunciation of individual eagerness (*spr̥hā*) are needed and a careful watching of our inner activities until God by the full light of self-knowledge, *jñānadīpena bhāsvatā*, dispels all further chance of self-delusion.

The danger of *tamoguṇa* is twofold, first, when the Purusha thinks, identifying himself with the *tamas* in him, “I am weak, sinful, miserable, ignorant, good-for-nothing, inferior to this man and inferior to that man, *adhama*, what will God do through me?” — as if God were limited by the temporary



capacities or incapacities of his instruments and it were not true that he can make the dumb to talk and the lame to cross the hills, *mūkam karoti vācālam paṅgum laṅghayate girim*,— and again when the sadhak tastes the relief, the tremendous relief of a negative *sānti* and, feeling himself delivered from all troubles and in possession of peace, turns away from life and action and becomes attached to the peace and ease of inaction. Remember always that you too are Brahman and the divine Shakti is working in you; reach out always to the realisation of God's omnipotence and his delight in the Lila. He bids Arjuna work *lokasaṅgrahārthāya*, for keeping the world together, for he does not wish the world to sink back into Prakriti, but insists on your acting as he acts,

उत्सीदेयः किमे लोका न कुर्या कर्म चेदहम् ।

“These worlds would be overpowered by tamas and sink into Prakriti if I did not do actions.” To be attached to inaction is to give up our action not to God but to our tamasic *ahaṅkāra*.

The danger of the *sattvaguna* is when the sadhak becomes attached to any one-sided conclusion of his reason, to some particular *kriyā* or movement of the sadhana, to the joy of any particular *siddhi* of the yoga, perhaps the sense of purity or the possession of some particular power or the Ananda of the contact with God or the sense of freedom and hungers after it, becomes attached to that only and would have nothing else. Remember that the yoga is not for yourself; for these things, though they are part of the *siddhi*, are not the object of the *siddhi*, for you have decided at the beginning to make no claim upon God but take what he gives you freely and, as for the Ananda, the selfless soul will even forego the joy of God's presence, when that is God's will. You must be free even from the highest sattwic *ahaṅkāra*, even from the subtle ignorance of *mumukṣutva*, the desire of liberation, and take all joy and delight without attachment. You will then be the *siddha* or perfect man of the Gita.

These then are the processes of the yoga, (1) the *saṅkalpa* of *ātmasamarpaṇa*, (2) the standing apart from the Adhar by self-

knowledge, (3) the vision of God everywhere and in all things and in all happenings, the surrender of the fruits of action and action itself to God, and the freedom thereby from ignorance, from *ahaṅkāra*, from the *dvandvas*, from desire, so that you are *śuddha*, *mukta*, *siddha*, full of Ananda, pure, free, perfect and blissful in your being. But the processes will be worked out, once the *saṅkalpa* is made, by God's Shakti, by a mighty process of Nature. All that is indispensable on your part is the *anumati* and *smṛti*. *Anumati* is consent, you must give a temporary consent to the movements of the yoga, to all that happens inside or outside you as part of the circumstances of the sadhana, not exulting at the good, not fretting at the evil, not struggling in your heart to keep the one or get rid of the other, but always keeping in mind and giving a permanent assent to that which has to be finally effected. The temporary consent is passive submission to the methods and not positive acceptance of the results. The permanent consent is an anticipatory acceptance of the results, a sort of effortless and desireless exercise of will. It is the constant exercise of this desireless will, an intent aspiration and constant remembrance of the path and its goal which are the *dhṛti* and *utsāha* needed, the necessary steadfastness and zeal of the sadhak; *vyākulatā* or excited, passionate eagerness is more intense, but less widely powerful, and it is disturbing and exhausting, giving intense pleasure and pain in the pursuit but not so vast a bliss in the acquisition. The followers of this path must be like the men of the early yugas, *dhīrāḥ*, the great word of praise in the Upanishads. In the remembrance, the *smṛti* or *smaraṇa*, you must be *apramatta*, free from negligence. It is by the loss of the *smṛti* owing to the rush and onset of the *guṇas* that the yogin becomes *bhraṣṭa*, falls from his firm seat, wanders from his path. But you need not be distressed when the *pramāda* comes and the state of fall or clouded condition seems to persist, for there is no fear for you of a permanent fall since God himself has taken entire charge of you and if you stumble, it is because it is best for you to stumble, as a child by frequent stumbling and falling learns to walk. The necessity of *apramattatā* disappears when you can replace the memory of the yoga and its objects by

the continual remembrance of God in all things and happenings, the *nitya anusmaraṇa* of the Gita. For those who can make the full surrender from the beginning there is no question; their path is utterly swift and easy.

It is said in the “Sanatsujatiya” that four things are necessary for *siddhi* — *śāstra*, *utsāha*, *guru* and *kāla* — the teaching of the path, zeal in following it, the Guru and time. Your path is that which I am pointing out, the *utsāha* needed is this *anumati* and this *nitya smaraṇa*, the Guru is God himself and for the rest only time is needed. That God himself is the Guru, you will find when knowledge comes to you; you will see how every little circumstance within you and without you has been subtly planned and brought about by infinite wisdom to carry out the natural process of the yoga, how the internal and external movements are arranged and brought together to work on each other, so as to work out the imperfection and work in the perfection. An almighty love and wisdom are at work for your uplifting. Therefore never be troubled by the time that is being taken, even if it seems very long, but when imperfections and obstructions arise, be *apramatta*, *dhīra*, have the *utsāha*, and leave God to do the rest. Time is necessary. It is a tremendous work that is being done in you, the alteration of your whole human nature into a divine nature, the crowding of centuries of evolution into a few years. You ought not to grudge the time. There are other paths that offer more immediate results or at any rate, by offering you some definite *kriyā* you can work at yourself, give your *ahaṅkāra* the satisfaction of feeling that you are doing something, so many more *prāṇāyāmas* today, so much longer a time for the *āsana*, so many more repetitions of the *japa*, so much done, so much definite progress marked. But once you have chosen this path, you must cleave to it. Those are human methods, not the way that the infinite Shakti works, which moves silently, sometimes imperceptibly to its goal, advances here, seems to pause there, then mightily and triumphantly reveals the grandiose thing that it has done. Artificial paths are like canals hewn by the intelligence of man; you travel easily, safely, surely, but from one given place to another. This path is the broad and trackless ocean by

which you can travel widely to all parts of the world and are admitted to the freedom of the infinite. All that you need are the ship, the steering-wheel, the compass, the motive-power and a skilful captain. Your ship is the Brahmavidya, faith is your steering-wheel, self-surrender your compass, the motive-power is she who makes, directs and destroys the worlds at God's command and God himself is your captain. But he has his own way of working and his own time for everything. Watch his way and wait for his time. Understand also the importance of accepting the Shastra and submitting to the Guru and do not do like the Europeans who insist on the freedom of the individual intellect to follow its own fancies and preferences which it calls reasonings, even before it is trained to discern or fit to reason. It is much the fashion nowadays to indulge in metaphysical discussions and philosophical subtleties about Maya and Adwaita and put them in the forefront, making them take the place of spiritual experience. Do not follow that fashion or confuse yourself and waste time on the way by questionings which will be amply and luminously answered when the divine knowledge of the *vijñāna* awakes in you. Metaphysical knowledge has its place, but as a handmaid to spiritual experience, showing it the way sometimes but much more dependent on it and living upon its bounty. By itself it is mere *pāṇḍitya*, a dry and barren thing and more often a stumbling-block than a help. Having accepted this path, follow its Shastra without unnecessary doubt and questioning, keeping the mind plastic to the light of the higher knowledge, gripping firmly what is experienced, waiting for light where things are dark to you, taking without pride what help you can from the living guides who have already trod the path, always patient, never hastening to narrow conclusions, but waiting for a more complete experience and a fuller light, relying on the Jagadguru who helps you from within.

It is necessary to say something about the Mayavada and the modern teachings about the Adwaita because they are much in the air at the present moment and, penetrated with ideas from European rationalism and agnosticism for which Shankara would have been astonished to find himself made responsible,

perplex many minds. Remember that one-sided philosophies are always a partial statement of truth. The world, as God has made it, is not a rigid exercise in logic but, like a strain of music, an infinite harmony of many diversities, and his own existence, being free and absolute, cannot be logically defined. Just as the best religion is that which admits the truth of all religions, so the best philosophy is that which admits the truth of all philosophies and gives each its right place. Maya is one realisation, an important one which Shankara overstressed because it was most vivid to his own experience. For yourself leave the word for subordinate use and fix rather on the idea of Lila, a deeper and more penetrating word than Maya. Lila includes the idea of Maya and exceeds it; nor has it that association of the vanity of all things, useless to you who have elected to remain and play with Sri Krishna in Mathura and Brindavan.

God is one but he is not bounded by his unity. We see him here as one who is always manifesting as many, not because he cannot help it, but because he so wills, and outside manifestation he is *anirdeśyam*, indefinable, and cannot be described as either one or many. That is what the Upanishads and other sacred books consistently teach; he is *ekamevādvitīyam*, One and there is no other, but also and consequently he is “this man, yonder woman, that blue-winged bird, this scarlet-eyed.” He is *sānta*, he is *ananta*; the Jiva is he. “I am the *aśvattha* tree,” says Sri Krishna in the Gita, “I am death, I am Agni Vaishwanara, I am the heat that digests food, I am Vyasa, I am Vasudeva, I am Arjuna.” All that is the play of his *caitanya* in his infinite being, his manifestations, and therefore all are real. Maya means nothing more than the freedom of Brahman from the circumstances through which he expresses himself. He is in no way limited by that which we see or think about him. That is the Maya from which we must escape, the Maya of ignorance which takes things as separately existent and not God, not *caitanya*, the illimitable for the really limited, the free for the bound. Do you remember the story of Sri Krishna and the Gopis, how Narada found him differently occupied in each house to which he went, present to each Gopi in a different body, yet always the same Sri Krishna? Apart from the

devotional meaning of the story, which you know, it is a good image of his World-Lila. He is *sarva*, everyone, each Purusha with his apparently different Prakriti and action is he, and yet at the same time he is the Purushottama who is with Radha, the Para Prakriti, and can withdraw all these into himself when he wills and put them out again when he wills. From one point of view they are one with him, from another one yet different, from yet another always different because they always exist, latent in him or expressed at his pleasure. There is no profit in disputing about these standpoints. Wait until you see God and know yourself and him and then debate and discussion will be unnecessary.

The goal marked out for us is not to speculate about these things, but to experience them. The call upon us is to grow into the image of God, to dwell in him and with him and be a channel of his joy and might and an instrument of his works. Purified from all that is *aśubha*, transfigured in soul by his touch, we have to act in the world as dynamos of that divine electricity and send it thrilling and radiating through mankind, so that wherever one of us stands, hundreds around may become full of his light and force, full of God and full of Ananda. Churches, Orders, theologies, philosophies have failed to save mankind because they have busied themselves with intellectual creeds, dogmas, rites and institutions, with *ācāraśuddhi* and *darśana*, as if these could save mankind, and have neglected the one thing needful, the power and purification of the soul. We must go back to the one thing needful, take up again Christ's gospel of the purity and perfection of mankind, Mahomed's gospel of perfect submission, self-surrender and servitude to God, Chaitanya's gospel of the perfect love and joy of God in man, Ramakrishna's gospel of the unity of all religions and the divinity of God in man, and, gathering all these streams into one mighty river, one purifying and redeeming Ganges, pour it over the death-in-life of a materialistic humanity as Bhagirath led down the Ganges and flooded with it the ashes of his fathers, so that they may be a resurrection of the soul in mankind and the Satyayuga for a while return to the world. Nor is this the whole object of the

Lila or the Yoga; the reason for which the Avatars descend is to raise up man again and again, developing in him a higher and ever higher humanity, a greater and yet greater development of divine being, bringing more and more of heaven again and again upon the earth until our toil is done, our work accomplished and Sachchidananda fulfilled in all even here, even in this material universe. Small is his work, even if he succeeds, who labours for his own salvation or the salvation of a few; infinitely great is his, even if he fail or succeed only partially or for a season, who lives only to bring about peace of soul, joy, purity and perfection among all mankind.

## APPENDIX

### Explanations of Some Words and Phrases

“Matter itself, you will one day realise, is not material, it is not substance but form of consciousness, *guṇa*, the result of quality of being perceived by sense-knowledge.” (p. 77)

There is no need to put “the” before “quality” — in English that would alter the sense. Matter is not regarded in this passage as a quality of being perceived by sense; I don’t think that would have any meaning. It is regarded as a result of a certain power and action of consciousness which presents forms of itself to sense perception and it is this quality of sense-perceivedness, so to speak, that gives them the appearance of Matter, i.e. of a certain kind of substantiality inherent in themselves — but in fact they are not self-existent substantial objects but forms of consciousness. The point is that there is no such thing as the self-existent Matter posited by nineteenth-century Science.

“chitta” and “chetas”

Chitta is ordinarily used for the mental consciousness in general, thought, feeling, etc. taken together with a stress now on one side or another, sometimes on the feelings as in *citta-pramāthī*, sometimes on the thought-mind — that is why I translated it [on p. 75 (*maccittaḥ*)] “heart and mind” in its wider sense. Chetas can be used in the same way, but it has a different shade of sense, properly speaking, and can include also the movements of the soul, covering the whole consciousness even; [on p. 82] I take it in its most general sense. The translation is not meant

*Sri Aurobindo wrote these explanations in 1938 in answer to questions asked by a Hindi translator of The Yoga and Its Objects.*



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to be literal but to render the thought in the line in its fullness. *Adhyātmacetasā* practically amounts to what in English we would describe as a spiritual consciousness.

“throw our arms around” (p. 78)

It is a figure meaning to comprehend in our consciousness with love and Ananda.

“the nature” (p. 81, lines 29, 31, 33)

Nature here means the parts of Prakriti in the human being: as it is the condition of the Prakriti that changes with shifting of the gunas and it is this condition of the Prakriti that will become illumined by the transformation of *sattva* into  *jyotiḥ*.

*lokasaṅgrahārthāya* (p. 85) — Does this mean present order?

No. It is in a more general sense the maintenance of the world order which may be a developing, not necessarily a stationary one, an order spiritual, moral etc. and not merely a social order.



Part Three

Writings from the *Arya*

1914–1921



N° 1

# आर्य

**A PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW**

*(English Edition of the "Revue de Grande Synthèse.")*

**Editors :**

SRI AUROBINDO GHOSE — PAUL & MIRRA RICHARD.

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# “ ARYA ”

## MONTHLY REVIEW.

*The “ ARYA ” is a Review of pure philosophy.*

*The object which it has set before itself is twofold :—*

*1. A systematic study of the highest problems of existence ;*

*2. The formation of a vast Synthesis of knowledge, harmonising the diverse religious traditions of humanity occidental as well as oriental. Its method will be that of a realism, at once rational and transcendental,—a realism consisting in the unification of intellectual and scientific discipline with those of intuitive experience.*

*This Review will also serve as an organ for the various groups and societies founded on its inspiration.*

The Review will publish :—

**Synthetic studies in speculative Philosophy.**

**Translations and commentaries of ancient texts.**

**Studies in Comparative Religion.**

**Practical methods of inner culture and self development.**

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## Notes on the *Arya*





## The “Arya’s” Second Year

THE “ARYA”, born by a coincidence which might well have been entirely disastrous to its existence in the very month when there broke out the greatest catastrophe that has overtaken the modern world, has yet, though carried on under serious difficulties, completed its first year. We have been obliged unfortunately to discontinue the French edition from February last as our director M. Paul Richard was then recalled to join his class of the Reserve Army in France. We have to thank the indulgence of our French subscribers who have consented to receive the English edition in its stead.

We have been obliged in our first year for reasons we shall indicate in the preface to our August number<sup>1</sup> to devote the Review almost entirely to high philosophy and severe and difficult thinking. But the object we had in view is now fulfilled and we recognise that we have no right to continue to subject our readers to the severe strain of almost 64 pages of such strenuous intellectual labour. We shall therefore in the next year devote a greater part of our space to articles on less profound subjects written in a more popular style. Needless to say, our matter will always fall within the definition of a philosophical Review and centre around the fundamental thought which the “Arya” represents.

We shall continue the *Life Divine*, the *Synthesis of Yoga* and the *Secret of the Veda*; but we intend to replace the *Selected Hymns* by a translation of the Hymns of the Atris (the fifth Mandala of the Rig Veda) so conceived as to make the sense of the Vedic chants at once and easily intelligible without the aid of a

<sup>1</sup> The “preface” in question appeared under the title “Our Ideal”. The bulk of that piece is printed on pages 140–47. Passages referring to the Arya were omitted from it after its first publication; these are reproduced on pages 103–4. — Ed.

commentary to the general reader. The same circumstance which obliged us to discontinue the French edition, will also prevent us from continuing the *Wherefore of the Worlds*. Happily, we have been able to bring it to a point where the writer's central idea appears, the new creation of our world by redeeming Love, — a fitting point for the faith and reason of man to pause upon at the moment of the terrible ordeal which that world is now undergoing.

Without the divine Will which knows best what to use and what to throw aside, no human work can come to the completion hoped for by our limited vision. To that Will we entrust the continuance and the result of our labours and we conclude the first year of the "Arya" with the aspiration that the second may see the speedy and fortunate issue of the great world-convulsion which still pursues us and that by the Power which brings always the greatest possible good out of apparent evil there may emerge from this disastrous but long-foreseen collapse of the old order a new and better marked by the triumph of higher principles of love, wisdom and unity and a sensible advance of the race towards our ultimate goal, — the conscious oneness of the Soul in humanity and the divinity of man.

## APPENDIX

### Passages Omitted from “Our Ideal”

The “Arya” having completed its first year and survived the first perils of infancy, now offers itself a second time to the decisions of Time and the mind of the hour. We think it necessary to open our new year with a succinct statement of the idea this Review is intended to serve and the aim which it holds before it. For our Review has been conceived neither as a mirror of the fleeting interests and surface thoughts of the period we live in, nor as the mouthpiece of a sect, school or already organised way of thinking. Its object is to feel out for the thought of the future, to help in shaping its foundations and to link it to the best and most vital thought of the past.

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Our first preoccupation in the “Arya” has therefore been with the deepest thought that we could command on the philosophical foundations of the problem; and we have been so profoundly convinced that without this basis nothing we could say would have any real, solid and permanent value that we have perhaps given too great a space to difficult and abstruse thought whether in the shaping of our own ideas or in the study and restatement of the ancient Eastern knowledge. Our excuse is that we come forward as ourselves learners and students and must begin at the roots to proceed forward safely.

*These paragraphs formed part of the article “Our Ideal” when it was published in the Arya in August 1915 (one month after “The ‘Arya’s’ Second Year”). The passages occurred at the beginning of the essay and before its last paragraph. They were omitted from “Our Ideal” when it was included in the book Ideal and Progress in 1920.*

Our second preoccupation has been with the psychological disciplines of Yoga; but here also we have been obliged to concern ourselves with a deep study of the principles underlying the methods rather than with a popular statement of methods and disciplines. But without this previous study of principles the statement of methods would have been unsound and not really helpful. There are no short cuts to an integral perfection.

Other and more popular sides of our work we have been obliged hitherto to neglect; but now that we have advanced a little in the more difficult part of it, we hope to turn increasingly to these more obvious and general subjects of interest. And if our readers are still willing to follow us, their recompense will be a more clear, sound and solid thought on these subjects than we could otherwise have given them.

## The “Arya’s” Fourth Year

**W**E CLOSE this month the fourth year of the “Arya”, and bring to a conclusion at the same time the “Psychology of Social Development”, the “Ideal of Human Unity” and the first series of the “Essays on the Gita”. A few more chapters will complete the “Life Divine”. We are therefore well in view of the completion of the first part of the work which we had proposed to ourselves in starting this philosophical monthly, and we take the opportunity to say a few words upon the principle which has governed our writing and which the difficulty of a serial exposition on several lines at a time, scattering and breaking up the total impression, may have prevented some of our readers from grasping in its entirety.

We had not in view at any time a review or magazine in the ordinary sense of the word, that is to say, a popular presentation or criticism of current information and current thought on philosophical questions. Nor was it, as in some philosophical and religious magazines in India, the restatement of an existing school or position of philosophical thought cut out in its lines and needing only to be popularised and supported. Our idea was the thinking out of a synthetic philosophy which might be a contribution to the thought of the new age that is coming upon us. We start from the idea that humanity is moving to a great change of its life which will even lead to a new life of the race, — in all countries where men think, there is now in various forms that idea and that hope, — and our aim has been to search for the spiritual, religious and other truth which can enlighten and guide the race in this movement and endeavour. The spiritual experience and the general truths on which such an attempt could be based, were already present to us, otherwise we should have had no right to make the endeavour at all; but the complete intellectual statement of them and their results and

issues had to be found. This meant a continuous thinking, a high and subtle and difficult thinking on several lines, and this strain, which we had to impose on ourselves, we were obliged to impose also on our readers. This too is the reason why we have adopted the serial form which in a subject like philosophy has its very obvious disadvantages, but was the only one possible.

Our original intention was to approach the synthesis from the starting-point of the two lines of culture which divide human thought and are now meeting at its apex, the knowledge of the West and the knowledge of the East; but owing to the exigencies of the war this could not be fulfilled. The "Arya" except for one unfinished series has been an approach to the highest reconciling truth from the point of view of the Indian mentality and Indian spiritual experience, and Western knowledge has been viewed from that standpoint. Here the main idea which has governed our writing, was imposed on us by the very conditions of the problem. All philosophy is concerned with the relations between two things, the fundamental truth of existence and the forms in which existence presents itself to our experience. The deepest experience shows that the fundamental truth is truth of the Spirit; the other is the truth of life, truth of form and shaping force and living idea and action. Here the West and East have followed divergent lines. The West has laid most emphasis on truth of life and for a time come to stake its whole existence upon truth of life alone, to deny the existence of spirit or to relegate it to the domain of the unknown and unknowable; from that exaggeration it is now beginning to return. The East has laid most emphasis on truth of the Spirit and for a time came, at least in India, to stake its whole existence upon that truth alone, to neglect the possibilities of life or to limit it to a narrow development or a fixed status; the East too is beginning to return from this exaggeration. The West is reawaking to the truth of the Spirit and the spiritual possibilities of life, the East is reawaking to the truth of Life and tends towards a new application to it of its spiritual knowledge. Our view is that the antinomy created between them is an unreal one. Spirit being the fundamental truth of existence, life can be only its manifestation; Spirit must

be not only the origin of life but its basis, its pervading reality and its highest and total result. But the forms of life as they appear to us are at once its disguises and its instruments of self-manifestation. Man has to grow in knowledge till they cease to be disguises and grow in spiritual power and quality till they become in him its perfect instruments. To grow into the fullness of the divine is the true law of human life and to shape his earthly existence into its image is the meaning of his evolution. This is the fundamental tenet of the philosophy of the "Arya".

This truth had to be worked out first of all from the metaphysical point of view; for in philosophy metaphysical truth is the nucleus of the rest, it is the statement of the last and most general truths on which all the others depend or in which they are gathered up. Therefore we gave the first place to the "Life Divine". Here we start from the Vedantic position, its ideas of the Self and mind and life, of Sachchidananda and the world, of Knowledge and Ignorance, of rebirth and the Spirit. But Vedanta is popularly supposed to be a denial of life, and this is no doubt a dominant trend it has taken. Though starting from the original truth that all is the Brahman, the Self, it has insisted in the end that the world is simply not-Brahman, not-Self; it has ended in a paradox. We have attempted on the contrary to establish from its data a comprehensive Advaita. We have shown that mind and life and matter are derivations from the Self through a spiritual mind or supermind which is the real support of cosmic existence and by developing mind into that, man can arrive at the real truth of the spirit in the world and the real truth and highest law of life. The Self is Sachchidananda and there is no incurable antinomy between that and the world; only we see the world through the eyes of the Ignorance and we have to see it through the eyes of the Knowledge. Our ignorance itself is only knowledge developing out of its involution in the apparent nescience of Matter and on its way to a return to its conscious integrality. To accomplish that return and manifest the spiritual life in the human existence is the opportunity given by the successions of rebirth. We accept the truth of evolution, not so much in the physical form given to it by the West as

in its philosophical truth, the involution of life and mind and spirit here in matter and their progressive manifestation. At the summit of this evolution is the spiritual life, the life divine.

It was necessary to show that these truths were not inconsistent with the old Vedantic truth, therefore we included explanations from this point of view of the Veda, two of the Upanishads and the Gita. But the Veda has been obscured by the ritualists and the scholiasts. Therefore we showed in a series of articles, initially only as yet, the way of writing of the Vedic mystics, their system of symbols and the truths they figure. Among the Upanishads we took the Isha and the Kena; to be full we should have added the Taittiriya, but it is a long one and for it we had no space. The Gita we are treating as a powerful application of truth of spirit to the largest and most difficult part of the truth of life, to action, and a way by which action can lead us to birth into the Spirit and can be harmonised with the spiritual life. Truth of philosophy is of a merely theoretical value unless it can be lived, and we have therefore tried in the "Synthesis of Yoga" to arrive at a synthetical view of the principles and methods of the various lines of spiritual self-discipline and the way in which they can lead to an integral divine life in the human existence. But this is an individual self-development, and therefore it was necessary to show too how our ideal can work out in the social life of mankind. In the "Psychology of Social Development" we have indicated how these truths affect the evolution of human society. In the "Ideal of Human Unity" we have taken the present trend of mankind towards a closer unification and tried to appreciate its tendencies and show what is wanting to them in order that real human unity may be achieved.

Our plan has compelled us to deal mainly with first principles and work them out in their fullness. In future we do not propose to start any other long series of this kind, but to have more short articles with a broader, more direct and, as far as possible, more popular treatment. We shall also permit ourselves a freer range and diversity, so far as that is permissible in a philosophical review.



# On Ideals and Progress



## On Ideals

**I**DEALS are truths that have not yet effected themselves for man, the realities of a higher plane of existence which have yet to fulfil themselves on this lower plane of life and matter, our present field of operation. To the pragmatist intellect which takes its stand upon the ever-changing present, ideals are not truths, not realities, they are at most potentialities of future truth and only become real when they are visible in the external fact as work of force accomplished. But to the mind which is able to draw back from the flux of force in the material universe, to the consciousness which is not imprisoned in its own workings or carried along in their flood but is able to envelop, hold and comprehend them, to the soul that is not merely the subject and instrument of the world-force but can reflect something of that Master-Consciousness which controls and uses it, the ideal present to its inner vision is a greater reality than the changing fact obvious to its outer senses. The Idea is not a reflection of the external fact which it so much exceeds; rather the fact is only a partial reflection of the Idea which has created it.

Certainly, ideals are not the ultimate Reality, for that is too high and vast for any ideal to envisage; they are aspects of it thrown out in the world-consciousness as a basis for the workings of the world-power. But they are primary, the actual workings secondary. They are nearer to the Reality and therefore always more real, forcible and complete than the facts which are their partial reflection. Reflections themselves of the Real, they again are reflected in the more concrete workings of our existence. The human intellect in proportion as it limits itself by the phenomena of self-realising Force fails to catch the creative Idea until after we have seen the external fact it has created; but this order of our sense-enslaved consciousness is not the real order of the universe. God pre-exists before the world can come

into being, but to our experience in which the senses act first and only then the finer workings of consciousness, the world seems to come first and God to emerge out of it, so much so that it costs us an effort to rise out of the mechanical, pluralistic and pantheistic conceptions of Him to a truer and higher idea of the Divine Reality. That which to us is the ultimate, is in truth the primary reality. So too the Idea which seems to us to rise out of the fact, really precedes it and out of it the fact has arisen. Our vulgar contrast of the ideal and the real is therefore a sensuous error, for that which we call real is only a phenomenon of force working out something that stands behind the phenomenon and that is pre-existent and greater than it. The Real, the Idea, the phenomenon, this is the true order of the creative Divinity.

The pragmatic intellect is only sure of a thing when it finds it realised in Power; therefore it has a certain contempt for the ideal, for the vision, because it drives always at execution and material realisation. But Power is not the only term of the Godhead; Knowledge is the elder sister of Power: Force and Consciousness are twin aspects of being both in the eternal foundation of things and in their evolutionary realisation. The idea is the realisation of a truth in Consciousness as the fact is its realisation in Power, both indispensable, both justified in themselves and in each other, neither warranted in ignoring or despising its complement. For the idealist and visionary to despise the pragmatist or for the pragmatist to depreciate the idealist and visionary is a deplorable result of our intellectual limitations and the mutual misunderstandings by which the arrogance of our imperfect temperament and mentality shuts itself out from perfection. It is as if we were to think that God the Seer and Knower must despise God the Master of works and energies or the Lord of action and sacrifice ignore the divine Witness and Originator. But these two are one and the division in us a limitation that mankind has yet to conquer.

The human being advances in proportion as he becomes more and more capable of knowing before he realises in action. This is indeed the order of evolution. It begins with a

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material working in which the Prakriti, the executive Power, is veiled by its works, by the facts it produces, and itself veils the consciousness which originates and supports all its workings. In Life the force emerges and becomes vibrant in the very surface of its works; last, in Mind the underlying consciousness reveals itself. So too man is at first subject in his mentality to the facts which his senses envisage, cannot go behind and beyond them, knows only the impressions they make on his receptive mind. The animal is executive, not creative; a passive tool of Matter and Life he does not seek in his thought and will to react upon and use them: the human being too in his less developed state is executive rather than creative; he limits his view to the present and to his environment, works so as to live from day to day, accepts what he is without reaching forward in thought to what he may be, has no ideals. In proportion as he goes beyond the fact and seeks to anticipate Nature, to catch the ideas and principles behind her workings and finally to seize the idea that is not yet realised in fact and himself preside over its execution, he becomes originative and creative and no longer merely executive. He begins thus his passage from subjection to mastery.

In thus progressing humanity falls apart after its fashion into classes; it divides itself between the practical man and the idealist and makes numerous compromises between the two extremes. In reality the division is artificial; for every man who does anything in the world, works by virtue of an idea and in the force given to him by ideals, either his own or others' ideals, which he may or may not recognise but in whose absence nevertheless he would be impotent to move a single step. The smaller the ideals, the fewer they are and the less recognised and insisted on, the less also is the work done and the progress realised; on the other hand, when ideals enlarge themselves, when they become forceful, widely recognised, when different ideals enter into the field, clash and communicate their thought and force to each other, then the race rises to its great periods of activity and creation. And it is when the Ideal arisen, vehement, energetic, refuses to be debarred from possession and throws

itself with all the gigantic force of the higher planes of existence on this reluctant and rebellious stuff of life and matter to conquer it that we have the great eras which change the world by carrying out the potentialities of several centuries in the action of a few decades.

Therefore wherever and whenever the mere practical man abounds and excludes or discourages by his domination the idealist, there is the least work and the least valuable work done in that age or country for humanity; at most some preliminary spade-work, some labour of conservation and hardly perceptible motion, some repression of creative energies preparing for a great future outburst. On the other hand, when the idealist is liberated, when the visionary abounds, the executive worker also is uplifted, finds at once an orientation and tenfold energy and accomplishes things which he would otherwise have rejected as a dream and chimera, which to his ordinary capacity would be impossible and which often leave the world wondering how work so great could have been done by men who were in themselves so little. The union of the great idealist with the great executive personality who receives and obeys the idea is always the sign of a coming realisation which will be more or less deep and extensive in proportion as they are united or as the executive man seizes more or less profoundly and completely the idea he serves and is able to make permanent in force what the other has impressed upon the consciousness of his age.

Often enough, even when these two different types of men work in the same cause and one more or less fulfils the other, they are widely separated in their accessory ideas, distrust, dislike and repudiate each other. For ordinarily the idealist is full of anticipations which reach beyond the actual possibilities or exceed the work that is destined to be immediately fulfilled; the executive man on the other hand is unable to grasp either all the meaning of the work he does or all its diviner possibilities which to him are illusion and vanity while to the other they are all that is supremely valuable in his great endeavour. To the practical worker limiting himself by patent forces and actual possibilities the idealist who made his work possible seems an idle dreamer

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or a troublesome fanatic; to the idealist the practical man who realises the first steps towards his idea seems a coarse spoiler of the divine work and almost its enemy: for by attaching too much importance to what is immediately possible he removes the greater possibilities which he does not see, seems to prevent and often does prevent a larger and nobler realisation. It is the gulf between a Cavour and a Mazzini, between the prophet of an ideal and the statesman of a realisable idea. The latter seems always to be justified by the event, but the former has a deeper justification in the shortcomings of the event. The successes of the executive man hiding away the ideal under the accomplished fact are often the tragedies of the human spirit and are responsible for the great reactions and disappointments it undergoes when it finds how poor and soulless is the accomplished fact compared with the glory of the vision and the ardour of the effort.

It cannot be doubted which of these two opposites and complementaries is the most essential to success. Not only is the upheaval and fertilising of the general consciousness by the thinker and the idealist essential to the practical realisation of great changes, but in the realisation itself the idealist who will not compromise is an indispensable element. Show me a movement without a force of uncompromising idealism working somewhere in its sum of energies and you have shown me a movement which is doomed to failure and abortion or to petty and inconsiderable results. The age or the country which is entirely composed of reasonable, statesmanlike workers ever ready for concession and compromise is a country which will never be great until it has added to itself what is lacking to it and bathed itself in pure and divine fountains and an age which will accomplish nothing of supreme importance for the progress of humanity. There is a difference however between the fanatic of an idea and the true idealist: the former is simply the materialistic, executive man possessed by the idea of another, not himself the possessor of it; he is haunted in his will and driven by the force of the idea, not really illumined by its light. He does harm as well as good and his chief use is to prevent the

man of compromise from pausing at a paltry or abortive result; but his excesses also bring about great reactions. Incapable of taking his stand on the ideal itself, he puts all his emphasis on particular means and forms and overstrains the springs of action till they become dulled and incapable of responding to farther excitation. But the true idealist is not the servant of the letter or the form; it is the idea which he loves and the spirit behind the idea which he serves.

Man approaches nearer his perfection when he combines in himself the idealist and the pragmatist, the originative soul and the executive power. Great executive personalities have usually been men of a considerable idealism. Some indeed have served a purpose rather than an ideal; even in the idea that guided or moved them they have leaned to its executive rather than its inspiring and originative aspect; they have sought their driving force in the interest, passion and emotion attached to it rather than in the idea itself. Others have served consciously a great single thought or moral aim which they have laboured to execute in their lives. But the greatest men of action who were endowed by Nature with the most extraordinary force of accomplishment, have owed it to the combination in them of active power with an immense drift of originative thought devoted to practical realisation. They have been great executive thinkers, great practical dreamers. Such were Napoleon and Alexander. Napoleon with his violent prejudice against ideologues and dreamers was himself a colossal dreamer, an incurable if unconscious ideologist; his teeming brain was the cause of his gigantic force and accomplishment. The immense if shapeless ideas of Alexander threw themselves into the form of conquests, cities, cultures; they broke down the barriers of Greek and Asiatic prejudice and narrow self-imprisonment and created an age of civilisation and soul-interchange.

But these great personalities do not contain in themselves the combination which humanity most needs; not the man of action driven by ideas, the pragmatist stirred by a half-conscious exaltation from the idealistic, almost the mystic side of his nature, but the seer who is able to execute his vision is the higher term



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of human power and knowledge. The one takes his stand in the Prakriti, the executive Force, and is therefore rather driven than leads himself even when he most successfully leads others; the other takes his stand in the Purusha, the Knower who controls executive force, and he possesses the power that he uses. He draws nearer to the type of the divine Seer-Will that has created and governs the universe. But such a combination is rare and difficult; for in order to grasp the Ideal the human soul has to draw back so far from the limitations, pettinesses, denials of the world of phenomenal fact that the temperament and mentality become inapt for executive action upon the concrete phenomena of life and matter. The mastery of the fact is usually possible to the idealist mind only when its idealism is of no great depth or power and can therefore accommodate itself more easily to the actual life-environment.

Until this difficulty is overcome and the Seer-Will becomes more common in man and more the master of life, the ideal works at a disadvantage, by a silent pressure upon the reluctant world, by occasional attacks and sudden upheavals; a little is accomplished in a long time or by a great and sudden effort, a little that is poor enough, coarse enough, material enough compared with the thing seen and attempted, but which still makes a farther advance possible though often after a period of quiescence and reaction. And times there are, ages of stupendous effort and initiative when the gods seem no longer satisfied with this tardy and fragmentary working, when the ideal breaks constantly through the dull walls of the material practical life, incalculable forces clash in its field, innumerable ideas meet and wrestle in the arena of the world and through the constant storm and flash, agitation of force and agitation of light the possibility of the victoriously fulfilled ideal, the hope of the Messiah, the expectation of the Avatar takes possession of the hearts and thoughts of men. Such an age seems now to be coming upon the world. But whether that hope and expectation and possibility are to come to anything depends upon whether men prepare their souls for the advent and rise in the effort of their faith, life and thought to the height and purity of a clearly-grasped ideal.

The Messiah or Avatar is nothing but this, the divine Seer-Will descending upon the human consciousness to reveal to it the divine meaning behind our half-blind action and to give along with the vision the exalted will that is faithful and performs and the ideal force that executes according to the vision.

# Yoga and Skill in Works

Yoga is skill in works.

*Gita*

**Y**OGA, says the Gita, is skill in works, and by this phrase the ancient Scripture meant that the transformation of mind and being to which it gave the name of Yoga brought with it a perfect inner state and faculty out of which the right principle of action and the right spiritual and divine result of works emerged naturally like a tree out of its seed. Certainly, it did not mean that the clever general or politician or lawyer or shoemaker deserves the name of a Yogin; it did not mean that any kind of skill in works was Yoga, but by Yoga it signified a spiritual condition of universal equality and God-union and by the skill of the Yogic worker it intended a perfect adaptation of the soul and its instruments to the rhythm of the divine and universal Spirit in a nature liberated from the shackles of egoism and the limitations of the sense-mind.

Essentially, Yoga is a generic name for the processes and the result of processes by which we transcend or shred off our present modes of being and rise to a new, a higher, a wider mode of consciousness which is not that of the ordinary animal and intellectual man. Yoga is the exchange of an egoistic for a universal or cosmic consciousness lifted towards or informed by the supra-cosmic, transcendent Unnameable who is the source and support of all things. Yoga is the passage of the human thinking animal towards the God-consciousness from which he has descended. In that ascent we find many levels and stages, plateau after plateau of the hill whose summit touches the Truth of things; but at every stage the saying of the Gita applies in an ever higher degree. Even a little of this new law and inner order delivers the soul out of the great peril by which it had been

overtaken in its worldward descent, the peril of the ignorance by which the unilluminated intellect, even when it is keenest or sagest, must ever be bound and limited, of the sorrow and sin from which the unpurified heart, even when it wears the richest purple of aspiration and feeling, must ever suffer soil and wound and poverty, and of the vanity of its works to which the undivinisèd will of man, even when it is most vehement and powerful or Olympian and victorious, must eternally be subject. It is the utility of Yoga that it opens to us a gate of escape out of the vicious circle of our ordinary human existence.

The idea of works, in the thought of the Gita, is the widest possible. All action of Nature in man is included, whether it be internal or external, operate in the mind or use the body, seem great or seem little. From the toil of the hero to the toil of the cobbler, from the labour of the sage to the simple physical act of eating, all is included. The seeking of the Self by thought, the adoration of the Highest by the emotions of the heart, the gathering of means and material and capacity and the use of them for the service of God and man stand here on an equal footing. Buddha sitting under the Bo-tree and conquering the illumination, the ascetic silent and motionless in his cave, Shankara storming through India, debating with all men and preaching most actively the gospel of inaction are all from this point of view doing great and forceful work. But while the outward action may be the same, there is a great internal difference between the working of the ordinary man and the working of the Yogin, — a difference in the state of the being, a difference in the power and the faculty, a difference in the will and temperament.

What we do, arises out of what we are. The existent is conscious of what he is; that consciousness formulates itself as knowledge and power; works are the result of this twofold force of being in action. Mind, life and body can only operate out of that which is contained in the being of which they are forces. This is what we mean when we say that all things act according to their nature. The divine Existence is pure and unlimited being in possession of all itself, it is *sat*; whatever it puts forth in

its limitless purity of self-awareness is truth of itself, *satya*; the divine knowledge is knowledge of the Truth, the divine Will is power of the Truth, the divine workings are words and ideas of the Truth realising themselves in manifold forms and through many stages and in infinite relations. But God is not limited or bound by any particular working or any moment of time or any field of space or any law of relation, because He is universal and infinite. Nor is He limited by the universe; for His infinity is not cosmic, but supracosmic.

But the individualised being is or acts as if he were so bound and limited, because he treats the particular working of existence that he is and the particular moment of time and field of space in which it is actually operating and the particular conditions which reign in the working and in the moment and in the field as if they were self-existent realities and the binding truth of things. Himself, his knowledge, his force and will, his relations with the world and his fellows, his need in it and his desire from them he treats as the sufficient truth and reality, the point of departure of all his works, the central fact and law of his universe. And from this egoistic error arises an all-vitiating falsehood. For the particular, the individual can have no self-existence, no truth, no valid force except in so far as it reflects rightly and relates and conforms itself justly to the universal, to the all-being, the all-knowledge, the all-will and follows its true drift towards self-realisation and vast delight in itself. Therefore the salvation of the individual lies in his universalising himself; and this is the lesson which life tries always to teach him but the obstinate ego is always unwilling to learn; for the universal is not any group or extended ego, not the family, community, nation or even all mankind, but an infinite far surpassing all these littlenesses.

Nor is the universalising of himself sufficient for liberation, although certainly it will make him practically more free and in his being nearer to the true freedom. To put himself in tune with the universal is a step, but beyond the universal and directing and determining it is the supracosmic Infinity; for the universe also has no self-existence, truth or validity except as it expresses the divine Being, Knowledge, Will, Power, Delight of Him who

surpasses all universe, so much that it can be said figuratively that with a petty fragment of His being and a single ray of His consciousness He has created all these worlds. Therefore the universalised mind must look up from its cosmic consciousness to the Supernal and derive from that all its sense of being and movement of works. This is the fundamental truth from which the Yogic consciousness starts; it helps the individual to universalise himself and then to transcend the cosmic formula. And this transformation acts not only on his status of being but on his active consciousness in works.

The Gita tells us that equality of soul and mind is Yoga and that this equality is the foundation of the Brahman-state, that high infinite consciousness to which the Yogin aspires. Now equality of mind means universality; for without universality of soul there may be a state of indifference or an impartial self-control or a well-governed equality of temperament, but these are not the thing that is meant. The equality spoken of is not indifference or impartiality or equability, but a fundamental oneness of attitude to all persons and all things and happenings because of the perception of all as the One. Such equality, it is erroneously thought, is incompatible with action. By no means; this is the error of the animal and the intellectual man who thinks that action is solely possible when dictated by his hopes, fears and passions or by the self-willed preferences of the emotion and the intellect justifying themselves by the illusions of the reason. That might be the fact if the individual were the real actor and not merely an instrument or secondary agent; but we know well enough, for Science and Philosophy assure us of the same truth, that the universal is the Force which acts through the simulacrum of our individuality. The individual mind, pretending to choose for itself with a sublime ignorance and disregard of the universal, is obviously working on the basis of a falsehood and by means of an error and not in the knowledge and the will of the Truth. It cannot have any real skill in works; for to start from a falsehood or half-truth and work by means of blunders and arrive at another falsehood or half-truth which we have immediately to change, and all the while to weep and struggle

and suffer and have no sure resting-place, cannot surely be called skill in works. But the universal is equal in all and therefore its determinations are not self-willed preferences but are guided by the truth of the divine will and knowledge which is unlimited and not subject to incapacity or error.

Therefore that state of the being by which the Yogin differs from the ordinary man, is that by which he rises from the foundation of a perfect equality to the consciousness of the one existence in all and embracing all and lives in that existence and not in the walls of his body or personal temperament or limited mind. Mind and life and body he sees as small enough things which happen and change and develop in his being. Nay, the whole universe is seen by him as happening within himself, not in his small ego or mind, but within this vast and infinite self with which he is now constantly identified. All action in the universe he sees as arising in this being, out of the divine Existence and under the stress of the divine Truth, Knowledge, Will and Power. He begins to participate consciously in its working and to see all things in the light of that divine truth and governance; and even when his own actions move on certain lines rather than others, he is not bound by them or shut to the truth of all the rest by his own passions and preferences, gropings and seekings and revolts. It is evident that such an increasing wideness of vision must mean an increasing knowledge. And if it be true that knowledge is power, it must mean also an increasing force for works. Certainly, it would not be so, if the Yogin continued to act by the light of his individual reason and imagination and will; for the intellect and all that depends on it can only work by virtue of rigid limitations and exclusive determinations. Accordingly, the continued activity of the unilluminated intellect and its servants conflicts with the new state of consciousness and knowledge which arises out of this larger existence, and so long as they remain active, it cannot be perfect or assured; for the consciousness is being continually pulled down to the lower field of ego-habit by the claim of their narrow workings. But the Yogin ceases, progressively, to act by the choice of his intellectual or emotional nature. Another light dawns, another power and

presence intervenes, other faculties awake in the place of the old human-animal combination.

As the state of being changes, the will and temperament must necessarily be modified. Even from an early stage the Yogin begins to subordinate his personal will or it becomes naturally subordinate to the sense of the supreme Will which is attracting him upward. Ignorantly, imperfectly, blunderingly it moves at first, with many recoils and relapses into personal living and personal action, but in time it becomes more in tune with its Source and eventually the personal will merges upward and all ways into the universal and infinite and obeys implicitly the transcendent. Nor does this change and ascension and expanding mean any annihilation of the will-power working in the individual, as the intellectual man might imagine; but rather it increases it to an immense forcefulness while giving it an infinite calm and an eternal patience. The temperament also is delivered from all leash of straining and desire, from all urge of passion and pain of wilful self-delusion. Desire, even the best, turns always to limitation and obscuration, to some eager exclusive choice and pressure, to some insistent exclusion of what should not be excluded and impatient revolt against the divine denials and withholdings. It generates anger and grief and passion and obstinacy, and these bring about the soul's loss of its divine memory or steadfast consciousness of itself and its self-knowledge and its equal vision of the truth of things. Therefore desire and its brood are incompatible with skill in works and their persistence is the sign of an imperfect Yoga.

Not only must the will and fundamental knowledge-view of things change, but a new combination of faculties take the place of the old. For if the intellect is not to do all our mental work for us or to work at all in its unillumined state and if the will in the form of desires, wishes, intellectual preferences is not to determine and enforce our action, then it is clear that other powers of knowledge and will must awaken and either replace the intellect and the mental preference or illumine and guide the one and transform and dominate the other. Otherwise either the action may be nil or else its impulses mechanical and chaotic,



even if the static being is blissfully enlarged; for they will well up indeed out of the universal and not the personal, but out of the universal in its lower formula which permits the erratic action of the heart and mind, while the old personal will and reason will not be there to impose some light and order on their ill-connected impulsions. Such faculties and new combination of faculties can and do emerge and they are illuminations and powers that are in direct touch and harmony with the light and power of the Truth; therefore in proportion as they manifest and take hold of their functions, they must increase the force, subtlety and perfection of the Yogin's skill in works.

But the greatest skill in works of Yoga is that which to the animal man seems its greatest ineptitude. For all this difficult attainment, the latter will say, may lead to anything you please, but we have to lose our personal life, abandon our personal objects, annul our personal will and pleasure and without these life cannot be worth living. Now the object of all skill in works must be evidently to secure the best welfare either of ourselves or of others or of all. The ordinary man calls it welfare to secure momentarily some transient object, to wade for it through a sea of grief and suffering and painful labour and to fall from it again still deeper into the same distressful element in search of a new transient object. The greatest cunning of Yoga is to have detected this cheat of the mind and its desires and dualities and to have found the way to an abiding peace, a universal delight and an all-embracing satisfaction, which can not only be enjoyed for oneself but communicated to others. That too arises out of the change of our being; for the pure truth of existence carries also in it the unalloyed delight of existence, they are inseparable in the status of the infinite. To use the figures of the Vedic seers, by Yoga Varuna is born in us, a vast sky of spiritual living, the divine in his wide existence and infinite truth; into that wideness Mitra rises up, Lord of Light and Love who takes all our activities of thought and feeling and will, links them into a divine harmony, charioteers our movement and dictates our works; called by this wideness and this harmony Aryaman appears in us, the Divine in its illumined power, uplifted force of being and all-judging

effective will; and by the three comes the indwelling Bhaga, the Divine in its pure bliss and all-seizing joy who dispels the evil dream of our jarring and divided existence and possesses all things in the light and glory of Aryaman's power, Mitra's love and light, Varuna's unity. This divine Birth shall be the son of our works; and than creating this what greater skill can there be or what more practical and sovereign cunning?

## Conservation and Progress

**M**ANKIND thinks naturally in extremes or else reconciles by a patchwork and compromise. Whether he makes a fetish of moderation or surrenders himself to the enthusiasm of the single idea, the human being misses always truth of vision and the right pitch of action because instead of seeing, feeling and becoming in obedience to his nature like other animate existences he tries always to measure things by a standard he has set up in his intelligence. But it is the character of his intelligence that it finds it an easy task to distinguish and separate but is clumsy in combining. When it combines, it tends to artificialise and falsify. It feels at ease in pursuing a single idea to its logical consequences and in viewing things from a single standpoint; but to harmonise different ideas in action and to view the facts from different standpoints is contrary to its native impulse; therefore it does that badly, with an ill grace and without mastery. Oftenest it makes an incongruous patchwork rather than a harmony. The human mind is strong and swift in analysis; it synthesises with labour and imperfectly and does not feel at home in its syntheses. It divides, opposes and, placed between the oppositions it creates, becomes an eager partisan of one side or another; but to think wisely and impartially and with a certain totality is irksome and disgusting to the normal human being.

All human action as all human thought suffers from these disabilities. For it is seduced by a trenchant idea which it follows without proper attention to collateral issues, to necessary companion ideas, to the contrary forces in operation, or else it regards these merely as enemies, brands them as pure falsehood and evil and strives with more or less violence to crush them out of existence. Then it sees other ideas which it attempts to realise in turn, either adding them to its past notions and possessions

or else rejecting these entirely for the new light; it makes a fresh war and a new clearance and denies its past work in the interest of a future attainment. But it has also its repentances, its returns, its recalls and re-enthronings of banished gods and even of lifeless ghosts and phantoms to which it gives a temporary and false appearance of life. And on the way it has continually its doubts, scruples, hesitations, its portentous assumptions of a sage moderation and a gradual and cautious advance. But human moderation is usually a wiseacre and a botcher; it sews a patch of new velvet on old fustian or of new fustian on old velvet and admires its deplorable handiwork. And its cautious advance means an accumulation of shams, fictions and dead conventions till the burden of falsehood becomes too great for life to bear and a violent revolution is necessary to deliver the soul of humanity out of the immobilising cerements of the past. Such is the type of our progress; it is the advance of an ignorant and purblind but always light-attracted spirit, a being half-animal, half-god, stumbling forward through the bewildering jungle of its own errors.

This characteristic of human mentality shows itself in the opposition we create between conservation and progress. Nothing in the universe can really stand still because everything there is a mould of Time and the very essence of Time is change by a movement forward. It is true that the world's movement is not in a straight line; there are cycles, there are spirals; but still it circles, not round the same point always, but round an ever advancing centre, and therefore it never returns exactly upon its old path and never goes really backward. As for standing still, it is an impossibility, a delusion, a fiction. Only the spirit is stable; the soul and body of things are in eternal motion. And in this motion there are the three determining powers of the past, future and present, — the present a horizontal and constantly shifting line without breadth between a vast realised infinity that both holds back and impels and a vast unrealised infinity that both repels and attracts.

The past is both a drag and a force for progress. It is all that has created the present and a great part of the force that is creating the future. For the past is not dead; its forms are

gone and had to go, otherwise the present would not have come into being: but its soul, its power, its essence lives veiled in the present and ever-accumulating, growing, deepening will live on in the future. Every human being holds in and behind him all the past of his own race, of humanity and of himself; these three things determine his starting-point and pursue him through his life's progress. It is in the force of this past, in the strength which its huge conservations give to him that he confronts the unilluminated abysses of the future and plunges forward into the depths of its unrealised infinities. But also it is a drag, partly because man afraid of the unknown clings to the old forms of which he is sure, the old foundations which feel so safe under his feet, the old props round which so many of his attachments and associations cast their tenacious tendrils, but also partly because the forces of the past keep their careful hold on him so as to restrain him in his uncertain course and prevent the progress from becoming a precipitation.

The future repels us even while it irresistibly attracts. The repulsion lies partly in our own natural recoil from the unknown, because every step into this unknown is a wager between life and death; every decision we make may mean either the destruction or the greater fulfilment of what we now are, of the name and form to which we are attached. But also it lies in the future itself; for there, governing that future, there are not only powers which call us to fulfil them and attract us with an irresistible force but other powers which have to be conquered and do not desire to yield themselves. The future is a sphinx with two minds, an energy which offers itself and denies, gives itself and resists, seeks to enthrone us and seeks to slay. But the conquest has to be attempted, the wager has to be accepted. We have to face the future's offer of death as well as its offer of life, and it need not alarm us, for it is by constant death to our old names and forms that we shall live most vitally in greater and newer forms and names. Go on we must; for if we do not, Time itself will force us forward in spite of our fancied immobility. And this is the most pitiable and dangerous movement of all. For what can be more pitiable than to be borne helplessly forward

clinging to the old that disintegrates in spite of our efforts and shrieking frantically to the dead ghosts and dissolving fragments of the past to save us alive? And what can be more dangerous than to impose immobility on that which is in its nature mobile? This means an increasing and horrible rottenness; it means an attempt to persist on as a putrid and stinking corpse instead of a living and self-renewing energetic creature. The greatest spirits are therefore those who have no fear of the future, who accept its challenge and its wager; they have that sublime trust in the God or Power that guides the world, that high audacity of the human soul to wrestle with the infinite and realise the impossible, that wise and warrior confidence in its ultimate destiny which mark the Avatars and prophets and great innovators and renovators.

If we consider carefully we shall see that the past is indeed a huge force of conservation, but of conservation that is not immobile, but on the contrary offers itself as material for change and new realisation; that the present is the constant change and new actual realisation which the past desires and compels; and that the future is that force of new realisation not yet actual towards which the past was moving and for the sake of which it lived. Then we perceive that there is no real opposition between these three; we see that they are parts of a single movement, a sort of Trinity of Vishnu-Brahma-Maheshwara fulfilling by an inseparable action the one Deity. Yet the human mind in its mania of division and opposition seeks to set them at strife and ranges humanity into various camps, the partisans of the past, the partisans of the present, the partisans of the future, the partisans of all sorts of compromises between the three forces. Nature makes good use of the struggle between these partisans and her method is necessary in our present state of passionate ignorance and egoistic obstinacy; but none the less is it from the point of view of a higher knowledge a pitifully ignorant struggle.

The partisans of the future call themselves the party of progress, the children of light and denounce the past as ignorant, evil, a mass of errors and abuses; their view alone has the monopoly of the light, the truth, the good — a light, good and truth which will equally be denounced as error and evil by

succeeding generations. The partisans of the present look with horror upon all progress as an impious and abominable plunge into error and evil and degeneration and ruin; for them the present is the culmination of humanity, — as previous “present” times were for all the preceding generations and as the future which they abhor will be for these unprogressive souls if they should then reincarnate; they will then defend it with the same passion and asperity against another future as they now attack it in the interests of the present. The partisans of the past are of two kinds. The first admit the defects of the present but support it in so far as it still cherishes the principles of the high, perfect, faultless, adorable past, that golden age of the race or community, and because even if somewhat degenerate, its forms are a bulwark against the impiety of progress; if they admit any change, it is in the direction of the past that they seek it. A second kind condemn the present root and branch as degenerate, hateful, horrible, vicious, accursed; they erect a past form as the hope of a humanity returning to the wisdom of its forefathers. And to such quarrels of children the intellectuals and the leaders of thought and faith lend the power of the specious or moving word and the striking idea and the emotional fervour or religious ardour which they conceive to be the very voice and light and force of Truth itself in its utter self-revelation.

The true thinker can dispense with the *éclat* which attaches to the leader of partisans. He will strive to see this great divine movement as a whole, to know in its large lines the divine intention and goal in it without seeking to fix arbitrarily its details; he will strive to understand the greatness and profound meaning of the past without attaching himself to its forms, for he knows that forms must change and only the formless endures and that the past can never be repeated, but only its essence preserved, its power, its soul of good and its massed impulse towards a greater self-fulfilment; he will accept the actual realisations of the present as a stage and nothing more, keenly appreciating its defects, self-satisfied errors, presumptuous pretensions because these are the chief enemies of progress, but not ignoring the truth and good that it has gained; and he will sound the future

to understand what the Divine in it is seeking to realise, not only at the present moment, not only in the next generation, but beyond, and for that he will speak, strive, if need be battle, since battle is the method still used by Nature in humanity, even while all the while he knows that there is more yet beyond beside which, when it comes to light, the truth he has seized will seem erroneous and limited. Therefore he will act without presumption and egoism, knowing that his own errors and those which he combats are alike necessary forces in that labour and movement of human life towards the growing Truth and Good by which there increases shadowily the figure of a far-off divine Ideal.



## The Conservative Mind and Eastern Progress

THE ARRIVAL of a new radical idea in the minds of men is the sign of a great coming change in human life and society; it may be combated, the reaction of the old idea may triumph for a time, but the struggle never leaves either the thoughts and sentiments or the habits and institutions of the society as they were when it commenced. Whether it knows it or not, it has gone forward and the change is irretrievable. Either new forms replace the old institutions or the old while preserving the aspect of continuity have profoundly changed within, or else these have secured for themselves a period of greater rigidity, increasing corruption, progressive deterioration of spirit and waning of real force which only assures them in the future a more complete catastrophe and absolute disappearance. The past can arrive at the most at a partial survival or an euthanasia, provided it knows how to compromise liberally with the future.

The conservative mind is unwilling to recognise this law though it is observable throughout human history and we can easily cull examples with full hands from all ages and all climes; and it is protected in its refusal to see by the comparative rarity of rapid revolutions and great cataclysmal changes; it is blinded by the disguise which Nature so often throws over her processes of mutation. If we look casually at European history in this light the attention is only seized by a few conspicuous landmarks, the evolution and end of Athenian democracy, the transition from the Roman republic to the empire, the emergence of feudal Europe out of the ruins of Rome, the Christianisation of Europe, the Reformation and Renaissance together preparing a new society, the French Revolution, the present rapid movement towards a socialistic State and the replacing of competition by organised cooperation. Because our view of European history is

chiefly political, we do not see the constant mutation of society and of thought in the same relief; but we can recognise two great cycles of change, one of the ancient races leading from the primitive ages to the cultured society of the Graeco-Roman world, the other from the semi-barbarism of feudal Christendom to the intellectual, materialistic and civilised society of modern times.

In the East, on the contrary, the great revolutions have been spiritual and cultural; the political and social changes, although they have been real and striking, if less profound than in Europe, fall into the shade and are apt to be overlooked; besides, this unobtrusiveness is increased by their want of relief, the slow subtlety of their process and the instinctive persistence and reverence with which old names and formulas have been preserved while the thing itself was profoundly modified until its original sense remained only as a pious fiction. Thus Japan kept its sacrosanct Mikado as a cover for the change to an aristocratic and feudal government and has again brought him forward in modern times to cover and facilitate without too serious a shock the transition from a mediaeval form of society into the full flood of modernism. In India the continued fiction of the ancient four-fold order of society based on spiritual idealism, social type, ethical discipline and economic function is still used to cover and justify the quite different, complex and chaotic order of caste which, while it still preserves some confused fragments of the old motives, is really founded upon birth, privilege, local custom and religious formalism. The evolution from one type of society to another so opposed to it in its psychological motives and real institutions without any apparent change of formula is one of the most curious phenomena in the social history of mankind and still awaits intelligent study.

Our minds are apt to seize things in the rough and to appreciate only what stands out in bold external relief; we miss the law of Nature's subtleties and disguises. We can see and fathom to some extent the motives, necessities, process of great revolutions and marked changes and we can consider and put in their right place the brief reactions which only modified without actually

preventing the overt realisation of new ideas. We can see for instance that the Sullan restoration of Roman oligarchy, the Stuart restoration in England or the brief return of monarchy in France with the Bourbons were no real restorations, but a momentary damming of the tide attended with insufficient concessions and forced developments which determined, not a return to the past, but the form and pace of the inevitable revolution. It is more difficult but still possible to appreciate the working of an idea against all obstacles through many centuries; we can comprehend now, for instance, that we must seek the beginnings of the French Revolution, not in Rousseau or Mirabeau or the blundering of Louis XVI, but in movements which date back to the Capet and the Valois, while the precise fact which prepared its tremendous outbreak and victory and determined its form was the defeat of the Calvinistic reformation in France and the absolute triumph of the monarchical system over the nobility and the bourgeoisie in the reigns of Louis XIII and Louis XIV. That double victory determined the destruction of the monarchy in France, the downfall of the Church and, by the failure of the nobles to lead faithfully the liberal cause whether in religion or politics, the disappearance of aristocracy.

But Nature has still more subtle and disguised movements in her dealings with men by which she leads them to change without their knowing that they have changed. It is because she has employed chiefly this method in the vast masses of the East that the conservative habit of mind is so much stronger there than in the West. It is able to nourish the illusion that it has not changed, that it is immovably faithful to the ideas of remote forefathers, to their religion, their traditions, their institutions, their social ideals, that it has preserved either a divine or an animal immobility both in thought and in the routine of life and has been free from the human law of mutation by which man and his social organisations must either progress or degenerate but can in no case maintain themselves unchanged against the attack of Time. Buddhism has come and gone and the Hindu still professes to belong to the Vedic religion held and practised by his Aryan forefathers; he calls his creed the Aryan dharma,

the eternal religion. It is only when we look close that we see the magnitude of the illusion. Buddha has gone out of India indeed, but Buddhism remains; it has stamped its giant impress on the spirit of the national religion, leaving the forms to be determined by the Tantricism with which itself had made alliance and some sort of fusion in its middle growth; what it destroyed no man has been able to restore, what it left no man has been able to destroy. As a matter of fact, the double cycle which India has described from the early Vedic times to India of Buddha and the philosophers and again from Buddha to the time of the European irruption was in its own way as vast in change religious, social, cultural, even political and administrative as the double cycle of Europe; but because it preserved old names for new things, old formulas for new methods and old coverings for new institutions and because the change was always marked in the internal but quiet and unobtrusive in the external, we have been able to create and preserve the fiction of the unchanging East. There has also been this result that while the European conservative has learned the law of change in human society, knows that he must move and quarrels with the progressist only over the right pace and the exact direction, the Eastern or rather the Indian conservative still imagines that stability may be the true law of mortal being, practises a sort of Yogic *āsana* on the flood of Time and because he does not move himself, thinks — for he keeps his eyes shut and is not in the habit of watching the banks — that he can prevent the stream also from moving on.

This conservative principle has its advantages even as rapid progress has its vices and its perils. It helps towards the preservation of a fundamental continuity which makes for the longevity of civilisations and the persistence of what was valuable in humanity's past. So, in India, if religion has changed immensely its form and temperament, the religious spirit has been really eternal, the principle of spiritual discipline is the same as in the earliest times, the fundamental spiritual truths have been preserved and even enriched in their contents and the very forms can all be traced back through their mutations to the seed of the Veda. On the other hand this habit of mind leads to the

accumulation of a great mass of accretions which were once valuable but have lost their virtue and to the heaping up of dead forms and shibboleths which no longer correspond to any vital truth nor have any understood and helpful significance. All this putrid waste of the past is held to be too sacred to be touched by any profane hand and yet it chokes up the streams of the national life or corrupts its waters. And if no successful process of purification takes place, a state of general ill-health in the social body supervenes in which the principle of conservation becomes the cause of dissolution.

The present era of the world is a stage of immense transformations. Not one but many radical ideas are at work in the mind of humanity and agitate its life with a vehement seeking and effort at change; and although the centre of the agitation is in progressive Europe, yet the East is being rapidly drawn into this churning of the sea of thought and this breaking up of old ideas and old institutions. No nation or community can any longer remain psychologically cloistered and apart in the unity of the modern world. It may even be said that the future of humanity depends most upon the answer that will be given to the modern riddle of the Sphinx by the East and especially by India, the hoary guardian of the Asiatic idea and its profound spiritual secrets. For the most vital issue of the age is whether the future progress of humanity is to be governed by the modern economic and materialistic mind of the West or by a nobler pragmatism guided, uplifted and enlightened by spiritual culture and knowledge. The West never really succeeded in spiritualising itself and latterly it has been habituated almost exclusively to an action in the external governed by political and economic ideals and necessities; in spite of the reawakening of the religious mind and the growth of a widespread but not yet profound or luminous spiritual and psychical curiosity and seeking, it has to act solely in the things of this world and to solve its problems by mechanical methods and as the thinking political and economic animal, simply because it knows no other standpoint and is accustomed to no other method. On the other hand the East, though it has allowed its spirituality

to slumber too much in dead forms, has always been open to profound awakenings and preserves its spiritual capacity intact, even when it is actually inert and uncreative. Therefore the hope of the world lies in the re-arousing in the East of the old spiritual practicality and large and profound vision and power of organisation under the insistent contact of the West and in the flooding out of the light of Asia on the Occident, no longer in forms that are now static, effete, unadaptive, but in new forms stirred, dynamic and effective.

India, the heart of the Orient, has to change as the whole West and the whole East are changing, and it cannot avoid changing in the sense of the problems forced upon it by Europe. The new Orient must necessarily be the result either of some balance and fusion or of some ardent struggle between progressive and conservative ideals and tendencies. If therefore the conservative mind in this country opens itself sufficiently to the necessity of transformation, the resulting culture born of a resurgent India may well bring about a profound modification in the future civilisation of the world. But if it remains shut up in dead fictions, or tries to meet the new needs with the mind of the schoolman and the sophist dealing with words and ideas in the air rather than actual fact and truth and potentiality, or struggles merely to avoid all but a scanty minimum of change, then, since the new ideas cannot fail to realise themselves, the future India will be formed in the crude mould of the Westernised social and political reformer whose mind, barren of original thought and unenlightened by vital experience, can do nothing but reproduce the forms and ideas of Europe and will turn us all into halting apes of the West. Or else, and that perhaps is the best thing that can happen, a new spiritual awakening must arise from the depths of this vast life that shall this time more successfully include in its scope the great problems of earthly life as well as those of the soul and its transmundane destinies, an awakening that shall ally itself closely with the renascent spiritual seeking of the West and with its yearning for the perfection of the human race. This third and as yet unknown quantity is indeed the force needed throughout the East. For at present we have only two

extremes of a conservative immobility and incompetence imprisoned in the shell of past conventions and a progressive force hardly less blind and ineffectual because secondhand and merely imitative of nineteenth-century Europe, with a vague floating mass of uncertainty between. The result is a continual fiasco and inability to evolve anything large, powerful, sure and vital, a drifting in the stream of circumstance, a constant grasping at details and unessentials and failure to reach the heart of the great problems of life which the age is bringing to our doors. Something is needed which tries to be born; but as yet, in the phrase of the Veda, the Mother holds herself compressed in smallness, keeps the Birth concealed within her being and will not give it forth to the Father. When she becomes great in impulse and conception, then we shall see it born.

## Our Ideal

**W**E BELIEVE in the constant progression of humanity and we hold that that progression is the working out of a Thought in Life which sometimes manifests itself on the surface and sometimes sinks below and works behind the mask of external forces and interests. When there is this lapse below the surface, humanity has its periods of apparent retrogression or tardy evolution, its long hours of darkness or twilight during which the secret Thought behind works out one of its phases by the pressure mainly of economic, political and personal interests ignorant of any deeper aim within. When the Thought returns to the surface, humanity has its periods of light and of rapid efflorescence, its dawns and splendid springtides; and according to the depth, vitality, truth and self-effective energy of the form of Thought that emerges is the importance of the stride forward that it makes during these Hours of the Gods in our terrestrial manifestation.

There is no greater error than to suppose, as the “practical” man is wont to do, that thought is only a fine flower and ornament of life and that political, economic and personal interests are the important and effective motors of human action. We recognise that this is a world of life and action and developing organism; but the life that seeks to guide itself only by vital and material forces is a slow, dark and blundering growth. It is an attempt to approximate man to the method of vegetable and animal existence. The earth is a world of Life and Matter, but man is not a vegetable nor an animal; he is a spiritual and a thinking being who is set here to shape and use the animal mould for higher purposes, by higher motives, with a more divine instrumentation.

Therefore by his very nature he serves the working of a Thought within him even when he is ignorant of it in his surface



self. The practical man who ignores or despises the deeper life of the Idea, is yet serving that which he ignores or despises. Charlemagne hewing a chaotic Europe into shape with his sword was preparing the reign of the feudal and Catholic interpretation of human life with all that that great though obscure period of humanity has meant for the thought and spiritual development of mankind. But it is when the Thought emerges and guides life that man grows towards his full humanity, strides forward on his path and begins to control the development of Nature in his destiny or at least to collaborate as a conscious mind and spirit with That which controls and directs it.

The progress of humanity has therefore been a constant revolution with its rhythm of alternative darkness and light, but both the day and the night have helped to foster that which is evolving. The periods have not been the same for all parts of the globe. In the historic ages of the present cycle of civilisation the movement has been almost entirely centred in the twin continents of Asia and Europe. And there it has been often seen that when Asia was moving through the light, Europe was passing through one of her epochs of obscurity and on the other hand the nights of Asia's repose or stagnation have corresponded with the days of Europe's mental vigour and vital activity.

But the fundamental difference has been that Asia has served predominantly (not exclusively) as a field for man's spiritual experience and progression, Europe has been rather a workshop for his mental and vital activities. As the cycle progressed, the Eastern continent has more and more converted itself into a storehouse of spiritual energy sometimes active and reaching forward to new development, sometimes conservative and quiescent. Three or four times in history a stream of this energy has poured out upon Europe, but each time Europe has rejected wholly or partially the spiritual substance of the afflatus and used it rather as an impulse to fresh intellectual and material activity and progress.

The first attempt was the filtering of Egyptian, Chaldean and Indian wisdom through the thought of the Greek philosophers from Pythagoras to Plato and the Neo-Platonists; the result was

the brilliantly intellectual and unspiritual civilisation of Greece and Rome. But it prepared the way for the second attempt when Buddhism and Vaishnavism filtered through the Semitic temperament entered Europe in the form of Christianity. Christianity came within an ace of spiritualising and even of asceticising the mind of Europe; it was baffled by its own theological deformation in the minds of the Greek fathers of the Church and by the sudden flooding of Europe with a German barbarism whose temperament in its merits no less than in its defects was the very antitype both of the Christian spirit and the Graeco-Roman intellect.

The Islamic invasion of Spain and the southern coast of the Mediterranean — curious as the sole noteworthy example of Asiatic culture using the European method of material and political irruption as opposed to a peaceful invasion by ideas — may be regarded as a third attempt. The result of its meeting with Graecised Christianity was the reawakening of the European mind in feudal and Catholic Europe and the obscure beginnings of modern thought and science.

The fourth and last attempt which is as yet only in its slow initial stage is the quiet entry of Eastern and chiefly of Indian thought into Europe first through the veil of German metaphysics, more latterly by its subtle influence in reawakening the Celtic, Scandinavian and Slavonic idealism, mysticism, religionism, and the direct and open penetration of Buddhism, Theosophy, Vedantism, Bahaism and other Oriental influences in both Europe and America.

On the other hand, there have been two reactions of Europe upon Asia; first, the invasion of Alexander with his aggressive Hellenism which for a time held Western Asia, created echoes and reactions in India and returned through Islamic culture upon mediaeval Europe; secondly, the modern onslaught of commercial, political, scientific Europe upon the moral, artistic and spiritual cultures of the East.

The new features of this mutual interpenetration are, first, that the two attacks have synchronised and, secondly, that they have encountered in each case the extreme exaggeration of their

opposites. Intellectual and materialistic Europe found India, the Asia of Asia, the heart of the world's spiritual life, in the last throes of an enormous experiment, the thought of a whole nation concentrated for centuries upon the pure spiritual existence to the exclusion of all real progress in the practical and mental life of the race. The entering stream of Eastern thought found in Europe the beginning of an era which rejected religion, philosophy and psychology, — religion as an emotional delusion, philosophy, the pure essence of the mind, as a barren thought-weaving, — and resolved to devote the whole intellectual faculty of man to a study of the laws of material Nature and of man's bodily, social, economic and political existence and to build thereon a superior civilisation.

That stupendous effort is over; it has not yet frankly declared its bankruptcy, but it is bankrupt. It is sinking in a cataclysm as gigantic and as unnatural as the attempt which gave it birth. On the other hand, the exaggerated spirituality of the Indian effort has also registered a bankruptcy; we have seen how high individuals can rise by it, but we have seen also how low a race can fall which in its eagerness to seek after God ignores His intention in humanity. Both the European and the Indian attempt were admirable, the Indian by its absolute spiritual sincerity, the European by its severe intellectual honesty and ardour for the truth; both have accomplished miracles; but in the end God and Nature have been too strong for the Titanism of the human spirit and for the Titanism of the human intellect.

The salvation of the human race lies in a more sane and integral development of the possibilities of mankind in the individual and in the community. The safety of Europe has to be sought in the recognition of the spiritual aim of human existence, otherwise she will be crushed by the weight of her own unillumined knowledge and soulless organisation. The safety of Asia lies in the recognition of the material mould and mental conditions in which that aim has to be worked out, otherwise she will sink deeper into the slough of despond of a mental and physical incompetence to deal with the facts of life and the shocks of a rapidly changing movement. It is not any exchange

of forms that is required, but an interchange of regenerating impulses and a happy fusion and harmonising.

The synchronism and mutual interpenetration of the two great currents of human effort at such a crisis in the history of the race is full of hope for the future of humanity, but full also of possible dangers. The hope is the emergence of a new and better human life founded on a greater knowledge, a pursuit of the new faculties and possibilities opening out before us and a just view of the problem which the individual, the society, the race have to solve. Mankind has been drawn together by the developments of material science and for good or evil its external future is henceforth one; its different parts no longer develop separately and in independence of each other. There opens out at the same time the possibility that by the development and practice of the science and the life of the soul it may be made one in reality and by an internal unity.

The idea by which the enlightenment of Europe has been governed is the passion for the discovery of the Truth and Law that constitutes existence and governs the process of the world, the attempt to develop the life and potentialities of man, his ideals, institutions, organisations by the knowledge of that Law and Truth and the confidence that along this line lies the road of human progress and perfection.

The idea is absolutely just and we accept it entirely; but its application has been erroneous. For the Law and Truth that has to be discovered is not that of the material world — though this is required, nor even of the mental and physical — though this is indispensable, but the Law and Truth of the Spirit on which all the rest depends. For it is the power of the Self of things that expresses itself in their forms and processes.

The message of the East to the West is a true message, “Only by finding himself can man be saved,” and “what shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul?” The West has heard the message and is seeking out the law and truth of the soul and the evidences of an inner reality greater than the material. The danger is that with her passion for mechanism and her exaggerated intellectuality she may fog

herself in an external and false psychism, such as we see arising in England and America, the homes of the mechanical genius, or in intellectual, unspiritual and therefore erroneous theories of the Absolute, such as have run their course in critical and metaphysical Germany.

The idea by which the illumination of Asia has been governed is the firm knowledge that truth of the Spirit is the sole real truth, the belief that the psychological life of man is an instrument for attaining to the truth of the Spirit and that its laws must be known and practised with that aim paramount, and the attempt to form the external life of man and the institutions of society into a suitable mould for the great endeavour.

This idea, too, is absolutely just and we accept it entirely. But in its application, and in India most, it has deviated into a divorce between the Spirit and its instruments and a disparagement and narrowing of the mental and external life of the race. For it is only on the widest and richest efflorescence of this instrumental life that the fullest and most absolute attainment of the spiritual can be securely based. This knowledge the ancients of the East possessed and practised; it has been dimmed in knowledge and lost in practice by their descendants.

The message the West brings to the East is a true message. Man also is God and it is through his developing manhood that he approaches the godhead; Life also is the Divine, its progressive expansion is the self-expression of the Brahman, and to deny Life is to diminish the Godhead within us. This is the truth that returns to the East from the West translated into the language of the higher truth the East already possesses; and it is an ancient knowledge. The East also is awaking to the message. The danger is that Asia may accept it in the European form, forget for a time her own law and nature and either copy blindly the West or make a disastrous amalgam of that which she has in its most inferior forms and the crudenesses which are invading her.

The problem of thought therefore is to find out the right idea and the right way of harmony; to restate the ancient and eternal spiritual truth of the Self so that it shall re-embrace, permeate, dominate, transfigure the mental and physical life;

to develop the most profound and vital methods of psychological self-discipline and self-development so that the mental and psychical life of man may express the spiritual life through the utmost possible expansion of its own richness, power and complexity; and to seek for the means and motives by which his external life, his society and his institutions may remould themselves progressively in the truth of the spirit and develop towards the utmost possible harmony of individual freedom and social unity.

This is our ideal and our search. Throughout the world there are plenty of movements inspired by the same drift, but there is room for an effort of thought which shall frankly acknowledge the problem in its integral complexity and not be restrained in the flexibility of its search by attachment to any cult, creed or extant system of philosophy.

The effort involves a quest for the Truth that underlies existence and the fundamental Law of its self-expression in the universe — the work of metaphysical philosophy and religious thought; the sounding and harmonising of the psychological methods of discipline by which man purifies and perfects himself — the work of psychology, not as it is understood in Europe, but the deeper practical psychology called in India Yoga; and the application of our ideas to the problems of man's social and collective life.

Philosophy and religious thought based on spiritual experience must be the beginning and the foundation of any such attempt; for they alone go behind appearances and processes to the truth of things. The attempt to get rid of their supremacy must always be vain. Man will always think and generalise and try to penetrate behind the apparent fact, for that is the imperative law of his awakened consciousness; man will always turn his generalisations into a religion, even though it be only a religion of positivism or of material Law. Philosophy is the intellectual search for the fundamental truth of things, religion is the attempt to make the truth dynamic in the soul of man. They are essential to each other; a religion that is not the expression of philosophic truth, degenerates into superstition and

obscurantism, and a philosophy which does not dynamise itself with the religious spirit is a barren light, for it cannot get itself practised. But again neither of these get their supreme value unless raised into the spirit and cast into life.

What then shall be our ideal? Unity for the human race by an inner oneness and not only by an external association of interests; the resurgence of man out of the merely animal and economic life or the merely intellectual and aesthetic into the glories of the spiritual existence; the pouring of the power of the spirit into the physical mould and mental instrument so that man may develop his manhood into that true supermanhood which shall exceed our present state as much as this exceeds the animal state from which science tells us that we have issued. These three are one; for man's unity and man's self-transcendence can come only by living in the Spirit.





# The Superman



## The Superman

THE IDEAL of the Superman has been brought recently into much notice, some not very fruitful discussion and a good deal of obloquy. It is apt to be resented by average humanity because men are told or have a lurking consciousness that here is a claim of the few to ascend to heights of which the many are not capable, to concentrate moral and spiritual privileges and enjoy a domination, powers and immunities hurtful to a diffused dignity and freedom in mankind. So considered, supermanhood is nothing more important than a deification of the rare or solitary ego that has out-topped others in the force of our common human qualities. But this presentation is narrow and a travesty. The gospel of true supermanhood gives us a generous ideal for the progressive human race and should not be turned into an arrogant claim for a class or individuals. It is a call to man to do what no species has yet done or aspired to do in terrestrial history, evolve itself consciously into the next superior type already half foreseen by the continual cyclic development of the world-idea in Nature's fruitful musings. And when we so envisage it, this conception ranks surely as one of the most potent seeds that can be cast by thought into the soil of our human growth.

Nietzsche first cast it, the mystic of Will-worship, the troubled, profound, half-luminous Hellenising Slav with his strange clarities, his violent half-ideas, his rare gleaming intuitions that came marked with the stamp of an absolute truth and sovereignty of light. But Nietzsche was an apostle who never entirely understood his own message. His prophetic style was like that of the Delphic oracles which spoke constantly the word of the Truth but turned it into untruth in the mind of the hearer. Not always indeed; for sometimes he rose beyond his personal temperament and individual mind, his European inheritance

and environment, his revolt against the Christ-idea, his war against current moral values and spoke out the Word as he had heard it, the Truth as he had seen it, bare, luminous, impersonal and therefore flawless and imperishable. But for the most part this message that had come to his inner hearing vibrating out of a distant Infinite like a strain caught from the lyre of far-off Gods, did get, in his effort to appropriate and make it nearer to him, mixed up with a somewhat turbulent surge of collateral ideas that drowned much of the pure original note.

Especially, in his concept of the Superman he never cleared his mind of a preliminary confusion. For if a sort of human godhead is the goal to which the race must advance, the first difficulty is that we have to decide to which of two very different types of divinity the idea in us should owe allegiance. For the deity within may confront us either with the clear, joyous and radiant countenance of the God or the stern convulsed visage of the Titan. Nietzsche hymned the Olympian but presented him with the aspect of the Asura. His hostile preoccupation with the Christ-idea of the crucified God and its consequences was perhaps responsible for this distortion, as much as his subjection to the imperfect ideas of the Greeks. He presents to us sometimes a superman who fiercely and arrogantly repels the burden of simple sorrow and service, not one who arises victorious over mortality and suffering, his ascension vibrant with the triumph-song of a liberated humanity. To lose the link of Nature's moral evolution is a capital fault in the apostle of supermanhood; for only out of the unavoidable line of the evolution can that emerge in the bosom of a humanity long tested, ripened and purified by the fire of egoistic and altruistic suffering.

God and Titan, Deva and Asura, are indeed close kin in their differences; nor could either have been spared in the evolution. Yet do they inhabit opposite poles of a common existence and common nature. The one descends from the light and the infinity, satisfied, to the play; the other ascends from the obscurity and the vagueness, angry, to the struggle. All the acts of the God derive from the universal and tend to the universal. He was born out of a victorious harmony. His qualities join pure and

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gracious hands and link themselves together naturally and with delight as in the pastoral round of Brindavan, divine Krishna dominating and holding together its perfect circles. To evolve in the sense of the God is to grow in intuition, in light, in joy, in love, in happy mastery; to serve by rule and to rule by service; to be able to be bold and swift and even violent without hurt or wickedness and mild and kindly and even self-indulgent without laxity or vice or weakness; to make a bright and happy whole in oneself and, by sympathy, with mankind and all creatures. And in the end it is to evolve a large impersonal personality and to heighten sympathy into constant experience of world-oneness. For such are the Gods, conscious always of their universality and therefore divine.

Certainly, power is included. To be the divine man is to be self-ruler and world-ruler; but in another than the external sense. This is a rule that depends upon a secret sympathy and oneness which knows the law of another's being and of the world's being and helps or, if need be, compels it to realise its own greatest possibilities, but by a divine and essentially an inner compulsion. It is to take all qualities, energies, joys, sorrows, thoughts, knowledge, hopes, aims of the world around us into ourselves and return them enriched and transmuted in a sublime commerce and exploitation. Such an empire asks for no vulgar ostentation or golden trappings. The gods work oftenest veiled by light or by the storm-drift; they do not disdain to live among men even in the garb of the herdsman or the artisan; they do not shrink from the cross and the crown of thorns either in their inner evolution or their outward fortunes. For they know that the ego must be crucified and how shall men consent to this if God and the gods have not shown them the way? To take all that is essential in the human being and uplift it to its most absolute term so that it may become an element of light, joy, power for oneself and others, this is divinity. This, too, should be the drift of supermanhood.

But the Titan will have nothing of all this; it is too great and subtle for his comprehension. His instincts call for a visible, tangible mastery and a sensational domination. How shall he

feel sure of his empire unless he can feel something writhing helpless under his heel, — if in agony, so much the better? What is exploitation to him, unless it diminishes the exploited? To be able to coerce, exact, slay, overtly, irresistibly, — it is this that fills him with the sense of glory and dominion. For he is the son of division and the strong flowering of the Ego. To feel the comparative limitation of others is necessary to him that he may imagine himself immeasurable; for he has not the real, self-existent sense of infinity which no outward circumstance can abrogate. Contrast, division, negation of the wills and lives of others are essential to his self-development and self-assertion. The Titan would unify by devouring, not by harmonising; he must conquer and trample what is not himself either out of existence or into subservience so that his own image may stand out stamped upon all things and dominating all his environment.

In Nature, since it started from division and egoism, the Titan had to come first; he is here in us as the elder god, the first ruler of man's heaven and earth. Then arrives the God and delivers and harmonises. Thus the old legend tells us that the Deva and the Asura laboured together to churn the ocean of life for the supreme draught of immortality, but, once it had been won, Vishnu kept it for the God and defrauded the fiercer and more violent worker. And this seems unjust; for the Asura has the heavier and less grateful portion of the burden. He begins and leads; he goes his way hewing, shaping, planting: the God follows, amends, concludes, reaps. He prepares fiercely and with anguish against a thousand obstacles the force that we shall use: the other enjoys the victory and the delight. And therefore to the great God Shiva the stained and stormy Titan is very dear, — Shiva who took for himself the fierce, dark and bitter poison first churned up from the sea of life and left to others the nectar. But the choice that Shiva made with knowledge and from love, the Titans made from darkness and passion, — desirous really of something very different and deceived by their stormy egoism. Therefore the award of Vishnu stands; to the God shall fall the crown and the immortality and not, unless he divinise himself, to the proud and strenuous Asura.

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For what is supermanhood but a certain divine and harmonious absolute of all that is essential in man? He is made in God's image, but there is this difference between the divine Reality and its human representative that everything which in the one is unlimited, spontaneous, absolute, harmonious, self-possessed becomes in the other limited, relative, laboured, discordant, deformed, possessed by struggle, kept by subservience to one's possessions, lost by the transience and insecurity which come from wrong holding. But in this constant imperfection there is always a craving and an aspiration towards perfection. Man, limited, yearns to the Infinite; relative, is attracted in all things towards their absolute; artificial in Nature, drives towards a higher ease, mastery and naturalness that must for ever be denied to her inconscient forces and half-conscient animals; full of discords, he insists upon harmony; possessed by Nature and to her enslaved, is yet convinced of his mission to possess and master her. What he aspires to, is the sign of what he may be. He has to pass by a sort of transmutation of the earthly metal he now is out of flawed manhood into some higher symbol. For Man is Nature's great term of transition in which she grows conscious of her aim; in him she looks up from the animal with open eyes towards her divine ideal.

But God is complex, not simple; and the temptation of the human intellect is to make a short cut to the divine nature by the exclusive worship of one of its principles. Knowledge, Love whose secret word is Delight, Power and Unity are some of the Names of God. But though they are all divine, yet to follow any of them exclusively is to invite, after the first energy is over, His departure from us and denial; for even unity, exclusively pursued, ceases to be a true oneness. Yet this error we perpetually commit. Is it Love in whose temple we adore? Then we shut its gates upon Power as a child of the world and the devil and bid Knowledge carry elsewhere her lack of sweetness and remoteness from the heart's fervour. We erect an idol of Power and would pass all else through the fire of Moloch before its sombre and formidable image, expelling Love with scorn as a nurse of weaklings and degrading Knowledge to the position of

a squire or even a groom of Force. Or we cultivate Knowledge with a severe aloofness and austerity to find at last the lotus of the heart dulled and fading — happy if its more divine faculties are not already atrophied — and ourselves standing impotent with our science while the thunders of Rudra crash through and devastate the world we have organised so well by our victorious and clear-minded efficiency. Or we run after a vague and mechanical zero we call unity and when we have sterilised our secret roots and dried up the wells of Life within us, discover, unwise unifiers, that we have achieved death and not a greater existence. And all this happens because we will not recognise the complexity of the riddle we are set here to solve. It is a great and divine riddle; but it is no knot of Gordius, nor is its all-wise Author a dead king that he should suffer us to mock his intention and cut through to our will with the fierce impatience of the hasty mortal conqueror.

None of these oppositions is more constant than that of Power and Love: yet neither of these deities can be safely neglected. What can be more divine than Love? But followed exclusively it is impotent to solve the world's discords. The worshipped Avatar of love and the tender saint of saints leave behind them a divine but unfollowed example, a luminous and imperishable but ineffective memory. They have added an element to the potentialities of the heart, but the race cannot utilise it effectively for life because it has not been harmonised with the rest of the qualities that are essential to our fullness. Shall we therefore turn round and give ourselves to Power with its iron hands of action and its hard and clear practical intellect? The men of power may say that they have done a more tangible work for their race than the souls of Love, but it is a vain advantage. For they have not even tried to raise us beyond our imperfect humanity. They have erected a temporary form or given a secular impetus. An empire has been created, an age or a century organised, but the level of humanity has not been raised nearer to the secret of a Caesar or a Napoleon. Love fails because it hastily rejects the material of the world's discords or only tramples them underfoot in an unusual ecstasy; Power because it seeks only to



organise an external arrangement. The world's discords have to be understood, seized, transmuted. Love must call Power and Knowledge into the temple and seat them beside her in a unified equality; Power must bow its neck to the yoke of Light and Love before it can do any real good to the race.

Unity is the secret, a complex, understanding and embracing unity. When the full heart of Love is tranquillised by knowledge into a calm ecstasy and vibrates with strength, when the strong hands of Power labour for the world in a radiant fullness of joy and light, when the luminous brain of knowledge accepts and transforms the heart's obscure inspirations and lends itself to the workings of the high-seated Will, when all these gods are founded together on a soul of sacrifice that lives in unity with all the world and accepts all things to transmute them, then is the condition of man's integral self-transcendence. This and not a haughty, strong and brilliant egoistic self-culture enthroning itself upon an enslaved humanity is the divine way of supermanhood.

## All-Will and Free-Will

**H**IS IS surely a bounded soul who has never felt the brooding wings of a Fate overshadow the world, never looked beyond the circle of persons, collectivities and forces, never been conscious of the still thought or the assured movement of a Presence in things determining their march. On the other hand it is the sign of a defect in the thought or a void of courage and clearness in the temperament to be overwhelmed by Fate or hidden Presence and reduced to a discouraged acquiescence, — as if the Power in things nullified or rendered superfluous and abortive the same Power in myself. Fate and free-will are only two movements of one indivisible energy. My will is the first instrument of my Fate, Fate a Will that manifests itself in the irresistible subconscious intention of the world.

All error like all evil is born of a division in the indivisible. Because God has a myriad aspects, mind breaks up His unity; it creates a violent opposition and vain attempt at mutual exclusion in the united family of the Ideas and Powers that are convergently busy with the universe. Thus our thought erects a mysterious Fate or an equally mysterious free-will and insists that this or that must be but both shall not subsist together. It is a false and unreal quarrel. I have a will, that is plain; but it is not true that it is free in the sense of being a thing apart in the world determining itself and its actions and fruits as if it alone existed or as if it could at all shape itself except as visible crest and form of an invisible wave. Even the wave is more than itself; for that too has behind it the tramp of the whole measureless ocean of Force and Time. On the other hand there is no incalculable Fate, no blind, cruel and ineluctable Necessity against which the wings of the soul must dash themselves in vain as if it were a bird snared by a monstrous Fowler in a dim-lit and fantastic cage.

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All times and nations have felt or played with the idea of Fate. The Greeks were pursued by the thought of a mysterious and ineffable Necessity presiding over the divine caprices of the gods. The Mahomedan sits calm and inert under the yoke of Kismet. The Hindu speaks of Karma and the writing on the forehead when he would console himself for calamity or failure or excuse himself from perseverance and masculine effort. And all these notions are akin in the general imprecision of the idea they shadow forth and the vague twilight in which they are content to leave its ulterior significance. Modern Science has brought in an equally formless and arbitrary predestination of Law of Nature and Heredity to contradict the idea of responsibility in a free, willing and acting soul. Where there is no soul, there can be no freedom. Nature works out her original law in man; our fathers and mothers with all that they carried in them are a second vital predestination and the dead generations impose themselves on the living; pressure of environment comes in as a third Fate to take from us the little chance of liberty we might still have snatched out of this infinite coiling of forces. The triple Moirai of the Greeks have been re-enthroned with other masks and new names. We believe once more in a tremendous weaving of our fate, but by the measured dance of immense material Powers. It is the old gods again, but stripped of intelligence and the chance of human sympathy, inexorable because they are conscious neither of themselves nor of us.

It is doubtful whether belief in Fate or free-will makes much difference to a man's action, but it certainly matters a great deal to his temperament and inner being; for it puts its stamp on the cast of his soul. The man who makes belief in Fate an excuse for quiescence, would find some other pretext if this were lacking. His idea is only a decorous garment for his mood; it clothes his indolence and quiescence in a specious robe of light or drapes it with a noble mantle of dignity. But when his will clutches at an object or action, we do not find him pursuing it with a less strenuous resolution or, it may be, a less childish impatience or obstinacy than the freest believer in free-will. It is not our intellectual ideas that govern our action, but our nature and

temperament, — not *dhī*,<sup>1</sup> but *mati* or even *manyu*, or, as the Greeks would have said, *thumos* and not *nous*.

On the other hand a great man of action will often seize on the idea of Fate to divinise to himself the mighty energy that he feels driving him on the path of world-altering deeds. He is like a shell discharged from some dim Titanic howitzer planted in concealment far behind this first line of trenches which we see thrown out by Life into the material world; or he is like a planet sped out from Nature's hands with its store of primal energy sufficient for its given time, its fixed service to the world-life, its settled orbit round a distant and sovereign Light. He expresses in the idea of Fate his living and constant sense of the energy which has cast him down here whether to break like some Vedic Marut the world's firm and established things or to cut through mountains a path down which new rivers of human destiny can pour. Like Indra or Bhagirath he precedes; the throng of the divine waters follow. His movement decides their course; here Indus shall flow, there Ganges pace yellow and leonine to the sea. Therefore we find that the greatest men of action the world has known were believers in Fate or in a divine Will. Caesar, Mahomet, Napoleon, what more colossal workers has our past than these? The superman believes more readily in Destiny, feels more vitally conscious of God than the average human mind.

A saying of Napoleon's is pregnant of the true truth of this matter. Questioned why, since he talked continually of fate, he thought it worth while to be always thinking and planning, he answered with just reason, "Because it is still Fate who wills that I should plan." This is the truth. There is a Will or Force in the world that determines the result of my actions as part of the great whole; there is a Will in me that determines, concealed by my thought and personal choice, the part that I shall take in determining the whole. It is this that my mind seizes on and calls my will. But I and mine are masks. It is All-existence that gives

<sup>1</sup> These are terms of Vedic psychology. *Dhī* is the intellect; *mati*, the general mentality; *manyu*, the temperament and emotive mind.

me my reality; it is the All-will and All-knowledge that, while I calculate, works in me for its own incalculable purpose.

For this very reason I am right in laying stress on my free-will. If a Necessity governs even the gods, yet is my will a daughter of Necessity with a right in the mansion of her mother; or even it is a face of the divine Necessity that in many forms plays with the world. If Kismet is the will of God, yet is that will active in my present moment and not only in the hour of my birth or of the birth of the world. If my past actions determine my present, my immediate action also determines the moment that shall be and is not utterly put off by a tardy mechanism to belated effects in a far-off life. If Law of nature and heredity and environment are powerful, yet do they depend on the individual for the use to which they shall be turned.

The fruit of my actions belongs not to me, but to God and the world; my action belongs to God and myself. There I have a right. Or rather it belongs to God in myself; the right is His, but I enjoy it. The Will that works in me is the indivisible All which only seems to separate itself from itself in my body and personality, *nāmarūpa*, as the whole sea throws itself upon a particular coast in a particular surge of waves. The All and the I are at play of hide and seek with each other in a corner of an infinite universe.

I may play entirely at cross-purposes with the All-Will in me. That is when I lend my will-power to be a servant of the nervous part of my mind which, ignorant and passionate, adores self, openly or under many pretences, as its own god. It is this in me, this egoist, this hungerer that feels upon it in the heavy hand of Fate the oppression of a tyrant or the resistance of a blind and unintelligent power. For always absorbed in its own need and view-point it helps the All by that friction and opposition which are so essential to the mechanism of the world. Therefore it misunderstands the firm Teacher and His stern, yet loving compulsion in things and must progress by self-will and struggle and suffering because it cannot yet learn to progress by obedience. But also I may, by an intuition in my nature, an aspiration in my heart and a reason in my mind, put myself at the service of

some strong ideal, some intelligent Force that serves God with or without knowledge of Him. Then is my will a true will; it does its share, it leaves its quota, it returns to its Master with its talent used or increased. And to a certain extent it is free; for a great liberty is this, to be delivered from the Animal and the Rakshasa in ourselves, free to choose the right or be chosen by it.

But how different a thing would it be if I could persuade my ego to break and emerge from the mould in which it has taken refuge from its divine Pursuer! The great antinomy would then be abrogated and not simply mitigated. My free-will would become God-will and Fate put off her mask. By consenting to be the mere slave of God and consciously but one instrument of That which is not bound by its instruments, I should know a freedom which sings on the harps of heaven, but which no speech of man can utter; I should be washed and rolled in the waves of pure puissance and pure ecstasy, the immeasurable and unfathomable ecstasy of all-being and all-life and all-force. I should see Fate illumined melting into Will and Will glorified passing into God.

## The Delight of Works

**I**N THY works there are always these three, the Master, the Worker and the Instrument. To define them in oneself rightly and rightly to possess them is the secret of works and of the delight of works.

Learn thou first to be the instrument of God and to accept thy Master. The instrument is this outward thing thou callest thyself; it is a mould of mind, a driving-force of power, a machinery of form, a thing full of springs and cogs and clamps and devices. Call not this the Worker or the Master; it can never be the Worker or the Master. Accept thyself humbly, yet proudly, devotedly, submissively and joyfully as a divine instrument.

There is no greater pride and glory than to be a perfect instrument of the Master.

Learn thou first absolutely to obey. The sword does not choose where it shall strike, the arrow does not ask whither it shall be driven, the springs of the machine do not insist on the product that shall be turned out from its labour. These things are settled by the intention and working of Nature and the more the conscious instrument learns to feel and obey the pure and essential law of its nature, the sooner shall the work turned out become perfect and flawless. Self-choice by the nervous motive-power, revolt of the physical and mental tool can only mar the working.

Let thyself drive in the breath of God and be as a leaf in the tempest; put thyself in His hand and be as the sword that strikes and the arrow that leaps to its target. Let thy mind be as the spring of the machine, let thy force be as the shooting of a piston, let thy work be as the grinding and shaping descent of the steel on its object. Let thy speech be the clang of the hammer on the anvil and the moan of the engine in its labour and the cry of the trumpet that proclaims the force of God to the regions.

In whatsoever way do as an instrument the work that is natural to thee and appointed.

The sword has a joy in the battle-play, the arrow has a mirth in its hiss and its leaping, the earth has a rapture in its dizzy whirl through space, the sun has the royal ecstasy of its blazing splendours and its eternal motion. O thou self-conscious instrument, take thou too the delight of thy own appointed workings.

The sword did not ask to be made, nor does it resist its user, nor lament when it is broken. There is a joy of being made and a joy of being used and a joy of being put aside and a joy too of being broken. That equal joy discover.

Because thou hast mistaken the instrument for the worker and the master and because thou seekest to choose by the ignorance of thy desire thy own state and thy own profit and thy own utility, therefore thou hast suffering and anguish and hast many times to be thrust into the red hell of the furnace and hast many times to be reborn and reshaped and retempered until thou shalt have learned thy human lesson.

And all these things are because they are in thy unfinished nature. For Nature is the worker and what is it that she works at? She shapes out of her crude mind and life and matter a fully conscious being.

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Know thyself next as the Worker. Understand thy nature to be the worker and thy own nature and All-Nature to be thyself.

This nature-self is not proper to thee nor limited. Thy nature has made the sun and the systems, the earth and her creatures, thyself and thine and all thou art and perceivest. It is thy friend and thine enemy, thy mother and thy devourer, thy lover and thy torturer, the sister of thy soul and an alien and a stranger, thy joy and thy sorrow, thy sin and thy virtue, thy strength and thy weakness, thy knowledge and thy ignorance. And yet it is none of these things, but something of which they are attempts and imperfect images. For beyond all these it is an original



self-knowledge and an infinite force and innumerable quality.

But in thee there is a special movement, a proper nature and an individual energy. Follow that like a widening river till it leads thee to its infinite source and origin.

Know therefore thy body to be a knot in Matter and thy mind to be a whirl in universal Mind and thy life to be an eddy of Life that is for ever. Know thy force to be every other being's force and thy knowledge to be a glimmer from the light that belongs to no man and thy works to be made for thee and be delivered from the error of thy personality.

When that is done, thou shalt take thy free delight in the truth of thy individual being and in thy strength and in thy glory and in thy beauty and in thy knowledge; and in the denial of these things thou shalt take delight also. For all this is the dramatic mask of the Person and the self-image of the self-Sculptor.

Why shouldst thou limit thyself? Feel thyself also in the sword that strikes thee and the arms that embrace, in the blazing of the sun and the dance of the earth, in the flight of the eagle and the song of the nightingale, in all that is past and all that is now and all that is pressing forward to become. For thou art infinite and all this joy is possible to thee.

The Worker has the joy of her works and the joy of her Lover for whom she works. She knows herself to be his consciousness and his force, his knowledge and his reserving of knowledge, his unity and his self-division, his infinity and the finite of his being. Know thyself also to be these things; take thou also the delight of thy Lover.

There are those who know themselves as a workshop or an instrument or the thing worked, but they mistake the Worker for the Master; this too is an error. Those who fall into it can hardly arrive at her high, pure and perfect workings.

The instrument is finite in a personal image, the worker is universal with a personal trend, but neither of these is the Master; for neither is the true Person.

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Know last the Master to be thyself; but to this self put no form and seek for it no definition of quality. Be one with That in thy being, commune with That in thy consciousness, obey That in thy force, be subject to That and clasped by it in thy delight, fulfil That in thy life and body and mentality. Then before an opening eye within thee there shall emerge that true and only Person, thyself and not thyself, all others and more than all others, the Director and Enjoyer of thy works, the Master of the worker and the instrument, the Reveller and Trampler in the dance of the universe and yet hushed and alone with thee in thy soul's silent and inner chamber.

The joy of the Master possessed, there is nothing else for thee to conquer. For He shall give thee Himself and all things and all creatures' gettings and havings and doings and enjoyings for thy own proper portion, and He shall give thee that also which cannot be portioned.

Thou shalt contain in thy being thyself and all others and be that which is neither thyself nor all others. Of works this is the consummation and the summit.

# Evolution



## Evolution

**W**HAT IN its principle and scope is the force of evolution and how does it work out in the world?

The theory of evolution has been the key-note of the thought of the nineteenth century. It has not only affected all its science and its thought-attitude, but powerfully influenced its moral temperament, its politics and its society. Without it there could not have been that entire victory of the materialistic notion of life and the universe which has been the general characteristic of the age that is now passing, — a victory which for a time even claimed to be definitive, — nor such important corollary effects of this great change as the failure of the religious spirit and the breaking-up of religious beliefs. In society and politics it has led to the substitution of the evolutionary for the moral idea of progress and the consequent materialisation of social ideas and social progress, the victory of the economic man over the idealist. The scientific dogma of heredity, the theory of the quite recent emergence of the civilised thinking human animal, the popular notion of the all-pervading struggle for life and the aid it has given to an exaggerated development of the competitive instinct, the idea of the social organism and the aid it has given to the contrary development of economic socialism and the increasing victory of the organised State or community over the free individual, — all these are outflowings from the same source.

The materialistic view of the world is now rapidly collapsing and with it the materialistic statement of the evolution theory must disappear. Modern European thought progresses with a vertiginous rapidity. If it is Teutonic in its fidelity of observation and its tendency to laborious systematisation, it has also another side, Celtic-Hellenic, a side of suppleness, mobility, readiness for

rapid change, insatiable curiosity. It does not allow the same thought, the same system to exercise for very long a secure empire; it is in haste to question, to challenge, to reject, to remould, to discover new and opposite truths, to venture upon other experiments. At present this spirit of questioning has not attacked the evolution theory at its centre, but it is visibly preparing to give it a new form and meaning.

The general idea of evolution was the filiation of each successive form or state of things to that which preceded it, its appearance by a process of outbringing or deploying of some possibility prepared and even necessitated by previous states and previous tendencies. Not only does a form contain the seed of the form that reproduces it, but also the seed of the possible new form that varies from it. By successive progression a world-system evolves out of the nebula, a habitable planet appears in an uninhabitable system, protoplasmic life emerges by some yet unknown process out of Matter, the more developed grows out of the less developed organism. The fish and the creeping thing are the descendants of the plasm, the biped and quadruped trace back to the fish and reptile, man is a quadruped of the genus Ape who has learned to walk erect on two legs and has divested himself of characteristics unsuited to his new mode of life and progression. Force in Matter is the unconscious Goddess who has worked these miracles by her inherent principle of natural adaptation and in the organism by the additional machinery of heredity; by natural selection those species which reproduce new characteristics developed by adaptation to the environment and favourable to survival, tend to propagate themselves and remain; others fall back in the race of life and disappear.

Such were once the salient ideas; but some of them and not the least important are now questioned. The idea of the struggle for life tends to be modified and even denied; it is asserted that, at least as popularly understood, it formed no real part of Darwinism. This modification is a concession to reviving moralistic and idealistic tendencies which seek for a principle of love as well as a principle of egoism in the roots of life. Equally important are the conclusions arrived at by some investigators into the phenomena

of heredity that acquired characteristics are not handed down to the posterity and the theory that it is chiefly predispositions that are inherited; for by these modifications the process of evolution begins to wear a less material and mechanical aspect; its source and the seat of its motive power are shifted to that which is least material, most psychical in Matter. Finally, the first idea of a slow and gradual evolution is being challenged by a new theory of evolution through sudden and rapid outbursts; and again we pass from the sense of an obvious superficial machinery and all-sufficient material necessity to profundities whose mystery is yet to be fathomed.

In themselves, indeed, these modifications would not be radical. Their importance lies in their synchronism with a great resurgence, in new forms, of old ideas that had been submerged by the materialistic wave. Theories of vitalism, idealistic tendencies of thought, which were supposed to have been slain by the march of physical Science, now arise, dispute the field and find their account in every change of scientific generalisation which at all opens the way to their own expansion and reassertion. In what respects then is it likely that the evolution theory will be found deficient by the wider and more complex thought of the future and compelled to undergo essential changes?

In the first place, the materialistic theory of evolution starts from the Sankhya position that all world is a development out of indeterminate Matter by Nature-Force, but it excludes the Silent Cause of the Sankhyas, the Purusha or observant and reflective Soul. Hence it conceives the world as a sort of automatic machine which has somehow happened. No intelligent cause, no aim, no *raison d'être*, but simply an automatic deployment, combination, chance self-adaptation of means to end without any knowledge or intention in the adaptation. This is the first paradox of the theory and its justification must be crushing and conclusive if it is to be finally accepted by the human mind.

Again, Force in indeterminate Matter without any Conscious-Soul being all the beginning and all the material of things, Mind, Life and Consciousness can only be developments out of Matter and even only operations of Matter. They cannot be at

all things in themselves, different from Matter or in the last degree independent of it. This is the second paradox and the point at which the theory has eventually failed to establish itself. More and more the march of knowledge leads towards the view that the three are different forms of Force, each with its own characteristics and proper method of action, each reacting upon the other and enriching its forms by the contact.

An idea has even begun to dawn that there is not a single creation but a triple, material, vital and mental; it may be regarded as a composite of three worlds, as it were, interpenetrating each other. We are led back to the old Vedic idea of the triple world in which we live. And we may reasonably forecast that when its operations are examined from this new standpoint, the old Vedic knowledge will be justified that it is one Law and Truth acting in all, but very differently formulated according to the medium in which the work proceeds and its dominant principle. The same gods exist on all the planes and maintain the same essential laws, but with a different aspect and mode of working and to ever wider results.

If this be the truth, then the action of evolution must be other than has been supposed. For example the evolution of Life in Matter must have been produced and governed not by a material principle, but by a Life-Principle working in and upon the conditions of Matter and applying to it its own laws, impulses, necessities. This idea of a mighty Life, other than the material Principle, working in it and upon it has begun to dominate the advanced thought of Europe. The other idea of a still mightier Mind working in Life and upon it has not yet made sufficient way because the investigation of the laws of Mind is still in its groping infancy.

Again, the materialist theory supposes a rigid chain of material necessity; each previous condition is a coordination of so many manifest forces and conditions; each resulting condition is its manifest result. All mystery, all element of the incalculable disappears. If we can completely analyse the previous conditions and discover their general law, we can be sure of the subsequent result, as in the case of an eclipse or an earthquake. For



all is manifestation which is the logical result of a previous manifestation.

Once more the conclusion is too simple and trenchant; the world is more complex. Besides the manifest causes there are those that are unmanifest or latent and not subject to our analysis or come from behind or above and cannot be calculated and forecast though by a higher revelatory Knowledge they may be foreseen. This element increases as we climb the ladder of existence; its scope is greater in Life than in Matter, freer in Mind than in Life. European thought already tends to posit behind all manifest activity an Unmanifest called according to intellectual predilection either the Inconscient or the Subconscient which contains more and in a way unseizable to us knows more and can more than the surface existence. Out of this Unmanifest the manifest constantly emerges.

Again we return towards an ancient truth already known to the Vedic sages, — the idea of an inconscient or subconscious ocean of being, the ocean of the heart of things out of which the worlds form themselves. But the Veda posits also a governing and originating Superconscient which accounts for the appearance of a hidden consciousness and knowledge pervading the operations of Evolution and which constitutes the self-acting Law and Truth behind them.

The theory of materialistic evolution led naturally to the idea of a slow and gradual progression in a straight line. It admits reversions, atavisms, loops and zigzags of reaction deflecting the straight line, but these must necessarily be subordinate, hardly visible if we calculate by ages rather than by shorter periods of time. Here too, fuller knowledge disturbs the received notions. In the history of man everything seems now to point to alternations of a serious character, ages of progression, ages of recoil, the whole constituting an evolution that is cyclic rather than in one straight line. A theory of cycles of human civilisation has been advanced, we may yet arrive at the theory of cycles of human evolution, the Kalpa and Manwantaras of the Hindu theory. If its affirmation of cycles of world-existence is farther off from affirmation, it is because they must be so vast in their periods

as to escape not only all our means of observation, but all our means of deduction or definite inference.

Instead of slow, steady, minute gradations it is now suggested that new steps in evolution are rather effected by rapid and sudden outbursts, outbreaks, as it were, of manifestation from the unmanifest. Shall we say that Nature preparing slowly behind the veil, working a little backwards, working a little forwards, one day arrives at the combination of outward things which makes it possible for her to throw her new idea into a realised formation, suddenly, with violence, with a glorious dawning, with a grandiose stride? And that would explain the economy of her relapses and her reappearances of things long dead. She aims at a certain immediate result and to arrive at it more quickly and entirely she sacrifices many of her manifestations and throws them back into the latent, the unmanifest, the subconscious. But she has not finished with them; she will need them at another stage for a farther result. Therefore she brings them forward again and they reappear in new forms and other combinations and act towards new ends. So evolution advances.

And her material means? Not the struggle for life only. The real law, it is now suggested, is rather mutual help or at least mutual accommodation. Struggle exists, mutual destruction exists, but as a subordinate movement, a red minor chord, and only becomes acute when the movement of mutual accommodation fails and elbow-room has to be made for a fresh attempt, a new combination.

The propagation of acquired characteristics by heredity was too hastily and completely asserted; it is now perhaps in danger of being too summarily denied. Not Matter alone, but Life and Mind working upon Matter help to determine evolution. Heredity is only a material shadow of soul-reproduction, of the rebirth of Life and Mind into new forms. Ordinarily, as a constant factor or basis, there is the reproduction of that which was already evolved; for new characteristics to be propagated in the species they must have been accepted, received, sanctioned in the vital and mental worlds; then only can they be automatically self-reproduced from the material seed. Otherwise they are

private and personal acquisitions and are returned into the State exchequer, the treasury of the subconscious, and do not go to the family estate. When the mind-world and life-world are ready, they are poured out freely on fit recipients. This is the reason why it is predisposition that is chiefly inherited. The psychical and vital force in the material principle is first impressed; when that has been done on a sufficient scale, it is ready for a general new departure and an altered heredity appears.

Thus the whole view of Evolution begins to change. Instead of a mechanical, gradual, rigid evolution out of indeterminate Matter by Nature-Force we move towards the perception of a conscious, supple, flexible, intensely surprising and constantly dramatic evolution by a superconscient Knowledge which reveals things in Matter, Life and Mind out of the unfathomable Inconscient from which they rise.

## The Inconscient

**T**HE FIRST or superficial view which the observing mind takes on any object of knowledge is always an illusory view; all science, all true knowledge comes by going behind the superficies and discovering the inner truth and the hidden law. It is not that the thing itself is illusory, but that it is not what it superficially appears to be; nor is it that the operations and functionings we observe on the surface do not take place, but that we cannot find their real motive-power, process, relations by the simple study of them as they offer themselves to the observing senses.

In the realm of physical science this is obvious enough and universally admitted. The earth is not flat but round, not still but constant to a double motion; the sun moves but not round the earth; bodies that seem to us luminous are in themselves non-luminous; things that are part of our daily experience, colour, sound, light, air are quite other in their reality than what they pretend to be. Our senses give us false views of distance, size, shape, relation. Objects which seem to them self-existent forms are aggregations and constituted by subtler constituents which our ordinary faculties are unable to detect. These material constituents again are merely formulations of a Force which we cannot describe as material and of which the senses have no evidence. Yet the mind and the senses can live quite satisfied and convinced in this world of illusions and accept them as the practical truth — for to a certain extent they are the practical truth and sufficient for an initial, ordinary and limited activity.

But only to a certain extent; for there are possibilities of a wider life, a more mastering action, a greater practicality which can only be achieved by going behind these surfaces and utilising a truer knowledge of objects and forces. The discovery of the secret operations of Nature leads to a contingent discovery, the

possibility of a farther use of her forces to which she herself has not proceeded, not finding them necessary for the mere preservation of existence and its ordinary workings, but has left to man, her mental being, to discover and utilise for the amelioration of existence and for the development of its possibilities.

All this is easy to see in the realm of Matter; but mankind is not yet entirely ready to recognise the same truth and follow up the same principle in the realm of Mind. It is true that psychology has made an advance and has begun to improve its method. Formerly, it was a crude, scholastic and superficial systematisation of man's ignorance of himself. The surface psychological functionings, will, mind, senses, reason, conscience, etc., were arranged in a dry and sterile classification; their real nature and relation to each other were not fathomed nor any use made of them which went beyond the limited action Nature had found sufficient for a very superficial mental and psychic life and for very superficial and ordinary workings. Because we do not know ourselves, therefore we are unable to ameliorate radically our subjective life or develop with mastery, with rapidity, with a sure science the hidden possibilities of our mental capacity and our moral nature. The new psychology seeks indeed to penetrate behind superficial appearances, but it is encumbered by initial errors which prevent a profounder knowledge, — the materialistic error which bases the study of mind upon the study of the body; the sceptical error which prevents any bold and clear-eyed investigation of the hidden profundities of our subjective existence; the error of conservative distrust and recoil which regards any subjective state or experience that departs from the ordinary operations of our mental and psychical nature as a morbidity or a hallucination, — just as the Middle Ages regarded all new science as magic and a diabolical departure from the sane and right limits of human capacity; finally, the error of objectivity which leads the psychologist to study others from outside instead of seeing his true field of knowledge and laboratory of experiment in himself. Psychology is necessarily a subjective science and one must proceed in it from the knowledge of oneself to the knowledge of others.

But whatever the crudities of the new science, it has at least taken the first capital step without which there can be no true psychological knowledge; it has made the discovery which is the beginning of self-knowledge and which all must make who deeply study the facts of consciousness, — that our waking and surface existence is only a small part of our being and does not yield to us the root and secret of our character, our mentality or our actions. The sources lie deeper. To discover them, to know the nature and the processes of the inconscient or subconscious self and, so far as is possible, to possess and utilise them as physical science possesses and utilises the secret of the forces of Nature ought to be the aim of a scientific psychology.

But here the first difficulty confronts us, the problem whether this other and greater self of which our waking existence is only a surface and a phenomenon, is subconscious or inconscient. And thereon hinges the whole destiny of the human being. For if it is inconscient in its very nature, then we cannot hope to illuminate ourselves with the hidden light of these depths — for light there is none — or to find and to possess ourselves of the secret of its power. On the other hand if it is subconscious, that is to say a concealed consciousness deeper, greater, more powerful than our superficial self, an endless vista of self-enlargement opens out before us and the human race marches towards infinite possibilities.

Modern psychological experiment and observation have proceeded on two different lines which have not yet found their point of meeting. On the one hand psychology has taken for its starting-point the discoveries and the fundamental thesis of the physical sciences and has worked as a continuation of physiology. The physical sciences are the study of inconscient Force working in inconscient Matter and a psychology which accepts this formula as the basis of all existence must regard consciousness as a phenomenal result of the Inconscient working on the inconscient. Mind is only an outcome and as it were a record of nervous reactions. The true self is the inconscient; mental action is one of its subordinate phenomena. The Inconscient is greater than the conscient; it is the god, the magician, the

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creator whose action is far more unerring than the ambitious but blundering action of the conscious mentality. The tree is more perfectly guided than man in its more limited action, precisely because it lives unambitiously according to Nature and is passive in the hands of the Inconscient. Mind enters in to enlarge the field of activity, but also to multiply errors, perversities, revolts against Nature, departures from the instinctive guiding of the Inconscient Self which generate that vast element of ignorance, falsehood and suffering in human life, — that “much falsehood in us” of which the Vedic poet complains.

Where then lies the hope that mind will repair its errors and guide itself according to the truth of things? The hope lies in Science, in the intelligent observation, utilising, initiation of the forces and workings of the Inconscient. To take only one instance, — the Inconscient operates by the law of heredity and, left to itself, works faultlessly to ensure the survival of good and healthy types. Man misuses heredity in the false conditions of his social life to transmit and perpetuate degeneracy. We must study the law of heredity, develop a science of Eugenics and use it wisely and remorselessly — with the remorseless wisdom of Nature — so as to ensure by intelligence the result that the Inconscient assures by instinctive adaptation. We can see where this idea and this spirit will lead us, — to the replacement of the emotional and spiritual idealism which the human mind has developed by a cold sane materialistic idealism and to an amelioration of mankind attempted by the rigorous mechanism of the scientific expert, no longer by the profound inspiration of genius and the supple aspiration of puissant character and personality. And yet what if this were only another error of the conscient mind? What if the mistaking and the disease, the revolt and departure from Nature were itself a part, a necessary part of the wise and unerring plan of the profound Inconscient Self and all the much falsehood a means of arriving at a greater truth and a more exalted capacity? The fact that genius itself, the highest result of our developing consciousness, flowers so frequently on a diseased branch is a phenomenon full of troubling suggestions. The clear way of ascertained science need not always be the best

way; it may stand often in the path of development of a yet greater and deeper Knowledge.

The other line of psychological investigation is still frowned upon by orthodox science, but it thrives and yields its results in spite of the anathema of the doctors. It leads us into by-paths of psychical research, hypnotism, mesmerism, occultism and all sorts of strange psychological gropings. Certainly, there is nothing here of the assured clearness and firmly-grounded positivism of the physical method. Yet facts emerge and with the facts a momentous conclusion, — the conclusion, that there is a “subliminal” self behind our superficial waking mind not inconscient but conscient, greater than the waking mind, endowed with surprising faculties and capable of a much surer action and experience, conscient of the superficial mind though of it the superficial mind is inconscient. And then a question rises. What if there were really no Inconscient at all, but a hidden Consciousness everywhere perfect in power and wisdom, of which our mind is the first slow, hesitating and imperfect disclosure and into the image of which the human mentality is destined progressively to grow? It would at least be no less valid a generalisation and it would explain all the facts that we now know considerably better than the blind and purposeless determinism of the materialistic theory.

In pursuing psychological investigation upon this line we shall only be resuming that which had already been done by our remote forefathers. For they too, the moment they began to observe, to experiment, to look below the surface of things, were compelled to perceive that the surface man is only a form and appearance and that the real self is something infinitely greater and more profound. They too must have passed through the first materialistic stages of science and philosophy. For we read in the Aitareya Upanishad that entering upon possession of the material world and the body, the Purusha, the Conscious Soul, asks himself, “If utterance is by speech and life by the breath, vision by the eye, hearing by the ear, thought by the mind,” if in short all the apparent activities of the being can be accounted for by the automatic functioning of Nature, “then what am I?” And



the Upanishad says farther, "He being born distinguished only the working of the material elements, for what else was there of which he should discuss and conclude?" Yet in the end "he beheld this conscious being which is Brahman utterly extended and he said to himself, Now have I really seen." So too in the Taittiriya Upanishad Bhrigu Varuni meditating on the Brahman comes first to the conclusion that "Matter is Brahman" and only afterwards discovers Life that is Brahman, — so rising from the materialistic to the vitalistic theory of existence as European thought is now rising, — then Mind that is Brahman and then Knowledge that is Brahman, — so rising to the sensational and the idealistic realisations of the truth — and at last Bliss of Existence that is Brahman. There he pauses in the ultimate spiritual realisation, the highest formulation of knowledge that man can attain.

The Conscient therefore and not the Inconscient was the Truth at which the ancient psychology arrived; and it distinguished three strata of the conscient self, the waking, the dream and the sleep selves of Man, — in other words the superficial existence, the subconscious or subliminal and the superconscient which to us seems the inconscient because its state of consciousness is the reverse of ours: for ours is limited and based on division and multiplicity, but this is "that which becomes a unity"; ours is dispersed in knowledge, but in this other self conscious knowledge is self-collected and concentrated; ours is balanced between dual experiences, but this is all delight, it is that which in the very heart of our being fronts everything with a pure all-possessing consciousness and enjoys the delight of existence.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, although its seat is that stratum of consciousness which to us is a deep sleep, — for the mind there cannot maintain its accustomed functioning and becomes inconscient, — yet its name is He who knows, the Wise One, Prajna. "This" says the Mandukya Upanishad, "is omniscient, omnipotent, the inner control, the womb of all and that from which creatures are born and into which they depart." It answers,

<sup>1</sup> See the Mandukya Upanishad for these brief and profound definitions.

therefore, closely enough to the modern idea of the Inconscient corrected by the other modern idea of the subliminal self; for it is inconscient only to the waking mind precisely because it is superconscient to it and the mind is therefore only able to seize it in its results and not in itself. And what better proof can there be of the depth and truth of the ancient psychology than the fact that when modern thought in all its pride of exact and careful knowledge begins to cast its fathom into these depths, it is obliged to repeat in other language what had already been written nearly three thousand years ago?

We find the same idea of this inner control repeated in the Gita; for it is the Lord who “sits in the hearts of all creatures and turns all creatures mounted on an engine by his Maya.” At times the Upanishad seems to describe this Self as the “mental being leader of the life and the body”, which is really the subliminal mind of the psychological investigators; but this is only a relative description. The Vedantic psychology was aware of other depths that take us beyond this formula and in relation to which the mental being becomes in its turn as superficial as is our waking to our subliminal mind. And now once more in the revolutions of human thought these depths have to be sounded; modern psychology will be led perforce, by the compulsion of the truth that it is seeking, on to the path that was followed by the ancient. The new dawns, treading the eternal path of the Truth, follow it to the goal of the dawns that have gone before, — how many, who shall say?

For this knowledge was not first discovered in the comparatively late antiquity that gave us the Upanishads which we now possess. It is already there in the dateless verses of the Rig Veda, and the Vedic sages speak of it as the discovery of yet more ancient seers besides whom they themselves were new and modern. Emerging from the periods of eclipse and the nights of ignorance which overtake humanity, we assume always that we are instituting a new knowledge. In reality, we are continually rediscovering the knowledge and repeating the achievement of the ages that have gone before us, — receiving again out of the “Inconscient” the light that it had drawn back into its secrecies

and now releases once more for a new day and another march of the great journey.

And the goal of that journey cannot be other than the “highest good” which the ancient psychologists proposed to the life and growth of the soul. Man, the mental being, once aware that there is this deep, great and hidden self, the real reality of his being, must necessarily seek to enter into it, to become conscious in it, to make there his centre instead of dwelling on the surface, to win and apply its diviner law and supreme nature and capacity, to make himself one with it so that he shall become the Real instead of the Apparent Man. And the sole debate that remains is whether this great conquest can be achieved and enjoyed in this human life and terrestrial body or is only possible beyond — whether in fact the human consciousness is the chosen instrument for the progressive self-revelation of this “Inconscient”, this real self within us, or only a baulked effort with no fruition here or a haphazard and incomplete sketch that can never be perfected into the divine image.

## Materialism

**M**ANY hard things have been said about materialism by those who have preferred to look at life from above rather than below or who claim to live in the more luminous atmosphere of the idealistic mind or ether of the spiritual existence. Materialism has been credited with the creation of great evils, viewed even as the archimage of a detestable transformation or the misleader guiding mankind to an appalling catastrophe. Those whose temperament and imagination dally lovingly with an idealised past, accuse it for the cultural, social, political changes which they abhor, regarding them as a disturbance, happily, they believe, temporary, of eternal moral values and divinely ordained hierarchies. Those, more numerous, who look beyond to the hope of a larger idealism and higher spirituality, proclaim in its decline and passing away a fortunate deliverance for the human spirit. World-wide strife and competition have been, it is said, its fruits, war and the holocaust of terrible sacrifice in which mankind has been squandering its strength, blood, treasure, — though these are no new calamities, nor would it be safe to hope that they are the last of their kind, — are pointed to as its nemesis or regarded as a funeral pyre it has lighted for itself in whose cruel flame the errors and impurities it brought into existence are being burned to ashes. Science has been declared suspect as a guide or instructor of mankind and bidden to remain parked within her proper limits, because she was for long the ally of the material view of existence, a suggester of atheism and agnosticism, a victory-bringer of materialism and scepticism, the throne of their reign or pillar of their stability. Reason has been challenged because rationalism and free-thought were appropriated as synonyms of materialistic thinking.

All this wealth of accusation may have and much of it has

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its truth. But most things that the human mind thus alternately trumpets and bans, are a double skein. They come to us with opposite faces, their good side and their bad, a dark aspect of error and a bright of truth; and it is as we look upon one or the other visage that we swing to our extremes of opinion or else oscillate between them. Materialism may not be quite as dead as most would declare it to be; still held by a considerable number of scientific workers, perhaps a majority, — and scientific opinion is always a force both by its power of well-ascertained truth and its continued service to humanity, — it constitutes even now the larger part of the real temper of action and life even where it is rejected as a set opinion. The strong impressions of the past are not so easily erased out of our human mentality. But it is a fast receding force; other ideas and standpoints are crowding in and thrust it out from its remaining points of vantage. It will be useful before we say farewell to it, and can now be done with safety, to see what it was that gave to it its strength, what it has left permanently behind it, and to adjust our new view-points to whatever stuff of truth may have lain within it and lent it its force of applicability. Even we can look at it with an impartial sympathy, though only as a primary but lesser truth of our actual being, — for it is all that, but no more than that, — and try to admit and fix its just claims and values. We can now see too how it was bound to escape from itself by the widening of the very frame of knowledge it has itself constructed.

Admit, — for it is true, — that this age of which materialism was the portentous offspring and in which it had figured first as petulant rebel and aggressive thinker, then as a grave and strenuous preceptor of mankind, has been by no means a period of mere error, calamity and degeneration, but rather a most powerful creative epoch of humanity. Examine impartially its results. Not only has it immensely widened and filled in the knowledge of the race and accustomed it to a great patience of research, scrupulosity, accuracy, — if it has done that only in one large sphere of inquiry, it has still prepared for the extension of the same curiosity, intellectual rectitude, power for knowledge to other and higher fields, — not only has it with an unexampled

force and richness of invention brought and put into our hands, for much evil, but also for much good, discoveries, instruments, practical powers, conquests, conveniences which, however we may declare their insufficiency for our highest interests, yet few of us would care to relinquish, but it has also, paradoxical as that might at first seem, strengthened man's idealism. On the whole, it has given him a kindlier hope and humanised his nature. Tolerance is greater, liberty has increased, charity is more a matter of course, peace, if not yet practicable, is growing at least imaginable. Latterly the thought of the eighteenth century which promulgated secularism has been much scouted and belittled, that of the nineteenth which developed it, riddled with adverse criticism and overpassed. Still they worshipped no mean godheads. Reason, science, progress, freedom, humanity were their ideals, and which of these idols, if idols they are, would we like or ought we, if we are wise, to cast down into the mire or leave as poor unworshipped relics on the wayside? If there are other and yet greater godheads or if the visible forms adored were only clay or stone images or the rites void of the inmost knowledge, yet has their cult been for us a preliminary initiation and the long material sacrifice has prepared us for a greater religion.

Reason is not the supreme light, but yet is it always a necessary light-bringer and until it has been given its rights and allowed to judge and purify our first infra-rational instincts, impulses, rash fervours, crude beliefs and blind prejudgments, we are not altogether ready for the full unveiling of a greater inner luminary. Science is a right knowledge, in the end only of processes, but still the knowledge of processes too is part of a total wisdom and essential to a wide and a clear approach towards the deeper Truth behind. If it has laboured mainly in the physical field, if it has limited itself and bordered or overshadowed its light with a certain cloud of wilful ignorance, still one had to begin this method somewhere and the physical field is the first, the nearest, the easiest for the kind and manner of inquiry undertaken. Ignorance of one side of Truth or the choice of a partial ignorance or ignoring for better concentration on another side is often a necessity of our imperfect mental nature.

It is unfortunate if ignorance becomes dogmatic and denies what it has refused to examine, but still no permanent harm need have been done if this willed self-limitation is compelled to disappear when the occasion of its utility is exhausted. Now that we have founded rigorously our knowledge of the physical, we can go forward with a much firmer step to a more open, secure and luminous repossession of mental and psychic knowledge. Even spiritual truths are likely to gain from it, not a loftier or more penetrating, — that is with difficulty possible, — but an ampler light and fuller self-expression.

Progress is the very heart of the significance of human life, for it means our evolution into greater and richer being; and these ages by insisting on it, by forcing us to recognise it as our aim and our necessity, by making impossible hereafter the attempt to subsist in the dullness or the gross beatitude of a stationary self-content, have done a priceless service to the earth-life and cleared the ways of heaven. Outward progress was the greater part of its aim and the inward is the more essential? but the inward too is not complete if the outward is left out of account. Even if the insistence of our progress fall for a time too exclusively on growth in one field, still all movement forward is helpful and must end by giving a greater force and a larger meaning to our need of growth in deeper and higher provinces of our being. Freedom is a godhead whose greatness only the narrowly limited mind, the State-worshipper or the crank of reaction can now deny. No doubt, again, the essential is an inner freedom; but if without the inner realisation the outer attempt at liberty may prove at last a vain thing, yet to pursue an inner liberty and perpetuate an outer slavery or to rejoice in an isolated release and leave mankind to its chains was also an anomaly that had to be exploded, a confined and too self-centred ideal. Humanity is not the highest godhead; God is more than humanity; but in humanity too we have to find and to serve him. The cult of humanity means an increasing kindliness, tolerance, charity, helpfulness, solidarity, universality, unity, fullness of individual and collective growth, and towards these things we are advancing much more rapidly than was possible in any

previous age, if still with sadly stumbling footsteps and some fierce relapses. The cult of our other human selves within the cult of the Divine comes closer to us as our large ideal. To have brought even one of these things a step nearer, to have helped to settle them with whatever imperfect expression and formula in our minds, to have accelerated our movement towards them are strong achievements, noble services.

Objection can at once be made that all these great things have no connection with materialism. The impulse towards them was of old standing and long active in the human mind; the very principle of the humanitarianism which has been one of the striking developments of modern sentiment, was first brought out from our nature and made prominent by religion, compassion and the love of man first intimately and powerfully enforced by Christianity and Buddhism; if they have now a little developed, it is the natural expanding from seeds that had long been sown. Materialism was rather calculated to encourage opposite instincts; and the good it favoured it limited, made arid, mechanised. If all these nobler things have grown and are breaking the bounds set to them, it is because man is fortunately inconsistent and after a certain stage of our development cannot be really and wholly materialistic; he needs ideals, ethical expansion, a closer emotional fulfilment, and these needs he has tacked on to his development of materialistic opinion and corrected its natural results by them. But the ideals themselves were taken from an anterior opinion and culture.

This is the truth, but not the whole truth. The old religious cultures were often admirable in the ensemble and always in some of their parts, but if they had not been defective, they could neither have been so easily breached, nor would there have been the need of a secularist age to bring out the results the religions had sown. Their faults were those of a certain narrowness and exclusive vision. Concentrated, intense in their ideal and intensive in their effect, their expansive influence on the human mind was small. They isolated too much their action in the individual, limited too narrowly the working of their ideals in the social order, tolerated for instance and even utilised for the ends of



church and creed an immense amount of cruelty and barbarism which were contrary to the spirit and truth from which they had started. What they discouraged in the soul of the individual, they yet maintained in the action and the frame of society, seemed hardly to conceive of a human order delivered from these blots. The depth and fervour of their aspiration had for its shadow a want of intellectual clarity, an obscurity which confused their working and balked the expansion of their spiritual elements. They nourished too a core of asceticism and hardly cared to believe in the definite amelioration of the earth life, despised by them as a downfall or a dolorous descent or imperfection of the human spirit, or whatever earthly hope they admitted saw itself postponed to the millennial end of things. A belief in the vanity of human life or of existence itself suited better the preoccupation with an aim beyond earth. Perfection, ethical growth, liberation became individual ideals and figured too much as an isolated preparation of the soul for the beyond. The social effect of the religious temperament, however potentially considerable, was cramped by excessive other-worldliness and distrust in the intellect accentuated to obscurantism.

The secularist centuries weighed the balance down very much in the opposite direction. They turned the mind of the race wholly earthwards and manwards, but by insisting on intellectual clarity, reason, justice, freedom, tolerance, humanity, by putting these forward and putting the progress of the race and its perfectibility as an immediate rule for the earthly life to be constantly pressed towards and not shunting off the social ideal to doomsday to be miraculously effected by some last divine intervention and judgment, they cleared the way for a collective advance. For they made these nobler possibilities of mankind more imperative to the practical intelligence. If they lost sight of heaven or missed the spiritual sense of the ideals they took over from earlier ages, yet by this rational and practical insistence on them they drove them home to the thinking mind. Even their too mechanical turn developed from a legitimate desire to find some means for making the effective working of these ideals a condition of the very structure of society. Materialism

was only the extreme intellectual result of this earthward and human turn of the race mind. It was an intellectual machinery used by the Time-spirit to secure for a good space the firm fixing of that exclusive turn of thought and endeavour, a strong rivet of opinion to hold the mind of man to it for as long as it might be needed. Man does need to develop firmly in all his earthly parts, to fortify and perfect his body, his life, his outward-going mind, to take full possession of the earth his dwelling-place, to know and utilise physical Nature, enrich his environment and satisfy by the aid of a generalised intelligence his evolving mental, vital and physical being. That is not all his need, but it is a great and initial part of it and of human perfection. Its full meaning appears afterwards; for only in the beginning and in the appearance an impulse of his life, in the end and really it will be seen to have been a need of his soul, a preparing of fit instruments and the creating of a fit environment for a diviner life. He has been set here to serve God's ways upon earth and fulfil the Godhead in man and he must not despise earth or reject the basis given for the first powers and potentialities of the Godhead. When his thought and aim have persisted too far in that direction, he need not complain if he is swung back for a time towards the other extreme, to a negative or a positive, a covert or an open materialism. It is Nature's violent way of setting right her own excess in him.

But the intellectual force of materialism comes from its response to a universal truth of existence. Our dominant opinions have always two forces behind them, a need of our nature and a truth of universal existence from which the need arises. We have the material and vital need because life in Matter is our actual basis, the earthward turn of our minds because earth is and was intended to be the foundation here for the workings of the Spirit. When indeed we scan with a scrupulous intelligence the face that universal existence presents to us or study where we are one with it or what in it all seems most universal and permanent, the first answer we get is not spiritual but material. The seers of the Upanishads saw this with their penetrating vision and when they gave this expression of our first apparently

complete, eventually insufficient view of Being, "Matter is the Brahman, from Matter all things are born, by Matter they exist, to Matter they return," they fixed the formula of universal truth of which all materialistic thought and physical science are a recognition, an investigation, a filling in of its significant details, elucidations, justifying phenomena and revelatory processes, the large universal comment of Nature upon a single text.

Mark that it is the first fact of experience from which we start and up to a certain point an undeniable universal truth of being. Matter surely is here our basis, the one thing that is and persists, while life, mind, soul and all else appear in it as a secondary phenomenon, seem somehow to arise out of it, subsist by feeding upon it, — therefore the word used in the Upanishads for Matter is *annam*, food, — and collapse from our view when it disappears. Apparently the existence of Matter is necessary to them, their existence does not appear to be one whit necessary to Matter. The Being does present himself at first with this face, inexorably, as if claiming to be that and nothing else, insisting that his material base and its need shall first be satisfied and, until that is done, grimly persistent with little or with no regard for our idealistic susceptibilities and caring nothing if he breaks through the delicate net of our moral, our aesthetic and our other finer perceptions. They have the hope of their reign, but meanwhile this is the first visage of universal existence and we have not to hide our face from it any more than could Arjuna from the terrible figure of the Divine on the battle-field of Kurukshetra, or attempt to escape and evade it as Shiva, when there rose around him the many stupendous forms of the original Energy, fled from the vision of it to this and that quarter, forgetful of his own godhead. We must look existence in the face in whatever aspect it confronts us and be strong to find within as well as behind it the Divine.

Materialistic science had the courage to look at this universal truth with level eyes, to accept it calmly as a starting-point and to inquire whether it was not after all the whole formula of universal being. Physical science must necessarily to its own first view be materialistic, because so long as it deals with the

physical, it has for its own truth's sake to be physical both in its standpoint and method; it must interpret the material universe first in the language and tokens of the material Brahman, because these are its primary and its general terms and all others come second, subsequently, are a special syllabary. To follow a self-indulgent course from the beginning would lead at once towards fancies and falsities. Initially, science is justified in resenting any call on it to indulge in another kind of imagination and intuition. Anything that draws it out of the circle of the phenomena of objects, as they are represented to the senses and their instrumental prolongations, and away from the dealings of the reason with them by a rigorous testing of experience and experimentation, must distract it from its task and is inadmissible. It cannot allow the bringing in of the human view of things; it has to interpret man in the terms of the cosmos, not the cosmos in the terms of man. The too facile conclusion of the idealist that since things only exist as known to consciousness, they can exist only by consciousness and must be creations of the mind, has no meaning for it; it first has to inquire what consciousness is, whether it is not a result rather than a cause of Matter, coming into being, as it seems to do, only in the frame of a material inconscient universe and apparently able to exist only on the condition that that has been previously established. Starting from Matter, science has to be at least hypothetically materialistic.

When the action of the material principle, the first to organise itself, has been to some extent well understood, then can this science go on to consider what claim to be quite other terms of our being, — life and mind. But first it is forced to ask itself whether both mind and life are not, as they seem to be, special consequences of the material evolution, themselves powers and movements of Matter. After and if this explanation has failed to cover and to elucidate the facts, it can be more freely investigated whether they are not quite other principles of being. Many philosophical questions arise, as, whether they have entered into Matter and whence or were always in it, and if so, whether they are for ever less and subordinate in action or are in their essential power greater, whether they are contained

in it only or really contain it, whether they are subsequent and dependent on its previous appearance or only that in their apparent organisation here but in real being and power anterior to it and Matter itself dependent on the essential pre-existence of life and mind. A greater question comes, whether mind itself is the last term or there is something beyond, whether soul is only an apparent result and phenomenon of the interaction of mind, life and body or we have here an independent term of our being and of all being, greater, anterior, ultimate, all matter containing and contained in a secret spiritual consciousness, spirit the first, last and eternal, the Alpha and the Omega, the OM. For experiential philosophy either Matter, Mind, Life or Spirit may be the Being, but none of these higher principles can be made securely the basis of our thought against all intellectual questioning until the materialistic hypothesis has first been given a chance and tested. That may in the end turn out to have been the use of the materialistic investigation of the universe and its inquiry the greatest possible service to the finality of the spiritual explanation of existence. In any case materialistic science and philosophy have been after all a great and austere attempt to know dispassionately and to see impersonally. They have denied much that is being reaffirmed, but the denial was the condition of a severer effort of knowledge and it may be said of them, as the Upanishad says of Bhrigu the son of Varuna, *sa tapas taptvā annam brahmeti vyajānāt*. "He having practised austerity discovered that Matter was the Brahman."

The gates of escape by which a knowledge starting from materialism can get away from its own self-immuring limitations, can here only be casually indicated. I may take another occasion to show how the possibility must become in eventual fact a necessity. Physical science has before its eye two eternal factors of existence, Matter and Energy, and no others at all are needed in the account of its operations. Mind dealing with the facts and relations of Matter and Energy as they are arranged to the senses in experience and continuative experiment and are analysed by the reason, would be a sufficient definition of physical science. Its first regard is on Matter as the one principle

of being and on Energy only as a phenomenon of Matter; but in the end one questions whether it is not the other way round, all things the action of Energy and Matter only the field, body and instrument of her workings. The first view is quantitative and purely mechanical, the second lets in a qualitative and a more spiritual element. We do not at once leap out of the materialistic circle, but we see an opening in it which may widen into an outlet when, stirred by this suggestion, we look at life and mind not merely as phenomenon in Matter but as energies and see that they are quite other energies than the material with their own peculiar qualities, powers and workings. If indeed all action of life and mind could be reduced, as it was once hoped, to none but material, quantitative and mechanical, to mathematical, physiological and chemical terms, the opening would cease to be an outlet; it would be choked. That attempt has failed and there is no sign of its ever being successful. Only a limited range of the phenomena of life and mind could be satisfied by a purely bio-physical, psycho-physical or biopsychical explanation, and even if more could be dealt with by these data, still they would only have been accounted for on one side of their mystery, the lower end. Life and Mind, like the Vedic Agni, have their two extremities hidden in a secrecy, and we should by this way only have hold of the tail-end: the head would still be mystic and secret. To know more we must have studied not only the actual or possible action of body and matter on mind and life, but explored all the possible action of mind too on life and body; that opens undreamed vistas. And there is always the vast field of the action of mind in itself and on itself, which needs for its elucidation another, a mental, a psychic science.

Having examined and explained Matter by physical methods and in the language of the material Brahman, — it is not really explained, but let that pass, — having failed to carry that way of knowledge into other fields beyond a narrow limit, we must then at least consent to scrutinise life and mind by methods appropriate to them and explain their facts in the language and tokens of the vital and mental Brahman. We may discover then

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where and how these tongues of the one existence render the same truth and throw light on each other's phrases, and discover too perhaps another, high, brilliant and revealing speech which may shine out as the definitive all-explaining word. That can only be if we pursue these other sciences too in the same spirit as the physical, with a scrutiny, not only of their obvious and first actual phenomena, but of all the countless untested potentialities of mental and psychic energy, and with a free unlimited experimentation. We shall find out that their ranges of the unknown are immense. We shall perceive that until the possibilities of mind and spirit are better explored and their truths better known, we cannot yet pronounce the last all-ensphering formula of universal existence. Very early in this process the materialistic circle will be seen opening up on all its sides until it rapidly breaks up and disappears. Adhering still to the essential rigorous method of science, though not to its purely physical instrumentation, scrutinising, experimenting, holding nothing for established which cannot be scrupulously and universally verified, we shall still arrive at supraphysical certitudes. There are other means, there are greater approaches, but this line of access too can lead to the one universal truth.

Three things will remain from the labour of the secularist centuries; truth of the physical world and its importance, the scientific method of knowledge, — which is to induce Nature and Being to reveal their own way of being and proceeding, not hastening to put upon them our own impositions of idea and imagination, *adhyāropa*, — and last, though very far from least, the truth and importance of the earth life and the human endeavour, its evolutionary meaning. They will remain, but will turn to another sense and disclose greater issues. Surer of our hope and our labour, we shall see them all transformed into light of a vaster and more intimate world-knowledge and self-knowledge.





# Thoughts and Glimpses



# Aphorisms

## THE GOAL

When we have passed beyond knowings, then we shall have Knowledge. Reason was the helper; Reason is the bar.

When we have passed beyond willings, then we shall have Power. Effort was the helper; Effort is the bar.

When we have passed beyond enjoyings, then we shall have Bliss. Desire was the helper; Desire is the bar.

When we have passed beyond individualising, then we shall be real Persons. Ego was the helper; Ego is the bar.

When we have passed beyond humanity, then we shall be the Man. The Animal was the helper; the Animal is the bar.

Transform reason into ordered intuition; let all thyself be light. This is thy goal.

Transform effort into an easy and sovereign overflowing of the soul-strength; let all thyself be conscious force. This is thy goal.

Transform enjoying into an even and objectless ecstasy; let all thyself be bliss. This is thy goal.

Transform the divided individual into the world-personality; let all thyself be the divine. This is thy goal.

Transform the Animal into the Driver of the herds; let all thyself be Krishna. This is thy goal.

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What I cannot do now is the sign of what I shall do hereafter. The sense of impossibility is the beginning of all possibilities. Because this temporal universe was a paradox and an impossibility, therefore the Eternal created it out of His being.

Impossibility is only a sum of greater unrealised possibles. It veils an advanced stage and a yet unaccomplished journey.

If thou wouldst have humanity advance, buffet all preconceived ideas. Thought thus smitten awakes and becomes creative. Otherwise it rests in a mechanical repetition and mistakes that for its right activity.

To rotate on its own axis is not the one movement for the human soul. There is also its wheeling round the Sun of an inexhaustible illumination.

Be conscious first of thyself within, then think and act. All living thought is a world in preparation; all real act is a thought manifested. The material world exists because an Idea began to play in divine self-consciousness.

Thought is not essential to existence nor its cause, but it is an instrument for becoming; I become what I see in myself. All that thought suggests to me, I can do; all that thought reveals in me, I can become. This should be man's unshakable faith in himself, because God dwells in him.

Not to go on for ever repeating what man has already done is our work, but to arrive at new realisations and undreamed-of masteries. Time and soul and world are given us for our field, vision and hope and creative imagination stand for our prompters, will and thought and labour are our all-effective instruments.

What is there new that we have yet to accomplish? Love, for as yet we have only accomplished hatred and self-pleasing; Knowledge, for as yet we have only accomplished error and perception and conceiving; Bliss, for as yet we have only accomplished pleasure and pain and indifference; Power, for as yet we have

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only accomplished weakness and effort and a defeated victory; Life, for as yet we have only accomplished birth and growth and dying; Unity, for as yet we have only accomplished war and association.

In a word, godhead; to remake ourselves in the divine image.

### THE DELIGHT OF BEING

If Brahman were only an impersonal abstraction eternally contradicting the apparent fact of our concrete existence, cessation would be the right end of the matter; but love and delight and self-awareness have also to be reckoned.

The universe is not merely a mathematical formula for working out the relation of certain mental abstractions called numbers and principles to arrive in the end at a zero or a void unit, neither is it merely a physical operation embodying certain equations of forces. It is the delight of a Self-lover, the play of a Child, the endless self-multiplication of a Poet intoxicated with the rapture of His own power of endless creation.

We may speak of the Supreme as if He were a mathematician working out a cosmic sum in numbers or a thinker resolving by experiment a problem in relations of principles and the balance of forces: but also we should speak of Him as if He were a lover, a musician of universal and particular harmonies, a child, a poet. The side of thought is not enough; the side of delight too must be entirely grasped: Ideas, Forces, Existences, Principles are hollow moulds unless they are filled with the breath of God's delight.

These things are images, but all is an image. Abstractions give us the pure conception of God's truths; images give us their living reality.

If Idea embracing Force begot the worlds, Delight of Being begot the Idea. Because the Infinite conceived an innumerable delight in itself, therefore worlds and universes came into existence.

Consciousness of being and Delight of being are the first parents. Also, they are the last transcendences. Unconsciousness is only an intermediate swoon of the conscious or its obscure sleep; pain and self-extinction are only delight of being running away from itself in order to find itself elsewhere or otherwise.

Delight of being is not limited in Time; it is without end or beginning. God comes out from one form of things only to enter into another.

What is God after all? An eternal child playing an eternal game in an eternal garden.

#### MAN, THE PURUSHA

God cannot cease from leaning down towards Nature, nor man from aspiring towards the Godhead. It is the eternal relation of the finite to the infinite. When they seem to turn from each other, it is to recoil for a more intimate meeting.

In man nature of the world becomes again self-conscious so that it may take the great leap towards its Enjoyer. This is the Enjoyer whom unknowingly it possesses, whom life and sensation possessing deny and denying seek. Nature of the world knows not God only because it knows not itself; when it knows itself, it shall know unalloyed delight of being.

Possession in oneness and not loss in oneness is the secret. God and Man, World and Beyond-world become one when they know each other. Their division is the cause of ignorance as ignorance is the cause of suffering.

Man seeks at first blindly and does not even know that he is seeking his divine self; for he starts from the obscurity of material Nature and even when he begins to see, he is long blinded by the light that is increasing in him. God too answers obscurely to his search; He seeks and enjoys man's blindness like the hands of a little child that grope after its mother.

God and Nature are like a boy and girl at play and in love. They hide and run from each other when glimpsed so that they may be sought after and chased and captured.

Man is God hiding himself from Nature so that he may possess her by struggle, insistence, violence and surprise. God is universal and transcendent Man hiding himself from his own individuality in the human being.

The animal is Man disguised in a hairy skin and upon four legs; the worm is Man writhing and crawling towards the evolution of his Manhood. Even crude forms of Matter are Man in his inchoate body. All things are Man, the Purusha.

For what do we mean by Man? An uncreated and indestructible soul that has housed itself in a mind and body made of its own elements.

#### THE END

The meeting of man and God must always mean a penetration and entry of the divine into the human and a self-immersion of man in the Divinity.

But that immersion is not in the nature of an annihilation. Extinction is not the fulfilment of all this search and passion, suffering and rapture. The game would never have been begun if that were to be its ending.

Delight is the secret. Learn of pure delight and thou shalt learn of God.

What then was the commencement of the whole matter? Existence that multiplied itself for sheer delight of being and plunged into numberless trillions of forms so that it might find itself innumerable.

And what is the middle? Division that strives towards a multiple unity, ignorance that labours towards a flood of varied light, pain

that travails towards the touch of an unimaginable ecstasy. For all these things are dark figures and perverse vibrations.

And what is the end of the whole matter? As if honey could taste itself and all its drops together and all its drops could taste each other and each the whole honeycomb as itself, so should the end be with God and the soul of man and the universe.

Love is the keynote, Joy is the music, Power is the strain, Knowledge is the performer, the infinite All is the composer and audience. We know only the preliminary discords which are as fierce as the harmony shall be great; but we shall arrive surely at the fugue of the divine Beatitudes.

#### THE CHAIN

The whole world yearns after freedom, yet each creature is in love with his chains; this is the first paradox and inextricable knot of our nature.

Man is in love with the bonds of birth; therefore he is caught in the companion bonds of death. In these chains he aspires after freedom of his being and mastery of his self-fulfilment.

Man is in love with power; therefore he is subjected to weakness. For the world is a sea of waves of force that meet and continually fling themselves on each other; he who would ride on the crest of one wave, must faint under the shock of hundreds.

Man is in love with pleasure; therefore he must undergo the yoke of grief and pain. For unmixed delight is only for the free and passionless soul; but that which pursues after pleasure in man is a suffering and straining energy.

Man hungers after calm, but he thirsts also for the experiences of a restless mind and a troubled heart. Enjoyment is to his mind a fever, calm an inertia and a monotony.



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Man is in love with the limitations of his physical being, yet he would have also the freedom of his infinite mind and his immortal soul.

And in these contrasts something in him finds a curious attraction; they constitute for his mental being the artistry of life. It is not only the nectar but the poison also that attracts his taste and his curiosity.

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In all these things there is a meaning and for all these contradictions there is a release. Nature has a method in every madness of her combinings and for her most inextricable knots there is a solution.

Death is the question Nature puts continually to Life and her reminder to it that it has not yet found itself. If there were no siege of death, the creature would be bound for ever in the form of an imperfect living. Pursued by death he awakes to the idea of perfect life and seeks out its means and its possibility.

Weakness puts the same test and question to the strengths and energies and greatnesses in which we glory. Power is the play of life, shows its degree, finds the value of its expression; weakness is the play of death pursuing life in its movement and stressing the limit of its acquired energy.

Pain and grief are Nature's reminder to the soul that the pleasure it enjoys is only a feeble hint of the real delight of existence. In each pain and torture of our being is the secret of a flame of rapture compared with which our greatest pleasures are only as dim flickerings. It is this secret which forms the attraction for the soul of the great ordeals, sufferings and fierce experiences of life which the nervous mind in us shuns and abhors.

The restlessness and early exhaustion of our active being and its instruments are Nature's sign that calm is our true foundation

and excitement a disease of the soul; the sterility and monotony of mere calm is her hint that play of the activities on that firm foundation is what she requires of us. God plays for ever and is not troubled.

The limitations of the body are a mould; soul and mind have to pour themselves into them, break them and constantly remould them in wider limits till the formula of agreement is found between this finite and their own infinity.

Freedom is the law of being in its illimitable unity, secret master of all Nature: servitude is the law of love in the being voluntarily giving itself to serve the play of its other selves in the multiplicity.

It is when freedom works in chains and servitude becomes a law of Force, not of Love, that the true nature of things is distorted and a falsehood governs the soul's dealings with existence.

Nature starts with this distortion and plays with all the combinations to which it can lead before she will allow it to be righted. Afterwards she gathers up all the essence of these combinations into a new and rich harmony of love and freedom.

Freedom comes by a unity without limits; for that is our real being. We may gain the essence of this unity in ourselves; we may realise the play of it in oneness with all others. The double experience is the complete intention of the soul in Nature.

Having realised infinite unity in ourselves, then to give ourselves to the world is utter freedom and absolute empire.

Infinite, we are free from death; for life then becomes a play of our immortal existence. We are free from weakness; for we are the whole sea enjoying the myriad shock of its waves. We are free from grief and pain; for we learn how to harmonise our being with all that touches it and to find in all things action and reaction of the delight of existence. We are free from limitation; for the body becomes a plaything of the infinite mind and learns to obey the will of the immortal soul. We are free from the fever of the nervous mind and the heart, yet are not bound to immobility.

Immortality, unity and freedom are in ourselves and await there our discovery; but for the joy of love God in us will still remain the Many.

## Thoughts and Glimpses

Some think it presumption to believe in a special Providence or to look upon oneself as an instrument in the hands of God, but I find that every man has a special Providence and I see that God uses the mattock of the labourer and babbles in the mouth of a little child.

Providence is not only that which saves me from the shipwreck in which everybody else has foundered. Providence is also that which while all others are saved snatches away my last plank of safety and drowns me in the solitary ocean.

The delight of victory is sometimes less than the attraction of struggle and suffering; nevertheless the laurel and not the cross should be the aim of the conquering human soul.

Souls that do not aspire are God's failures; but Nature is pleased and loves to multiply them because they assure her of stability and prolong her empire.

Those who are poor, ignorant, ill-born or ill-bred are not the common herd; the common herd are all who are satisfied with pettiness and an average humanity.

Help men, but do not pauperise them of their energy; lead and instruct men, but see that their initiative and originality remain intact; take others into thyself, but give them in return the full godhead of their nature. He who can do this is the leader and the guru.

God has made the world a field of battle and filled it with the trampling of combatants and the cries of a great wrestle and struggle. Would you filch His peace without paying the price He has fixed for it?

Distrust a perfect-seeming success, but when having succeeded thou findest still much to do, rejoice and go forward; for the labour is long before the real perfection.

There is no more benumbing error than to mistake a stage for the goal or to linger too long in a resting-place.

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Wherever thou seest a great end, be sure of a great beginning. Where a monstrous and painful destruction appals thy mind, console it with the certainty of a large and great creation. God is there not only in the still small voice, but in the fire and in the whirlwind.

The greater the destruction, the freer the chances of creation; but the destruction is often long, slow and oppressive, the creation tardy in its coming or interrupted in its triumph. The night returns again and again and the day lingers or seems even to have been a false dawning. Despair not therefore, but watch and work. Those who hope violently, despair swiftly: neither hope nor fear, but be sure of God's purpose and thy will to accomplish.

The hand of the divine Artist works often as if it were unsure of its genius and its material. It seems to touch and test and leave, to pick up and throw away and pick up again, to labour and fail and botch and repiece together. Surprises and disappointments are the order of his work before all things are ready. What was selected, is cast away into the abyss of reprobation; what was rejected, becomes the corner-stone of a mighty edifice. But behind all this is the sure eye of a knowledge which surpasses our reason and the slow smile of an infinite ability.

God has all time before him and does not need to be always in a hurry. He is sure of his aim and success and cares not if he break his work a hundred times to bring it nearer perfection. Patience is our first great necessary lesson, but not the dull slowness to

move of the timid, the sceptical, the weary, the slothful, the unambitious or the weakling; a patience full of a calm and gathering strength which watches and prepares itself for the hour of swift great strokes, few but enough to change destiny.

Wherefore God hammers so fiercely at his world, tramples and kneads it like dough, casts it so often into the blood-bath and the red hell-heat of the furnace? Because humanity in the mass is still a hard, crude and vile ore which will not otherwise be smelted and shaped: as is his material, so is his method. Let it help to transmute itself into nobler and purer metal, his ways with it will be gentler and sweeter, much loftier and fairer its uses.

Wherefore he selected or made such a material, when he had all infinite possibility to choose from? Because of his divine Idea which saw before it not only beauty and sweetness and purity, but also force and will and greatness. Despise not force, nor hate it for the ugliness of some of its faces, nor think that love only is God. All perfect perfection must have something in it of the stuff of the hero and even of the Titan. But the greatest force is born out of the greatest difficulty.

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All would change if man could once consent to be spiritualised; but his nature mental and vital and physical is rebellious to the higher law. He loves his imperfections.

The Spirit is the truth of our being; mind and life and body in their imperfection are its masks, but in their perfection should be its moulds. To be spiritual only is not enough; that prepares a number of souls for heaven, but leaves the earth very much where it was. Neither is a compromise the way of salvation.

The world knows three kinds of revolution. The material has strong results, the moral and intellectual are infinitely larger in their scope and richer in their fruits, but the spiritual are the great sowings.

If the triple change could coincide in a perfect correspondence, a faultless work would be done; but the mind and body of mankind cannot hold perfectly a strong spiritual inrush: most is spilt, much of the rest is corrupted. Many intellectual and physical upturnings of our soil are needed to work out a little result from a large spiritual sowing.

Each religion has helped mankind. Paganism increased in man the light of beauty, the largeness and height of his life, his aim at a many-sided perfection; Christianity gave him some vision of divine love and charity; Buddhism has shown him a noble way to be wiser, gentler, purer, Judaism and Islam how to be religiously faithful in action and zealously devoted to God; Hinduism has opened to him the largest and profoundest spiritual possibilities. A great thing would be done if all these God-visions could embrace and cast themselves into each other; but intellectual dogma and cult egoism stand in the way.

All religions have saved a number of souls, but none yet has been able to spiritualise mankind. For that there is needed not cult and creed, but a sustained and all-comprehending effort at spiritual self-evolution.

The changes we see in the world today are intellectual, moral, physical in their ideal and intention: the spiritual revolution waits for its hour and throws up meanwhile its waves here and there. Until it comes the sense of the others cannot be understood and till then all interpretation of present happening and forecast of man's future are vain things. For its nature, power, event are that which will determine the next cycle of our humanity.





Heraclitus



## Heraclitus

THE PHILOSOPHY and thought of the Greeks is perhaps the most intellectually stimulating, the most fruitful of clarities the world has yet had. Indian philosophy was intuitive in its beginnings, stimulative rather to the deeper vision of things, — nothing more exalted and profound, more revelatory of the depths and the heights, more powerful to open unending vistas has ever been conceived than the divine and inspired Word, the *mantra* of Veda and Vedanta. When that philosophy became intellectual, precise, founded on the human reason, it became also rigidly logical, enamoured of fixity and system, desirous of a sort of geometry of thought. The ancient Greek mind had instead a kind of fluid precision, a flexibly inquiring logic; acuteness and the wide-open eye of the intellect were its leading characteristics and by this power in it it determined the whole character and field of subsequent European thinking. Nor is any Greek thinker more directly stimulating than the aphoristic philosopher Heraclitus; and yet he keeps and adds to this more modern intellectual stimulativeness something of the antique psychic and intuitive vision and word of the older Mystics. The trend to rationalism is there, but not yet that fluid clarity of the reasoning mind which was the creation of the Sophists.

Professor R. D. Ranade has recently published a small treatise on the philosophy of Heraclitus. From the paging of the treatise it seems to be an excerpt, but from what there is nothing to tell. It is perhaps too much to hope that it is from a series of essays on philosophers or a history of philosophy by this perfect writer and scholar. At any rate such a work from such a hand would be a priceless gain. For Professor Ranade possesses in a superlative degree the rare gift of easy and yet adequate exposition; but he has more than this, for he can give a fascinating

interest to subjects like philology and philosophy which to the ordinary reader seem harsh, dry, difficult and repellent. He joins to a luminous clarity, lucidity and charm of expression an equal luminousness and just clarity of presentation and that perfect manner in both native to the Greek and French language and mind, but rare in the English tongue. In these seventeen pages he has presented the thought of the old enigmatic Ephesian with a clearness and sufficiency which leaves us charmed, enlightened and satisfied.

On one or two difficult points I am inclined to differ with the conclusions he adopts. He rejects positively Pfleiderer's view of Heraclitus as a mystic, which is certainly exaggerated and, as stated, a misconception; but it seems to me that there is behind that misconception a certain truth. Heraclitus' abuse of the mysteries of his time is not very conclusive in this respect; for what he reviles is those aspects of obscure magic, physical ecstasy, sensual excitement which the Mysteries had put on in some at least of their final developments as the process of degeneration increased which made a century later even the Eleusinian a butt for the dangerous mockeries of Alcibiades and his companions. His complaint is that the secret rites which the populace held in ignorant and superstitious reverence "unholily mysticise what are held among men as mysteries." He rebels against the darkness of the Dionysian ecstasy in the approach to the secrets of Nature; but there is a luminous Apollonian as well as an obscure and sometimes dangerous Dionysian mysticism, a Dakshina as well as a Vama Marga of the mystic Tantra. And though no partaker in or supporter of any kind of rites or mummerly, Heraclitus still strikes one as at least an intellectual child of the Mystics and of mysticism, although perhaps a rebel son in the house of his mother. He has something of the mystic style, something of the intuitive Apollonian inlook into the secrets of existence.

Certainly, as Mr. Ranade says, mere aphorism is not mysticism; aphorism and epigram are often enough, perhaps usually a condensed or a pregnant effort of the intellect. But Heraclitus' style, as Mr. Ranade himself describes it, is not only aphoristic and epigrammatic but cryptic, and this cryptic character is not

merely the self-willed obscurity of an intellectual thinker affecting an excessive condensation of his thought or a too closely-packed burden of suggestiveness. It is enigmatic in the style of the mystics, enigmatic in the manner of their thought which sought to express the riddle of existence in the very language of the riddle. What for instance is the "ever-living Fire" in which he finds the primary and imperishable substance of the universe and identifies it in succession with Zeus and with eternity? or what should we understand by "the thunderbolt which steers all things"? To interpret this fire as merely a material force of heat and flame or simply a metaphor for being which is eternal becoming is, it seems to me, to miss the character of Heraclitus' utterances. It includes both these ideas and everything that connects them. But then we get back at once to the Vedic language and turn of thought; we are reminded of the Vedic Fire which is hymned as the upbuilder of the worlds, the secret Immortal in men and things, the periphery of the gods, Agni who "becomes" all around the other immortals, himself becomes and contains all the gods; we are reminded of the Vedic thunderbolt, that electric Fire, of the Sun who is the true Light, the Eye, the wonderful weapon of the divine pathfinders Mitra and Varuna. It is the same cryptic form of language, the same brief and abundant method of thought even; though the conceptions are not identical, there is a clear kinship.

The mystical language has always this disadvantage that it readily becomes obscure, meaningless or even misleading to those who have not the secret and to posterity a riddle. Mr. Ranade tells us that it is impossible to make out what Heraclitus meant when he said, "The gods are mortals, men immortals." But is it quite impossible if we do not cut off this thinker from the earlier thought of the mystics? The Vedic Rishi also invokes the Dawn, "O goddess and human"; the gods in the Veda are constantly addressed as "men", the same words are traditionally applied to indicate men and immortals. The immanence of the immortal principle in man, the descent of the gods into the workings of mortality was almost the fundamental idea of the mystics. Heraclitus, likewise, seems to

recognise the inextricable unity of the eternal and the transitory, that which is for ever and yet seems to exist only in this strife and change which is a continual dying. The gods manifest themselves as things that continually change and perish; man is in principle an eternal being. Heraclitus does not really deal in barren antitheses; his method is a statement of antinomies and an adumbrating of their reconciliation in the very terms of opposition. Thus when he says that the name of the bow (*biós*) is life (*bíos*), but its work is death, obviously he intends no mere barren play upon words; he speaks of that principle of war, father of all and king of all, which makes cosmic existence an apparent process of life, but an actual process of death. The Upanishads seized hold of the same truth when they declared life to be the dominion of King Death, described it as the opposite of immortality and even related that all life and existence here were first created by Death for his food.

Unless we bear in mind this pregnant and symbolic character of Heraclitus' language we are likely to sterilise his thought by giving it a too literal sense. Heraclitus praises the "dry soul" as the wisest and best, but, he says, it is a pleasure and satisfaction to souls to become moist. This inclination of the soul to its natural delight in a sort of wine-drenched laxity must be discouraged; for Dionysus the wine-god and Hades, the Lord of Death, the Lord of the dark underworld, are one and the same deity. Professor Ranade takes this eulogy of the dry soul as praise of the dry light of reason; he finds in it a proof that Heraclitus was a rationalist and not a mystic: yet strangely enough he takes the parallel and opposite expressions about the moist soul and Dionysus in a quite different and material sense, as an ethical disapprobation of wine-drinking. Surely, it cannot be so; Heraclitus cannot mean by the dry soul the reason of a sober man and by a moist soul the non-reason or bewildered reason of the drunkard; nor when he says that Hades and Dionysus are the same, is he simply discouraging the drinking of wine as fatal to the health! Evidently he employs here, as always, a figurative

and symbolic language because he has to convey a deeper thought for which he finds ordinary language too poor and superficial.

Heraclitus is using the old language of the Mysteries, though in his own new way and for his own individual purpose, when he speaks of Hades and Dionysus and the everliving Fire or of the Furies, the succourers of Justice who will find out the Sun if he oversteps his measure. We miss his sense, if we see in these names of the gods only the poorer superficial meanings of the popular mythological religion. When Heraclitus speaks of the dry or the moist soul, it is of the soul and not the intellect that he is thinking, *psuchē* and not *nous*. *Psuchē* corresponds roughly to the *cetas* or *citta* of Indian psychology, *nous* to *buddhi*; the dry soul of the Greek thinker to the purified heart-consciousness, *śuddha citta*, of the Indian psychologists, which in their experience was the first basis for a purified intellect, *viśuddha buddhi*. The moist soul is that which allows itself to be perturbed by the impure wine of sense ecstasy, emotional excitement, an obscure impulse and inspiration whose source is from a dark underworld. Dionysus is the god of this wine-born ecstasy, the god of the Bacchic mysteries, — of the “walkers in the night, mages, bacchanals, mystics”: therefore Heraclitus says that Dionysus and Hades are one. In an opposite sense the ecstatic devotee of the Bhakti path in India reproaches the exclusive seeker by the way of thought-discernment with his “dry knowledge”, using Heraclitus’ epithet, but with a pejorative and not a laudatory significance.

To ignore the influence of the mystic thought and its methods of self-expression on the intellectual thinking of the Greeks from Pythagoras to Plato is to falsify the historical procession of the human mind. It was enveloped at first in the symbolic, intuitive, esoteric style and discipline of the Mystics, — Vedic and Vedantic seers, Orphic secret teachers, Egyptian priests. From that veil it emerged along the path of a metaphysical philosophy still related to the Mystics by the source of its fundamental ideas, its first aphoristic and cryptic style, its attempt to seize directly upon truth by intellectual vision rather than arrive at it by careful

ratiocination, but nevertheless intellectual in its method and aim. This is the first period of the Darshanas in India, in Greece of the early intellectual thinkers. Afterwards came the full tide of philosophic rationalism, Buddha or the Buddhists and the logical philosophers in India, in Greece the Sophists and Socrates with all their splendid progeny; with them the intellectual method did not indeed begin, but came to its own and grew to its fullness. Heraclitus belongs to the transition, not to the noontide of the reason; he is even its most characteristic representative. Hence his cryptic style, hence his brief and burdened thought and the difficulty we feel when we try to clarify and entirely rationalise his significances. The ignoring of the Mystics, our pristine fathers, *pūrve pitarah*, is the great defect of the modern account of our thought-evolution.



## Heraclitus – 2

**W**HAT PRECISELY is the key-note of Heraclitus' thinking, where has he found his starting-point, or what are the grand lines of his philosophy? For if his thought is not developed in the severe systematic method of later thinkers, if it does not come down to us in large streams of subtle reasoning and opulent imagery like Plato's but in detached aphoristic sentences aimed like arrows at truth, still they are not really scattered philosophical reflections. There is an inter-relation, an inter-dependence; they all start logically from his fundamental view of existence itself and go back to it for their constant justification.

As in Indian, so in Greek philosophy the first question for thought was the problem of the One and the Many. We see everywhere a multiplicity of things and beings; is it real or only phenomenal or practical, *māyā*, *vyavahāra*? Has individual man, for instance, — the question which concerns us most nearly, — an essential and immortal existence of his own or is he simply a phenomenal and transient result in the evolution or play of some one original principle, Matter, Mind, Spirit, which is the only real reality of existence? Does unity exist at all and, if so, is it a unity of sum or of primordial principle, a result or an origin, a oneness of totality or a oneness of nature or a oneness of essence, — the various standpoints of Pluralism, of Sankhya, of Vedanta? Or if both the One and the Many are real, what are the relations between these two eternal principles of being, or are they reconciled in an Absolute beyond them? These are no barren questions of logic, no battle of cloudy metaphysical abstractions, as the practical and sensational man would have us contemptuously believe; for on our answer to them depends our conception of God, of existence, of the world and of human life and destiny.

Heraclitus, differing in this, as Mr. Ranade reminds us, from Anaximander who like our Mayavadins denied true reality to the Many and from Empedocles who thought the All to be alternately one and many, believed unity and multiplicity to be both of them real and coexistent. Existence is then eternally one and eternally many, — even as Ramanuja and Madhwa have concluded, though in a very different spirit and from a quite different standpoint. Heraclitus' view arose from his strong concrete intuition of things, his acute sense of universal realities; for in our experience of the cosmos we do find always and inseparably this eternal coexistence and cannot really escape from it. Everywhere our gaze on the Many reveals to us an eternal oneness, no matter what we fix on as the principle of that oneness; yet is that unity inoperative except by the multiplicity of its powers and forms, nor do we anywhere see it void of or apart from its own multiplicity. One Matter, but many atoms, plasms, bodies; one Energy, but many forces; one Mind or at least Mind-stuff, but many mental beings; one Spirit, but many souls. Perhaps periodically this multiplicity goes back, is dissolved into, is swallowed up by the One from which it was originally evolved; but still the fact that it has evolved and got involved again, compels us to suppose a possibility and even a necessity of its renewed evolution: it is not then really destroyed. The Adwaitin by his Yoga goes back to the One, feels himself merged, believes that he has got rid of the Many, proved perhaps their unreality; but it is the achievement of an individual, of one of the Many, and the Many go on existing in spite of it. The achievement proves only that there is a plane of consciousness on which the soul can realise and not merely perceive by the intellect the oneness of the Spirit, and it proves nothing else. Therefore, on this truth of eternal oneness and eternal multiplicity Heraclitus fixes and anchors himself; from his firm acceptance of it, not reasoning it away but accepting all its consequences, flows all the rest of his philosophy.

Still, one question remains to be resolved before we can move a step farther. Since there is an eternal One, what is that?

Is it Force, Mind, Matter, Soul? or, since Matter has many principles, is it some one principle of Matter which has evolved all the rest or which by some power of its own activity has changed into all that we see? The old Greek thinkers conceived of cosmic Substance as possessed of four elements, omitting or not having arrived at the fifth, Ether, in which Indian analysis found the first and original principle. In seeking the nature of the original substance they fixed then on one or other of these four as the primordial Nature, one finding it in Air, another in Water, while Heraclitus, as we have seen, describes or symbolises the source and reality of all things as an everliving Fire. “No man or god” he says “has created the universe, but ever there was and is and will be the everliving Fire.”

In the Veda, in the early language of the Mystics generally, the names of the elements or primary principles of Substance were used with a clearly symbolic significance. The symbol of water is thus used constantly in the Rig Veda. It is said that in the beginning was the inconscient Ocean out of which the One was born by the vastness of His energy; but it is clear from the language of the hymn that no physical ocean is meant, but rather the unformed chaos of inconscient being in which the Divine, the Godhead lay concealed in a darkness enveloped by greater darkness. The seven active principles of existence are similarly spoken of as rivers or waters; we hear of the seven rivers, the great water, the four superior rivers, in a context which shows their symbolic significance. We see this image fixed in the Puranic mythus of Vishnu sleeping on the serpent Infinite in the milky ocean. But even as early as the Rig Veda, ether is the highest symbol of the Infinite, the *apeiron* of the Greeks; water is that of the same Infinite in its aspect as the original substance; fire is the creative power, the active energy of the Infinite; air, the life-principle, is spoken of as that which brings down fire out of the ethereal heavens into the earth. Yet these were not merely symbols. The Vedic Mystics held, it is clear, a close connection and effective parallelism to exist between psychical and physical activities, between the action of Light, for instance, and the phenomena of mental illumination; fire

was to them at once the luminous divine energy, the Seer-Will of the universal Godhead active and creative of all things, and the physical principle creative of the substantial forms of the universe, burning secretly in all life.

It is doubtful how far the earlier Greek philosophic thinkers preserved any of these complex conceptions in their generalisations about the original principle. But Heraclitus has clearly an idea of something more than a physical substance or energy in his concept of the everliving Fire. Fire is to him the physical aspect, as it were, of a great burning creative, formative and destructive force, the sum of all whose processes is a constant and unceasing change. The idea of the One which is eternally becoming Many and the Many which is eternally becoming One and of that One therefore not so much as stable substance or essence as active Force, a sort of substantial Will-to-become, is the foundation of Heraclitus' philosophy.

Nietzsche, whom Mr. Ranade rightly affiliates to Heraclitus, Nietzsche, the most vivid, concrete and suggestive of modern thinkers, as is Heraclitus among the early Greeks, founded his whole philosophical thought on this conception of existence as a vast Will-to-become and of the world as a play of Force; divine Power was to him the creative Word, the beginning of all things and that to which life aspires. But he affirms Becoming only and excludes Being from his view of things; hence his philosophy is in the end unsatisfactory, insufficient, lop-sided; it stimulates, but solves nothing. Heraclitus does not exclude Being from the data of the problem of existence, although he will not make any opposition or gulf between that and Becoming. By his conception of existence as at once one and many, he is bound to accept these two aspects of his everliving Fire as simultaneously true, true in each other; Being is an eternal becoming and yet the Becoming resolves itself into eternal being. All is in flux, for all is change of becoming; we cannot step into the same waters twice, for it is other and yet other waters that are flowing on. And yet, with his keen eye on the truth of things, preoccupied though he was with this aspect of existence, he could not help seeing another truth behind it. The waters into which we step,

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are and are not the same; our own existence is an eternity and an inconstant transience; we are and we are not. Heraclitus does not solve the contradiction; he states it and in his own way tries to give some account of its process.

That process he sees as a constant change and a changing back, an exchange and an interchange in a constant whole, — managed for the rest by a clash of forces, by a creative and determinative strife, “war which is the father and king of all things.” Between Fire as the Being and Fire in the Becoming existence describes a downward and upward movement — *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* — which has been called the “back-returning road” upon which all travels. These are the master ideas of the thought of Heraclitus.

## Heraclitus – 3

TWO APOPHTHEGMS of Heraclitus give us the starting-point of his whole thinking. They are his saying that it is wisdom to admit that all things are one and his other saying “One out of all and all out of One.” How are we to understand these two pregnant utterances? Must we read them into each other and conclude that for Heraclitus the One only exists as resultant of the many even as the many only exist as a becoming of the One? Mr. Ranade seems to think so; he tells us that this philosophy denies Being and affirms only Becoming, — like Nietzsche, like the Buddhists. But surely this is to read a little too much into Heraclitus’ theory of perpetual change, to take it too much by itself. If that was his whole belief, it is difficult to see why he should seek for an original and eternal principle, the everliving Fire which creates all by its perpetual changing, governs all by its fiery force of the “thunderbolt”, resolves all back into itself by a cyclic conflagration, difficult to account for his theory of the upward and downward way, difficult to concede what Mr. Ranade contends, that Heraclitus did hold the theory of a cosmic conflagration or to imagine what could be the result of such a cosmic catastrophe. To reduce all becoming into Nothing? Surely not; Heraclitus’ thought is at the very antipodes from speculative Nihilism. Into another kind of becoming? Obviously not, since by an absolute conflagration existing things can only be reduced into their eternal principle of being, into Agni, back into the immortal Fire. Something that is eternal, that is itself eternity, something that is for ever one, — for the cosmos is eternally one and many and does not by becoming cease to be one, — something that is God (Zeus), something that can be imaged as Fire which, if an ever-active force, is yet a substance or at least a substantial force and not merely an abstract Will-to-become, — something out of which

all cosmic becoming arises and into which it returns, what is this but eternal Being?

Heraclitus was greatly preoccupied with his idea of eternal becoming, for him the one right account of the cosmos, but his cosmos has still an eternal basis, a unique original principle. That distinguishes his thought radically from Nietzsche's or the Buddhists'. The later Greeks derived from him the idea of the perpetual stream of things, "All things are in flux." The idea of the universe as constant motion and unceasing change was always before him, and yet behind and in it all he saw too a constant principle of determination and even a mysterious principle of identity. Every day, he says, it is a new sun that rises; yes, but if the sun is always new, exists only by change from moment to moment, like all things in Nature, still it is the same everliving Fire that rises with each Dawn in the shape of the sun. We can never step again into the same stream, for ever other and other waters are flowing; and yet, says Heraclitus, "we do and we do not enter into the same waters, we are and we are not." The sense is clear; there is an identity in things, in all existences, *sarvabhūtāni*, as well as a constant changing; there is a Being as well as a Becoming and by that we have an eternal and real existence as well as a temporary and apparent, are not merely a constant mutation but a constant identical existence. Zeus exists, a sempiternal active Fire and eternal Word, a One by which all things are unified, all laws and results perpetually determined, all measures unalterably maintained. Day and Night are one, Death and Life are one, Youth and Age are one, Good and Evil are one, because that is One and all these are only its various shapes and appearances.

Heraclitus would not have accepted a purely psychological principle of Self as the origin of things, but in essence he is not very far from the Vedantic position. The Buddhists of the Nihilistic school used in their own way the image of the stream and the image of the fire. They saw, as Heraclitus saw, that nothing in the world is for two moments the same even in the most insistent continuity of forms. The flame maintains itself unchanged in appearance, but every moment it is another and

not the same fire; the stream is sustained in its flow by ever new waters. From this they drew the conclusion that there is no essence of things, nothing self-existent; the apparent becoming is all that we can call existence, behind it there is eternal Nothing, the absolute Void, or perhaps an original Non-Being. Heraclitus saw, on the contrary, that if the form of the flame only exists by a constant change, a constant exchange rather of the substance of the wick into the substance of the fiery tongue, yet there must be a principle of their existence common to them which thus converts itself from one form into another; — even if the substance of the flame is always changing, the principle of Fire is always the same and produces always the same results of energy, maintains always the same measures.

The Upanishad too describes the cosmos as a universal motion and becoming; it is all this that is mobile in the mobility, *jagatyām jagat*, — the very word for universe, *jagat*, having the radical sense of motion, so that the whole universe, the macrocosm, is one vast principle of motion and therefore of change and instability, while each thing in the universe is in itself a microcosm of the same motion and instability. Existences are “all becomings”; the Self-existent Atman, Swayambhu, has become all becomings, *ātmā eva abhūt sarvāṇi bhūtāni*. The relation between God and World is summed up in the phrase, “It is He that has moved out everywhere, *sa paryagāt*”; He is the Lord, the Seer and Thinker, who becoming everywhere — Heraclitus’ Logos, his Zeus, his One out of which come all things — “has fixed all things rightly according to their nature from years sempiternal”, — Heraclitus’ “All things are fixed and determined.” Substitute his Fire for the Vedantic Atman and there is nothing in the expressions of the Upanishad which the Greek thinker would not have accepted as another figure of his own thought. And do not the Upanishads use among other images this very symbol of the Fire? “As one Fire has entered into the world and taken shapes according to the various forms in the world,” so the one Being has become all these names and forms and yet remains the One. Heraclitus tells us precisely the same thing; God is all contraries, “He takes various shapes just as fire, when



it is mingled with spices, is named according to the savour of each.” Each one names Him according to his pleasure, says the Greek seer, and He accepts all names and yet accepts none, not even the highest name of Zeus. “He consents and yet at the same time does not consent to be called by the name of Zeus.” So too said Indian Dirghatamas of old in his long hymn of the divine Mysteries in the Rig Veda, “One existent the sages call by many names.” Though He assumes all these forms, says the Upanishad, He has no form that the vision can seize, He whose name is a mighty splendour. We see again how close are the thoughts of the Greek and very often even his expressions and images to the sense and style of the Vedic and Vedantic sages.

We must put each of Heraclitus’ apophthegms into its right place if we would understand his thought. “It is wise to admit that all things are one,” — not merely, be it noted, that they came from oneness and will go back to oneness, but that they are one, now and always, — all is, was and ever will be the everliving Fire. All seems to our experience to be many, an eternal becoming of manifold existences; where is there in it any principle of eternal identity? True, says Heraclitus, so it seems; but wisdom looks beyond and does see the identity of all things; Night and Day, Life and Death, the good and the evil, all are one, the eternal, the identical; those who see only a difference in objects, do not know the truth of the objects they observe. “Hesiod did not know day and night; for it is the One,” — *esti gar hen, asti hi ekam*. Now, an eternal and identical which all things are, is precisely what we mean by Being; it is precisely what is denied by those who see only Becoming. The Nihilistic Buddhists<sup>1</sup> insisted that there were only so many ideas, *vijñānāni*, and impermanent forms which were but the combination of parts and elements: no oneness, no identity anywhere; get beyond ideas and forms, you get to self-extinction, to the Void, to Nothing. Yet one must posit a principle of unity somewhere, if not at the base or in the secret being of things, yet in their action. The Buddhists had

<sup>1</sup> Buddha himself remained silent on this question; his goal of Nirvana was a negation of phenomenal existence, but not necessarily a denial of any kind of existence.

to posit their universal principle of Karma which, when you think of it, comes after all to a universal energy as the cause of the world, a creator and preserver of unchanging measures. Nietzsche denied Being, but had to speak of a universal Will-to-be; which again, when you come to think of it, seems to be no more than a translation of the Upanishadic *tapo brahma*, “Will-Energy is Brahman.” The later Sankhya denied the unity of conscious existences, but asserted the unity of Nature, Prakriti, which is again at once the original principle and substance of things and the creative energy, the *phusis* of the Greeks. It is indeed wise to agree that all things are one; for vision drives at that, the soul and the heart reach out to that, thought comes circling round to it in the very act of denial.

Heraclitus saw what all must see who look at the world with any attention, that there is something in all this motion and change and differentiation which insists on stability, which goes back to sameness, which assures unity, which triumphs into eternity. It has always the same measures; it is, was and ever will be. We are the same in spite of all our differences; we start from the same origin, proceed by the same universal laws, live, differ and strive in the bosom of an eternal oneness, are seeking always for that which binds all beings together and makes all things one. Each sees it in his own way, lays stress on this or that aspect of it, loses sight of or diminishes other aspects, gives it therefore a different name — even as Heraclitus, attracted by its aspect of creative and destructive Force, gave it the name of Fire. But when he generalises, he puts it widely enough; it is the One that is All, it is the All that is One, — Zeus, eternity, the Fire. He could have said with the Upanishad, “All this is the Brahman”, *sarvam khalu idam brahma*, though he could not have gone on and said, “This Self is the Brahman”, but would have declared rather of Agni what a Vedantic formula says of Vayu, *tvam pratyakṣam brahmāsi*, “Thou art manifest Brahman.”

But we may admit the One in different ways. The Adwaitins affirmed the One, the Being, but put away “all things” as Maya, or they recognised the immanence of the Being in these becomings which are yet not-Self, not That. Vaishnava philosophy saw

existence as eternally one in the Being, God, eternally many by His nature or conscious-energy in the souls whom He becomes or who exist in her. In Greece also Anaximander denied the multiple reality of the Becoming. Empedocles affirmed that the All is eternally one and many; all is one which becomes many and then again goes back to oneness. But Heraclitus will not so cut the knot of the riddle. “No,” he says in effect, “I hold to my idea of the eternal oneness of all things; never do they cease to be one. It is all my everliving Fire that takes various shapes and names, changes itself into all that is and yet remains itself, not at all by any illusion or mere appearance of becoming, but with a severe and positive reality.” All things then are in their reality and substance and law and reason of their being the One; the One in its shapes, values, changings becomes really all things. It changes and is yet immutable: for it does not increase or diminish, nor does it lose for a moment its eternal nature and identity which is that of the everliving Fire. Many values which reduce themselves to the same standard and judge of all values; many forces which go back to the same unalterable energy; many becoming which both represent and amount to one identical Being.

Here Heraclitus brings in his formula of “One out of all and all out of One”, which is his account of the process of the cosmos just as his formula “All things are one” is his account of the eternal truth of the cosmos. One, he says, in the process of the cosmos is always becoming all things from moment to moment, hence the eternal flux of things; but all things also are eternally going back to their principle of oneness; hence the unity of the cosmos, the sameness behind the flux of becoming, the stability of measures, the conservation of energy in all changes. This he explains farther by his theory of change as in its character a constant exchange. But is there then no end to this simultaneous upward and downward motion of things? As the downward has so far prevailed as to create the cosmos, will not the upward too prevail so as to dissolve it back into the everliving Fire? Here we come to the question whether Heraclitus did or did not hold the theory of a periodic conflagration or *pralaya*. “Fire will come on all things and judge and convict them.” If he held it, then we have

again another striking coincidence of Heraclitus' thought with our familiar Indian notions, the periodic *pralaya*, the Puranic conflagration of the world by the appearance of the twelve suns, the Vedantic theory of the eternal cycles of manifestation and withdrawal from manifestation. In fact, both the lines of thought are essentially the same and had to arrive inevitably at the same conclusions.

## Heraclitus – 4

**H**ERACLITUS' account of the cosmos is an evolution and involution out of his one eternal principle of Fire, — at once the one substance and the one force, — which he expresses in his figurative language as the upward and downward road. “The road up and down” he says “is one and the same.” Out of Fire, the radiant and energetic principle, air, water and earth proceed, — that is the procession of energy on its downward road; there is equally in the very tension of this process a force of potential return which would lead things backward to their source in the reverse order. In the balance of these two upward and downward forces resides the whole cosmic action; everything is a poise of contrary energies. The movement of life is like the back-returning of the bow, to which he compares it, an energy of traction and tension restraining an energy of release, every force of action compensated by a corresponding force of reaction. By the resistance of one to the other all the harmonies of existence are created.

We have the same idea of an evolution of successive conditions of energy out of a primal substance-force in the Indian theory of Sankhya. There indeed the system proposed is more complete and satisfying. It starts with the original or root energy, *mūla prakṛti*, which as the first substance, *pradhāna*, evolves by development and change into five successive principles. Ether, not fire, is the first principle, ignored by the Greeks, but rediscovered by modern Science;<sup>1</sup> there follow air, fire, the igneous, radiant and electric energy, water, earth, the fluid and solid. The Sankhya, like Anaximenes, puts Air first of the four principles admitted by the Greeks, though it does not like him make it the original substance, and it thus differs from the order of

<sup>1</sup> Now again rejected, though that does not seem to be indubitable or final.

Heraclitus. But it gives to the principle of fire the function of creating all forms, — as Agni in the Veda is the great builder of the worlds, — and here at least it meets his thought; for it is as the energetic principle behind all formation and mutation that Heraclitus must have chosen Fire as his symbol and material representative of the One. We may remember in this connection how far modern Science has gone to justify these old thinkers by the importance it gives to electricity and radio-active forces — Heraclitus' fire and thunderbolt, the Indian triple Agni — in the formation of atoms and in the transmutation of energy.

But the Greeks failed to go forward to that final discrimination which India attributed to Kapila, the supreme analytical thinker, — the discrimination between Prakriti and her cosmic principles, her twenty-four tattwas forming the subjective and objective aspects of Nature, and between Prakriti and Purusha, Conscious-Soul and Nature-Energy. Therefore while in the Sankhya ether, fire and the rest are only principles of the objective evolution of Prakriti, evolutionary aspects of the original *phusis*, the early Greeks could not get back beyond these aspects of Nature to the idea of a pure energy, nor could they at all account for her subjective side. The Fire of Heraclitus has to do duty at once for the original substance of all Matter and for God and Eternity. This preoccupation with Nature-Energy and the failure to fathom its relations with Soul has persisted in modern scientific thought, and we find there too the same attempt to identify some primary principle of Nature, ether or electricity, with the original Force.

However that may be, the theory of the creation of the world by some kind of evolutionary change out of the original substance or energy, by *pariṇāma*, is common to the early Greek and the Indian systems, however they may differ about the nature of the original *phusis*. The distinction of Heraclitus among the early Greek sages is his conception of the upward and downward road, one and the same in the descent and the return. It corresponds to the Indian idea of *nivṛtti* and *pravṛtti*, the double movement of the Soul and Nature, — *pravṛtti*, the moving out and forward, *nivṛtti*, the moving back and in. The

Indian thinkers were preoccupied with this double principle so far as it touches the action of the individual soul entering into the procession of Nature and drawing back from it; but still they saw a similar, a periodic movement forward and back of Nature itself which leads to an ever-repeated cycle of creation and dissolution; they held the idea of a periodic *pralaya*. Heraclitus' theory would seem to demand a similar conclusion. Otherwise we must suppose that the downward tendency, once in action, has always the upper hand over the upward or that cosmos is eternally proceeding out of the original substance and eternally returning to it, but never actually returns. The Many are then eternal not only in power of manifestation, but in actual fact of manifestation.

It is possible that Heraclitus may so have thought, but it is not the logical conclusion of his theory; it contradicts the evident suggestion of his metaphor about the road which implies a starting-point and a point of return; and we have too the distinct statement of the Stoics that he believed in the theory of conflagration, — an assertion which they are hardly likely to have made if this were not generally accepted as his teaching. The modern arguments against enumerated by Mr. Ranade are founded upon misconceptions. Heraclitus' affirmation is not simply that the One is always Many, the Many always One, but in his own words, "out of all the One and out of One all." Plato's phrasing of the thought, "the reality is both many and one and in its division it is always being brought together," states the same idea in different language. It means a constant current and back-current of change, the upward and downward road, and we may suppose that as the One by downward change becomes completely the All in the descending process, yet remains eternally the one everliving Fire, so the All by upward change may resort completely to the One and yet essentially exist, since it can again return into various being by the repetition of the downward movement. All difficulty disappears if we remember that what is implied is a process of evolution and involution, — so too the Indian word for creation, *sṛṣṭi*, means a release or bringing forth of what is held in, latent, — and that the conflagration destroys

existing forms, but not the principle of multiplicity. There will be then no inconsistency at all in Heraclitus' theory of a periodic conflagration; it is rather, that being the highest expression of change, the complete logic of his system.



## Heraclitus – 5

**I**F IT is the law of Change that determines the evolution and involution of the one downward and upward road, the same law prevails all along the path, through all its steps and returns, in all the million transactions of the wayside. There is everywhere the law of exchange and interchange, *amoibē*. The unity and the multiplicity have at every moment this active relation to each other. The One is constantly exchanging itself for the many; that gold has been given, you have instead these commodities, but in fact they are only so much value of the gold. The many are constantly exchanging themselves for the One; these commodities are given, disappear, are destroyed, we say, but in their place there is the gold, the original substance-energy to the value of the commodities. You see the sun and you think it is the same sun always, but really it is a new sun that rises each day; for it is the Fire's constant giving of itself in exchange for the elemental commodities that compose the sun which preserves its form, its energy, its movement, all its measures. Science shows us that this is true of all things, of the human body, for instance; it is always the same, but it preserves its apparent identity only by a constant change. There is a constant destruction, yet there is no destruction. Energy distributes itself, but never really dissipates itself; change and unalterable conservation of energy in the change are the law, not destruction. If this world of multiplicity is destroyed in the end by Fire, yet there is no end and it is not destroyed, but only exchanged for the Fire. Moreover, there is exchange between all these becomings which are only so many active values of the Being, commodities that are a fixed value and measure of the universal gold. Fire takes of its substance from one form and gives to another, changes one apparent value of its substance into another apparent value, but the substance-energy remains the

same and the new value is the equivalent of the old, — as when it turns fuel into smoke and cinders and ashes. Modern Science with a more accurate knowledge of what actually happens in this change, yet confirms Heraclitus' conclusion. It is the law of the conservation of energy.

Practically, the active secret of life is there; all life physical or mental or merely dynamic maintains itself by constant change and interchange. Still, Heraclitus' account is so far not altogether satisfactory. The measure, the value of the energy exchanged remains unaltered even when the form is altered, but why should also the cosmic commodities we have for the universal gold be fixed and in a way unchanging? What is the explanation, how comes about this eternity of principles and elements and kinds of combination and this persistence and recurrence of the same forms which we observe in the cosmos? Why in this constant cosmic flux should everything after all remain the same? Why should the sun, though always new, be yet for all practical purposes the same sun? Why should the stream be, as Heraclitus himself admits, the same stream although it is ever other and other waters that are flowing? It was in this connection that Plato brought in his eternal, ideal plane of fixed ideas, by which he seems to have meant at once an originating real-idea and an original ideal schema for all things. An idealistic philosophy of the Indian type might say that this force, the Shakti which you call Fire, is a consciousness which preserves by its energy its original scheme of ideas and corresponding forms of things. But Heraclitus gives us another account, not quite satisfactory, yet profound and full of suggestive truth; it is contained in his striking phrases about war and justice and tension and the Furies pursuing the transgressor of measures. He is the first thinker to see the world entirely in the terms of Power.

What is the nature of this exchange? It is strife, *eris*, it is war, *polemos*! What is the rule and result of the war? It is justice. How acts that justice? By a just tension and compensation of forces which produce the harmony of things and therefore, we presume, their stability. "War is the father of all and the king of all"; "All things becoming according to strife"; "To know that

strife is justice”; these are his master apophthegms in this matter. At first we do not see why exchange should be strife; it would seem rather to be commerce. Strife there is, but why should there not also be peaceful and willing interchange? Heraclitus will have none of it; no peace! he would agree with the modern Teuton that commerce itself is a department of War. It is true there is a commerce, gold for commodities, commodities for gold, but the commerce itself and all its circumstances are governed by a forceful, more, a violent compulsion of the universal Fire. That is what he means by the Furies pursuing the sun; “for fear of Him” says the Upanishad “the wind blows . . . and death runs.” And between all beings there is a constant trial of strength; by that warfare they come into being, by that their measures are maintained. We see that he is right; he has caught the initial aspect of cosmic Nature. Everything here is a clash of forces and by that clash and struggle and clinging and wrestling things not only come into being, but are maintained in being. Karma? Laws? But different laws meet and compete and by their tension the balance of the world is maintained. Karma? It is the forcible justice of an eternal compelling Power and it is the Furies pursuing us if we transgress our measures.

War, contends Heraclitus, is not mere injustice, chaotic violence; it is justice, although a violent justice, the only kind possible. Again, from that point of view, we see that he is right. By the energy expended and its value shall the fruits be determined, and where two forces meet, expenditure of energy means a trial of strength. Shall not then the rewards be to the strong according to his strength and to the weak according to his weakness? So it is at least in the world, the primal law, although subject to the help of the weak by the strong which need not after all be an injustice or a violation of measures, in spite of Nietzsche and Heraclitus. And is there not after all sometimes a tremendous strength behind weakness, the very strength of the pressure on the oppressed which brings its terrible reaction, the back return of the bow, Zeus, the eternal Fire, observing his measures?

Not only between being and being, force and force is there

war, but within each there is an eternal opposition, a tension of contraries, and it is this tension which creates the balance necessary to harmony. Harmony then there is, for cosmos itself is in its result a harmony; but it is so because in its process it is war, tension, opposition, a balance of eternal contraries. Real peace there cannot be, unless by peace you mean a stable tension, a balance of power between hostile forces, a sort of mutual neutralisation of excesses. Peace cannot create, cannot maintain anything, and Homer's prayer that war might perish from among Gods and men is a monstrous absurdity, for that would mean the end of the world. A periodic end there may be, not by peace or reconciliation, but by conflagration, by an attack of Fire, *to pur epelthon*, a fiery judgment and conviction. Force created the world, Force is the world, Force by its violence maintains the world, Force shall end the world, — and eternally re-create it.

## Heraclitus – 6

**H**ERACLITUS is the first and the most consistent teacher of the law of relativity; it is the logical result of his primary philosophical concepts. Since all is one in its being and many in its becoming, it follows that everything must be one in its essence. Night and day, life and death, good and evil can only be different aspects of the same absolute reality. Life and death are in fact one, and we may say from different points of view that all death is only a process and change of life or that all life is only an activity of death. Really both are one energy whose activity presents to us a duality of aspects. From one point of view we are not, for our existence is only a constant mutation of energy; from another we are, because the being in us is always the same and sustains our secret identity. So too, we can only speak of a thing as good or evil, just or unjust, beautiful or ugly from a purely relative point of view, because we adopt a particular standpoint or have in view some practical end or temporarily valid relation. He gives the example of “the sea, water purest and impurest”, their fine element to the fish, abominable and undrinkable to man. And does not this apply to all things? — they are the same always in reality and assume their qualities and properties because of our standing-point in the universe of becoming, the nature of our seeing and the texture of our minds. All things circle back to the eternal unity and in their beginning and end are the same; it is only in the arc of becoming that they vary in themselves and from each other, and there they have no absoluteness to each other. Night and day are the same; it is only the nature of our vision and our standing-point on the earth and our relations of earth and sun that create the difference. What is day to us, is to others night.

Because of this insistence on the relativity of good and evil,

Heraclitus is thought to have enunciated some kind of supermoralism; but it is well to see carefully to what this supermoralism of Heraclitus really amounts. Heraclitus does not deny the existence of an absolute; but for him the absolute is to be found in the One, in the Divine, — not the gods, but the one supreme Divinity, the Fire. It has been objected that he attributes relativity to God, because he says that the first principle is willing and yet not willing to be called by the name of Zeus. But surely this is to misunderstand him altogether. The name Zeus expresses only the relative human idea of the Godhead; therefore while God accepts the name, He is not bound or limited by it. All our concepts of Him are partial and relative; “He is named according to the pleasure of each.” This is nothing more nor less than the truth proclaimed by the Vedas, “One existent the sages call by many names.” Brahman is willing to be called Vishnu, and yet he is not willing, because he is also Brahma and Maheshwara and all the gods and the world and all principles and all that is, and yet not any of these things, *neti neti*. As men approach him, so he accepts them. But the One to Heraclitus as to the Vedantin is absolute.

This is quite clear from all his sayings; day and night, good and evil are one, because they are the One in their essence and in the One the distinctions we make between them disappear. There is a Word, a Reason in all things, a Logos, and that Reason is one; only men by the relativity of their mentality turn it each into his personal thought and way of looking at things and live according to this variable relativity. It follows that there is an absolute, a divine way of looking at things. “To God all things are good and just, but men hold some things to be good, others unjust.” There is then an absolute good, an absolute beauty, an absolute justice of which all things are the relative expression. There is a divine order in the world; each thing fulfils its nature according to its place in the order and in its place and symmetry in the one Reason of things is good, just and beautiful precisely because it fulfils that Reason according to the eternal measures. To take an example, the world war may be regarded as an evil by some, a sheer horror of carnage, to others because of the new

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possibilities it opens to mankind, it may seem a good. It is at once good and evil. But that is the relative view; in its entirety, in its fulfilment in each and all of its circumstances of a divine purpose, a divine justice, a divine force executing itself in the large reason of things, it is from the absolute point of view good and just — to God, not to man.

Does it follow that the relative view-point has no validity at all? Not for a moment. On the contrary, it must be the expression, proper to each mentality according to the necessity of its nature and standpoint, of the divine Law. Heraclitus says that plainly; “Fed are all human laws by one, the divine.” That sentence ought to be quite sufficient to protect Heraclitus against the charge of antinomianism. True, no human law is the absolute expression of the divine justice, but it draws its validity, its sanction from that and is valid for its purpose, in its place, in its proper time, has its relative necessity. Even though men’s notions of good and justice vary in the mutations of the becoming, yet human good and justice persist in the stream of things, preserve a measure. Heraclitus admits relative standards, but as a thinker he is obliged to go beyond them. All is at once one and many, an absolute and a relative, and all the relations of the many are relativities, yet are fed by, go back to, persist by that in them which is absolute.

## Heraclitus – 7

THE IDEAS of Heraclitus on which I have so far laid stress, are general, philosophical, metaphysical; they glance at those first truths of existence, *devānāṁ prathamā vratāni*,<sup>1</sup> for which philosophy first seeks because they are the key to all other truths. But what is their practical effect on human life and aspiration? For that is in the end the real value of philosophy for man, to give him light on the nature of his being, the principles of his psychology, his relations with the world and with God, the fixed lines or the great possibilities of his destiny. It is the weakness of most European philosophy — not the ancient — that it lives too much in the clouds and seeks after pure metaphysical truth too exclusively for its own sake; therefore it has been a little barren because much too indirect in its bearing on life. It is the great distinction of Nietzsche among later European thinkers to have brought back something of the old dynamism and practical force into philosophy, although in the stress of this tendency he may have neglected unduly the dialectical and metaphysical side of philosophical thinking. No doubt, in seeking Truth we must seek it for its own sake first and not start with any preconceived practical aim and prepossession which would distort our disinterested view of things; but when Truth has been found, its bearing on life becomes of capital importance and is the solid justification of the labour spent in our research. Indian philosophy has always understood its double function; it has sought the Truth not only as an intellectual pleasure or the natural dharma of the reason, but in order to know how man may live by the Truth or strive after it; hence its intimate influence on the religion, the social ideas, the daily life of the people, its immense dynamic

<sup>1</sup> The first laws of working of the Gods.



power on the mind and actions of Indian humanity. The Greek thinkers, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, the Stoics and Epicureans, had also this practical aim and dynamic force, but it acted only on the cultured few. That was because Greek philosophy, losing its ancient affiliation to the Mystics, separated itself from the popular religion; but as ordinarily Philosophy alone can give light to Religion and save it from crudeness, ignorance and superstition, so Religion alone can give, except for a few, spiritual passion and effective power to Philosophy and save it from becoming unsubstantial, abstract and sterile. It is a misfortune for both when the divine sisters part company.

But when we seek among Heraclitus' sayings for the human application of his great fundamental thoughts, we are disappointed. He gives us little direct guidance and on the whole leaves us to draw our own profit from the packed opulence of his first ideas. What may be called his aristocratic view of life, we might regard possibly as a moral result of his philosophical conception of Power as the nature of the original principle. He tells us that the many are bad, the few good and that one is to him equal to thousands, if he be the best. Power of knowledge, power of character, — character, he says, is man's divine force, — power and excellence generally are the things that prevail in human life and are supremely valuable, and these things in their high and pure degree are rare among men, they are the difficult attainment of the few. From that, true enough so far as it goes, we might deduce a social and political philosophy. But the democrat might well answer that if there is an eminent and concentrated virtue, knowledge and force in the one or the few, so too there is a diffused virtue, knowledge and force in the many which acting collectively may outweigh and exceed isolated or rare excellences. If the king, the sage, the best are Vishnu himself, as old Indian thought also affirmed, to a degree to which the ordinary man, *prākṛto janah*, cannot pretend, so also are "the five", the group, the people. The Divine is *samaṣṭi* as well as *vyāṣṭi*, manifested in the collectivity as well as in the individual, and the justice on which Heraclitus insists demands that both should have their effect and their value; they depend

indeed and draw on each other for the effectuation of their excellences.

Other sayings of Heraclitus are interesting enough, as when he affirms the divine element in human laws, — and that is also a profound and fruitful sentence. His views on the popular religion are interesting, but move on the surface and do not carry us very far even on the surface. He rejects with a violent contempt the current degradation of the old mystic formulas and turns from them to the true mysteries, those of Nature and of our being, that Nature which, as he says, loves to be hidden, is full of mysteries, ever occult. It is a sign that the lore of the early Mystics had been lost, the spiritual sense had departed out of their symbols, even as in Vedic India; but there took place in Greece no new and powerful movement which could, as in India, replace them by new symbols, new and more philosophic restatements of their hidden truths, new disciplines, schools of Yoga. Attempts, such as that of Pythagoras, were made; but Greece at large followed the turn given by Heraclitus, developed the cult of the reason and left the remnants of the old occult religion to become a solemn superstition and a conventional pomp.

Doubly interesting is his condemnation of animal sacrifice; it is, he says, a vain attempt at purification by defilement of oneself with blood, as if we were to cleanse mud-stained feet with mud. Here we see the same trend of revolt against an ancient and universal religious practice as that which destroyed in India the sacrificial system of the Vedic religion, — although Buddha's great impulse of compassion was absent from the mind of Heraclitus: pity could never have become a powerful motive among the old Mediterranean races. But the language of Heraclitus shows us that the ancient system of sacrifice in Greece and in India was not a mere barbaric propitiation of savage deities, as modern inquiry has falsely concluded; it had a psychological significance, purification of the soul as well as propitiation of higher and helpful powers, and was therefore in all probability mystic and symbolical; for purification was, as we know, one of the master ideas of the ancient Mysteries. In India of the Gita, in the development of Judaism by the prophets

and by Jesus, while the old physical symbols were discouraged and especially the blood-rite, the psychological idea of sacrifice was saved, emphasised and equipped with subtler symbols, such as the Christian Eucharist and the offerings of the devout in the Shaiva or Vaishnava temples. But Greece with its rational bent and its insufficient religious sense was unable to save its religion; it tended towards that sharp division between philosophy and science on one side and religion on the other which has been so peculiar a characteristic of the European mind. Here too Heraclitus was, as in so many other directions, a forerunner, an indicator of the natural bent of occidental thought.

Equally striking is his condemnation of idol-worship, one of the earliest in human history, — “he who prays to an image is chattering to a stone wall.” The intolerant violence of this protestant rationalism and positivism makes Heraclitus again a precursor of a whole movement of the human mind. It is not indeed a religious protest such as that of Mahomed against the naturalistic, Pagan and idolatrous polytheism of the Arabs or of the Protestants against the aesthetic and emotional saint-worship of the Catholic Church, its Mariolatry and use of images and elaborate ritual; its motive is philosophic, rational, psychological. Heraclitus was not indeed a pure rationalist. He believes in the Gods, but as psychological presences, cosmic powers, and he is too impatient of the grossness of the physical image, its hold on the senses, its obscuration of the psychological significance of the godheads to see that it is not to the stone, but to the divine person figured in the stone that the prayer is offered. It is noticeable that in his conception of the gods he is kin to the old Vedic seers, though not at all a religious mystic in his temperament. The Vedic religion seems to have excluded physical images and it was the protestant movements of Jainism and Buddhism which either introduced or at least popularised and made general the worship of images in India. Here too Heraclitus prepares the way for the destruction of the old religion, the reign of pure philosophy and reason and the void which was filled up by Christianity; for man cannot live by reason alone. When it was too late, some attempt was made to re-spiritualise the

old religion, and there was the remarkable effort of Julian and Libanius to set up a regenerated Paganism against triumphant Christianity; but the attempt was too unsubstantial, too purely philosophic, empty of the dynamic power of the religious spirit. Europe had killed its old creeds beyond revival and had to turn for its religion to Asia.

Thus, for the general life of man Heraclitus has nothing to give us beyond his hint of an aristocratic principle in society and politics, — and we may note that this aristocratic bent was very strong in almost all the subsequent Greek philosophers. In religion his influence tended to the destruction of the old creed without effectively putting anything more profound in its place; though not himself a pure rationalist, he prepared the way for philosophic rationalism. But even without religion philosophy by itself can give us at least some light on the spiritual destiny of man, some hope of the infinite, some ideal perfection after which we can strive. Plato who was influenced by Heraclitus, tried to do this for us; his thought sought after God, tried to seize the ideal, had its hope of a perfect human society. We know how the Neo-platonists developed his ideas under the influence of the East and how they affected Christianity. The Stoics, still more directly the intellectual descendants of Heraclitus, arrived at very remarkable and fruitful ideas of human possibility and a powerful psychological discipline, — as we should say in India, a Yoga, — by which they hoped to realise their ideal. But what has Heraclitus himself to give us? Nothing directly; we have to gather for ourselves whatever we can from his first principles and his cryptic sentences.

Heraclitus was regarded in ancient times as a pessimistic thinker and we have one or two sayings of his from which we can, if we like, deduce the old vain gospel of the vanity of things. Time, he says, is playing draughts like a child, amusing itself with counters, building castles on the sea-shore only to throw them down again. If that is the last word, then all human effort and aspiration are vain. But on what primary philosophical conception does this discouraging sentence depend? Everything turns

on that; for in itself this is no more than an assertion of a self-evident fact, the mutability of things and the recurrent transiency of forms. But if the principles which express themselves in forms are eternal or if there is a Spirit in things which finds its account in the mutations and evolutions of Time and if that Spirit dwells in the human being as the immortal and infinite power of his soul, then no conclusion of the vanity of the world or the vanity of human existence arises. If indeed the original and eternal principle of Fire is a purely physical substance or force, then, truly, since all the great play and effort of consciousness in us must sink and dissolve into that, there can be no permanent spiritual value in our being, much less in our works. But we have seen that Heraclitus' Fire cannot be a purely physical or unconscious principle. Does he then mean that all our existence is merely a continual changeable Becoming, a play or Lila with no purpose in it except the playing and no end except the conviction of the vanity of all cosmic activity by its relapse into the indistinguishable unity of the original principle or substance? For even if that principle, the One to which the many return, be not merely physical or not really physical at all, but spiritual, we may still, like the Mayavadins, affirm the vanity of the world and of our human existence, precisely because the one is not eternal and the other has no eventual aim except its own self-abolition after the conviction of the vanity and unreality of all its temporal interests and purposes. Is the conviction of the world by the one absolute Fire such a conviction of the vanity of all the temporal and relative values of the Many?

That is one sense in which we can understand the thought of Heraclitus. His idea of all things as born of war and existing by strife might, if it stood by itself, lead us to adopt, even if he himself did not clearly arrive at, that conclusion. For if all is a continual struggle of forces, its best aspect only a violent justice and the highest harmony only a tension of opposites without any hope of a divine reconciliation, its end a conviction and destruction by eternal Fire, all our ideal hopes and aspirations are out of place; they have no foundation in the truth of things. But there is another side to the thought

of Heraclitus. He says indeed that all things come into being “according to strife”, by the clash of forces, are governed by the determining justice of war. He says farther that all is utterly determined, fated. But what then determines? The justice of a clash of forces is not fate; forces in conflict determine indeed, but from moment to moment, according to a constantly changing balance always modifiable by the arising of new forces. If there is predetermination, an inevitable fate in things, then there must be some power behind the conflict which determines them, fixes their measures. What is that power? Heraclitus tells us; all indeed comes into being according to strife, but also all things come into being according to Reason, *kat’ erin* but also *kata ton logon*. What is this Logos? It is not an inconscient reason in things, for his Fire is not merely an inconscient force, it is Zeus and eternity. Fire, Zeus is Force, but it is also an Intelligence; let us say then that it is an intelligent Force which is the origin and master of things. Nor can this Logos be identical in its nature with the human reason; for that is an individual and therefore relative and partial judgment and intelligence which can only seize on relative truth, not on the true truth of things, but the Logos is one and universal, an absolute reason therefore combining and managing all the relativities of the many. Was not then Philo justified in deducing from this idea of an intelligent Force originating and governing the world, Zeus and Fire, his interpretation of the Logos as “the divine dynamic, the energy and the self-revelation of God”? Heraclitus might not so have phrased it, might not have seen all that his thought contained, but it does contain this sense when his different sayings are fathomed and put together in their consequences.

We get very near the Indian conception of Brahman, the cause, origin and substance of all things, an absolute Existence whose nature is consciousness (Chit) manifesting itself as Force (Tapas, Shakti) and moving in the world of his own being as the Seer and Thinker, *kavir manīṣī*, an immanent Knowledge-Will in all, *vijñānamaya puruṣa*, who is the Lord or Godhead, *īś, īśvara, deva*, and has ordained all things according to their

nature from years sempiternal, — Heraclitus' "measures" which the Sun is forced to observe, his "things are utterly determined." This Knowledge-Will is the Logos. The Stoics spoke of it as a seed Logos, *spermatikos*, reproduced in conscious beings as a number of seed Logoi; and this at once reminds us of the Vedantic *prājña puruṣa*, the supreme Intelligence who is the Lord and dwells in the sleep-state holding all things in a seed of dense consciousness which works out through the perceptions of the subtle Puruṣa, the mental Being. Vijnana is indeed a consciousness which sees things, not as the human reason sees them in parts and pieces, in separated and aggregated relations, but in the original reason of their existence and law of their existence, their primal and total truth; therefore it is the seed Logos, the originative and determinant conscious force working as supreme Intelligence and Will. The Vedic seers called it the Truth-consciousness and believed that men also could become truth-conscious, enter into the divine Reason and Will and by the Truth become immortals, *anthrōpoi athanatoi*.

Does the thought of Heraclitus admit of any such hope as the Vedic seers held and hymned with so triumphant a confidence? or does it even give ground for any aspiration to some kind of a divine supermanhood such as his disciples the Stoics so sternly laboured for or as that of which Nietzsche, the modern Heraclitus, drew a too crude and violent figure? His saying that man is kindled and extinguished as light disappears into night, is commonplace and discouraging enough. But this may after all be only true of the apparent man. Is it possible for man in his becoming to raise his present fixed measures? to elevate his mental, relative, individual reason into direct communion with or direct participation in the divine and absolute reason? to inspire and raise the values of his human force to the higher values of the divine force? to become aware like the gods of an absolute good and an absolute beauty? to lift this mortal to the nature of immortality? Against his melancholy image of human transiency we have that remarkable and cryptic sentence, "the gods are mortals, men immortals", which, taken literally, might mean that the gods are powers that perish and

replace each other and the soul of man alone is immortal, but must at least mean that there is in man behind his outward transiency an immortal spirit. We have too his saying, "thou canst not find the limits of the soul", and we have the profoundest of all Heraclitus' utterances, "the kingdom is of the child." If man is in his real being an infinite and immortal spirit, there is surely no reason why he should not awaken to his immortality, arise towards the consciousness of the universal, one and absolute, live in a higher self-realisation. "I have sought for myself" says Heraclitus; and what was it that he found?

But there is one great gap and defect whether in his knowledge of things or his knowledge of the self of man. We see in how many directions the deep divining eye of Heraclitus anticipated the largest and profoundest generalisations of Science and Philosophy and how even his more superficial thoughts indicate later powerful tendencies of the occidental mind, how too some of his ideas influenced such profound and fruitful thinkers as Plato, the Stoics, the Neo-platonists. But in his defect also he is a forerunner; it illustrates the great deficiency of later European thought, such of it at least as has not been profoundly influenced by Asiatic religions or Asiatic mysticism. I have tried to show how often his thought touches and is almost identical with the Vedic and Vedantic. But his knowledge of the truth of things stopped with the vision of the universal reason and the universal force; he seems to have summed up the principle of things in these two first terms, the aspect of consciousness, the aspect of power, a supreme intelligence and a supreme energy. The eye of Indian thought saw a third aspect of the Self and of Brahman; besides the universal consciousness active in divine knowledge, besides the universal force active in divine will, it saw the universal delight active in divine love and joy. European thought, following the line of Heraclitus' thinking, has fixed itself on reason and on force and made them the principles towards whose perfection our being has to aspire. Force is the first aspect of the world, war, the clash of energies; the second aspect, reason, emerges out of the appearance of



force in which it is at first hidden and reveals itself as a certain justice, a certain harmony, a certain determining intelligence and reason in things; the third aspect is a deeper secret behind these two, universal delight, love, beauty which taking up the other two can establish something higher than justice, better than harmony, truer than reason, — unity and bliss, the ecstasy of our fulfilled existence. Of this last secret power Western thought has only seen two lower aspects, pleasure and aesthetic beauty; it has missed the spiritual beauty and the spiritual delight. For that reason Europe has never been able to develop a powerful religion of its own; it has been obliged to turn to Asia. Science takes possession of the measures and utilities of Force; rational philosophy pursues reason to its last subtleties; but inspired philosophy and religion can seize hold of the highest secret, *uttamam rahasyam*.

Heraclitus might have seen it if he had carried his vision a little farther. Force by itself can only produce a balance of forces, the strife that is justice; in that strife there takes place a constant exchange and, once this need of exchange is seen, there arises the possibility of modifying and replacing war by reason as the determinant principle of the exchange. This is the second effort of man, of which Heraclitus did not clearly see the possibility. From exchange we can rise to the highest possible idea of interchange, a mutual dependency of self-giving as the hidden secret of life; from that can grow the power of Love replacing strife and exceeding the cold balance of reason. There is the gate of the divine ecstasy. Heraclitus could not see it, and yet his one saying about the kingdom of the child touches, almost reaches the heart of the secret. For this kingdom is evidently spiritual, it is the crown, the mastery to which the perfected man arrives; and the perfect man is a divine child! He is the soul which awakens to the divine play, accepts it without fear or reserve, gives itself up in a spiritual purity to the Divine, allows the careful and troubled force of man to be freed from care and grief and become the joyous play of the divine Will, his relative and stumbling reason to be replaced by that divine knowledge which to the Greek, the

rational man, is foolishness, and the laborious pleasure-seeking of the bound mentality to lose itself in the spontaneity of the divine Ananda; “for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” The Paramhansa, the liberated man, is in his soul *bālavat*, even as if a child.

# The Problem of Rebirth



## Section I

# Rebirth and Karma



## Rebirth

THE THEORY of rebirth is almost as ancient as thought itself and its origin is unknown. We may according to our prepossessions accept it as the fruit of ancient psychological experience always renewable and verifiable and therefore true or dismiss it as a philosophical dogma and ingenious speculation; but in either case the doctrine, even as it is in all appearance well-nigh as old as human thought itself, is likely also to endure as long as human beings continue to think.

In former times the doctrine used to pass in Europe under the grotesque name of transmigration which brought with it to the Western mind the humorous image of the soul of Pythagoras migrating, a haphazard bird of passage, from the human form divine into the body of a guinea-pig or an ass. The philosophical appreciation of the theory expressed itself in the admirable but rather unmanageable Greek word, *metempsychosis*, which means the insouling of a new body by the same psychic individual. The Greek tongue is always happy in its marriage of thought and word and a better expression could not be found; but forced into English speech the word becomes merely long and pedantic without any memory of its subtle Greek sense and has to be abandoned. Reincarnation is the now popular term, but the idea in the word leans to the gross or external view of the fact and begs many questions. I prefer “rebirth”, for it renders the sense of the wide, colourless, but sufficient Sanskrit term, *punarjanma*, “again-birth”, and commits us to nothing but the fundamental idea which is the essence and life of the doctrine.

Rebirth is for the modern mind no more than a speculation and a theory; it has never been proved by the methods of modern science or to the satisfaction of the new critical mind formed by a scientific culture. Neither has it been disproved; for modern science knows nothing about a before-life or an after-life for

the human soul, knows nothing indeed about a soul at all, nor can know; its province stops with the flesh and brain and nerve, the embryo and its formation and development. Neither has modern criticism any apparatus by which the truth or untruth of rebirth can be established. In fact, modern criticism, with all its pretensions to searching investigation and scrupulous certainty, is no very efficient truth-finder. Outside the sphere of the immediate physical it is almost helpless. It is good at discovering data, but except where the data themselves bear on the surface their own conclusion, it has no means of being rightly sure of the generalisations it announces from them so confidently in one generation and destroys in the next. It has no means of finding out with surety the truth or untruth of a doubtful historical assertion; after a century of dispute it has not even been able to tell us yes or no, whether Jesus Christ ever existed. How then shall it deal with such a matter as this of rebirth which is stuff of psychology and must be settled rather by psychological than physical evidence?

The arguments which are usually put forward by supporters and opponents, are often weak or futile and even at their best insufficient either to prove or to disprove anything in the world. One argument, for instance, often put forward triumphantly in disproof is this that we have no memory of our past lives and therefore there were no past lives! One smiles to see such reasoning seriously used by those who imagine that they are something more than intellectual children. The argument proceeds on psychological grounds and yet it ignores the very nature of our ordinary or physical memory which is all that the normal man can employ. How much do we remember of our actual lives which we are undoubtedly living at the present moment? Our memory is normally good for what is near, becomes vaguer or less comprehensive as its objects recede into the distance, farther off seizes only some salient points and, finally, for the beginning of our lives falls into a mere blankness. Do we remember even the mere fact, the simple state of being an infant on the mother's breast? and yet that state of infancy was, on any but a Buddhist theory, part of the same life and belonged to the same



individual, — the very one who cannot remember it just as he cannot remember his past lives. Yet we demand that this physical memory, this memory of the brute brain of man which cannot remember our infancy and has lost so much of our later years, shall recall that which was before infancy, before birth, before itself was formed. And if it cannot, we are to cry, “Disproved your reincarnation theory!” The sapient insipidity of our ordinary human reasoning could go no farther than in this sort of ratiocination. Obviously, if our past lives are to be remembered whether as fact and state or in their events and images, it can only be by a psychical memory awaking which will overcome the limits of the physical and resuscitate impressions other than those stamped on the physical being by physical cerebration.

I doubt whether, even if we could have evidence of the physical memory of past lives or of such a psychical awakening, the theory would be considered any better proved than before. We now hear of many such instances confidently alleged though without that apparatus of verified evidence responsibly examined which gives weight to the results of psychical research. The sceptic can always challenge them as mere fiction and imagination unless and until they are placed on a firm basis of evidence. Even if the facts alleged are verified, he has the resource of affirming that they are not really memories but were known to the person alleging them by ordinary physical means or were suggested to him by others and have been converted into reincarnate memory either by conscious deception or by a process of self-deception and self-hallucination. And even supposing the evidence were too strong and unexceptionable to be got rid of by these familiar devices, they might yet not be accepted as proof of rebirth; the mind can discover a hundred theoretical explanations for a single group of facts. Modern speculation and research have brought in this doubt to overhang all psychical theory and generalisation.

We know for instance that in the phenomena, say, of automatic writing or of communication from the dead, it is disputed whether the phenomena proceed from outside, from disembodied minds, or from within, from the subliminal consciousness,

or whether the communication is actual and immediate from the released personality or is the uprising to the surface of a telepathic impression which came from the mind of the then living man but has remained submerged in our subliminal mentality. The same kind of doubts might be opposed to the evidences of reincarnate memory. It might be maintained that they prove the power of a certain mysterious faculty in us, a consciousness that can have some inexplicable knowledge of past events, but that these events may belong to other personalities than ours and that our attribution of them to our own personality in past lives is an imagination, a hallucination, or else an instance of that self-appropriation of things and experiences perceived but not our own which is one out of the undoubted phenomena of mental error. Much would be proved by an accumulation of such evidences but not, to the sceptic at least, rebirth. Certainly, if they were sufficiently ample, exact, profuse, intimate, they would create an atmosphere which would lead in the end to a general acceptance of the theory by the human race as a moral certitude. But proof is a different matter.

After all, most of the things that we accept as truths are really no more than moral certitudes. We have all the profoundest unshakable faith that the earth revolves on its own axis, but as has been pointed out by a great French mathematician, the fact has never been proved; it is only a theory which accounts well for certain observable facts, no more. Who knows whether it may not be replaced in this or another century by a better — or a worse? All observed astronomical phenomena were admirably accounted for by theories of spheres and I know not what else, before Galileo came in with his “And yet it moves,” disturbing the infallibility of Popes and Bibles and the science and logic of the learned. One feels certain that admirable theories could be invented to account for the facts of gravitation if our intellects were not prejudiced and prepossessed by the anterior demonstrations of Newton.<sup>1</sup> This is the ever-perplexing and inherent plague of our reason; for it starts by knowing nothing and has

<sup>1</sup> This was written in pre-Einsteinian days.

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to deal with infinite possibilities, and the possible explanations of any given set of facts, until we actually know what is behind them, are endless. In the end, we really know only what we observe and even that subject to a haunting question, for instance, that green is green and white is white, although it appears that colour is not colour but something else that creates the appearance of colour. Beyond observable fact we must be content with reasonable logical satisfaction, dominating probability and moral certitude, — at least until we have the sense to observe that there are faculties in us higher than the sense-dependent reason and awaiting development by which we can arrive at greater certainties.

We cannot really assert as against the sceptic any such dominant probability or any such certitude on behalf of the theory of rebirth. The external evidence yet available is in the last degree rudimentary. Pythagoras was one of the greatest of sages, but his assertion that he fought at Troy under the name of the Antenorid and was slain by the younger son of Atreus is an assertion only and his identification of the Trojan shield will convince no one who is not already convinced; the modern evidence is not as yet any more convincing than the proof of Pythagoras. In absence of external proof which to our matter-governed sensational intellects is alone conclusive, we have the argument of the reincarnationists that their theory accounts for all the facts better than any other yet advanced. The claim is just, but it does not create any kind of certitude. The theory of rebirth coupled with that of Karma gives us a simple, symmetrical, beautiful explanation of things; but so too the theory of the spheres gave us once a simple, symmetrical, beautiful explanation of the heavenly movements. Yet we have now got quite another explanation, much more complex, much more Gothic and shaky in its symmetry, an inexplicable order evolved out of chaotic infinities, which we accept<sup>2</sup> as the truth of the

<sup>2</sup> Or used to accept, but now it is suggested that this order is only a schema created by our own mind or determined by the constitution of our brain, a syntax and logic of word and thought which we impose on a world that in fact does not or may not contain any such thing.

matter. And yet, if we will only think, we shall perhaps see that even this is not the whole truth; there is much more behind we have not yet discovered. Therefore the simplicity, symmetry, beauty, satisfactoriness of the reincarnation theory is no warrant of its certitude.

When we go into details, the uncertainty increases. Rebirth accounts, for example, for the phenomenon of genius, inborn faculty and so many other psychological mysteries. But then Science comes in with its all-sufficient explanation by heredity, — though, like that of rebirth, all-sufficient only to those who already believe in it. Without doubt, the claims of heredity have been absurdly exaggerated. It has succeeded in accounting for much, not all, in our physical make-up, our temperament, our vital peculiarities. Its attempt to account for genius, inborn faculty and other psychological phenomena of a higher kind is a pretentious failure. But this may be because Science knows nothing at all that is fundamental about our psychology, — no more than primitive astronomers knew of the constitution and law of the stars whose movements they yet observed with a sufficient accuracy. I do not think that even when Science knows more and better, it will be able to explain these things by heredity; but the scientist may well argue that he is only at the beginning of his researches, that the generalisation which has explained so much may well explain all, and that at any rate his hypothesis has had a better start in its equipment of provable facts than the theory of reincarnation.

Nevertheless, the argument of the reincarnationist is so far a good argument and respect-worthy, though not conclusive. But there is another more clamorously advanced which seems to me to be on a par with the hostile reasoning from absence of memory, at least in the form in which it is usually advanced to attract unripe minds. This is the ethical argument by which it is sought to justify God's ways with the world or the world's ways with itself. There must, it is thought, be a moral governance for the world; or at least some sanction of reward in the cosmos for virtue, some sanction of punishment for sin. But upon our perplexed and chaotic earth no such sanction appears. We see the

good man thrust down into the press of miseries and the wicked flourishing like a green bay-tree and *not* cut down miserably in his end. Now this is intolerable. It is a cruel anomaly, it is a reflection on God's wisdom and justice, almost a proof that God is not; we must remedy that. Or if God is not, we must have some other sanction for righteousness.

How comforting it would be if we could tell a good man and even the amount of his goodness, — for should not the Supreme be a strict and honourable accountant? — by the amount of ghee that he is allowed to put into his stomach and the number of rupees he can jingle into his bank and the various kinds of good luck that accrue to him. Yes, and how comforting too if we could point our finger at the wicked stripped of all concealment and cry at him, "O thou wicked one! for if thou wert not evil, wouldst thou in a world governed by God or at least by good, be thus ragged, hungry, unfortunate, pursued by griefs, void of honour among men? Yes, thou art proved wicked, because thou art ragged. God's justice is established." The Supreme Intelligence being fortunately wiser and nobler than man's childishness, this is impossible. But let us take comfort! It appears that if the good man has not enough good luck and ghee and rupees, it is because he is really a scoundrel suffering for his crimes, — but a scoundrel in his past life who has suddenly turned a new leaf in his mother's womb; and if yonder wicked man flourishes and tramples gloriously on the world, it is because of his goodness — in a past life, the saint that was then having since been converted — was it by his experience of the temporal vanity of virtue? — to the cult of sin. All is explained, all is justified. We suffer for our sins in another body; we shall be rewarded in another body for our virtues in this; and so it will go on *ad infinitum*. No wonder, the philosophers found this a bad business and proposed as a remedy to get rid of both sin and virtue and even as our highest good to scramble anyhow out of a world so amazingly governed.

Obviously, this scheme of things is only a variation of the old spiritual-material bribe and menace, the bribe of a Heaven of fat joys for the good and the threat of a hell of eternal fire or bestial tortures for the wicked. The idea of the Law of the

world as primarily a dispenser of rewards and punishments is cognate to the idea of the Supreme Being as a judge, "father" and school-master who is continually rewarding with lollipops his good boys and continually caning his naughty urchins. It is cognate also to the barbarous and unthinking system of sometimes savage and always degrading punishment for social offences on which human society, unable still to find out or organise a more satisfactory way, is still founded. Man insists continually on making God in his own image instead of seeking to make himself more and more in the image of God, and all these ideas are the reflection of the child and the savage and the animal in us which we have still failed to transform or outgrow. We should be inclined to wonder how these fancies of children found their way into such profound philosophical religions as Buddhism and Hinduism, if it were not so patent that men will not deny themselves the luxury of tacking on the rubbish from their past to the deeper thoughts of their sages.

No doubt, since these ideas were so prominent, they must have had their use in training humanity. Perhaps even it is true that the Supreme deals with the child soul according to its childishness and allows it to continue its sensational imaginations of heaven and hell for a time beyond the death of the physical body. Perhaps both these ideas of after-life and of rebirth as fields of punishment and reward were needed because suited to our half-mentalised animality. But after a certain stage the system ceases to be really effective. Men believe in Heaven and Hell but go on sinning merrily, quit at last by a Papal indulgence or the final priestly absolution or a death-bed repentance or a bath in the Ganges or a sanctified death at Benares, — such are the childish devices by which we escape from our childishness! And in the end the mind grows adult and puts the whole nursery nonsense away with contempt. The reward and punishment theory of rebirth, if a little more elevated or at least less crudely sensational, comes to be as ineffective. And it is good that it should be so. For it is intolerable that man with his divine capacity should continue to be virtuous for a reward and shun sin out of terror. Better a strong sinner than a selfish virtuous coward

or a petty hucksterer with God; there is more divinity in him, more capacity of elevation. Truly the Gita has said well, *krpanāḥ phalāhetavaḥ*. And it is inconceivable that the system of this vast and majestic world should have been founded on these petty and paltry motives. There is reason in these theories? then reason of the nursery, puerile. Ethics? then ethics of the mud, muddy.

The true foundation of the theory of rebirth is the evolution of the soul, or rather its efflorescence out of the veil of Matter and its gradual self-finding. Buddhism contained this truth involved in its theory of Karma and emergence out of Karma but failed to bring it to light; Hinduism knew it of old, but afterwards missed the right balance of its expression. Now we are again able to restate the ancient truth in a new language and this is already being done by certain schools of thought, though still the old incrustations tend to tack themselves on to the deeper wisdom. And if this gradual efflorescence be true, then the theory of rebirth is an intellectual necessity, a logically unavoidable corollary. But what is the aim of that evolution? Not conventional or interested virtue and the faultless counting out of the small coin of good in the hope of an apportioned material reward, but the continual growth towards a divine knowledge, strength, love and purity. These things alone are real virtue and this virtue is its own reward. The one true reward of the works of love is to grow ever in capacity and delight of love up to the ecstasy of the spirit's all-seizing embrace and universal passion; the one reward of the works of right Knowledge is to grow perpetually into the infinite Light; the one reward of the works of right Power is to harbour more and more of the Force Divine, and of the works of purity to be freed more and more from egoism into that immaculate wideness where all things are transformed and reconciled into the divine equality. To seek other reward is to bind oneself to a foolishness and a childish ignorance; and to regard even these things as a reward is an unripeness and an imperfection.

And what of suffering and happiness, misfortune and prosperity? These are experiences of the soul in its training, helps, props, means, disciplines, tests, ordeals, — and prosperity often

a worse ordeal than suffering. Indeed, adversity, suffering may often be regarded rather as a reward to virtue than as a punishment for sin, since it turns out to be the greatest help and purifier of the soul struggling to unfold itself. To regard it merely as the stern award of a Judge, the anger of an irritated Ruler or even the mechanical recoil of result of evil upon cause of evil is to take the most superficial view possible of God's dealings with the soul and the law of the world's evolution. And what of worldly prosperity, wealth, progeny, the outward enjoyment of art, beauty, power? Good, if they be achieved without loss to the soul and enjoyed only as the outflowing of the divine Joy and Grace upon our material existence. But let us seek them first for others or rather for all, and for ourselves only as a part of the universal condition or as one means of bringing perfection nearer.

The soul needs no proof of its rebirth any more than it needs proof of its immortality. For there comes a time when it is consciously immortal, aware of itself in its eternal and immutable essence. Once that realisation is accomplished, all intellectual questionings for and against the immortality of the soul fall away like a vain clamour of ignorance around the self-evident and ever-present truth. *Tato na vicikitsate*. That is the true dynamic belief in immortality when it becomes to us not an intellectual dogma but a fact as evident as the physical fact of our breathing and as little in need of proof or argument. So also there comes a time when the soul becomes aware of itself in its eternal and mutable movement; it is then aware of the ages behind that constituted the present organisation of the movement, sees how this was prepared in an uninterrupted past, remembers something of the bygone soul-states, environments, particular forms of activity which built up its present constituents and knows to what it is moving by development in an uninterrupted future. This is the true dynamic belief in rebirth, and there too the play of the questioning intellect ceases; the soul's vision and the soul's memory are all. Certainly, there remains the question of the mechanism of the development and of the laws of rebirth where the intellect and its inquiries and



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generalisations can still have some play. And here the more one thinks and experiences, the more the ordinary, simple, cut-and-dried account of reincarnation seems to be of doubtful validity. There is surely here a greater complexity, a law evolved with a more difficult movement and a more intricate harmony out of the possibilities of the Infinite. But this is a question which demands long and ample consideration; for subtle is the law of it. *Aṅur hyeṣa dharmah.*

## The Reincarnating Soul

**H**UMAN thought in the generality of men is no more than a rough and crude acceptance of unexamined ideas. Our mind is a sleepy or careless sentry and allows anything to pass the gates which seems to it decently garbed or wears a plausible appearance or can mumble anything that resembles some familiar password. Especially is this so in subtle matters, those remote from the concrete facts of our physical life and environment. Even men who will reason carefully and acutely in ordinary matters and there consider vigilance against error an intellectual or a practical duty, are yet content with the most careless stumbling when they get upon higher and more difficult ground. Where precision and subtle thinking are most needed, there they are most impatient of it and averse to the labour demanded of them. Men can manage fine thought about palpable things, but to think subtly about the subtle is too great a strain on the grossness of our intellects; so we are content with making a dab at the truth, like the painter who threw his brush at his picture when he could not get the effect that he desired. We mistake the smudge that results for the perfect form of a verity.

It is not surprising then that men should be content to think crudely about such a matter as rebirth. Those who accept it, take it usually ready-made, either as a cut-and-dried theory or a crude dogma. The soul is reborn in a new body, — that vague and almost meaningless assertion is for them sufficient. But what is the soul and what can possibly be meant by the rebirth of a soul? Well, it means reincarnation; the soul, whatever that may be, had got out of one case of flesh and is now getting into another case of flesh. It sounds simple, — let us say, like the Djinn of the Arabian tale expanding out of and again compressing himself into his bottle or perhaps as a pillow is lugged out of one pillow-case and thrust into another. Or the soul fashions for itself a body

in the mother's womb and then occupies it, or else, let us say, puts off one robe of flesh and then puts on another. But what is it that thus "leaves" one body and "enters" into another? Is it another, a psychic body and subtle form, that enters into the gross corporeal form, — the Purusha perhaps of the ancient image, no bigger than a man's thumb, or is it something in itself formless and impalpable that incarnates in the sense of becoming or assuming to the senses a palpable shape of bone and flesh?

In the ordinary, the vulgar conception there is no birth of a soul at all, but only the birth of a new body into the world occupied by an old personality unchanged from that which once left some now discarded physical frame. It is John Robinson who has gone out of the form of flesh he once occupied; it is John Robinson who tomorrow or some centuries hence will reincarnate in another form of flesh and resume the course of his terrestrial experiences with another name and in another environment. Achilles, let us say, is reborn as Alexander, the son of Philip, a Macedonian, conqueror not of Hector but of Darius, with a wider scope, with larger destinies; but it is still Achilles, it is the same personality that is reborn, only the bodily circumstances are different. It is this survival of the identical personality that attracts the European mind today in the theory of reincarnation. For it is the extinction or dissolution of the personality, of this mental, nervous and physical composite which I call myself that is hard to bear for the man enamoured of life, and it is the promise of its survival and physical reappearance that is the great lure. The one objection that really stands in the way of its acceptance is the obvious non-survival of memory. Memory is the man, says the modern psychologist, and what is the use of the survival of my personality, if I do not remember my past, if I am not aware of being the same person still and always? What is the utility? Where is the enjoyment?

The old Indian thinkers, — I am not speaking of the popular belief which was crude enough and thought not at all about the matter, — the old Buddhistic and Vedantist thinkers surveyed the whole field from a very different standpoint. They were not attached to the survival of the personality; they did not

give to that survival the high name of immortality; they saw that personality being what it is, a constantly changing composite, the survival of an identical personality was a non-sense, a contradiction in terms. They perceived indeed that there is a continuity and they sought to discover what determines this continuity and whether the sense of identity which enters into it is an illusion or the representation of a fact, of a real truth, and, if the latter, then what that truth may be. The Buddhist denied any real identity. There is, he said, no self, no person; there is simply a continuous stream of energy in action like the continuous flowing of a river or the continuous burning of a flame. It is this continuity which creates in the mind the false sense of identity. I am not now the same person that I was a year ago, not even the same person that I was a moment ago, any more than the water flowing past yonder ghaut is the same water that flowed past it a few seconds ago; it is the persistence of the flow in the same channel that preserves the false appearance of identity. Obviously, then, there is no soul that reincarnates, but only Karma that persists in flowing continuously down an apparently uninterrupted channel. It is Karma that incarnates; Karma creates the form of a constantly changing mentality and physical bodies that are, we may presume, the result of that changing composite of ideas and sensations which I call myself. The identical "I" is not, never was, never will be. Practically, so long as the error of personality persists, this does not make much difference and I can say in the language of ignorance that I am reborn in a new body; practically, I have to proceed on the basis of that error. But there is this important point gained that it is all an error and an error which can cease; the composite can be broken up for good without any fresh formation, the flame can be extinguished, the channel which called itself a river destroyed. And then there is non-being, there is cessation, there is the release of the error from itself.

The Vedantist comes to a different conclusion; he admits an identical, a self, a persistent immutable reality, — but other than my personality, other than this composite which I call myself. In the Katha Upanishad the question is raised in a very instructive

fashion quite apposite to the subject we have in hand. Nachiketas, sent by his father to the world of Death, thus questions Yama, the lord of that world: Of the man who has gone forward, who has passed away from us, some say that he is and others "this he is not"; which then is right? what is the truth of the great passage? Such is the form of the question and at first sight it seems simply to raise the problem of immortality in the European sense of the word, the survival of the identical personality. But that is not what Nachiketas asks. He has already taken as the second of three boons offered to him by Yama the knowledge of the sacred Flame by which man crosses over hunger and thirst, leaves sorrow and fear far behind him and dwells in heaven securely rejoicing. Immortality in that sense he takes for granted as, already standing in that farther world, he must surely do. The knowledge he asks for involves the deeper, finer problem, of which Yama affirms that even the gods debated this of old and it is not easy to know, for subtle is the law of it; something survives that appears to be the same person, that descends into hell, that ascends into heaven, that returns upon the earth with a new body, but is it really the same person that thus survives? Can we really say of the man "*He* still is," or must we not rather say "This *he* no longer is"? Yama too in his answer speaks not at all of the survival of death, and he only gives a verse or two to a bare description of that constant rebirth which all serious thinkers admitted as a universally acknowledged truth. What he speaks of is the Self, the real Man, the Lord of all these changing appearances; without the knowledge of that Self the survival of the personality is not immortal life but a constant passing from death to death; he only who goes beyond personality to the real Person becomes the Immortal. Till then a man seems indeed to be born again and again by the force of his knowledge and works, name succeeds to name, form gives place to form, but there is no immortality.

Such then is the real question put and answered so divergently by the Buddhist and the Vedantin. There is a constant reforming of personality in new bodies, but this personality is a mutable creation of force at its work streaming forward in

Time and never for a moment the same, and the ego-sense that makes us cling to the life of the body and believe readily that it is the same idea and form, that it is John Robinson who is reborn as Sidi Hossain, is a creation of the mentality. Achilles was not reborn as Alexander, but the stream of force in its works which created the momentarily changing mind and body of Achilles flowed on and created the momentarily changing mind and body of Alexander. Still, said the ancient Vedanta, there is yet something beyond this force in action, Master of it, one who makes it create for him new names and forms, and that is the Self, the Purusha, the Man, the Real Person. The ego-sense is only its distorted image reflected in the flowing stream of embodied mentality.

Is it then the Self that incarnates and reincarnates? But the Self is imperishable, immutable, unborn, undying. The Self is not born and does not exist in the body; rather the body is born and exists in the Self. For the Self is one everywhere, — *in* all bodies, we say, but really it is not confined and parcelled out in different bodies except as the all-constituting ether seems to be formed into different objects and is in a sense in them. Rather all these bodies are in the Self; but that also is a figment of space-conception, and rather these bodies are only symbols and figures of itself created by it in its own consciousness. Even what we call the individual soul is greater than its body and not less, more subtle than it and therefore not confined by its grossness. At death it does not leave its form, but casts it off, so that a great departing Soul can say of this death in vigorous phrase, “I have spat out the body.”

What then is it that we feel to inhabit the physical frame? What is it that the Soul draws out from the body when it casts off this partial physical robe which enveloped not it, but part of its members? What is it whose issuing out gives this wrench, this swift struggle and pain of parting, creates this sense of violent divorce? The answer does not help us much. It is the subtle or psychical frame which is tied to the physical by the heart-strings, by the cords of life-force, of nervous energy which have been woven into every physical fibre. This the Lord of

the body draws out and the violent snapping or the rapid or tardy loosening of the life-cords, the exit of the connecting force constitutes the pain of death and its difficulty.

Let us then change the form of the question and ask rather what it is that reflects and accepts the mutable personality, since the Self is immutable? We have in fact an immutable Self, a real Person, lord of this ever-changing personality which, again, assumes ever-changing bodies, but the real Self knows itself always as above the mutation, watches and enjoys it, but is not involved in it. Through what does it enjoy the changes and feel them to be its own, even while knowing itself to be unaffected by them? The mind and ego-sense are only inferior instruments; there must be some more essential form of itself which the Real Man puts forth, puts in front of itself, as it were, and at the back of the changings to support and mirror them without being actually changed by them. This more essential form is or seems to be in man the mental being or mental person which the Upanishads speak of as the mental leader of the life and body, *manomayah prāna-śarīra-netā*. It is that which maintains the ego-sense as a function in the mind and enables us to have the firm conception of continuous identity in Time as opposed to the timeless identity of the Self.

The changing personality is not this mental person; it is a composite of various stuff of Nature, a formation of Prakriti and is not at all the Purusha. And it is a very complex composite with many layers; there is a layer of physical, a layer of nervous, a layer of mental, even a final stratum of supramental personality; and within these layers themselves there are strata within each stratum. The analysis of the successive couches of the earth is a simple matter compared with the analysis of this wonderful creation we call the personality. The mental being in resuming bodily life forms a new personality for its new terrestrial existence; it takes material from the common matter-stuff, life-stuff, mind-stuff of the physical world and during earthly life it is constantly absorbing fresh material, throwing out what is used up, changing its bodily, nervous and mental tissues. But this is all surface work; behind is the foundation of past experience

held back from the physical memory so that the superficial consciousness may not be troubled or interfered with by the conscious burden of the past but may concentrate on the work immediately in hand. Still that foundation of past experience is the bedrock of personality; and it is more than that. It is our real fund on which we can always draw even apart from our present superficial commerce with our surroundings. That commerce adds to our gains, modifies the foundation for a subsequent existence.

Moreover, all this is, again, on the surface. It is only a small part of ourselves which lives and acts in the energies of our earthly existence. As behind the physical universe there are worlds of which ours is only a last result, so also within us there are worlds of our self-existence which throw out this external form of our being. The subconscious, the superconscious are oceans from which and to which this river flows. Therefore to speak of ourselves as a soul reincarnating is to give altogether too simple an appearance to the miracle of our existence; it puts into too ready and too gross a formula the magic of the supreme Magician. There is not a definite psychic entity getting into a new case of flesh; there is a metempsychosis, a reinsouling, a rebirth of new psychic personality as well as a birth of a new body. And behind is the Person, the unchanging entity, the Master who manipulates this complex material, the Artificer of this wondrous artifice.

This is the starting-point from which we have to proceed in considering the problem of rebirth. To view ourselves as such and such a personality getting into a new case of flesh is to stumble about in the ignorance, to confirm the error of the material mind and the senses. The body is a convenience, the personality is a constant formation for whose development action and experience are the instruments; but the Self by whose will and for whose delight all this is, is other than the body, other than the action and experience, other than the personality which they develop. To ignore it is to ignore the whole secret of our being.



## Rebirth, Evolution, Heredity

**T**WO TRUTHS, discoveries with an enormous periphery of luminous result and of a considerable essential magnitude, evolution and heredity, figure today in the front of thought, and I suppose we have to take them as a well-established unquenchable light upon our being, lamps of a constant lustre, though not yet very perfectly trimmed, final so far as anything is final in man's constantly changing cinematographic process of the development of intellectual knowledge. They may be said to make up almost the whole fundamental idea of life in the way of seeing peculiar to a mind dominated, fashioned, pressed into its powerful moulds by the exact, curious, multifariously searching, yet in the end singularly limited observation and singularly narrow reason of our modern science. Science is in her own way a great seer and magician; she has both the microscopic and the macroscopic, the closely gazing and the telescopic view, a dissolving power of searching analytic resolution, a creative power of revealing synthetic effectuation. She has hunted to their lair many of the intermediate secret processes of the great creatrix, and even she has been able, by the inventive faculty given to us, to go and do one better. Man, this midget in infinity, locomotive yet nailed to the contiguity of a petty crust of soil by the force of gravitation, has certainly scored by her a goodly number of points against the mother of the universe. But all this has been done in some perfection only in the limits of her lowest obtrusive physical field.

Face to face with psychic and spiritual secrecies, as in the open elementary world even of mind, Science has still the uninformed gaze and the groping hands of the infant. In that sphere she, so precise, illuminative, compelling in the physical, sees only the big blazing buzzing confusion which James tells us, with a possibly inaccurate vividness of alliterative phrase, is

the newborn baby's view of the sensible world into which he has dropped down the mysterious stairs of birth. Science, faced with what are still to her the wonderful random accords and unexplained miracles of consciousness, protects herself from the errors of the imagination, — but stumbling incidentally by that very fact into plenty of the errors of an inadequate induction, — behind an opaque shield of cautious scepticism. She clings with the grasping firmness of the half-drowned to planks of security she thinks she has got in a few well-tested correspondences, — so-styled, though the word as used explains nothing, — between mental action and its accompaniment of suggestive or instrumental physical functionings. She is determined, if she can, to explain every supraphysical phenomenon by some physical fact; psychological process of mind must not exist except as result or rendering of physiological process of body. This set resolution, apparently rational and cautious of ascertainable and firmly tangible truth, but really heroic in its paradoxical temerity, shuts up her chance of rapid discovery, for the present at least, in a fairly narrow circle. It taints too her extensions of physical truth into the psychological field with a pursuing sense of inadequacy. And this inadequacy in extended application is very evident in her theories of heredity and evolution when she forces them beyond their safe ground of physical truth and labours to illumine by them the subtle, complex, elusive phenomena of our psychological being.

There are still, I dare say, persons here and there who cherish a secret or an open unfaith in the theory of a physical evolution and believe that it will one day pass into the limbo of dead generalisations like the Ptolemaic theory in astronomy or like the theory of humours in medicine; but this is a rare and excessive scepticism. Yet it may not be without use or aptitude for our purpose to note that contrary to current popular notions the scientific account of this generalisation, like that of a good number of others, is not yet conclusively proved, even though now taken for granted. But still there is on the whole a mass of facts and indications in its favour so considerable as to look overwhelming, so that we cannot resist the conclusion that in

this way or some such way the whole thing came about and we find it difficult to conceive any more convincing explanation of the indubitable ascending and branching scale of genus and species which meets even our casual scrutiny of living existence. One thing at least seems now intellectually certain, we can no longer believe that these suns and systems were hurled full-shaped and eternally arranged into boundless space and all these numberless species of being planted on earth ready-made and nicely tailored in seven days or any number of days in a sudden outburst of caprice or Dionysiac excitement or crowded activity of mechanical conception by the fiat of a timeless Creator. The successive development which was summarily proposed by the ancient Hindu thinkers, the lower forms of being first, man afterwards as the crown of the Spirit's development of life on earth, has been confirmed by the patient and detailed scrutiny of physical science, — an aeonic development, though the farther Hindu conception of a constant repetition of the principle in cycles is necessarily incapable of physical evidence.

One thing more seems now equally certain that not only the seed of all life was one, — again the great intuition of the Upanishads foreruns the conclusions of the physical enquiry, one seed which the universal self-existence by process of force has disposed in many ways, *ekam bījam bahudhā śakti-yogāt*, — but even the principle of development is one and the structural ground-plan too as it develops step by step, in spite of all departures to this side or that in the workings of the creative Force or the creative Idea. Nature seems to start with an extraordinary poverty of original broad variative conceptions and to proceed to an extraordinary richness of her minuter consequential variations, which amounts to a forging of constant subtle differentiations of species and in the individual a startling insistence on result of uniqueness. It almost looks as if in the process of her physical harmonies there was meant to be some formal effect or symbolic reproduction of the truth that all things are originally one being, but a one who insists on his own infinite diversity, and even a suggestion that there is in this eternal unity an eternal pluralism, the Infinite Being self-repeated in an infinite

multiplicity of beings each unique and yet each the One. To a mind on the look-out for the metaphysical suggestions we can draw from the apparent facts of being, that might not seem altogether an imagination.

In any case we have this now patent order in the profuse complexities of the natural harmony of living things, — one plasmic seed, one developing ground-plan, an opulent number of varieties whose logical process would be by an ascending order which passes up through fine but still very distinct gradations from the crude to the complex, from the less organised to the more organised, from the inferior to the superior type. The first question that should strike the mind at once, when this tree of life has been seen, is whether this logical order was indeed the actual order in the history of the universe, and then, a second, naturally arising from that problem, whether, if so, each new form developed by variation from its natural predecessor or came in by some unknown process, a fresh, independent and in a way sudden creation. In the first case, we have the scientific order of physical evolution, — in the other one knows not well what, perhaps an unseen Demiurge who developed the whole thing in the earlier period of the earth evolution and has now wholly or almost entirely stopped the business so that we have no new physical development of that kind, but only, it may be, an evolution of capacity in types already created. Science stands out for a quite natural and mechanical, a quite unbroken physical evolution with many divergent lines indeed of developing variation, but in the line no gap or interstice. It is true that there are not one but a host of missing links, which even the richest remains of the past cannot fill in, and we are not in a position to deny with an absolute dogmatism the possibility of an advance *per saltum*, by a rapid overleaping, perhaps even by a crowded psychical or bio-psychic preparation whose result sprang out in the appearance of a new type with a certain gulf between itself and the preceding forms of life. With regard to man especially there is still an enormous uncertainty as to how he, so like yet so different from the other sons of Nature, came into existence. Still the gaps can be explained away, there is a great mass of

telling facts in favour of the less physically anarchic view, and it seems to have on its side the right of greatest probability in a material universe where the most perfectly physical principle of proceeding would seem to be the just basic law.

But even if we admit the most scrupulous and rigorous continuity of successive determination, the question arises whether the process of evolution has been indeed so exclusively physical and biological as at first sight it looks. If it is, we must admit not only a rigorous principle of class heredity, but a law of hereditary progressive variation and a purely physical cause of all mental and spiritual phenomena. Heredity by itself means simply the constant transmission of physical form and biological characteristics from a previous life to its posterity. There is very evidently such a general force of hereditary transmission within the genus or species itself, as the tree so the seed, as the seed so the tree, so that a lion generates a lion and not a cat or a rhinoceros, a man a human being and not an ourang-outang, — though one reads now of a curious and startling speculation, turning the old theory topsy-turvy, that certain ape kinds may be, not ancestors, but degenerate descendants of man! But farther, if a physical evolution is the whole fact, there must be a capacity for the hereditary transmission of variations by which new species are or have been created, — not merely in the process of a mixture or crossing, but by an internal development which is stored up and handed down in the seed. That too may very well be admitted, even though its real process and rationale are not yet understood, since the transmission of family and individual characteristics is a well-observed phenomenon. But then the things transmitted are not only physical and biological, but psychological or at least bio-psychic characters, repetitions of customary nervous experience and mental tendency, powers. We have to suppose that the physical seed transmits these things. We are called upon to admit that the human seed for instance, which does not contain a developed human consciousness, yet carries with it the powers of such a consciousness so that they reproduce themselves automatically in the thinking and organised mentality of the offspring. This, even if we have to accept

it, is an inexplicable paradox unless we suppose either that there is something more behind, a psychical power behind the veil of material process, or else that mind is only a process of life and life only a process of matter. Therefore finally we have to suppose the physical theory capable of explaining by purely material causes and a material constitution the mystery of the emergence of life in matter and the equal mystery of the emergence of mind in life. It is here that difficulties begin to crowd in which convict it, so far at least, of a hopeless inadequacy, and the nature of that inadequacy, its crux, its stumbling-point leave room for just that something behind, something psychical, a hidden soul process and for a more complex and less materialistic account of the truth of evolution.

The materialistic assumption — it is no more than a hypothetical assumption, for it has never been proved — is that development of non-living matter results under certain unknown conditions in a phenomenon of unconscious life which is in its real nature only an action and reaction of material energy, and the development of that again under certain unknown conditions in a phenomenon of conscious mind which is again in its real nature only an action and reaction of material energy. The thing is not proved, but that, it is argued, does not matter; it only means that we do not yet know enough; but one day we shall know, — the necessary physiological reaction called by us an intuition or train of reasoning crowned by discovery having, I suppose, taken place in a properly constituted nervous body and the more richly convoluted brain of a Galileo of biology, — and then this great and simple truth will be proved, like many other things once scoffed at by the shallow common sense of humanity. But the difficulty is that it seems incapable of proof. Even with regard to life, which is by a great deal the lesser difficulty, the discovery of certain chemical or other physical and mechanical conditions under which life can be stimulated to appear, will prove no more than that these are the favourable or necessary conditions for the manifestation of life in body, — such conditions there must be in the nature of things, — but not that life is not another new and higher power of the force of universal being. The connection of

life responses with physical conditions and stimuli proves very clearly that life and matter are connected and that, as indeed they must do to coexist, the two kinds of energy act on each other, — a very ancient knowledge; but it does not get rid of the fact that the physical response is accompanied by an element which seems to be of the nature of a nervous excitement and an incipient or suppressed consciousness and is not the same thing as the companion physical reaction.

When we come to mind, we see — how could it be otherwise in an embodied mind? — a response, interaction, connection, a correspondence if you will; but no amount of correspondence can show how a physical response can be converted into or amount to or by itself constitute in result a conscious operation, a perception, emotion, thought-concept, or prove that love is a chemical product or that Plato's theory of ideas or Homer's Iliad or the cosmic consciousness of the Yogin was only a combination of physiological reactions or a complex of the changes of grey brain matter or a flaming marvel of electrical discharges. It is not only that common sense and imagination boggle at these theories, — that objection may be disregarded, — not only that perception, reason and intuition have to be thrust aside in favour of a forced and too extended inference, but that there is a gulf of difference here between the thing to be explained and the thing by which it is sought to explain it which cannot be filled up, however much we may admit nervous connections and psycho-physical bridges. And if the physical scientist points to a number of indicative facts and hopes one day to triumph over these formidable difficulties, there is growing up on the other side an incipient mass of psychical phenomena which are likely to drown his theory in fathomless waters. The insuperability of these always evident objections is beginning to be more widely recognised, but since the past still holds considerable sway, it is necessary to insist on them so that we may have the clear right to go on to more liberal hypotheses which do not try prematurely to reduce to a mechanical simplicity the problem of our being.

One of these is the ancient view that not only incidence of body and life on mind and soul, but incidence of mind and

soul on body and life have to be considered. Here too there is the evolutionary idea, but physical and life evolution, even the growth of mind, are held to be only incidental to a soul evolution of which Time is the course and the earth among many other worlds the theatre. In the old Indian version of this theory evolution, heredity and rebirth are three companion processes of the universal unfolding, evolution the processional aim, rebirth the main method, heredity one of the physical conditions. That is a theory which provides at least the framework for a harmonious explanation of all the complex elements of the problem. The scientific idea starts from physical being and makes the psychical a result and circumstance of body; this other evolutionary idea starts from soul and sees in the physical being an instrumentation for the awakening to itself of a spirit absorbed in the universe of Matter.



## Rebirth and Soul Evolution

THE IDEAS that men currently form about life and things are for the most part pragmatic constructions. They are forms of a reason which is concerned with giving only such a serviceable account to itself of its surroundings as shall make a sufficient clue to our immediate business of the growth, action, satisfaction of the personality, something feasible, livable, effective for our journeying in Time, something viable in the twofold French sense of the word. Whether it corresponds to or is directly in touch with any real reality of things seems to be very much a matter of accident. It seems to be sufficient if we can persuade our facile and complaisant reason of its truth and find it serviceable and fruitful in consequences for thought, action and life-experience. It is true that there is another unpragmatic reason in us which labours to get rid of this demand of the intellectual and vital personality; it wants to look at the real truth of things without veils and without any object, to mirror the very image of Truth in the still waters of a dispassionate, clear and pure mentality. But the workings of this calmer greater reason are hampered by two tremendous difficulties. First, it seems next to impossible to disengage it entirely from the rest of ourselves, from the normal intellectuality, from the will to believe, from that instinct of the intelligence which helps the survival, by a sort of subtle principle of preference and selection, of the way of thinking that suits our personal bent or the accomplished frame of our nature. And again, what is the Truth that our reason mirrors? It is after all some indirect image of Truth, not her very self and body seen face to face; it is an image moulded from such data, symbol, process of Reality, — if any real Reality there is, — as we can gather from the very limited experience of self and existing things open to human mind. So that unless there be some means by which knowledge can burst through all veils

to the experience of the very Reality itself, or unless there be some universal Logos, divine Mind or Supermind, which knows itself and all things and our consciousness can reflect or get into touch with that, a pursuing insufficiency and uncertainty must always keep its baffling grasp upon even the highest power and largest walk of our reason and beset all the labour of human knowledge.

Nowhere are these disabilities more embarrassing than in those fundamental questions of the nature of the world and of our own existence which yet most passionately interest thinking humanity because this is in the end the thing of utmost importance to us, since everything else, except some rough immediate practicality of the moment, depends on its solution. And even that, until this great question is settled, is only a stumbling forward upon a journey of which we know not the goal or the purpose, the meaning or the necessity. The religions profess to solve these grand problems with an inspired or revealed certainty; but the enormity of their differences shows that in them too there is a selection of ideas, separate aspects of the Truth, — the sceptic would say, shows of imagination and falsehood, — and a construction from a limited spiritual experience. In them too there is an element of chosen and willed believing and some high pragmatic aim and utility, whether that be the soul's escape from the sorrow or unreality of existence or celestial bliss or a religio-ethical sanction and guidance. The philosophical systems are very obviously only feasible selective constructions of great reflective ideas. More often these are possibilities of the reason much rather than assured certainties or, if founded on spiritual experience, they are still selective constructions, a sort of great architectural approach to some gate into unknowable Divine or ineffable Infinite. The modern scientific mind professed to rid us of all mere intellectual constructions and put us face to face with truth and with assured truth only; it claimed the right to rid man of the fantastic encumbrance of religion and the nebulous futilities of metaphysical philosophy. But religion and philosophy have now turned upon science and convicted her, on her own statement of facts, of an equal liability to the two

universal difficulties of human reason. The system of science seems to be itself only another feasible and fruitful construction of the reason giving a serviceable account to itself of the physical world and our relations to it, and it seems to be nothing more. And its knowledge is fatally bound by the limitation of its data and its outlook. Science too creates only a partial image of Truth stamped with a character of much uncertainty and still more clearly imprinted with the perverse hallmark of insufficiency.

We have to recognise that human reason, moving as it does from a starting-point of ignorance and in a great enviroing circle of ignorance, must proceed by hypothesis, assumption and theory subject to verification of some kind convincing to our reason and experience. But there is this difference that the religious mind accepts the theory or assumption, — to which it does not at all give these names, for they are to it things felt, — with faith, with a will of belief, with an emotional certainty, and finds its verification in an increasing spiritual intuition and experience. The philosophic mind accepts it calmly and discerningly for its coherent agreement with the facts and necessities of being; it verifies by a pervading and unfailing harmony with all the demands of reason and intellectualised intuition. But the sceptical mind — not the mind of mere doubt or dogmatic denial which usually arrogates that name, but the open and balanced mind of careful, impartial and reserved inquiry, — gives a certain provisional character to its hypotheses, and it verifies by the justification of whatever order or category of ascertainable facts it takes for its standard of proof and invests with a character of decisive authority or reality. There is room enough for all three methods and there is no reason why our complex modern mind should not proceed simultaneously by all of them at once. For if the sceptical or provisional attitude makes us more ready to modify our image of Truth in the light of new material of thought and knowledge, the religious mind also, provided it keeps a certain firm and profound openness to new spiritual experience, can proceed faster to a larger and larger light, and meanwhile we can walk by it with an assured step and go securely about our principal business of the growth and perfection of our being. The

philosophic mind has the use of giving a needed largeness and openness to our mentality, — if it too does not narrow itself by a closed circle of metaphysical dogma, — and supports besides the harmony of our other action by the orderly assent of the higher reason.

In this matter of the soul and rebirth the initial hypothesis now lies quite open to us; the barrier has fallen. For if there is one thing now certain it is that physical science may give clues of process, but cannot lay hold on the reality of things. That means that the physical is not the whole secret of world and existence, and that in ourselves too the body is not the whole of our being. It is then through something supraphysical in Nature and ourselves which we may call the soul, whatever the exact substance of soul may be, that we are likely to get that greater truth and subtler experience which will enlarge the narrow rigid circle traced by physical science and bring us nearer to the Reality. There is nothing now to bar the most rational mind, — for true rationalism, real free thought need no longer be identified, as it was for some time too hastily and intolerantly, with a denial of the soul and a scouting of the truths of spiritual philosophy and religion, — there is nothing to prevent us from proceeding firmly upon whatever certitudes of spiritual experience have become to us the soil of our inner growth or the pillars on our road to self-knowledge. These are soul realities. But the exact frame we shall give to that knowledge, will best be built by farther spiritual experience aided by new enlarged intuitions, confirmed in the suggestions of a wide philosophic reason and fruitfully using whatever helpful facts we may get from the physical and the psychic sciences. These are truths of soul process; their full light must come by experimental knowledge and observation of the world without us and the world within.

The admission of the soul's existence does not of itself lead, by its own necessity, by any indispensable next step, to the acceptance of rebirth. It will only bring in this indispensable consequence if there is such a thing as a soul evolution which enforces itself always and is a constant part of the order of existence and the law of the time process. Moreover some kind

of admission of an individual soul is a first condition of the truth of rebirth. For there is a plausible theory of existence which admits an All-Soul, a universal being and becoming of which the material world is some sensible result, but does not admit any at all abiding truth of our spiritual individuality. The All-Soul may continually develop, may slowly yet urgently evolve its becoming; but each individual man or apparent individual being is to this way of thinking only a moment of the All-Soul and its evolution; out of that it rises by the formation which we call birth and it sinks back into it by the dissolution which we call death. But this limiting idea can only stand if we credit a creative biological evolution and its instrument of physical heredity with the whole causation of all our mental and spiritual being; but in that case we have no real soul or spirit, our soul personality or spiritual becoming is a fruit of our life and body. Now the question of rebirth turns almost entirely upon the one fundamental question of the past of the individual being and its future. If the creation of the whole nature is to be credited to the physical birth, then the body, life and soul of the individual are only a continuation of the body, life and soul of his ancestry, and there is no room anywhere for soul rebirth. The individual man has no past being independent of them and can have no independent future; he can prolong himself in his progeny, — the child may be his second or continued self, as the Upanishad puts it, — but there is no other rebirth for him. No continued stream of individuality presided over by any mental or spiritual person victoriously survives the dissolution of the body. On the other hand, if there is any element in us, still more the most important of all, which cannot be so accounted for, but presupposes a past or admits a future evolution other than that of the race mind and the physical ancestry, then some kind of soul birth becomes a logical necessity.

Now it is just here that the claims of physical and vital evolution and heredity seem to fail, — as a cause of our whole mental and spiritual being. Certainly it has been shown that our body and the most physical part of our life action are very largely the results of heredity, but not in such a way as to exclude an

assisting and perhaps really predominant psychical cause other than the ancestral contribution. It has been shown if you will that our conscious vitality and those parts of mind which depend upon it, something of temperament, something of character, certain impulses and predispositions, are to a great extent shaped — or is it only influenced? — by evolutionary heredity; but not that they are entirely due to this force, not that there is no soul, no spiritual entity which accepts and makes use of this instrumentation, but is not its created result or helplessly subject to it in its becoming. Still more are the higher parts of our mind marked with a certain stamp of spiritual independence. They are not altogether helpless formations of evolutionary heredity. But still all these things are evidently very much under the influence of environment and its pressures and opportunities. And we may draw from that, if we choose, a limiting conclusion; we may say that they are a phase of the universal soul, a part of the process of its evolution by selection; the race, not the individual, is the continuous factor and all our individual effort and acquisition, only in appearance, not really independent, ceases with death, except so much of our gain as is chosen to be carried on in the race by some secret will or conscious necessity in the universal being or the persistent becoming.

But when we come to our highest spiritual elements, we find that here we do arrive at a very clear and sovereign independence. We can carry on far beyond any determination by environment or the pressure of the race-soul our own soul evolution by the governing force of our spiritual nature. Quite apart from any evidence of an after-life on other planes or any memory of past births, this is sufficient warrant for a refusal to accept as sufficient any theory of the ephemeral being of the individual and the sole truth of the evolutionary Universal. Certainly, the individual being is not thereby shown to be independent of the All-Soul; it may be nothing but a form of it in time. But it is sufficient for our purpose that it is a persistent soul form, not determined by the life of the body and ceasing with its dissolution, but persisting independently beyond. For if it is thus independent of the physical race continuity in the future, if

it thus shows itself capable of determining its own future soul evolution in time, it must have had secretly such an independent existence all through and it must have been determining in reality, though no doubt by some other and indirect insistence, its past soul evolution too in time. Possibly it may exist in the All-Soul only during the universal continuity, may have arisen from it in that, may pass into it eventually. Or on the contrary it may exist in it prior to, or it is better to say, independent of the universal continuity, and there may be some kind of eternal individual. But it is sufficient for the theory of rebirth that a secret soul continuity of the individual does exist and not alone a brute succession of bodies informed by the All-Soul with a quite ephemeral illusion of mental or spiritual individuality.

There are theories of existence which accept the individual soul, but not soul evolution. There is, for instance, that singular dogma of a soul without a past but with a future, created by the birth of the body but indestructible by the death of the body. But this is a violent and irrational assumption, an imagination unverified and without verisimilitude. It involves the difficulty of a creature beginning in time but enduring through all eternity, an immortal being dependent for its existence on an act of physical generation, yet itself always and entirely unphysical and independent of the body which results from the generation. These are objections insuperable to the reason. But there is too the difficulty that this soul inherits a past for which it is in no way responsible, or is burdened with mastering propensities imposed on it not by its own act, and is yet responsible for its future which is treated as if it were in no way determined by that often deplorable inheritance, *damnosa hereditas*, or that unfair creation, and were entirely of its own making. We are made helplessly what we are and are yet responsible for what we are, — or at least for what we shall be hereafter, which is inevitably determined to a large extent by what we are originally. And we have only this one chance. Plato and the Hottentot, the fortunate child of saints or Rishis and the born and trained criminal plunged from beginning to end in the lowest fetid corruption of a great modern city have equally to create by the action or belief

of this one unequal life all their eternal future. This is a paradox which offends both the soul and the reason, the ethical sense and the spiritual intuition.

There is too the kindred idea, behind which a truth obscurely glimmers, that the soul of man is something high, pure and great which has fallen into the material existence and by its use of its nature and its acts in the body must redeem itself, must return to its own celestial nature. But it is evident that this one earthly life is not sufficient for all to effect that difficult return, but rather most may and do miss it entirely; and we have then either to suppose that an immortal soul can perish or be doomed to eternal perdition or else that it has more existences than this poor precarious one apparently given to it, lives or states of being which intervene between its fall and the final working out of a sure redemption. But the first supposition is subject to all the difficulties of that other paradox. Apart from the problem of the reason of the descent, it is difficult to see how straight from celestial being these different souls should have lapsed immediately to such immense differences of gradation in their fall and in such a way that each is responsible for the otherwise cruel and unequal conditions under which he has to determine so summarily his eternal future. Each must surely have had a past which made him responsible for his present conditions, if he is to be held thus strictly to account for all their results and the use he makes of his often too scanty, grudging and sometimes quite hopeless opportunity. The very nature of our humanity supposes a varying constituent past for the soul as well as a resultant future.

More reasonable therefore is a recent theory which suggests that a spirit or mental being has descended from another and greater plane and taken up the material existence when the physical and the animal evolution had proceeded far enough for a human embodiment upon earth to be possible. He looks back to a long series of human lives, beginning from that point, which has brought each of us to his present condition, and forward to a still continuing series which will carry all by their own degrees and in their own time to whatever completion, transfiguration,



return awaits the self-embodying human soul and is the crown of its long endeavour. But here again, what is it that brings about this connection of a spiritual being and higher mental nature and a physical being and lower animal nature? what necessitates this taking up of the lower life by the spirit which here becomes man? It would seem surely that there must have been some previous connection; the possessing mental or spiritual being must all the time have been preparing this lower life it thus occupies for a human manifestation. The whole evolution would then be an ordered continuity from the beginning and the intervention of mind and spirit would be no sudden inexplicable miracle, but a coming forward of that which was always there behind, an open taking up of the manifested life by a power which was always secretly presiding over the life evolution.

What this theory of rebirth supposes is an evolution of being in the material world from matter to embodied mind and a universal spirit which ensouls this evolution, while our individual spirits exist in the universal and follow their upward course to whatever purposed consummation or liberation or both may beckon to us at its end. Much more than this it may mean, but this at least; a soul evolution the real fact, an assumption of higher and higher forms the first appearance. We might indeed allow a past and future for the human soul, but place them below and above this terrestrial plane and admit only one casual or purposeful existence upon earth. But this would mean two orders of progressive existence unconnected and yet meeting for a brief moment. There would be an errant individual human soul intervening in the ordered terrestrial evolution and almost immediately passing out without any connecting cause or necessity. But especially it leaves insufficiently explained the phenomenon of the largely terrestrial animal being and nature of this spiritual and supra-terrestrial entity, this soul, its struggle for liberation, and the infinitely varying degrees in which in different bodies it has succeeded in dominating the lower nature. A past terrestrial soul evolution sufficiently accounting for these variations and degrees of our mixed being and a future soul evolution that helps us progressively to liberate the godhead of the spirit, seem

the only just and reasonable explanation of this labour of a matter-shackled soul which has attained a variable degree of humanity in the midst of a general progressive appearance of the life, mind and spirit in a material universe. Rebirth is the only possible machinery for such a soul evolution.

## The Significance of Rebirth

THE ONE question which through all its complexities is the sum of philosophy and to which all human enquiry comes round in the end, is the problem of ourselves, — why we are here and what we are, and what is behind and before and around us, and what we are to do with ourselves, our inner significances and our outer environment. In the idea of evolutionary rebirth, if we can once find it to be a truth and recognise its antecedents and consequences, we have a very sufficient clue for an answer to all these connected sides of the one perpetual question. A spiritual evolution of which our universe is the scene and earth its ground and stage, though its plan is still kept back above from our yet limited knowledge, — this way of seeing existence is a luminous key which we can fit into many doors of obscurity. But we have to look at it in the right focus, to get its true proportions and, especially, to see it in its spiritual significance more than in its mechanical process. The failure to do that rightly will involve us in much philosophical finessing, drive on this side or the other to exaggerated negations and leave our statement of it, however perfect may be its logic, yet unsatisfying and unconvincing to the total intelligence and the complex soul of humanity.

The bare idea of repeated births as the process of our soul existence does not carry us much farther than the simple material reality of this single life in the body, that first fact of our conscious sensation and memory which is the occasion of all our speculations. Behind our present starting-point and preceding this one lappet of our race in the fields of being rebirth reminds us indeed of a past, of pregnant anterior courses, a soul-existence in many previous bodies which have immediately created what we now are. But to what use or advantage if there is no progressive significance in our pre-existence and our persevering continuity?

In front of us it rolls far back from our vision the obstruction of the near blank wall of death; our journeying upon earth becomes less of a long or brief untraceable road ending abruptly and perplexingly in a cul-de-sac; our physical dissolution is robbed of the cruellest poison of its sting. For the burden of death to man the thinking, willing, feeling creature is not the loss of this poor case or chariot of body, but it is the blind psychical finality death suggests, the stupid material end of our will and thought and aspiration and endeavour, the brute breaking off of the heart's kind and sweet relations and affections, the futile convicting discontinuity of that marvellous and all-supporting soul-sense which gives us our radiant glimpses of the glory and delight of existence, — that is the discord and harsh inconsequence against which the thinking living creature revolts as incredible and inadmissible. The fiery straining to immortality of our life, mind, psyche, which can assent to cessation only by turning in enmity upon their own flame of nature, and the denial of it which the dull acquiescence of a body consenting inertly to death as to life brings in on us, is the whole painful irreconcilable contradiction of our double nature. Rebirth takes the difficulty and solves it in the sense of a soul continuity with a beat of physical repetition. Like other non-materialistic solutions it gives the right to the soul's suggestion as against the body's and sanctions the demand for survival, but unlike some others it justifies the bodily life by its utility to the soul's continued self-experience; our too swift act in the body ceases to be an isolated accident or an abrupt interlude, it gets the justification of a fulfilling future as well as a creating past for its otherwise haphazard actions and relations. But simple persistence, mechanical continuity is not enough; that is not all our psychical being signifies, not the whole luminous meaning of survival and continuity; without ascension, without expansion, without some growing up straight into light in the strength of our spirit our higher members toil here uncompleted, our birth in matter is not justified by any adequate meaning. We are very little better off than if death remained our ending; for our life in the end becomes then an indefinitely continued and renewed and temporarily consequent

in place of an inconsequent, abruptly ended and soon convicted futility.

By rebirth, too, this world around us, our environment, its suggestions, its opportunities are no longer left as the field of an ephemeral physical flowering or as a Life which cares very little for and means very little to the individual, though it may offer much perhaps during its uncertain longer time to the species. The world grows to us a field of soul-experience, a system of soul-recurrences, a means of self-effectuation, perhaps a crystallising of the conscious being's effective self-reflections. But to what end if our recurrence is only a repetition or a hesitating fluctuation within a few set types with a very limited, always uncompleted circle of accomplishment? For that is what it comes to, if there is no upward outlet, no infinite progression or no escape or enlarging into the soul's infinities. Rebirth tells us that what we are is a soul performing constantly the miracle of self-embodiment; but why this embodiment, what this soul has to do here with itself and what use it is to make of this world which is given to it for its grandiose scene, its difficult, plastic material and its besieging battery of multiform stimulus and suggestions, is hardly at all clearer than before. But the perception of rebirth as an occasion and means for a spiritual evolution fills in every hiatus. It makes life a significant ascension and not a mechanical recurrence; it opens to us the divine vistas of a growing soul; it makes the worlds a nexus of spiritual self-expansion; it sets us seeking, and with a sure promise to all of a great finding now or hereafter, for the self-knowledge of our spirit and the self-fulfilment of a wise and divine intention in our existence.

The oppressing sense of a circle of mechanical recurrence and the passionate seeking for an outlet of absolute escape haunted the earlier statements of the truth of rebirth and have left upon them in spite of the depths they fathomed a certain stamp of unsatisfactory inadequacy, — not illogical, for they are logical enough, once their premisses are admitted, but unsatisfying, because they do not justify to us our being. For, missing the divine utility of the cosmic workings, they fail to explain to us with a sufficiently large, patient, steadfast wholeness God

and ourselves and existence, negate too much, miss the positive sense of our strain and leave sounding an immense note of spiritual futility and cosmic discord. No statement of the sense of our being or our non-being has laid a more insistent stress on rebirth than did the Buddhistic; but it affirms strongly only the more strongly to negate. It views the recurrence of birth as a prolonged mechanical chain; it sees, with a sense of suffering and distaste, the eternal revolving of an immense cosmic wheel of energy with no divine sense in its revolutions, its beginning an affirmation of ignorant desire, its end a nullifying bliss of escape. The wheel turns uselessly for ever disturbing the peace of Non-being and creating souls whose one difficult chance and whole ideal business is to cease. That conception of being is only an extension from our first matter-governed sense of the universe, of our creation in it and of our decisive cessation. It takes up at every point our first obvious view of the bodily life and restates all its circumstances in the terms of a more psychical and spiritual idea of our existence.

What we see in the material universe is a stupendous system of mechanical recurrences. A huge mechanical recurrence rules that which is long-enduring and vast; a similar but frailer mechanical recurrence sways all that is ephemeral and small. The suns leap up into being, flame wheeling in space, squander force by motion and fade and are extinct, again perhaps to blaze into being and repeat their course, or else other suns take their place and fulfil their round. The seasons of Time repeat their unending and unchanging cycle. Always the tree of life puts forth its various flowers and sheds them and breaks into the same flowers in their recurring season. The body of man is born and grows and decays and perishes, but it gives birth to other bodies which maintain the one same futile cycle. What baffles the intelligence in all this intent and persistent process is that it seems to have in it no soul of meaning, no significance except the simple fact of causeless and purposeless existence dogged or relieved by the annulling or the compensating fact of individual cessation. And this is because we perceive the mechanism, but do not see the Power that uses the mechanism and the intention

in its use. But the moment we know that there is a conscious Spirit self-wise and infinite brooding upon the universe and a secret slowly self-finding soul in things, we get to the necessity of an idea in its consciousness, a thing conceived, willed, set in motion and securely to be done, progressively to be fulfilled by these great deliberate workings.

But the Buddhistic statement admits no self, spirit or eternal Being in its rigorously mechanical economy of existence. It takes only the phenomenon of a constant becoming and elevates that from the physical to the psychical level. As there is evident to our physical mind an Energy, action, motion, capable of creating by its material forces the forms and powers of the material universe, so there is for the Buddhistic vision of things an Energy, action, Karma, creating by its psychic powers of idea and association this embodied soul life with its continuity of recurrences. As the body is a dissoluble construction, a composite and combination, so the soul too is a dissoluble construction and combination; the soul life like the physical life sustains itself by a continuous flux and repetition of the same workings and movements. As this constant hereditary succession of lives is a prolongation of the one universal principle of life by a continued creation of similar bodies, a mechanical recurrence, so the system of soul rebirth too is a constant prolongation of the principle of the soul life by a continued creation through Karma of similar embodied associations and experiences, a mechanical recurrence. As the cause of all this physical birth and long hereditary continuation is an obscure will to life in Matter, so the cause of continued soul birth is an ignorant desire or will to be in the universal energy of Karma. As the constant wheelings of the universe and the motions of its forces generate individual existences who escape from or end in being by an individual dissolution, so there is this constant wheel of becoming and motion of Karma which forms into individualised soul-lives that must escape from their continuity by a dissolving cessation. An extinction of the embodied consciousness is our apparent material end; for soul too the end is extinction, the blank satisfaction of Nothingness or some ineffable bliss of a superconscient Non-Being. The affirmation of

the mechanical occurrence or recurrence of birth is the essence of this view; but while the bodily life suffers an enforced end and dissolution, the soul life ceases by a willed self-extinction.

The Buddhistic theory adds nothing to the first obvious significance of life except an indefinite prolongation by rebirth which is a burden, not a gain, and the spiritual greatness of the discipline of self-extinction, — the latter, no doubt, a thing of great value. The illusionist solution adds something, but does not differ very greatly in its motive from the Buddhistic. It sets against the futile cosmic repetition an eternity of our own absolute being; from the ignorance which creates the illusory mechanism of a recurrence of rebirth, it escapes into the self-knowledge of our ineffable existence. That seems to bring in a positive strain and to give to our being an initial, a supporting and an eventual reality. But the hiatus here is the absence of all true and valid relation between this real being of ours and all our birth and becoming. The last event and end of our births is not represented as any absolute fulfilment of what we are, — that would be a great, fruitful and magnificently positive philosophy, nor as the final affirmation of a progressive self-finding, — that too would give a noble meaning to our existence; it is a turning away from the demand of the universal Spirit, a refusal of all these cosmic ideas, imaginations, aspirations, action and effectuation. The way to find our being given us is an absolute denial of all our becoming. We rise to self by a liberating negation of ourselves, and in the result the Idea in the universe pursues its monstrous and aimless road, but the individual ceases and is blest in the cessation. The motive of this way of thought is the same oppressive sense of an ignorant mechanical cosmic recurrence as in the Buddhistic and the same high impatient passion of escape. There is recognition of a divine source of life, but a non-recognition of any divine meaning in life. And as for rebirth it is reduced in its significance to a constant mechanism of self-deception, and the will not to live is shown us as the last acquisition, the highest good and the one desirable result of living. The satisfaction which Illusionism gives, — for it does give a certain high austere kind of satisfaction to the intellect



and to one turn of spiritual tendency, — is the pressing to a last point of the obvious antinomy between this great burdensome and tyrannous mechanism, the universe, and the spirit which feels itself of another and a diviner nature, the great relief to a soul passioning for freedom, but compelled to labour on as a spring of the dull machine, of being able to cast away the cosmic burden, and finally the free and bare absoluteness of this spiritual conclusion. But it gives no real, because no fruitful answer to the problem of God and man and the significance of life; it only gets away from them by a skilful evasion and takes away from them all significance, so that any question of the sense and will in all this tremendous labour and throb and seeking loses meaning. But the challenge of God's universe to the knowledge and strength of the human spirit cannot in the end be met by man with a refusal or solved by an evasion, even though an individual soul may take refuge from the demand, as a man may from the burden of action and pain in unconsciousness, in spiritual trance or sleep or escape through its blank doors into the Absolute. Something the Spirit of the universe means by our labour in existence, some sense it has in these grandiose rhythms, and it has not undertaken them in an eternally enduring error or made them in a jest.<sup>1</sup> To know that and possess it, to find and fulfil consciously the universal being's hidden significances is the task given to the human spirit.

There are other statements or colourings of the idea of rebirth which admit a more positive sense for existence and nourish a robuster confidence in the power and delight of being which are its secret fountains; but they all stumble in the end over the limitations of humanity and an inability to see any outlet from their bondage in the order of the universe, because they suppose this to be a thing fixed from of years sempiternal — *śāśvatībhyaḥ samābhyaḥ*, not an eternally developing and creative, but an immutable cycle. The Vaishnava idea of the play of God, striking as it does into the secret of the hidden delight

<sup>1</sup> The magnificent and pregnant phrase of the Koran, "Thinkest thou that I have made the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in a jest?"

at the core of things, is a luminous ray shot into the very heart of the mystery; but isolated it cannot solve all its enigma. There is more here in the world than a play of secret delight; there is knowledge, there is power, there is a will and a mighty labour. Rebirth so looked at becomes too much of a divine caprice with no object but its playing, and ours is too great and strenuous a world to be so accounted for. Such chequered delight as is given to our becoming, is a game of disguises and seekings with no promise here of any divine completeness; its circles seem in the end not worth following out and the soul turns gladly to its release from the game's unsatisfying mazes. The Tantric solution shows us a supreme superconscient Energy which casts itself out here into teeming worlds and multitudinous beings and in its order the soul rises from birth to birth and follows its million forms, till in a last human series it opens to the consciousness and powers of its own divinity and returns through them by a rapid illumination to the eternal superconscience. We find at last the commencement of a satisfying synthesis, some justification of existence, a meaningful consequence in rebirth, a use and a sufficient though only temporary significance for the great motion of the cosmos. On lines very like these the modern mind, when it is disposed to accept rebirth, is inclined to view it. But there is a too minor stress on the soul's divine potentialities, a haste of insistence on the escape into superconscience; the supreme Energy constructs too long and stupendous a preparation for so brief and so insufficient a flowering. There is a lacuna here, some secret is still missing.

There are certain limitations of our own thought over which all these solutions stumble, and the chief of these obstacles are our sense of the mechanical nature of the universe and our inability to see forward to a greater than our present type of humanity. We see the superconscient Spirit in its effulgence and freedom and we see the universe in its unconscious bondage to the cycle of its mechanical recurrences, or we see existence as an abstract entity and Nature as a mechanical force; the conscient soul stands between as a link between these opposites, but it is itself so incomplete that we cannot find in this link

the secret or make of it a strong master of reconciliation. Then we pronounce birth to be an error of the soul and see our one chance of liberation in a shaking off of these natal shackles and a violent reversion to supracosmic consciousness or the freedom of abstract being. But what if rebirth were in truth no long dragging chain, but rather at first a ladder of the soul's ascension and at last a succession of mighty spiritual opportunities? It will be so if the infinite existence is not what it seems to the logical intellect, an abstract entity, but what it is to intuition and in deeper soul experience, a conscious spiritual Reality, and that Reality as real here as in any far off absolute Superconscience. For then universal Nature would be no longer a mechanism with no secret but its own inconscient mechanics and no intention but the mere recurrent working; it would be the conscient energy of the universal Spirit hidden in the greatness of its processes, *mahimānam asya*. And the soul ascending from the sleep of matter through plant and animal life to the human degree of the power of life and there battling with ignorance and limit to take possession of its royal and infinite kingdom would be the mediator appointed to unfold in Nature the spirit who is hidden in her subtleties and her vastnesses. That is the significance of life and the world which the idea of evolutionary rebirth opens to us; life becomes at once a progressive ascending series for the unfolding of the Spirit. It acquires a supreme significance: the way of the Spirit in its power is justified, no longer a foolish and empty dream, an eternal delirium, great mechanical toil or termless futility, but the sum of works of a large spiritual Will and Wisdom: the human soul and the cosmic spirit look into each other's eyes with a noble and divine meaning.

The questions which surround our existence elucidate themselves at once with a certain satisfactory fullness. What we are is a soul of the transcendent Spirit and Self unfolding itself in the cosmos in a constant evolutionary embodiment of which the physical side is only a pedestal of form corresponding in its evolution to the ascending degrees of the spirit, but the spiritual growth is the real sense and motive. What is behind us is the past terms of the spiritual evolution, the upward gradations of

the spirit already climbed, by which through constant rebirth we have developed what we are, and are still developing this present and middle human term of the ascension. What is around us is the constant process of the unfolding in its universal aspect: the past terms are there contained in it, fulfilled, overpassed by us, but in general and various type still repeated as a support and background; the present terms are there not as an unprofitable recurrence, but in active pregnant gestation of all that is yet to be unfolded by the spirit, no irrational decimal recurrence helplessly repeating for ever its figures, but an expanding series of powers of the Infinite. What is in front of us is the greater potentialities, the steps yet unclimbed, the intended mightier manifestations. Why we are here is to be this means of the spirit's upward self-unfolding. What we have to do with ourselves and our significances is to grow and open them to greater significances of divine being, divine consciousness, divine power, divine delight and multiplied unity, and what we have to do with our environment is to use it consciously for increasing spiritual purposes and make it more and more a mould for the ideal unfolding of the perfect nature and self-conception of the Divine in the cosmos. This is surely the Will in things which moves, great and deliberate, unhesitating, unceasing, through whatever cycles, towards a greater and greater informing of its own finite figures with its own infinite Reality.

All this is to the mind that lives in the figures of the present, as it must be to the careful sceptical mind of positive inquiry, no more than a hypothesis; for if evolution is an acknowledged idea, rebirth itself is only a supposition. Take it so, but still it is a better hypothesis than the naive and childlike religious solutions which make the world an arbitrary caprice and man the breathing clay puppet of an almighty human-minded Creator, and at least as good a hypothesis as the idea of a material inconscient Force somehow stumbling into a precarious, ephemeral, yet always continued phenomenon of consciousness, or a creative Life labouring in the Bergsonian formula oppressed but constant in the midst of a universal death, as good too as the idea of a mechanical working of Prakriti, Maya, Shakti into which or in

which a real or unreal individual stumbles and wanders, *dandramyamāṇo andhena nīyamāṇo yathāndhaḥ*,<sup>2</sup> until he can get out of it by a spiritual liberation. To a large philosophical questioning it will not seem in disagreement with the known lines of existence or out of tune with the facts and necessities of being or the demands of reason and intuition, even though it admits a yet unrealised factor, things yet to be; for that is implied in the very idea of evolution. It may modify, but does not radically contradict any religious experience or aspiration, — for it is not inconsistent either with a union with Superconscience or bliss in heavens beyond or any personal or impersonal relation with the Divine, since these may well be heights of the spiritual unfolding. Its truth will depend on spiritual experience and effectuation; but chiefly on this momentous issue, whether there is anything in the soul-powers of man which promises a greater term of being than his present mentality and whether that greater term can be made effective for his embodied existence. That is the question which remains over to be tested by psychological inquiry and the problem to be resolved in the course of the spiritual evolution of man.

There are transcendental questions of the metaphysical necessity, possibility, final reality of an evolutionary manifestation of this kind, but they do not need to be brought in now and here; for the time we are concerned only with its reality to experience and with the processional significance of rebirth, with the patent fact that we are a part of some kind of manifestation and move forward in the press of some kind of evolution. We see a Power at work and seek whether in that power there is a conscious Will, an ordered development and have first to discover whether it is the blind result of an organised Chance or inconscient self-compelled Law or the plan of a universal Intelligence or Wisdom. Once we find that there is a conscious Spirit of which this movement is one expression, or even admit that as our working hypothesis, we are bound to go on and ask whether this developing order ceases with what man now is or is laden

<sup>2</sup> “Beating about like the blind led by the blind.”

with something more towards which it and he have to grow, an unfinished expression, a greater unfound term, and in that case it is evidently towards that greater thing that man must be growing; to prepare it and to realise it must be the stage beyond in his destiny. Towards that new step in the evolution his history as a race must be subconsciously tending and the powers of the highest individuals half consciently striving to be delivered of this greater birth; and since the ascending order of rebirth follows always the degrees of the evolution, that too cannot be meant to stop short or shoot off abruptly into the superconscient without any regard to the intended step. The relation of our birth to life on other levels of consciousness and to whatever transcendent Superconscience there may be, are important problems, but their solution must be something in harmony with the intention of the Spirit in the universe; all must be part of a unity, and not an imbroglio of spiritual incoherences and contradictions. Our first bridge from the known to the unknown on this line of thought must be to discover how far the yet unfinished ladder of evolution can mount in the earth series. The whole processional significance of rebirth may be wrapped up in that one yet unattempted discovery.

## The Ascending Unity

**T**HE HUMAN mind loves a clear simplicity of view; the more trenchant a statement, the more violently it is caught by it and inclined to acceptance. This is not only natural to our first crudity of thinking, and the more attractive because it makes things delightfully easy to handle and saves an immense amount of worry of enquiry and labour of reflection, but, modified, it accompanies us to the higher levels of a more watchful mentality. Alexander's method with the fateful knot is our natural and favourite dealing with the tangled web of things, the easy cut, the royal way, the facile philosophy of this and not this, that and not that, a strong yes and no, a simple division, a pair of robust opposites, a clean cut of classification. Our reason acts by divisions, even our ordinary illogical thought is a stumbling and bungling summary analysis and arrangement of the experience that offers itself to us with such unending complexity. But the cleanest and clearest division is that which sets us most at ease, because it impresses on our still childlike intelligence a sense of conclusive and luminous simplicity.

But the average mind enamoured of a straight and plain thinking, for which, for a famous instance, that great doctor Johnson thought with the royal force dear to all strong men when he destroyed Berkeley's whole philosophy by simply kicking a stone and saying "There I prove the reality of matter," is not alone affected by this turn towards simple solutions. Even the philosopher, though he inclines to an intricate reasoning by the way, is best delighted when he can get by it to some magnificently conclusive conclusion, some clean-cutting distinction between Brahman and non-Brahman, Reality and unreality or any of the host of mental oppositions on which so many "isms" have been founded. These royal roads of philosophy have the advantage that they are highly and grandly cut for the steps of

the metaphysical intellect and at the same time attract and overpower the ordinary mind by the grandiose eminence of the peak in which they end, some snow-white heaven-cutting Matterhorn of sovereign formula. What a magnificent exterminating sweep do we hear for instance in that old renowned sentence, *brahma satyam jagan mithyā*, the Eternal alone is true, the universe is a lie, and how these four victorious words seem to settle the whole business of God and man and world and life at once and for ever in their uncompromising antithesis of affirmation and negation. But after all perhaps when we come to think more at large about the matter, we may find that Nature and Existence are not of the same mind as man in this respect, that there is here a great complexity which we must follow with patience and that those ways of thinking have most chance of a fruitful truth-yielding, which like the inspired thinking of the Upanishads take in many sides at once and reconcile many conflicting conclusions. One can hew material for a hundred philosophies out of the Upanishads as if from some bottomless Titans' quarry and yet no more exhaust it than one can exhaust the opulent bosom of our mother Earth or the riches of our father Ether.

Man began this familiar process of simple cuttings by emphasising his sense of himself as man; he made of himself a being separate, unique and peculiar in this world, for whom or round whom everything else was supposed to be created, — and all the rest, the subhuman existence, animal, plant, inanimate object, everything to the original atom seemed to him a creation different from himself, separate, of another nature; he condemned all to be without a soul, he was the one ensouled being. He saw life, defined it by certain characters that struck his mind, and set apart all other existence as non-living, inanimate. He looked at his earth, made it the centre of the universe, because the one inhabited scene of embodied souls or living beings; but the innumerable other heavenly bodies were only lights to illumine earth's day or to relieve her night. He perceived the insufficiency of this one earthly life only to create another opposite definition of a perfect heavenly existence and set it in the skies he saw above him. He perceived his "I" or self and conceived of it as a



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separate embodied ego, the centre of all his earthly and heavenly interests, and cut off all other being as the not-I which was there for him to make the best use he could out of it for this little absorbing entity. When he looked beyond these natural sense-governed divisions, he still followed the same logical policy. Conceiving of spirit, he cut it off sharply as a thing by itself, the opposite of all that was not spirit; an antinomy between spirit and matter became the base of his self-conception, or else more amply between spirit on the one side and on the other mind, life and body. Then conceiving of self as a pure entity, all else being not-self was separated from it as of quite another character. Incidentally, with the eye of his inveterate dividing mind, he saw it as his own separate self and, just as before he had made the satisfaction of ego his whole business on earth, so he made the soul's own individual salvation its one all-important spiritual and heavenly transaction. Or he saw the universal and denied the reality of the individual, refusing to them any living unity or coexistent reality, or saw a transcendent Absolute separate from individual and universe so that these became a figment of the unreal, Asat. Being and Becoming are to his clean-cutting confidently trenchant mind two opposite categories, of which one or the other must be denied, or made a temporary construction or a sum, or sicklied over with the pale hue of illusion, and not Becoming accepted as an eternal display of Being. These conceptions of the sense-guided or the intellectual reason still pursue us, but a considering wisdom comes more and more to perceive that conclusive and satisfying as they may seem and helpful though they may be for action of life, action of mind, action of spirit, they are yet, as we now put them, constructions. There is a truth behind them, but a truth which does not really permit of these isolations. Our classifications set up too rigid walls; all borders are borders only and not impassable gulfs. The one infinitely variable Spirit in things carries over all of himself into each form of his omnipresence; the self, the Being is at once unique in each, common in our collectivities and one in all beings. God moves in many ways at once in his own indivisible unity.

The conception of man as a separate and quite peculiar being in the universe has been rudely shaken down by a patient and disinterested examination of the process of nature. He is without equal or peer and occupies a privileged position on earth, but is not solitary in his being; all the evolution is there to explain this seeker of spiritual greatness embodied in a fragile body and narrow life and bounded mind who in turn by his being and seeking explains to itself the evolution. The animal prepares and imperfectly prefigures man and is itself prepared in the plant, as that too is foreseen obscurely by all that precedes it in the terrestrial expansion. Man himself takes up the miraculous play of the electron and atom, draws up through the complex development of the protoplasm the chemical life of subvital things, perfects the original nervous system of the plant in the physiology of the completed animal being, consummates and repeats rapidly in his embryonic growth the past evolution of the animal form into the human perfection and, once born, rears himself from the earthward and downward animal proneness to the erect figure of the spirit who is already looking up to his farther heavenward evolution. All the terrestrial past of the world is there summarised in man, and not only has Nature given as it were the physical sign that she has formed in him an epitome of her universal forces, but psychologically also he is one in his subconscious being with her obscurer subanimal life, contains in his mind and nature the animal and rises out of all this substratum into his conscious manhood.

Whatever soul there is in man is not a separate spiritual being which has no connection with all the rest of the terrestrial family, but seems to have grown out of it by a taking up of it all and an exceeding of its sense by a new power and meaning of the spirit. This is the universal nature of the type man on earth, and it is reasonable to suppose that whatever has been the past history of the individual soul, it must have followed the course of the universal nature and evolution. The separative pride which would break up the unity of Nature in order to make of ourselves another as well as a greater creation, has no physical warrant, but has been found on the contrary to be contradicted by all

the evidence; and there is no reason to suppose that it has any spiritual justification. The physical history of humankind is the growth out of the subvital and the animal life into the greater power of manhood; our inner history as indicated by our present nature, which is the animal plus something that exceeds it, must have been a simultaneous and companion growing on the same curve into the soul of humanity. The ancient Indian idea which refused to separate nature of man from the universal Nature or self of man from the one common self, accepted this consequence of its seeing. Thus the Tantra assigns eighty millions of plant and animal lives as the sum of the preparation for a human birth and, without binding ourselves to the figure, we can appreciate the force of its idea of the difficult soul evolution by which humanity has come or perhaps constantly comes into being. We can only get away from this necessity of an animal past by denying all soul to subhuman nature.

But this denial is only one of the blind, hasty and presumptuous isolations of the human mind which shut up in its own prison of separate self-perception refuses to see its kinship with the rest of natural being. Because soul or spirit works in the animal on a lower scale, we are not warranted in thinking that there is no soul in him, any more than a divine or superhuman being would be justified in regarding us as soulless bodies or soulless minds because of the grovelling downward drawn inferiority of our half-animal nature. The figure which we use when sometimes we say of one of our own kind that he has no soul, is only a figure; it means only that the animal type of soul predominates in him over the more developed soul type which we expect in the finer spiritual figure of humanity. But this animal element is present in every mother's son of us; it is our legacy, our inheritance from the common earth-mother: and how spiritually do we get this element of our being or incur the burden of this inheritance, if it is not the earning of our own past, the power we have kept from a bygone formative experience? The spiritual law of Karma is that the nature of each being can be only the result of his past energies; to suppose a soul which assumes and continues a past karma that is not its

own, is to cut a line of dissociation across this law and bring in an unknown and unverified factor. But if we admit it, we must account for that factor, we must explain or discover by what law, by what connection, by what necessity, by what strange impulsion of choice a spirit pure of all animal nature assumes a body and nature of animality prepared for it by a lower order of being. If there is no affinity and no consequence of past identity or connection, this becomes an unnatural and impossible assumption. Then it is the most reasonable and concordant conclusion that man has the animal nature, — and indeed if we consider well his psychology, we find that he houses many kinds of animal souls or rather an amalgam of animal natures, — because the developing self in him like the developed body has had a past subhuman evolution. This conclusion preserves the unity of Nature and its developing order; and it concurs with the persistent evidence of an interaction and parallelism which we perceive between the inward and the outward, the physical and the mental phenomenon, — a correspondence and companionship which some would explain by making mind a result and notation of the act of nerve and body, but which can now be better accounted for by seeing in vital and physical phenomenon a consequence and minor notation of a soul-action which it at the same time hints and conceals from our sense-bound mentality. Finally, it makes of soul or spirit, no longer a miraculous accident or intervention in a material universe, but a constant presence in it and the secret of its order and its existence.

The concession of an animal soul existence and of its past subhuman births slowly and guardedly preparing the birth into humanity cannot stop short at this abrupt line in the natural gradation. For man epitomises in his being not only the animal existence below him, but the obscurer subanimal being. But if it is difficult for us to concede a soul to the despised animal form and mind, it is still more difficult to concede it to the brute subconsciousness of the subanimal nature. Ancient belief made this concession with the happiest ease, saw a soul, a living godhead everywhere in the animate and in the inanimate and nothing was

to its view void of a spiritual existence. The logical abstracting intellect with its passion for clean sections intermediately swept away these large beliefs as an imaginative superstition or a primitive animism and, mastered by its limiting and dividing definitions, it drove a trenchant sectional cleavage between man and animal, animal and plant, animate and inanimate being. But now to the eye of our enlarging reason this system of intolerant cleavages is in rapid course of disappearance. The human mind is a development from what is inchoate in the animal mentality; there is, even, in that inferior type a sort of suppressed reason, for that name may well be given to a power of instinctive and customary conclusion from experience, association, memory and nervous response, and man himself begins with these things though he develops out of this animal inheritance a free human self-detaching power of reflective will and intelligence. And it is now clear that the nervous life which is the basis of that physical mentality in man and animal, exists also in the plant with a fundamental identity; not only so, but it is akin to us by a sort of nervous psychology which amounts to the existence of a suppressed mind. A subconscious mind in the plant, it is now not unreasonable to suggest, — but is it not at the summits of plant experience only half subconscious? — becomes conscient in the animal body. When we go lower down, we find hints that there are involved in the subvital most brute material forms the rudiments of precisely the same energy of life and its responses.

And the question then arises whether there is not an unbroken continuity in Nature, no scissions and sections, no unbridgeable gulfs or impassable borders, but a complete unity, matter instinct with a suppressed life, life instinct with a suppressed mind, mind instinct with a suppressed energy of a diviner intelligence, each new form or type of birth evolving a stage in the succession of suppressed powers, and there too the evolution not at an end, but this large and packed intelligence the means of liberating a greater and now suppressed self-power of the Spirit. A spiritual evolution thus meets our eye in the world which an inner force raises up a certain scale of gradations of its births in form by the unfolding of its own hidden powers to

the greatness of its complete and highest reality. The word of the ancient Veda stands, — out of all the ocean of inconscience, *apraketam salilam sarvam idam*, it is that one spiritual Existent who is born by the greatness of his own energy, *tapasas tan mahinā ajāyata ekam*. Where in this evolution does the thing we call soul make its first appearance? One is obliged to ask, was it not there, must it not have been there from the first beginnings, even though asleep or, as we may say, somnambulist in matter? If man were only a superior animal with a greater range of physical mind, we might conceivably say that there was no soul or spirit, but only three successive powers of Energy in a series of the forms of matter. But in this human intelligence there does appear at its summit a greater power of spirit; we rise up to a consciousness which is not limited by its physical means and formulas. This highest thing is not, as it might first appear, an unsubstantial sublimation of mind and mind a subtle sublimation of living matter. This greatness turns out to have been the very self-existent substance and power of our being; all other things seem in comparison only its lesser forms of itself which it uses for a progressive revelation; spirit in the end proves itself the first and not only the last, Alpha as well as Omega, and the whole secret of existence from its beginning. We come to a fathomless conception of this all, *sarvam idam*, in which we see that there is an obscure omnipresent life in matter, activated by that life a secret sleeping mind, sheltered in that sleep of mind an involved all-knowing all-originating Spirit. But then soul is not to be conceived of as a growth or birth of which we can fix a date of its coming or a stage in the evolution which brings it to a first capacity of formation, but rather all here is assumption of form by a secret soul which becomes in the self-seeking of life increasingly manifest to a growing self-conscience. All assumption of form is a constant and yet progressive birth or becoming of the soul, *sambhava, sambhūti*, — the dumb and blind and brute is that and not only the finely, mentally conscious human or the animal existence. All this infinite becoming is a birth of the Spirit into form. This is the truth, obscure at first or vague to the intelligence, but very

luminous to an inner experience, on which the ancient Indian idea of rebirth took its station.

But the repeated birth of the same individual does not at first sight seem to be indispensable in this overpowering universal unity. To the logical intellect it might appear to be a contradiction, since all here is the one self, spirit, existence born into nature, assuming a multitude of forms, ascending many gradations of its stages of self-revelation. That summary cutting of existence into the I and the not-I which was the convenience of our egoistic notion of things, a turn of mind so powerful for action, would seem to be only a practical or a mechanical device of the one Spirit to support its separative phenomenon of birth and conscious variation of combined proceeding, a sorcerer's trick of the universal intelligence; it is only apparent fact of being, not its truth, — there is no separation, only a universal unity, one spirit. But may not this again be a swinging away to the opposite extreme? As the ego was an excessive scission in the unity of being, so this idea of an ocean of unity in which our life would be only an inconstant momentary wave, may be a violent excision of something indispensable to the universal order. Individuality is as important a thing to the ways of the Spirit of existence as universality. The individual is that potent secret of its being upon which the universal stresses and leans and makes the knot of power of all its workings: as the individual grows in consciousness and sight and knowledge and all divine power and quality, increasingly he becomes aware of the universal in himself, but aware of himself too in the universality, of his own past not begun and ended in the single transient body, but opening to future consummations. If the aim of the universal in our birth is to become self-conscious and possess and enjoy its being, still it is done through the individual's flowering and perfection; if to escape from its own workings be the last end, still it is the individual that escapes while the universal seems content to continue its multitudinous births to all eternity. Therefore the individual would appear to be a real power of the Spirit and not a simple illusion or device, except in so far as the universal too may be, as some would have it, an immense illusion or

a grand imposed device. On this line of thinking we arrive at the idea of some great spiritual existence of which universal and individual are two companion powers, pole and pole of its manifestation, indefinite circumference and multiple centre of the activated realities of its being.

This is a way of seeing things, harmonious at least in its complexity, supple and capable of a certain all-embracing scope, which we can take as a basis for our ideas of rebirth,—an ascending unity, a spirit involved in material existence which scales wonderfully up many gradations through life to organised mind and beyond mind to the evolution of its own complete self-conscience, the individual following that gradation and the power for its self-crowning. If human mind is the last word of its possibility on earth, then rebirth must end in man and proceed by some abrupt ceasing either to an existence on other planes or to an annulment of its spiritual circle. But if there are higher powers of the spirit which are attainable by birth, then the ascent is not finished, greater assumptions may lie before the soul which has now reached and is lifted to a perfecting of the high scale of humanity. It may even be that this ascending rebirth is not the long upward rocket shooting of a conscious being out of matter or its whirling motion in mind destined to break up and dissolve in some high air of calm nothingness or of silent timeless infinity, but a progress to some great act and high display of the Divinity which shall give a wise and glorious significance to his persistent intention in an eternal creation. Or that at least may be one power of the Eternal's infinite potentiality.



## Involution and Evolution

THE WESTERN idea of evolution is the statement of a process of formation, not an explanation of our being. Limited to the physical and biological data of Nature, it does not attempt except in a summary or a superficial fashion to discover its own meaning, but is content to announce itself as the general law of a quite mysterious and inexplicable energy. Evolution becomes a problem in motion which is satisfied to work up with an automatic regularity its own puzzle, but not to work it out, because, since it is only a process, it has no understanding of itself, and, since it is a blind perpetual automatism of mechanical energy, it has neither an origin nor an issue. It began perhaps or is always beginning; it will stop perhaps in time or is always somewhere stopping and going back to its beginnings, but there is no why, only a great turmoil and fuss of a how to its beginning and its cessation; for there is in its acts no fountain of spiritual intention, but only the force of an unresting material necessity. The ancient idea of evolution was the fruit of a philosophical intuition, the modern is an effort of scientific observation. Each as enounced misses something, but the ancient got at the spirit of the movement where the modern is content with a form and the most external machinery. The Sankhya thinker gave us the psychological elements of the total evolutionary process, analysed mind and sense and the subtle basis of matter and divined some of the secrets of the executive energy, but had no eye for the detail of the physical labour of Nature. He saw in it too not only the covering active evident Force, but the concealed sustaining spiritual entity, though by an excess of the analytic intellect, obsessed with its love of trenchant scissions and symmetrical oppositions, he set between meeting Soul and Force an original and eternal gulf or line of separation. The modern scientist strives to make a complete scheme and

institution of the physical method which he has detected in its minute workings, but is blind to the miracle each step involves or content to lose the sense of it in the satisfied observation of a vast ordered phenomenon. But always the marvel of the thing remains, one with the inexplicable wonder of all existence, — even as it is said in the ancient Scripture,

*āścaryavat paśyati kaścīd enam,  
āścaryavad vadati tathaiva cānyaḥ;  
āścaryavac cainam anyah śṛṇoti,  
śrutvāpyenam veda na caiva kaścit.*

“One looks on it and sees a miracle, another speaks of it as a miracle, as a miracle another hears of it, but what it is, for all the hearing, none knoweth.” We know that an evolution there is, but not what evolution is; that remains still one of the initial mysteries of Nature.

For evolution, as is the habit with the human reason’s accounts and solutions of the deep and unfathomable way of the spirit in things, raises more questions than it solves; it does not do away with the problem of creation, for all its appearance of solid orderly fact, any more than the religious affirmation of an external omnipotent Creator could do it or the illusionist’s mystic Maya, *aghaṭana-ghaṭana-paṭīyasī*, very skilful in bringing about the impossible, some strange existent non-existent Power with an idea in That which is beyond and without ideas, self-empowered to create an existent non-existent world, existent because it very evidently is, non-existent because it is a patched up consistency of dreamful unreal transiencies. The problem is only prolonged, put farther back, given a subtle and orderly, but all the more challengingly complex appearance. But, even when our questioning is confined to the one issue of evolution alone, the difficulty still arises of the essential significance of the bare outward facts observed, what is meant by evolution, what is it that evolves, from what and by what force of necessity? The scientist is content to affirm an original matter or substance, atomic, electric, etheric or whatever it may finally turn out to be, which by the very nature of its own inherent energy or of an

energy acting in it and on it, — the two things are not the same, and the distinction, though it may seem immaterial in the beginning of the process, is of a considerable ultimate consequence, — produces owing to some unexplained law, constant system of results or other unalterable principle a number of different basic forms and powers of matter or different sensible and effective movements of energy: these come into being, it seems, when the minute original particles of matter meet together in variously disposed quantities, measures and combinations, and all the rest is a varying, developing, mounting movement of organised energy and its evolutionary consequences, *pariṇāma*, which depends on this crude constituting basis. All that is or may be a correct statement of phenomenal fact, — but we must not forget that the fundamental theory of science has been going of late through a considerable commotion of an upsetting and a rapid rearrangement, — but it carries us no step farther towards the principal, the all-important thing that we want to know. The way in which man sees and experiences the universe, imposes on his reason the necessity of a one original eternal substance of which all things are the forms and a one eternal original energy of which all movement of action and consequence is the variation. But the whole question is what is the reality of this substance and what is the essential nature of this energy?

Then, even if we suppose the least explicable part of the action to be an evolutionary development of the immaterial from Matter, still is that development a creation or a liberation, a birth of what did not exist before or a slow bringing out of what already existed in suppressed fact or in eternal potentiality? And the interest of the question becomes acute, its importance incalculable when we come to the still unexplained phenomenon of life and mind. Is life a creation out of inanimate substance or the appearance of a new, a suddenly or slowly resultant power out of the brute material energy, and is conscious mind a creation out of inconscient or subconscious life, or do these powers and godheads appear because they were always there though in a shrouded and by us unrecognizable condition of their hidden or suppressed idea and activity, *Nomen* and *Numen*? And what

of the soul and of man? Is soul a new result or creation of our mentalised life, — even so many regard it, because it clearly appears as a self-conscious, bright, distinguishable power only when thinking life has reached some high pitch of its intensity, — or is it not a permanent entity, the original mystery that now unveils its hidden form, the eternal companion of the energy we call Nature, her secret inhabitant or her very spirit and reality? And is man a biological creation of a brute energy which has somehow unexpectedly and quite inexplicably managed to begin to feel and think, or is he in his real self that inner Being and Power which is the whole sense of the evolution and the master of Nature? Is Nature only the force of self-expression, self-formation, self-creation of a secret spirit, and man however hedged in his present capacity, the first being in Nature in whom that power begins to be consciently self-creative in the front of the action, in this outer chamber of physical being, there set to work and bring out by an increasingly self-conscious evolution what he can of all its human significance or its divine possibility? That is the clear conclusion we must arrive at in the end, if we once admit as the key of the whole movement, the reality of this whole mounting creation a spiritual evolution.

The word evolution carries with it in its intrinsic sense, in the idea at its root the necessity of a previous involution. We must, if a hidden spiritual being is the secret of all the action of Nature, give its full power to that latent value of the idea. We are bound then to suppose that all that evolves already existed involved, passive or otherwise active, but in either case concealed from us in the shell of material Nature. The Spirit which manifests itself here in a body, must be involved from the beginning in the whole of matter and in every knot, formation and particle of matter; life, mind and whatever is above mind must be latent inactive or concealed active powers in all the operations of material energy. The only alternative would be to drive in between the two sides of our being the acute Sankhya scission; but that divides too much spirit and nature. Nature would be an inert and mechanical thing, but she would set to her work activised by some pressure on her of the Spirit. Spirit would be Being conscious

and free in its own essence from the natural activity, but would phenomenally modify or appear to modify its consciousness in response to some reaction of Nature. One would reflect the movements of the active Power, the other would enlighten her activities with the consciousness of the self-aware immortal being. In that case the scientific evolutionary view of Nature as a vast mechanical energy, life, mind and natural soul action its scale of developing operations would have a justification. Our consciousness would only be a luminous translation of the self-driven unresting mechanical activity into responsive notes of experience of the consenting spiritual witness. But the disabling difficulty in this notion is the quite opposite character of our own highest seeing; for in the end and as the energy of the universal force mounts up the gradients of its own possibilities, Nature becomes always more evidently a power of the spirit and all her mechanism only figures of its devising mastery. The power of the Flame cannot be divided from the Flame; where the Flame is, there is the power, and where the power is there is the fiery Principle. We have to come back to the idea of a spirit present in the universe and, if the process of its works of power and its appearance is in the steps of an evolution, there imposes itself the necessity of a previous involution.

This spirit in things is not apparent from the beginning, but self-betrayed in an increasing light of manifestation. We see the compressed powers of Nature start released from their original involution, disclose in a passion of work the secrets of their infinite capacity, press upon themselves and on the supporting inferior principle to subject its lower movement on which they are forced to depend into a higher working proper to their own type and feel their proper greatness in the greatness of their self-revealing effectuations. Life takes hold of matter and breathes into it the numberless figures of its abundant creative force, its subtle and variable patterns, its enthusiasm of birth and death and growth and act and response, its will of more and more complex organisation of experience, its quivering search and feeling out after a self-consciousness of its own pleasure and pain and understanding gust of action; mind seizes on life to make

it an instrument for the wonders of will and intelligence; soul possesses and lifts mind through the attraction of beauty and good and wisdom and greatness towards the joy of some half-seen ideal highest existence; and in all this miraculous movement and these climbing greatnesses each step sets its foot on a higher rung and opens to a clearer, larger and fuller scope and view of the always secret and always self-manifesting spirit in things. The eye fixed on the physical evolution has only the sight of a mechanical grandeur and subtlety of creation; the evolution of life opening to mind, the evolution of mind opening to the soul of its own light and action, the evolution of soul out of the limited powers of mind to a resplendent blaze of the infinities of spiritual being are the more significant things, give us greater and subtler reaches of the self-disclosing Secrecy. The physical evolution is only an outward sign, the more and more complex and subtle development of a supporting structure, the growing exterior metre mould of form which is devised to sustain in matter the rising intonations of the spiritual harmony. The spiritual significance finds us as the notes rise; but not till we get to the summit of the scale can we command the integral meaning of that for which all these first formal measures were made the outward lines, the sketch or the crude notation. Life itself is only a coloured vehicle, physical birth a convenience for the greater and greater births of the Spirit.

The spiritual process of evolution is then in some sense a creation, but a self-creation, not a making of what never was, but a bringing out of what was implicit in the Being. The Sanskrit word for creation signifies a loosing forth, a letting out into the workings of Nature. The Upanishad in a telling figure applies the image of the spider which brings its web out of itself and creates the structure in which it takes its station. That is applied in the ancient Scripture not to the evolution of things out of Matter, but to an original bringing of temporal becoming out of the eternal infinity; Matter itself and this material universe are only such a web or indeed no more than a part of it brought out from the spiritual being of the Infinite. But the same truth, the same law holds good of all that we see of the emergence of things from

involution in the material energy. We might almost speak here of a double evolution. A Force inherent in the Infinite brings out of it eternally the structure of its action in a universe of which the last descending scale is based upon an involution of all the powers of the spirit into an inconscient absorption in her self-oblivious passion of form and structural working. Thence comes an ascent and progressive liberation of power after power till the spirit self-disclosed and set free by knowledge and mastery of its works repossesses the eternal fullness of its being which envelops then and carries in its grasp the manifold and unified splendours of its nature. At any rate the spiritual process of which our human birth is a step and our life is a portion, appears as the bringing out of a greatness, *asya mahimānam*, which is secret, inherent and self-imprisoned, absorbed in the form and working of things. Our world-action figures an evolution, an outrolling of a manifold Power gathered and coiled up in the crude intricacy of Matter. The upward progress of the successive births of things is a rise into waking and larger and larger light of a consciousness shut into the first hermetic cell of sleep of the eternal Energy.

There is a parallel in the Yogic experience of the Kundalini, eternal Force coiled up in the body in the bottom root vessel or chamber, *mūlādhāra*, pedestal, earth-centre of the physical nervous system. There she slumbers coiled up like a Python and filled full of all that she holds gathered in her being, but when she is struck by the freely coursing breath, by the current of Life which enters in to search for her, she awakes and rises flaming up the ladder of the spinal chord and forces open centre after centre of the involved dynamic secrets of consciousness till at the summit she finds, joins and becomes one with the spirit. Thus she passes from an involution in inconscience through a series of opening glories of her powers into the greatest eternal super-conscience of the spirit. This mysterious evolving Nature in the world around us follows even such a course. Inconscient being is not so much a matrix as a chamber of materialised energy in which are gathered up all the powers of the spirit; they are there, but work in the conditions of the material energy, involved, we say, and therefore not apparent as themselves because they have

passed into a form of working subnormal to their own right scale where the characteristics by which we recognise and think we know them are suppressed into a minor and an undetected force of working. As Nature rises in the scale, she liberates them into their recognisable scales of energy, discloses the operations by which they can feel themselves and their greatness. At the highest summit she rises into the self-knowledge of the spirit which informed her action, but because of its involution or concealment in the forms of its workings could not be known in the greatness of its reality. Spirit and Nature discovering the secret of her energies become one at the top of the spiritual evolution by a soul in Nature which awakens to the significance of its own being in the liberation of the highest truth: it comes to know that its births were the births, the assumptions of form of an eternal Spirit, to know itself as that and not a creature of Nature and rises to the possession of the revealed, full and highest power of its own real and spiritual nature. That liberation, because liberation is self-possession, comes to us as the crown of a spiritual evolution.

We must consider all the packed significance of this involution. The spirit involved in material energy is there with all its powers; life, mind and a greater supramental power are involved in Matter. But what do we mean when we say that they are involved, and do we mean that all these things are quite different energies cut off from each other by an essential separateness, but rolled up together in an interaction, or do we mean that there is only one Being with its one energy, varying shades of the light of its power differentiated in the spectrum of Nature? When we say that Life is involved in Matter or in material Force, for of that Force Matter seems after all to be only a various self-spun formation, do we not mean that all this universal working, even in what seems to us its inconscient inanimate action, is a life-power of the spirit busy with formation, and we do not recognise it because it is there in a lower scale in which the characteristics by which we recognise life are not evident or are only slightly evolved in the dullness of the material covering? Material energy would be then Life packed into the density of



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Matter and feeling out in it for its own intenser recognisable power which it finds within itself in the material concealment and liberates into action. Life itself would be an energy of a secret mind, a mind imprisoned in its own forms and quivering out in the nervous seekings of life for its intenser recognisable power of consciousness which it discovers within the vital and material suppression and liberates into sensibility. No doubt, practically, these powers work upon each other as different energies, but in essence they would be one energy and their interaction the power of the spirit working by its higher on its lower forces, depending on them at first, but yet turning in the scale of its ascent to overtop and master them. Mind too might only be an inferior scale and formulation derived from a much greater and supramental consciousness, and that consciousness too with its greater light and will a characteristic originating power of spiritual being, the power which secret in all things, in mind, in life, in matter, in the plant and the metal and the atom assures constantly by its inevitable action the idea and harmony of the universe. And what is the spirit itself but infinite existence, eternal, immortal being, but always a conscious self-aware being, — and that is the difference between the materialist's mechanical monism and the spiritual theory of the universe, — which here expresses itself in a world finite to our conceptions whose every movement yet bears witness to the Infinite? And this world is because the spirit has the delight of its own infinite existence and the delight of its own infinite self-variation; birth is because all consciousness carries with it power of its own being and all power of being is self-creative and must have the joy of its self-creation. For creation means nothing else than a self-expression; and the birth of the soul in the body is nothing but a mode of its own self-expression. Therefore all things here are expression, form, energy, action of the Spirit; matter itself is but form of spirit, life but power of being of the spirit, mind but working of consciousness of the spirit. All Nature is a display and a play of God, power and action and self-creation of the one spiritual Being. Nature presents to spirit at once the force, the instrument, the medium, the obstacle, the result of his powers, and all these

things, obstacle as well as instrument, are the necessary elements for a gradual and developing creation.

But if the Spirit has involved its eternal greatness in the material universe and is there evolving its powers by the virtue of a secret self-knowledge, is disclosing them in a grandiose succession under the self-imposed difficulties of a material form of being, is disengaging them from a first veiling absorbed in-conscience of Nature, there is no difficulty in thinking or seeing that this soul shaped into humanity is a being of that Being, that this also has risen out of material involution by increasing self-expression in a series of births of which each grade is a new ridge of the ascent opening to higher powers of the spirit and that it is still arising and will not be for ever limited by the present walls of its birth but may, if we will, be born into a divine humanity. Our humanity is the conscious meeting place of the finite and the infinite and to grow more and more towards that Infinite even in this physical birth is our privilege. This Infinite, this Spirit who is housed within us but not bound or shut in by mind or body, is our own self and to find and be our self was, as the ancient sages knew, always the object of our human striving, for it is the object of the whole immense working of Nature. But it is by degrees of the self-finding that Nature enlarges to her spiritual reality. Man himself is a doubly involved being; most of himself in mind and below is involved in a subliminal conscience or a subconsciousness; most of himself above mind is involved in a spiritual superconscience. When he becomes conscient in the superconscience, the heights and the depths of his being will be illumined by another light of knowledge than the flickering lamp of the reason can now cast into a few corners; for then the master of the field will enlighten this whole wonderful field of his being, as the sun illumines the whole system it has created out of its own glories. Then only he can know the reality even of his own mind and life and body. Mind will be changed into a greater consciousness, his life will be a direct power and action of the Divinity, his very body no longer this first gross lump of breathing clay, but a very image and body of spiritual being. That transfiguration on the summit

of the mountain, divine birth, *divya janma*, is that to which all these births are a long series of laborious steps. An involution of spirit in matter is the beginning, but a spiritual assumption of divine birth is the fullness of the evolution.

East and West have two ways of looking at life which are opposite sides of one reality. Between the pragmatic truth on which the vital thought of modern Europe enamoured of the vigour of life, all the dance of God in Nature, puts so vehement and exclusive a stress and the eternal immutable Truth to which the Indian mind enamoured of calm and poise loves to turn with an equal passion for an exclusive finding, there is no such divorce and quarrel as is now declared by the partisan mind, the separating reason, the absorbing passion of an exclusive will of realisation. The one eternal immutable Truth is the Spirit and without the spirit the pragmatic truth of a self-creating universe would have no origin or foundation; it would be barren of significance, empty of inner guidance, lost in its end, a firework display shooting up into the void only to fall away and perish in mid-air. But neither is the pragmatic truth a dream of the non-existent, an illusion or a long lapse into some futile delirium of creative imagination; that would be to make the eternal Spirit a drunkard or a dreamer, the fool of his own gigantic self-hallucinations. The truths of universal existence are of two kinds, truths of the spirit which are themselves eternal and immutable, and these are the great things that cast themselves out into becoming and there constantly realise their powers and significances, and the play of the consciousness with them, the discords, the musical variations, soundings of possibility, progressive notations, reversions, perversions, mounting conversions into a greater figure of harmony; and of all these things the spirit has made, makes always his universe. But it is himself that he makes in it, himself that is the creator and the energy of creation and the cause and the method and the result of the working, the mechanist and the machine, the music and the musician, the poet and the poem, supermind, mind and life and matter, the soul and Nature.

An original error pursues us in our solutions of our problem. We are perplexed by the appearance of an antinomy; we set soul

against Nature, the spirit against his creative energy. But Soul and Nature, Purusha and Prakriti, are two eternal lovers who possess their perpetual unity and enjoy their constant difference, and in the unity abound in the passion of the multitudinous play of their difference, and in every step of the difference abound in the secret sense or the overt consciousness of unity. Nature takes the Soul into herself so that he falls asleep in a trance of union with her absorbed passion of creation and she too seems then to be asleep in the whirl of her own creative energy; and that is the involution in Matter. Above, it may be, the Soul takes Nature into himself so that she falls asleep in a trance of oneness with the absorbed self-possession of the spirit and he too seems to be asleep in the deep of his own self-locked immobile being. But still above and below and around and within all this beat and rhythm is the eternity of the spirit who has thus figured himself in soul and nature and enjoys with a perfect awareness all that he creates in himself by this involution and evolution. The soul fulfils itself in Nature when it possesses in her the consciousness of that eternity and its power and joy and transfigures the natural becoming with the fullness of the spiritual being. The constant self-creation which we call birth finds there the perfect evolution of all that it held in its own nature and reveals its own utmost significance. The complete soul possesses all its self and all Nature.

Therefore all this evolution is a growing of the Self in material nature to the conscious possession of its own spiritual being. It begins with form — apparently a form of Force — in which a spirit is housed and hidden; it ends in a spirit which consciously directs its own force and creates or assumes its own forms for the free joy of its being in Nature. Nature holding her own self and spirit involved and suppressed within herself, an imprisoned master of existence subjected to her ways of birth and action, — yet are these ways his and this spirit the condition of her being and the law of her workings, — commences the evolution: the spirit holding Nature conscious in himself, complete by his completeness, liberated by his liberation, perfected in his perfection, crowns the evolution. All our births are the

births of this spirit and self which has become or put forth a soul in Nature. To be is the object of our existence, — there is no other end or object, for the consciousness and bliss of being is the whole beginning and middle and end, as it is that which is without beginning or end. But this means in the steps of the evolution to grow more and more until we grow into our own fullness of self; all birth is a progressive self-finding, a means of self-realisation. To grow in knowledge, in power, in delight, love and oneness, towards the infinite light, capacity and bliss of spiritual existence, to universalise ourselves till we are one with all being, and to exceed constantly our present limited self till it opens fully to the transcendence in which the universal lives and to base upon it all our becoming, that is the full evolution of what now lies darkly wrapped or works half evolved in Nature.

## Karma

ONE FINDS an unanswerable truth in the theory of Karma, — not necessarily in the form the ancients gave to it, but in the idea at its centre, — which at once strikes the mind and commands the assent of the understanding. Nor does the austerer reason, distrustful of first impressions and critical of plausible solutions, find after the severest scrutiny that the more superficial understanding, the porter at the gateways of our mentality, has been deceived into admitting a tinsel guest, a false claimant into our mansion of knowledge. There is a solidity at once of philosophic and of practical truth supporting the idea, a bedrock of the deepest universal undeniable verities against which the human mind must always come up in its fathomings of the fathomless; in this way indeed does the world deal with us, there is a law here which does so make itself felt and against which all our egoistic ignorance and self-will and violence dashes up in the end, as the old Greek poet said of the haughty insolence and prosperous pride of man, against the very foundation of the throne of Zeus, the marble feet of Themis, the adamantine bust of Ananke. There is the secret of an eternal factor, the base of the unchanging action of the just and truthful gods, *devānām dhruvāṇi vratāni*, in the self-sufficient and impartial law of Karma.

This truth of Karma has been always recognised in the East in one form or else in another; but to the Buddhists belongs the credit of having given to it the clearest and fullest universal enunciation and the most insistent importance. In the West too the idea has constantly recurred, but in external, in fragmentary glimpses, as the recognition of a pragmatic truth of experience, and mostly as an ordered ethical law or fatality set over against the self-will and strength of man: but it was clouded over by other ideas inconsistent with any reign of law, vague ideas of

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some superior caprice or of some divine jealousy, — that was a notion of the Greeks, — a blind Fate or inscrutable Necessity, Ananke, or, later, the mysterious ways of an arbitrary, though no doubt an all-wise Providence. And all this meant that there was some broken half-glimpse of the working of a force, but the law of its working and the nature of the thing itself escaped the perception, — as indeed it could hardly fail to do, since the mental eye of the West, absorbed by the passion of life, tried to read the workings of the universe in the light of the single mind and life of man; but those workings are much too vast, ancient, unbrokenly continuous in Time and all-pervading in Space, — not in material infinity alone, but in the eternal time and eternal space of the soul's infinity, — to be read by so fragmentary a glimmer. Since the Eastern idea and name of the law of Karma was made familiar to the modern mentality, one side of it has received an increasing recognition, perhaps because latterly that mentality had been prepared by the great discoveries and generalisations of Science for a fuller vision of cosmic existence and a more ordered and majestic idea of cosmic Law. It may be as well then to start from the physical base in approaching this question of Karma, though we may find at last that it is from the other end of being, from its spiritual summit rather than its material support that we must look in order to catch its whole significance — and to fix also the limits of its significance.

Fundamentally, the meaning of Karma is that all existence is the working of a universal Energy, a process and an action and a building of things by that action, — an unbuilding too, but as a step to farther building, — that all is a continuous chain in which every one link is bound indissolubly to the past infinity of numberless links, and the whole governed by fixed relations, by a fixed association of cause and effect, present action the result of past action as future action will be the result of present action, all cause a working of energy and all effect too a working of energy. The moral significance is that all our existence is a putting out of an energy which is in us and by which we are made and as is the nature of the energy which is put forth as cause, so shall be that of the energy which returns as effect, that this is the universal

law and nothing in the world can, being of and in our world, escape from its governing incidence. That is the philosophical reality of the theory of Karma, and that too is the way of seeing which has been developed by physical Science. But its seeing has been handicapped in the progress to the full largeness of its own truth by two persistent errors, first, the strenuous paradoxical attempt — inevitable and useful no doubt as one experiment of the human reason which had to have its opportunity, but foredoomed to failure — to explain supraperceptible things by a physical formula, and a darkening second error of setting behind the universal rule of law and as its cause and efficient the quite opposite idea of the cosmic reign of Chance. The old notion of an unintelligible supreme caprice, — unintelligible it must naturally be since it is the working of an unintelligent Force, — thus prolonged its reign and got admission side by side with the scientific vision of the fixities and chained successions of the universe.

Being is no doubt one, and Law too may be one; but it is perilous to fix from the beginning on one type of phenomena with a predetermined will to deduce from that all other phenomenon however different in its significance and nature. In that way we are bound to distort truth into the mould of our own prepossession. Intermediately at least we have rather to recognise the old harmonious truth of Veda — which also came by this way in its end, its Vedanta, to the conception of the unity of Being, — that there are different planes of cosmic existence and therefore too of our own existence and in each of them the same powers, energies or laws must act in a different type and in another sense and light of their effectuality. First, then, we see that if Karma be a universal truth or the universal truth of being, it must be equally true of the inly-born mental and moral worlds of our action as in our outward relations with the physical universe. It is the mental energy that we put forth which determines the mental effect, — but subject to all the impact of past, present and future surrounding circumstance, because we are not isolated powers in the world, but rather our energy a subordinate strain and thread of the universal energy. The moral energy of our action determines similarly the nature and effect of the moral



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consequence, but subject too — though to this element the rigid moralist does not give sufficient consideration, — to the same incidence of past, present and future surrounding circumstance. That this is true of the output of physical energy, needs no saying nor any demonstration. We must recognise these different types and variously formulated motions of the one universal Force, and it will not do to say from the beginning that the measure and quality of my inner being is some result of the output of a physical energy translated into mental and moral energies, — for instance, that my doing a good or a bad action or yielding to good or to bad affections and motives is at the mercy of my liver, or contained in the physical germ of my birth, or is the effect of my chemical elements or determined essentially and ultimately by the disposition of the constituent electrons of my brain and nervous system. Whatever drafts my mental and moral being may make on the corporeal for its supporting physical energy and however it may be affected by its borrowings, yet it is very evident that it uses them for other and larger purposes, has a supraphysical method, evolves much greater motives and significances. The moral energy is in itself a distinct power, has its own plane of karma, moves me even, and that characteristically, to override my vital and physical nature. Forms of one universal Force at bottom — or at top — these may be, but in practice they are different energies and have to be so dealt with — until we can find what that universal Force may be in its highest purest texture and initial power and whether that discovery can give us in the perplexities of our nature a unifying direction.

Chance, that vague shadow of an infinite possibility, must be banished from the dictionary of our perceptions; for of chance we can make nothing, because it is nothing. Chance does not at all exist; it is only a word by which we cover and excuse our own ignorance. Science excludes it from the actual process of physical law; everything there is determined by fixed cause and relation. But when it comes to ask why these relations exist and not others, why a particular cause is allied to a particular effect, it finds that it knows nothing whatever about the matter; every actualised possibility supposes a number of other possibilities

that have not actualised but conceivably might have, and it is convenient then to say that Chance or at most a dominant probability determines all actual happening, the chance of evolution, the stumblings of a groping inconscient energy which somehow finds out some good enough way and fixes itself into a repetition of the process. If Inconscience can do the works of intelligence, it may not be impossible that chaotic Chance should create a universe of law! But this is only a reading of our own ignorance into the workings of the universe, — just as prescientific man read into the workings of physical law the caprices of the gods or any other name for a sportive Chance whether undivine or dressed in divine glories, whether credited with a pliant flexibility to the prayers and bribes of man or presented with an immutable Sphinx face of stone, — but names only in fact for his own ignorance.

And especially when we come to the pressing needs of our moral and spiritual being, no theory of chance or probability will serve at all. Here Science, physical in her basis, does not help except to point out to a certain degree the effects of my physicality on my moral being or of my moral action on my physicality: for anything else of just illumination or useful purpose, she stumbles and splashes about in the quagmire of her own nescience. Earthquake and eclipse she can interpret and predict, but not my moral and spiritual becoming, but only attempt to explain its phenomena when they have happened by imposing polysyllables and fearful and wonderful laws of pathology, morbid heredity, eugenics and what not of loose fumbling, which touch only the draggled skirts of the lowest psycho-physical being. But here I need guidance more than anywhere else and must have the recognition of a law, the high line of a guiding order. To know the law of my moral and spiritual being is at first and last more imperative for me than to learn the ways of steam and electricity, for without these outward advantages I can grow in my inner manhood, but not without some notion of moral and spiritual law. Action is demanded of me and I need a rule for my action: something I am urged inwardly to become which I am not yet, and I would know what is the way and law,

what the central power or many conflicting powers and what the height and possible range and perfection of my becoming. That surely much more than the rule of electrons or the possibilities of a more omnipotent physical machinery and more powerful explosives is the real human question.

The Buddhists' mental and moral law of Karma comes in at this difficult point with a clue and an opening. As Science fills our mind with the idea of a universal government of Law in the physical and outward world and in our relations with Nature, though she leaves behind it all a great unanswered query, an agnosticism, a blank of some other ungrasped Infinite, — here covered by the concept of Chance, — the Buddhist conception too fills the spaces of our mental and moral being with the same sense of a government of mental and moral Law: but this too erects behind that Law a great unanswered query, an agnosticism, the blank of an ungrasped Infinite. But here the covering word is more grandly intangible; it is the mystery of Nirvana. This Infinite is figured in both cases by the more insistent and positive type of mind as an Inconscience, — but material in the one, in the other a spiritual infinite zero, — but by the more prudent or flexible thinkers simply as an unknowable. The difference is that the unknown of Science is something mechanical to which mechanically we return by physical dissolution or *laya*, but the unknown of Buddhism is a Permanent beyond the Law to which we return spiritually by an effort of self-suppression, of self-renunciation and, at the latest end, of self-extinction, by a mental dissolution of the Idea which maintains the law of relations and a moral dissolution of the world-desire which keeps up the stream of successions of the universal action. This is a rare and an austere metaphysics; but to its discouraging grandeur we are by no means compelled to give assent, for it is neither self-evident nor inevitable. It is by no means so certain that a high spiritual negation of what I am is my only possible road to perfection; a high spiritual affirmation and absolute of what I am may be also a feasible way and gate. This nobly glacial or blissfully void idea of a Nirvana, because it is so overwhelmingly a negation, cannot finally satisfy the human spirit, which

is drawn persistently to some highest positive and affirmation of itself and only uses negations by the way the better to rid itself of what comes in as an obstacle to its self-finding. To the everlasting No the living being may resign itself by an effort, a sorrowful or a superb turning upon itself and existence, but the everlasting Yes is its native attraction: our spiritual orientation, the magnetism that draws the soul, is to eternal Being and not to eternal Non-Being.

Nevertheless certain essential and needed clues are there in the theory of Karma. And first, there is this assurance, this firm ground on which I can base a sure tread, that in the mental and moral world as in the physical universe there is no chaos, fortuitous rule of chance or mere probability, but an ordered Energy at work which assures its will by law and fixed relation and steady succession and the links of ascertainable cause and effectuality. To be assured that there is an all-pervading mental law and an all-pervading moral law, is a great gain, a supporting foundation. That in the mental and moral as in the physical world what I sow in the proper soil, I shall assuredly reap, is a guarantee of divine government, of equilibrium, of cosmos; it not only grounds life upon an adamant underbase of law, but by removing anarchy opens the way to a greater liberty. But there is the possibility that if this Energy is all, I may only be a creation of an imperative Force and all my acts and becomings a chain of determination over which I can have no real control or chance of mastery. That view would resolve everything into predestination of Karma, and the result might satisfy my intellect but would be disastrous to the greatness of my spirit. I should be a slave and puppet of Karma and could never dream of being a sovereign of myself and my existence. But here there comes in the second step of the theory of Karma, that it is the Idea which creates all relations. All is the expression and expansion of the Idea, *sarvāṇi vijñāna-vijṛmbhitāni*. Then I can by the will, the energy of the Idea in me develop the form of what I am and arrive at the harmony of some greater idea than is expressed in my present mould and balance. I can aspire to a nobler expansion. Still, if the Idea is a thing in itself, without any base but its own spontaneous

power, none originating it, no knower, no Purusha and Lord, I may be only a form of the universal Idea and myself, my soul, may have no independent existence or initiation. But there is too this third step that I am a soul developing and persisting in the paths of the universal Energy and that in myself is the seed of all my creation. What I have become, I have made myself by the soul's past idea and action, its inner and outer karma; what I will to be, I can make myself by present and future idea and action. And finally, there is this last supreme liberating step that both the Idea and its Karma may have their origin in the free spirit and by arriving at myself by experience and self-finding I can exalt my state beyond all bondage of Karma to spiritual freedom. These are the four pillars of the complete theory of Karma. They are also the four truths of the dealings of Self with Nature.

## Karma and Freedom

**T**HE UNIVERSE in which we live presents itself to our mentality as a web of opposites and contraries, not to say contradictions, and yet it is a question whether there can be in the universe any such thing as an entire opposite or a real contradiction. Good and evil seem to be as opposite powers as well can be and we are apt by the nature of our ethical mind to see the world, at any rate in its moral aspect, as a struggle and tug of war between these eternal opposites, God and devil, Deva and Asura, Ahuramazda, Angrya Mainyu. We hope always that on some as yet hardly conceivable day the one will perish and the other triumph and be convinced of eternity; but actually they are so intertwined that some believe they are here always together like light and shadow and, if at all, then only somewhere beyond this world of action, in some restful and silent eternity is there a release from the anguish of the knot of their intertwining, their bitter constant embrace and struggle. Good comes out of evil and again good itself seems often to turn to evil; the bodies of the wrestling combatants get so mixed and confounded together that to distinguish them the minds of the sages even are perplexed and bewildered. And it would seem sometimes as if this distinction hardly existed except for man and the spirits who urge him, perhaps since he ate of that tree of dual knowledge in the garden; for matter knows it not and life below man troubles itself but little, if at all, with moral differences. And it is said too that on the other side of human being and beyond its struggles is a serenity of the high and universal spirit where the soul transcends sin, but transcends also virtue, and neither sorrows nor repents nor asks “Why have I not done the good and wherefore have I done this which is evil?”<sup>1</sup> because in

<sup>1</sup> Taittiriya Upanishad.

it all things are perfect and to it all things are pure.

But there is a yet more radical instance of the eventual unreality of opposites. For the sages make too an opposition of the Knowledge and the Ignorance, — *vidyā avidyā, citti acitti*, — on which this question of good and evil seems very intimately to hang. Evil runs behind an ignorant urge of the soul in nature, is itself an ignorant perversion of its will, and the partiality of good is equally an affliction of the Ignorance. But when we look closely into the essence of these two things, we find that on one side ignorance seems to be nothing else than an involved or a partial knowledge; it is knowledge wrapped up in an unconscious action or it is knowledge feeling out for itself with the tentacles of mind; and again on the other side knowledge itself appears to be at best a partial knowing and always to have something beyond of which it is ignorant, even its highest and widest splendour a golden outbreak of solar effulgence against the mass of blue-black light of infinity through which we look beyond it to the Ineffable.

Our mind is compelled to think always by oppositions, from the practical validity of which we cannot escape, but which yet seem always in some sort questionable. We get a perception of a law of Karma, the constant unavoidable successions of the acts of energy and its insistent stream of consequences and reactions, the chain of causality, the great mass of past causes behind us from which all future consequence ought infallibly to unroll itself, and by this we try to explain the universe; but then immediately there arises the opposite idea and the challenging problem of liberty. Whence comes this notion of liberty, this divine or this Titanic thirst in man for freedom, born perhaps of something in him by which, however finite be his mind and life and body, he participates in the nature of infinity? For when we look round on the world as it is, everything seems to be by necessity and to move under a leaden constraint and compulsion. This is the aspect of the unthinking world of Force and Matter in which we live; and even in ourselves, in man the thinker, how little is free from some kind of present constraint and of compelling previous necessity! So much of what we are and do

is determined by our environment, so much has been shaped by our education and upbringing, — we are made by life and by the hands of others, are clay for many potters: and, as for what is left, was it not determined, even that which is most ourselves, by our individual, our racial, our human heredity or in the last resort by universal Nature who has shaped man and each man to what he is for her blind or her conscient uses?

But we insist and say that we have a will which is aware of a however heavily burdened freedom and can shape to its own purpose and change by its effort environment and upbringing and the formations of heredity and even our apparently immutable common nature. But this will and its effort, is it not itself an instrument, even a mechanical engine of Nature, the active universal energy, and is not its freedom an arbitrary illusion of our mentality which lives in each moment of the present and separates it by ignorance, by an abstraction of the mind from its determining past, so that I seem at every critical moment to exercise a free and virgin choice, while all the time my choice is dominated by its own previous formation and by all that obscure past which I ignore? Granted that Nature works through our will and can create and change, can, that is to say, produce a new formation out of the stuff she has provided for her workings, is it not by a past impulsion and a continuous energy from it that the thing is done? That is the first idea of Karma. Certainly, our present will must come in as one though not by any means the sole element of the act and formation, but in this view it is not a free ever-new will, but in the first place a child and birth of all the past nature, our action, our present karma the result of an already formed shape of the force of that nature, swabhava. And in the second place our will is an instrument constantly shaped and used by something greater than ourselves. Only if there is a soul or self which is not a creation, but a master of Nature, not a formation of the stream of universal energy, but itself the former and creator of its own Karma, are we justified in our claim of an actual freedom or at least in our aspiration to a real liberty. There is the whole heart of the debate, the nodus and escape of this perplexed issue.



But here the critical negative analytic thinker, ancient nihilistic Buddhist or modern materialist, comes in to take away the basis of any actual freedom in our earthly or in any possible heavenly existence. The Buddhist denied the existence of a Self free and infinite; that, he thought, was only a sublimation of the idea of ego, an imposition, *adhyāropa*, or gigantic magnified shadow thrown by the falsehood of our personality on eternal Non-Existence. But as for the soul, there is no soul, but only a stream of forms, ideas and sensations, and as the idea of a chariot is only a name for the combination of planks and pole and wheels and axles, so is the idea of individual soul or ego only a name for the combination or continuity of these things. Nor is the universe itself anything other than such a combination, *saṅghāta*, formed and maintained in its continuity by the successions of Karma, by the action of Energy. In this mechanical existence there can be no freedom from Karma, no possible liberty; but there is yet a possible liberation, because that which exists by combination and bondage to its combinations can be liberated from itself by dissolution. The motive power which keeps Karma in motion is desire and attachment to its works, and by the conviction of impermanence and the cessation of desire there can come about an extinction of the continuity of the idea in the successions of Time.

But if this extinction may be called a liberation, it is yet not a status of freedom; for that can only repose upon an affirmation, a permanence, not upon a negative and extinction of all affirmations, and needs too, one would imagine, a someone or something that is free. The Buddha himself, it may be remarked, seems to have conceived of Nirvana as a status of absolute bliss of freedom, a negation of Karmic existence in some incognisable Absolute which he refused steadfastly to describe or define by any positive or any negative, — as indeed definition by any exclusive positive or widest sum of positives or any negative or complete sum of negatives would seem by the very fact of its bringing in a definition and thereby a limitation to be inapplicable to the Absolute. The Illusionist's Maya is a more mystic thing and more obscure to the intelligence; but we have at least

here a Self, a positive Infinite which is capable therefore of an eternal freedom, but only in inaction, by cessation from Karma. For the self as the individual, the soul in action of Karma is bound always by ignorance, and only by rejection of individuality and of the cosmic illusion can we return to the liberty of the Absolute. What we see in both these systems is that spiritual freedom and the cosmic compulsion are equally admitted, but in a total separation and an exclusion from each other's own proper field, — still as absolute opposites and contraries. Compulsion of ignorance or Karma is absolute in the world of birth; freedom of the spirit is absolute in a withdrawal from birth and cosmos and Karma.

But these trenchant systems, however satisfactory to the logical reason, are suspect to a synthetic intelligence; and at any rate, as we find that knowledge and ignorance are not in their essence absolute contraries but ignorance and inconstancy itself the veil of a secret knowledge, so it may be at least possible that liberty and the compulsion of Karma are not such unbridgeable opposites, but that behind and even in Karma itself there is all the time a secret liberty of the indwelling Spirit. Buddhism and Illusionism too do not assert any external or internal predestination, but only a self-imposed bondage. And very insistently they demand of man a choice between the right and the wrong way, between the will to an impermanent existence and the will to Nirvana, between a will to cosmic existence and the will to an absolute spiritual being. Nor do they demand this choice of the Absolute or of the universal Being or Power, who indeed cares nothing for their claim and goes on very tranquilly and securely with his mighty eternal action, but they ask it of the individual, of the soul of man halting perplexed between the oppositions of his mentality. It would seem then that there is something in our individual being which has some real freedom of will, some power of choice of a great consequence and magnitude, and what is it then that thus chooses, and what are the limits, where the beginning or the end of its actual or its possible liberty?

Difficult also is it to understand how unsubstantial Impermanence can have such a giant hold or present this power of

eternal continuity in Time, — there must surely, one thinks, be a Permanent which expresses itself in this continuity, *dhruvam adhruweṣu*; or how an Illusion, — for what is illusion but an inconsequent dream or unsubstantial hallucination? — can build up this mighty world of just sequence and firm law and linked Necessity; some secret self-knowledge and wisdom there must be which guides the Energy of Karma in its idea and has appointed for her the paths she must hew in Time. It is because of their persistence of principle in all the transiencies of particular form that things have such a hold on our mind and will. It is because the world is so real that we feel so potently its grasp on us and our spirits turn on it with this grip of the wrestler. It is often indeed too fiercely real for us and we seek for liberty in the realm of dream or planes of the ideal and, not finding it sufficiently there, because we have not the freedom nor can develop the mastery to impose our ideal on this active reality, we seek it beyond in the remote and infinite greatness of the Absolute. We shall do better then to fix on that other more generally admissible distinction, namely, of the world of Karma as a practical or relative reality and the being of the Spirit constant behind it or brooding above it as a greater supreme reality. And then we have to find whether in the latter alone is any touch of freedom or whether, as must surely be if it is the Spirit that presides over the Energy at work and over its action, there is here too some element or some beginning at least of liberty, and whether, even if it be small and quite relative, we cannot in these steps of Time, in these relations of Karma make this freedom great and real by dwelling consciously in the greatness of the Spirit. May not that be the sovereignty we shall find here when we rise to the top of the soul's evolution?

One thing we will note that this urge towards control and this impression of freedom are an orientation and an atmosphere which cling about the action of mind, and they grow in Nature as she rises towards mentality. The world of Matter seems to know nothing about freedom; everything there appears as if written in sibyllic laws upon tablets of stone, laws which have a process, but no initial reason, serve a harmony of purposes or at

least produce a cosmos of fixed results, but do not appear to be shaped with an eye to them by any discoverable Intelligence. We can think of no presence of soul in natural things, because we can see in them no conscious action of mind and a conscious active mental intelligence is to our notions the very basis and standing-ground, if not the whole stuff of soul-existence. If Matter is all, then we may very easily conclude that all is a Karma of material energy which is governed by some inherent incomprehensible mechanically legislating Necessity. But then we see that Life seems to be made of a different stuff; here various possibility develops, here creation becomes eager, pressing, flexible, protean; here we are conscious of a searching and a selection, many potentialities and a choice of actualities, of a subconscious idea which is feeling around for its vital self-expression and shaping an instinctive action, — often, though in certain limits, with an unerring intuitive guidance of life to its immediate objective or to some yet distant purpose, — of a subconscious will too in the fibre of all this vast seeking and mutable impulsion. But yet this too works within limits, under fetters, in a given range of processes.

But when we get out into mind, Nature becomes there much more widely conscious of possibility and of choice; mind is aware of potentialities and of determinations in idea which are other than those of the immediate actuality or of the fixedly necessary consequence of the sum of past and present actualities; it is aware of numberless “may-be”s and “might-have-been”s, and these last are not entirely dead rejected things, but can return through the power of the Idea and effect future determinations and can fulfil themselves at last in the inner reality of their idea though, it may well be, in other forms and circumstances. Moreover, mind can and does go still further; it can conceive of an infinite possibility behind the self-limitations of actual existence. And from this seeing there arises the idea of a free and infinite Will, a Will of illimitable potentiality which determines all these innumerable marvels of its own universal becoming or creation in Space and Time. That means the absolute freedom of a Spirit and Power which is not determined by Karma, but

determines Karma. Apparent Necessity is the child of the spirit's free self-determination. What affects us as Necessity, is a Will which works in sequence and not a blind Force driven by its own mechanism.

This is not, however, a binding inference and always there remain on this head arguable by the reason three main conceptions which we can form of existence. First, there is the idea, facile to our reason, of a blind mechanical Necessity of some kind, — and against or behind that nothing or some absolute non-existence. The nature of this Necessity would be that of a fixed process bound to certain initial and general determinations of which all the rest is the consequence. But that is only a first appearance of universal things, the stamp of phenomenal impression which we get from the aspect of the material universe. Then, there is the idea of a free infinite Being, God or Absolute, who somehow or other creates out of something or out of nothing, in reality or only in conception, or brings out of himself into manifestation a world of the necessity of his will or Maya or Karma in which all things, all creatures are bound as the victims of a necessity, not mechanical or external, but spiritual and internal, a force of Ignorance or a force of Karma or else some kind of arbitrary predestination. And, finally, there is the idea of an absolute free Existence which supports, develops and informs a universe of relations, of that Power as the universal Spirit of our existence, of the world as the evolution of these relations, of beings in the universe as souls who work them out with some freedom of the spirit as its basis, — for that they inwardly are, — but with an observation of the law of the relations as their natural condition.

This law would be in phenomenon or as seen in a superficial view of its sole outward machinery an apparent chain of necessity, but in fact it would be a free self-determination of the Spirit in existence. The free self and spirit would be there informing all the action of material energy, secretly conscient in its inconstancy; his would be the movement of life and its inner spirit of guidance; but in mind would be something of the first open light of his presence. The soul evolving in Nature, *prakṛtir jīva bhūtā*, would be an immortal clouded Power of him

growing into the light of the spirit and therefore towards the consciousness and reality of freedom. It would be bound at first in Nature and obey helplessly in all its action the urge of Karma, because on the surface the action of energy would be the whole truth of its kinetic being; the rest, the freedom, the origination is there, but concealed below, subliminal and therefore not at all manifest in the action. Even in mentality the action of Karma would be the main fact; everything would be determined by the nature of force of our active being working upon and responding to the influences of the environment and by the nature of quality of our active being which would colour and shape the character of these outputtings and responses. But that force is the force, that quality the quality of the soul; and as the soul grew aware of itself, the consciousness of Freedom would emerge, assert itself, insist, strive to grow into a firmly felt and possessed reality. Free in the spirit within, conditioned and determined in Nature, striving in his soul to bring out the spiritual light, mastery and freedom to work upon the obscurity and embarrassment of his first natural conditions and their narrow determinations, this would be the nature of man the mental being.

On this basis it becomes possible to come at some clear and not wholly antinomous relation between man's necessity and man's freedom, between his earthly human nature at whirl in the machinery of mind, life and body and the master Soul, the Godhead, the real Man behind whose consent supports or whose bidding governs its motions. The soul of man is a power of the self-existence which manifests the universe and not the creature and slave of a mechanical Nature; and it is only the natural instruments of his being, it is mind, life and body and their functions and members which are helpless apparatus and gear of the machinery. These things are subject to the action of Karma, but man in himself, the real man within is not its subject, *na karma lipyate nare*. Rather is Karma his instrument and its developments the material he uses, and he is using it always from life to life for the shaping of a limited and individual, which may be one day a divine and cosmic personality. For the eternal spirit enjoys an absolute freedom. This freedom appears to us no

doubt in a certain status, origin or background of all being as an unconditioned infinite of existence, but also it is in relation to the universe the freedom of an existence which displays an infinite of possibilities and has a power of shaping at will out of its own potentiality the harmonies of the cosmos. Man, too, may well be capable of a release, *mokṣa*, into the unconditioned Infinite by cessation of all action, mind and personality. But that is not the whole of the spirit's absolute freedom; it is rather an incomplete liberty, since it endures only by its inaction. But the freedom of the Spirit is not so dependent; it can remain unimpaired in all this action of Karma and is not diminished or abrogated by the pouring of its energies into the whirl of the universe. And one may say that man cannot enjoy the double freedom because as man he is an individual being and therefore a thing in Nature, subject to Ignorance, to Karma. To be free he must get away from individuality, nature and Karma, and then man no longer exists, there is only the unconditioned Infinite. But this is to assume that there is no power of spiritual individuality, but only a power of individuation in Nature. All is then a formation of a nodus of mental, vital and physical Karma with which the one self for a long time mistakenly identifies its being by the delusion of ego. But if on the contrary there is any such thing as an individual power of spirit, it must, in whatever degree of actuality, share in the united force and freedom of the self-existent Divinity; for it is being of his being.

Freedom somewhere there is in our being and action, and we have only to see how and why it is limited in our outward nature, why here I am at all under any dominion of Karma. I appear to be bound by the law of an outward and imposed energy only because there is separation between my outward nature and my inmost spiritual self and I do not live in that outwardness with my whole being, but with a shape, turn and mental formation of myself which I call my ego or my personality. The cosmic spirit in matter seems itself to be so bound, for the same reason. It has started an outward compressed action, a law and disposition of material energy which must be allowed to unroll its consequences; itself holds back behind and conceals its shaping touch;

but still its supporting assent and impulse are there and these come out more into the open as Nature raises herself in the scales of life and mind. Nevertheless, I have to note that even in mind and even in its phenomenon of a conscious will Karma is the first law and there cannot be for me there a complete freedom; there is no such thing as a mental will which is absolutely free. And this is because mind is part of the action of the outward Ignorance, an action which seeks for knowledge but does not possess its full light and power, which can conceive of self and spirit and infinity and reflect them, but not altogether live in them, which can quiver with infinite possibility, but can only deal in a limited half-effective fashion with restricted possibilities. An Ignorance cannot be permitted to have, even if in its nature it could have, free mastery. It would never do for an ignorant mind and will to be given a wide and real freedom; for it would upset the right order of the energy which the Spirit has set at work and produce a most unholy confusion. It must be forced to obey or, if it resists, to bear the reaction of the Law; its partial freedom of a clouded and stumbling knowledge must be constantly overruled both in its action and its result by the law of universal Nature and the will of the seeing universal Spirit who governs the dispositions and consequences of Karma. This constrained overruled action is in patent fact the character of our mental being and action.

But still there is here something which we may call a relative freedom. It does not really belong to our outward mind and will or that shadow of myself which I have put forth in my mental ego; for these things are instruments and they work in the roads of the successions of Karma. But they still feel a power constantly coming forth and either assenting to or intervening in the action of the nature, and that power they attribute to themselves. They are aware of a relative freedom in their disposition of action and of at least a potential absolute freedom behind it, and mixing these two things confusedly together mind, will and ego cry out in unison "I am free." But this freedom and power are influences from the soul. To use a familiar metaphysical language, they type the assent and will of the Purusha without which the Prakriti cannot move on her way. The first and the greater part



of this soul-influence is in the form of an assent to Nature, an acquiescence; and for good reason. For I start with the action of the universal Energy which the Spirit has set in motion and as I rise from the ignorance towards knowledge, the first thing demanded from me is to gather experience of its law and of my relations to the law and partly therefore to acquiesce, to allow myself to be moved, to see and to come to know the nature of the motions, to suffer and obey the law, to understand and know Karma.

This obedience is forcibly imposed on the lower ignorant creation. But thinking man who experiences increasingly from generation to generation and from life to life the nature of things and develops reflective knowledge and the sense of his soul in Nature, delivers in her a power of initiating will. He is not bound to her set actualities; he can refuse assent, and the thing in Nature to which it is refused goes on indeed for a time and produces its results by impetus of Karma, but as it runs, it loses power and falls into impotence and desuetude. He can do more, he can command a new action and orientation of his nature. The assent was a manifestation of the power of the soul as giver of the sanction, *anumantā*, but this is a power of the soul as active lord of the nature, *īśvara*. Then Nature still insists more or less on her old habitual way by reason of her past impetus or the right of previous sanctions and may even, in proportion as she is unaccustomed to control, resist and call in hostile powers, our own creations, the children of our past willings; then is there a battle in the house of our being between the lord and his spouse or between old and new nature and a defeat of the soul or its victory. And this is certainly a freedom, but only a relative freedom, and even the greatest mental self-mastery a relative and precarious thing at the best. This liberty when we look down at it from a higher station, is not well distinguishable from a lightened bondage.

The mental being in us can be a learner in the school of freedom, not a perfect adept. A real freedom comes when we get away from the mind into the life of the spirit, from personality to the Person, from Nature to the lord of Nature. There again

the first liberty is a passive power; it is of the nature of an assent; it is an observing and essential liberty in which the active part of the being is an instrument of the supreme Spirit and its universal action. But the assent is to the will of the Spirit and not to the mechanical force of Nature, and there is thrown on the mind the freedom of the spirit's light and purity and a right knowledge of relations and a clear detached assent to the divine workings. But if man would have too a freedom of power, of participation, of companionship as the son of God in a greater divine control, he must then not only get back from mind, but must stand, in his thought and will even, above the levels of mentality and find there a station of leverage, a spiritual *pou stō*,<sup>2</sup> whence he can sovereignly move the world of his being. Such a station of consciousness there is in our supramental ranges. When the soul is one with the Supreme and with the universal not only in essence of consciousness and spiritual truth of being, but in expressive act too of consciousness and being, when it enjoys an initiating and relating truth of spiritual will and knowledge and the soul's overflowing delight in God and existence, when it is admitted to the spirit's fullness of assent to self and its creative liberty, its strain of an eternal joy in self-existence and self-manifestation, Karma itself becomes a rhythm of freedom and birth a strain of immortality.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> A "where to stand", the station of leverage from which Archimedes, could he only have found it, undertook to move the world.

<sup>3</sup> *Sambhūtyā amṛtam aśnute*, "by birth he enjoys immortality."

## Karma, Will and Consequence

**W**ILL, KARMA and consequence are the three steps of the Energy which moves the universe. But Karma and consequence are only the outcome of will or even its forms; will gives them their value and without it they would be nothing, nothing at least to man the thinking and growing soul and nothing, it may be hazarded, to the Spirit of which he is a flame and power as well as a creature. The thing we first see or imagine we see, when we look at the outward mechanism of the universe, is energy and its works, action and consequence. But by itself and without the light of an inhabiting will this working is only a huge soulless mechanism, a loud rattling of crank and pulley, a monstrous pounding of spring and piston. It is the presence of the spirit and its will that gives a meaning to the action and it is the value of the result to the soul that gives its profound importance to all great or little consequence. It would not matter to anyone or anything, not even to the cosmos itself, though this universal stir came to an end tomorrow or had never been created, if these suns and systems were not the field of a consciousness which there rolls out its powers, evolves its works, enjoys its creations, plans and exults in its immense aims and sequences. Spirit and consciousness and power of the spirit and Ananda are the meaning of existence. Take away this spiritual significance and this world of energy becomes a mechanical fortuity or a blind and rigid Maya.

The life of man is a portion of this vast significance, and since it is in him that on this material plane it comes out in its full capacity of meaning, a very important and central portion. The Will in the universe works up to him in the creative steps of its energy and makes of his nature a chariot of the gods on which it stands within the action, looks out on its works from the very front and no longer only from behind or above Nature's doings

and moves on to the ultimate consequences and the complete evolution of its purpose. The will of man is the agent of the Eternal for the unveiling of his secret meaning in the material creation. Man's mind takes up all the knots of the problem and works them out by the power of the spirit within him and brings them nearer to the full force and degree of their individual and cosmic solutions. This is his dignity and his greatness and he needs no other to justify and give a perfect value to his birth and his acts and his passing and his return to birth, a return which must be — and what is there in it to grieve at or shun? — until the work of the Eternal in him is perfected or the cycles rest from the glory of their labour.

This view of the world is the standpoint from which we must regard the question of man's conscious will and its dealings with life, because then all things fall into their natural place and we escape from exaggerated and depreciated estimates. Man is a conscious soul of the Eternal, one with the Infinite in his inmost being, and the spirit within him is master of his acts and his fate. For fate is *fatum*, the form of act and creation declared beforehand by a Will within him and the universe as the thing to be done, to be achieved, to be worked out and made the self-expression of his spiritual being. Fate is *adr̥ṣṭa*, the unseen thing which the Spirit holds hidden in the plan of its vision, the consequence concealed from the travailing mind absorbed in the work of the moment by the curtained nearnesses or the far invisible reaches of Time. Fate is *niyati*, the thing willed and executed by Nature, who is power of the Spirit, according to a fixed law of its self-governed workings. But since this Eternal and Infinite, our greater Self, is also the universal being, man in the universe is inseparably one with all the rest of existence, not a soul working out its isolated spiritual destiny and nature while all other beings are nothing but his environment and means or obstacles, — that they are indeed, but they are much more to him, — which is the impression cast on the mind by the thought or the religions that emphasise too much his centre of individuality or his aim of personal salvation. He is not indeed solely a portion of the universe. He is an eternal soul which, though limited for certain

temporal purposes in its outward consciousness, has to learn to enlarge itself out of those limits, to find and make effective its unity with the eternal Spirit who informs and transcends the universe. That spiritual necessity is the truth behind the religious dogma.

But also he is one in God and one in Nature with all beings in the cosmos, touches and includes all other souls, is linked to all powers of the Being that are manifest in this cosmic working. His soul, thought, will, action are intimate with the universal soul, thought, will and action. All acts on and through him and mixes with him and he acts too on all and his thought and will and life mix in and become a power of the one common life. His mind is a form and action of the universal mind. His call is not to be busy and concerned only with his own growth and perfection and natural destiny or spiritual freedom. A larger action too claims him. He is a worker in a universal work; the life of others is his life; world-consequence and the world-evolution are also his business. For he is one self with the selves of all other beings.

The dealings of our will with Karma and consequence have to be envisaged in the light of this double truth of man's individuality and man's universality. And seen in this light the question of the freedom of our individual will takes on another appearance. It becomes clear enough that our ego, our outward personality can be only a minor, a temporal, an instrumental form of our being. The will of the ego, the outward, the mentally personal will which acts in the movement cannot be free in any complete or separate sense of freedom. It cannot so be free because it is bound by its partial and limited nature and it is shaped by the mechanism of its ignorance, and again because it is an individualised form and working of the universal energy and at every moment impinged upon and modified and largely shaped by environing wills and powers and forces. But also it cannot so be free because of the greater Soul in us behind the mind which determines works and consequence according to the will in its being and the nature, its power of being, not in the moment but in the long continuities of Time, not solely by the immediate

adaptation to the environment, but by its own previous intention which has shaped the environment and already predetermined in great part the present act and consequence. The inward will in the being which is in intimacy with that Power is the real will and this outward thing only an instrumentation for a working out from moment to moment, a spring of the karmic mechanism. That inward will we find when we get back to it, to be a free will, not armoured in a separate liberty, but free in harmony with the freedom of the Spirit guiding and compelling Nature in all souls and in all happenings. This thing our outward mind cannot see easily because the practical truth which it feels is the energy of Nature at once working on us from without and forming too our action from within and reacting upon herself by the mental will, her instrument, to continue her self-shaping for farther Karma and farther consequence. Yet are we aware of a self and the presence of this self imposes on our minds the idea of someone who wills, someone who shapes even the nature and is responsible for consequence.

To understand one must cease to dwell exclusively on the act and will of the moment and its immediate consequences. Our present will and personality are bound by many things, by our physical and vital heredity, by a past creation of our mental nature, by environmental forces, by limitation, by ignorance. But our soul behind is greater and older than our present personality. The soul is not the result of our heredity, but has prepared by its own action and affinities this heredity. It has drawn around it these environmental forces by past karma and consequence. It has created in other lives the mental nature of which now it makes use. That ancient soul of long standing, sempiternal in being, *puruṣaḥ purāṇaḥ sanātanaḥ*, has accepted the outward limitation, the outward ignorance as a means of figuring out in a restriction of action from moment to moment the significance of its infinity and the sequence of its works of power. To live in this knowledge is not to take away the value and potency of the moment's will and act, but to give it an immensely increased meaning and importance. Then each moment becomes full of things infinite and can be seen taking up the work of a past

eternity and shaping the work of a future eternity. Our every thought, will, action carries with it its power of future self-determination and is too a help or a hindrance for the spiritual evolution of those around us and a force in the universal working. For the soul in us takes in the influences it receives from others for its own self-determination and gives out influences which the soul in them uses for their growth and experience. Our individual life becomes an immensely greater thing in itself and is convinced too of an abiding unity with the march of the universe.

And karma and consequence also get a wider meaning. At present we fix too much on the particular will and act of the moment and a particular consequence in a given time. But the particular only receives its value by all of which it is a part, all from which it comes, all to which it moves. We fix too much also on the externalities of karma and consequence, this good or that bad action and result of action. But the real consequence which the soul is after is a growth in the manifestation of its being, an enlarging of its range and action of power, its comprehension of delight of being, its delight of creation and self-creation, and not only its own but the same things in others with which its greater becoming and joy are one. Karma and consequence draw their meaning from their value to the soul; they are steps by which it moves towards the perfection of its manifested nature. And even when this object is won, our action need not cease, for it will keep its value and be a greater force of help for all these others with whom in self we are one. Nor can it be said that it will have no self-value to the soul grown aware of freedom and infinity; for who shall persuade me that my infinity can only be an eternal full stop, an endless repose, an infinite cessation? Much rather should infinity be eternally capable of an infinite self-expression.

The births of the soul are the series of a constant spiritual evolution, and it might well seem that when the evolution is finished, and that must be, it might at first appear, when the soul involved in ignorance returns to self-knowledge, the series of our births too ought to come to a termination. But that is only one

side of the matter, one long act here of the eternal drama, doing, karma. The spirit we are is not only an eternal consciousness and eternal being; its characters are an eternal power of being and an eternal Ananda. Creation is not to the spirit a trouble and an anguish, but a delight expressed, even though in the entirety of its depths inexpressible, fathomless, endless, inexhaustible. It is only the limited action of mind in the ignorance straining after possession and discovery and unable to find the concealed power of the spirit that makes of the delight of action and creation a passion or suffering: for, limited in capacity and embarrassed by life and body, it has yet desires beyond its capacity, because it is the instrument of a growth and the seed of an illimitable self-expression and it has the pain of the growth and the pain of the obstacle and the pain of the insufficiency of its action and delight. But let this struggling self-creator and doer of works once grow into the consciousness and power of the secret infinite spirit within it and all this passion and suffering passes away into an immeasurable delight of liberated being and its liberated action.

The Buddhist perception of karma and suffering as inseparable, that which drove the Buddha to the search for a means of the extinction of the will to be, is only a first phase and partial appearance. To find self is the cure of suffering, because self is infinite possession and perfect satisfaction. But to find self in quiescence is not the whole meaning of the spiritual evolution, but to find it too in its power of being; for being is not only eternal status, but also eternal movement, not only rest, but also action. There is a delight of rest and a delight of action, but in the wholeness of the spirit these two things are no longer contraries, but one and inseparable. The status of the spirit is an eternal calm, but also its self-expression in world-being is without any beginning or end, because eternal power means an eternal creation. When we gain the one, we need not lose its counterpart and consequence. To get to a foundation is not to destroy all capacity for superstructure.

Karma is nothing but the will of the Spirit in action, consequence nothing but the creation of will. What is in the will of being, expresses itself in karma and consequence. When the will



is limited in mind, karma appears as a bondage and a limitation, consequence as a reaction or an imposition. But when the will of the being is infinite in the spirit, karma and consequence become instead the joy of the creative spirit, the construction of the eternal mechanist, the word and drama of the eternal poet, the harmony of the eternal musician, the play of the eternal child. This lesser, bound, seemingly separate evolution is only a step in the free self-creation of the Spirit from its own illimitable Ananda. That is behind all we are and do; to hide it from mind and bring it slowly forward into the front of existence and action is the present play of Self with Nature.

## Rebirth and Karma

THE ANCIENT idea of Karma was inseparably connected with a belief in the soul's continual rebirth in new bodies. And this close association was not a mere accident, but a perfectly intelligible and indeed inevitable union of two related truths which are needed for each other's completeness and can with difficulty exist in separation. These two things are the soul side and the nature side of one and the same cosmic sequence. Rebirth is meaningless without karma, and karma has no fount of inevitable origin and no rational and no moral justification if it is not an instrumentality for the sequences of the soul's continuous experience. If we believe that the soul is repeatedly reborn in the body, we must believe also that there is some link between the lives that preceded and the lives that follow and that the past of the soul has an effect on its future; and that is the spiritual essence of the law of Karma. To deny it would be to establish a reign of the most chaotic incoherence, such as we find only in the leaps and turns of the mind in dream or in the thoughts of madness, and hardly even there. And if this existence were, as the cosmic pessimist imagines, a dream or an illusion or, worse, as Schopenhauer would have it, a delirium and insanity of the soul, we might accept some such law of inconsequent consequence. But, taken even at its worst, this world of life differs from dream, illusion and madness by its plan of fine, complex and subtle sequences, the hanging together and utility even of its discords, the general and particular harmony of its relations, which, if they are not the harmony we would have, not our longed-for ideal harmony, has still at every point the stamp of a Wisdom and an Idea at work; it is not the act of a Mind in tatters or a machine in dislocation. The continuous existence of the soul in rebirth must signify an evolution if not of the self, for that is said to be immutable, yet of its more outward active

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soul or self of experience. This evolution is not possible if there is not a connected sequence from life to life, a result of action and experience, an evolutionary consequence to the soul, a law of Karma.

And on the side of Karma, if we give to that its integral and not a truncated meaning, we must admit rebirth for the sufficient field of its action. For Karma is not quite the same thing as a material or substantial law of cause and effect, the antecedent and its mechanical consequence. That would perfectly admit of a Karma which could be carried on in time and the results come with certainty in their proper place, their just degree by a working out of the balance of forces, but need not in any way touch the human originator who might have passed away from the scene by the time the result of his acts got into manifestation. A mechanical Nature could well visit the sins of the fathers not on them, but on their fourth or their four-hundredth generation, as indeed this physical Nature does, and no objection of injustice or any other mental or moral objection could rise, for the only justice or reason of a mechanism is that it shall work according to the law of its structure and the fixed eventuality of its force in action. We cannot demand from it a mind or a moral equity or any kind of supraphysical responsibility. The universal energy grinds out inconsciently its effects and individuals are only fortuitous or subordinate means of its workings; the soul itself, if there is a soul, makes only a part of the mechanism of Nature, exists not for itself, but as a utility for her business. But Karma is more than a mechanical law of antecedent and consequence. Karma is action, there is a thing done and a doer and an active consequence; these three are the three joints, the three locks, the three *sandhis* of the connexus of Karma. And it is a complex mental, moral and physical working; for the law of it is not less true of the mental and moral than of the physical consequence of the act to the doer. The will and the idea are the driving force of the action, and the momentum does not come from some commotion in my chemical atoms or some working of ion and electron or some weird biological effervescence. Therefore the act and consequence must have some relation to the will and the

idea and there must be a mental and moral consequence to the soul which has the will and idea. That, if we admit the individual as a real being, signifies a continuity of act and consequence to him and therefore rebirth for a field of this working. It is evident that in one life we do not and cannot labour out and exhaust all the values and powers of that life, but only carry on a past thread, weave out something in the present, prepare infinitely more for the future.

This consequence of rebirth would not follow from the very nature of Karma if there were only an All-Soul of the universe. For then it would be that which is carrying on in myriads of forms its past, working out some present result, spinning yarn of karma for a future weft of consequence. It is the All-Soul which would be the originator, would upheave the force of the act, would receive and exhaust or again take up for farther uses the returning force of the consequence. Nothing essential would depend on its doing all these things through the same individual mask of its being. For the individual would only be a prolonged moment of the All-Soul, and what it originated in this moment of its being which I call myself, might very well produce its result on some other moment of the same being which from the point of view of my ego would be somebody quite different from and unconnected with myself. There would be no injustice, no unreason in such an apparently vicarious reaping of the fruit or suffering of the consequence; for what has a mask, though it be a living and suffering mask, to do with these things? And, in fact, in the nature of life in the material universe a working out of the result of the action of one in the lives of many others, an effect of the individual's action on the group or the whole is everywhere the law. What I sow in this hour, is reaped by my posterity for several generations and we can then call it the karma of the family. What the men of today as community or people resolve upon and execute, comes back with a blessing or a sword upon the future of their race when they themselves have passed away and are no longer there to rejoice or to suffer; and that we can speak of as the karma of the nation. Mankind as a whole too has a karma; what it wrought in its past, will shape its future

destiny; individuals seem only to be temporary units of human thought, will, nature who act according to the compulsion of the soul in humanity and disappear; but the karma of the race which they have helped to form continues through the centuries, the millenniums, the cycles.

But we can see, when we look into ourselves, that this relation of the individual to the whole has a different significance; it does not mean that I have no existence except as a more or less protracted moment in the cosmic becoming of the All-Soul: that too is only a superficial appearance and much subtler and greater is the truth of my being. For the original and eternal Reality, the Alpha and Omega, the Godhead is neither separate in the individual nor is he only and solely a Pantheos, a cosmic spirit. He is at once the eternal individual and the eternal All-Soul of this and many universes, and at the same time he is much more than these things. This universe might end, but he would still be; and I too, though the universe might end, could still exist in him; and all these eternal souls would still exist in him. But as his being is for ever, so the succession of his creations too is for ever; if one creation were to come to an end, it would be only that another might begin and the new would carry on with a fresh commencement and initiation the possibility that had not been worked out in the old, for there can be no end to the self-manifestation of the Infinite. *Nāsti anto vistarasya me*. The universe finds itself in me, even as I find myself in the universe, because we are this face and that face of the one eternal Reality, and individual being is as much needed as universal being to work out this manifestation. The individual vision of things is as true as the universal vision, both are ways of the self-seeing of the Eternal. I may now see myself as a creature contained in the universe; but when I come to self-knowledge, I see too the universe to be a thing contained in myself, subtly by implication in my individuality, amply in the great universalised self I then become. These are data of an ancient experience, things known and voiced of old, though they may seem shadowy and transcendental to the positive modern mind which has long pored so minutely on outward things that

it has become dazed and blind to any greater light and is only slowly recovering the power to see through its folds; but they are for all that always valid and can be experienced today by any one of us who chooses to turn to the deepest way of the inner experience. Modern thought and science, if we look at the new knowledge given us in its whole, do not contradict them, but only trace for us the outward effect and workings of these realities; for always we find in the end that truth of self is not contradicted, but reproduced and made effectual here by law of Energy and law of Matter.

The necessity of rebirth, if we look at it from the outward side, from the side of energy and process, stands upon a persistent and insistent fact which supervenes always upon the generality of common law and kind and constitutes the most intimate secret of the wonder of existence, the uniqueness of the individual. And this uniqueness is everywhere, but appears as a subordinate factor only in the lower ranges of existence. It becomes more and more important and pronounced as we rise in the scale, enlarges in mind, gets to enormous proportions when we come to the things of the spirit. That would seem to indicate that the cause of this significant uniqueness is something bound up with the very nature of spirit; it is something it held in itself and is bringing out more and more as it emerges out of material Nature into self-consciousness. The laws of being are at bottom one for all of us, because all existence is one existence; one spirit, one self, one mind, one life, one energy of process is at work; one will and wisdom has planned or has evolved from itself the whole business of creation. And yet in this oneness there is a persistent variety, which we see first in the form of a communal variation. There is everywhere a group energy, group life, group mind, and if soul is, then we have reason to believe that however elusive it may be to our seizing, there is a group-soul which is the support and foundation — some would call it the result — of this communal variety. That gives us a ground for a group karma. For the group or collective soul renews and prolongs itself and in man at least develops its nature and experience from generation to generation. And who knows whether, when

one form of it is disintegrated, community or nation, it may not wait for and assume other forms in which its will of being, its type of nature and mentality, its attempt of experience is carried forward, migrates, one might almost say, into new-born collective bodies, in other ages or cycles? Mankind itself has this separate collective soul and collective existence. And on that community the community of karma is founded; the action and development of the whole produces consequence of karma and experience for the individual and the totality even as the action and development of the individual produces consequences and experience for others, for the group, for the whole. And the individual is there; you cannot reduce him to a nullity or an illusion; he is real, alive, unique. The communal soul-variation mounts up from the rest, exceeds, brings in or brings out something more, something new, adds novel powers in the evolution. The individual mounts and exceeds in the same way from the community. It is in him, on his highest heights that we get the flame-crest of self-manifestation by which the One finds himself in Nature.

And the question is how does that come about at all? I enter into birth, not in a separate being, but in the life of the whole, and therefore I inherit the life of the whole. I am born physically by a generation which is a carrying on of its unbroken history; the body, life, physical mentality of all past being prolongs itself in me and I must therefore undergo the law of heredity; the parent, says the Upanishad, recreates himself by the energy in his seed and is reborn in the child. But as soon as I begin to develop, a new, an independent and overbearing factor comes in, which is not my parents nor my ancestry, nor past mankind, but I, my own self. And this is the really important, crowning, central factor. What matters most in my life, is not my heredity; that only gives me my opportunity or my obstacle, my good or my bad material, and it has not by any means been shown that I draw all from that source. What matters supremely is what I make of my heredity and not what my heredity makes of me. The past of the world, bygone humanity, my ancestors are there in me; but still I myself am the artist of my self, my life,

my actions. And there is the present of the world, of humanity, there are my contemporaries as well as my ancestors; the life of my environment too enters into me, offers me a new material, shapes me by its influence, lays its direct or its indirect touch on my being. I am invaded, changed, partly recreated by the envioning being and action in which I am and act. But here again the individual comes in subtly and centrally as the decisive power. What is supremely important is what I make of all this surrounding and invading present and not what it makes of me. And in the interaction of individual and general Karma in which others are causes and produce an effect in my existence and I am a cause and produce an effect on them, I live for others, whether I would have it so or no, and others live for me and for all. Still the central power of my psychology takes its colour from this seeing that I live for my self, and for others or for the world only as an extension of my self, as a thing with which I am bound up in some kind of oneness. I seem to be a soul, self or spirit who constantly with the assistance of all create out of my past and present my future being and myself too help in the surrounding creative evolution.

What then is this all-important and independent power in me and what is the beginning and the end of its self-creation? Has it, even though it is something independent of the physical and vital present and past which gives to it so much of its material, itself no past and no future? Is it something which suddenly emerges from the All-Soul at my birth and ceases at my death? Is its insistence on self-creation, on making something of itself for itself, for its own future and not only for its fleeting present and the future of the race, a vain preoccupation, a gross parasitical error? That would contradict all that we see of the law of the world-being; it would not reduce our life to a greater consistency with the frame of things, but would bring in a freak element and an inconsistency with the pervading principle. It is reasonable to suppose that this powerful independent element which supervenes and works upon the physical and vital evolution, was in the past and will be in the future. It is reasonable also to suppose that it did not come in suddenly from some



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unconnected existence and does not pass out after one brief intervention; its close connection with the life of the world is rather a continuation of a long past connection. And this brings in at once the whole necessity of past birth and karma. I am a persistent being who pursue my evolution within the persistent being of the world. I have evolved my human birth and I help constantly in the human evolution. I have created by my past karma my own conditions and my relations with the life of others and the general karma. That shapes my heredity, my environment, my affinities, my connections, my material, my opportunities and obstacles, a part of my predestined powers and results, not arbitrarily predestined but predetermined by my own stage of nature and past action, and on this groundwork I build new karma and farther strengthen or subtilise my power of natural being, enlarge experience, go on with my soul evolution. This process is woven in with the universal evolution and all its lines are included in the web of being, but it is not merely a jutting point or moment of it or a brief tag shot into the tissue. That is what rebirth means in the history of my manifested self and of universal being.

The old idea of rebirth errs on the contrary by an excessive individualism. Too self-concentrated, it treated one's rebirth and karma as too much one's own single affair, a sharply separate movement in the whole, leaned too much on one's own concern with one's self and even while it admitted universal relations and a unity with the whole, yet taught the human being to see in life principally a condition and means of his own spiritual benefit and separate salvation. That came from the view of the universe as a movement which proceeds out of something beyond, something from which each being enters into life and returns out of it to its source, and the absorbing idea of that return as the one thing that at all matters. Our being in the world, so treated, came in the end to be regarded as an episode and in sum and essence an unhappy and discreditable episode in the changeless eternity of the Spirit. But this was too summary a view of the will and the ways of the Spirit in existence. Certain it is that while we are here, our rebirth or karma, even while it

runs on its own lines, is intimately one with the same lines in the universal existence. But my self-knowledge and self-finding too do not abolish my oneness with other life and other beings. An intimate universality is part of the glory of spiritual perfection. This idea of universality, of oneness not only with God or the eternal Self in me, but with all humanity and other beings, is growing to be the most prominent strain in our minds and it has to be taken more largely into account in any future idea or computation of the significance of rebirth and karma. It was admitted in old times; the Buddhist law of compassion was a recognition of its importance; but it has to be given a still more pervading power in the general significance.

The self-effectuation of the Spirit in the world is the truth on which we take our foundation, a great, a long self-weaving in time. Rebirth is the continuity of that self-effectuation in the individual, the persistence of the thread; Karma is the process, a force, a work of energy and consequence in the material world, an inner and an outer will, an action and mental, moral, dynamic consequence in the soul evolution of which the material world is a constant scene. That is the conception; the rest is a question of the general and particular laws, the way in which karma works out and helps the purpose of the spirit in birth and life. And whatever those laws and ways may be, they must be subservient to this spiritual self-effectuation and take from it all their meaning and value. The law is a means, a line of working for the spirit, and does not exist for its own sake or for the service of any abstract idea. Idea and law of working are only direction and road for the soul's progress in the steps of its existence.

## Karma and Justice

**W**HAT ARE the lines of Karma? What is the intrinsic character and active law of this energy of the soul and its will and development of consequence? To ask that question is to ask what is the form taken here by the dynamic meaning of our existence and what the curves of guidance of its evolving self-creation and action. And such a question ought not to be answered in a narrow spirit or under the obsession of some single idea which does not take into account the many-sidedness and rich complexity of this subtle world of Nature. The law of Karma can be no rigid and mechanical canon or rough practical rule of thumb, but rather its guiding principle should be as supple a harmonist as the Spirit itself whose will of self-knowledge it embodies and should adapt itself to the need of self-development of the variable individual souls who are feeling their way along its lines towards the right balance, synthesis, harmonies of their action. The karmic idea cannot be — for spirit and not mind is its cause — a cosmic reflection of our limited average human intelligence, but rather the law of a greater spiritual wisdom, a means which behind all its dumb occult appearances embodies an understanding lead and a subtle management towards our total perfection.

The ordinary current conception of law of Karma is dominantly ethical, but ethical in no very exalted kind. Its idea of karma is a mechanical and materialistic ethics, a crudely exact legal judgment and administration of reward and punishment, an external sanction to virtue and prohibition of sin, a code, a balance. The idea is that there must be a justice governing the award of happiness and misery on the earth, a humanly intelligible equity and that the law of Karma represents it and gives us its formula. I have done so much good, *punya*. It is my capital, my accumulation and balance. I must have it paid out

to me in so much coin of prosperity, the legal currency of this sovereign and divine Themis, or why on earth should I at all do good? I have done so much evil. That too must come back to me in so much exact and accurate punishment and misfortune. There must be so much outward suffering or an inward suffering caused by outward event and pressure; for if there were not this physically sensible, visible, inevitable result, where would be any avenging justice and where could we find any deterrent sanction in Nature against evil? And this award is that of an exact judge, a precise administrator, a scrupulous merchant of good for good and evil for evil who has learned nothing and will never learn anything of the Christian or Buddhistic ideal rule, has no bowels of mercy or compassion, no forgiveness for sin, but holds austere to an eternal Mosaic law, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, a full, slow or swift, but always calm and precisely merciless *lex talionis*.

This commercial and mathematical accountant is sometimes supposed to act with a startling precision. A curious story was published the other day, figuring as a fact of contemporary occurrence, of a rich man who had violently deprived another of his substance. The victim is born as the son of the oppressor and in the delirium of a fatal illness reveals that he has obliged his old tyrant and present father to spend on him and so lose the monetary equivalent of the property robbed minus a certain sum, but that sum must be paid now, otherwise — The debt is absolved and as the last pice is expended, the reborn soul departs, for its sole object in taking birth is satisfied, accounts squared and the spirit of Karma content. That is the mechanical idea of Karma at its acme of satisfied precision. At the same time the popular mind in its attempt to combine the idea of a life beyond with the notion of rebirth, supposes a double prize for virtue and a double penalty for transgression. I am rewarded for my good deeds in heaven after death until the dynamic value of my virtue is exhausted and I am then reborn and rewarded again materially on earth. I am punished in hell to the equivalence of my sins and again punished for them in another life in the body. This looks a little superfluous and a rather redundant

justice, and, even, the precise accountant becomes very like an unconscionable hundred per cent usurer. Perhaps it may be said that beyond earth it is the soul that suffers — for purification, and here the physical being — as a concession to the forces of life and the symmetry of things: but still it is the soul that thus pays double in its subtle experience and in its physical incarnation.

The strands of our nature which mix in this natural but hardly philosophic conception, have to be disentangled before we can disengage the right value of these ideas. Their first motive seems to be ethical, for justice is an ethical notion; but true ethics is dharma, the right fulfilment and working of the higher nature, and right action should have right motive, should be its own justification and not go limping on the crutches of greed and fear. Right done for its own sake is truly ethical and ennobles the growing spirit; right done in the lust for a material reward or from fear of the avenging stripes of the executioner or sentence of the judge, may be eminently practical and useful for the moment, but it is not in the least degree ethical, but is rather a lowering of the soul of man; or at least the principle is a concession to his baser animal and unspiritual nature. But in natural man, born before the higher dharma and more potent and normal as a motive to action, come two other very insistent things, *kāma*, *artha*, desire and pleasure of enjoyment with its corresponding fear of suffering, and interest of possession, acquisition, success with its complementary pain of lacking and frustration, and this is what governs most prominently the normal barbaric or still half barbaric natural man. He needs to some not small extent if he is to conform his close pursuit of desire and interest to the ethical standard, a strict association or identity of result of virtue with some getting of his interest and pleasure and result of sin with some loss of materially or vitally desirable things and the infliction of mental, vital or physical pain. Human law proceeds on this principle by meeting the grosser more obvious offences with punishment and avenging pain or loss and on the other hand assuring the individual in some degree of the secure having of his legitimate pleasure and interest if he observes the legal rule. The cosmic law is expected by the popular theory of

Karma to deal with man on his own principle and do this very thing with a much sterner and more unescapable firmness of application and automatic necessity of consequence.

The cosmic Being must be then, if this view is to hold, a sort of enlarged divine Human or, we might say, a superior anthropoid Divine, or else the cosmic Law a perfection and magnitude of human methods and standards, which deals with man as he is accustomed to deal with his neighbour, — only not with a rough partial human efficacy, but either a sure omniscience or an unailing automatism. Whatever truth there may be behind that notion, this is not likely to be an adequate account of the matter. In actual life, if we put aside the rebirth theory, there are traces of this method, but it does not work out with any observable consistency, — not even if we accept an unsatisfactory and hardly just vicarious punishment as part of the scheme. What surety have we, then, of its better or its faultless working out in rebirth except for some similar partial signs and indications and, to fill in the blanks, our general sense of the fitness of things? And again where does the true nature of ethics come in in this scheme? That more elevated action, it would almost seem, is an ideal movement of less use for the practical governance of life than as one part of a preparation for a fourth and last need of man, his need of spiritual salvation, and salvation winds up finally our karma and casts away the economy along with the very thought and will of life. Desire is the law of life and action and therefore of Karma. To do things above the material level for their own sake and their pure right or pure delight is to head straight towards the distances of heaven or the silence of the Ineffable. But this is a view of the meaning of existence against which it is time for the higher seeing mind and being of man to protest and to ask whether the ways of the Spirit in the world may not be capable of a greater, nobler and wiser significance.

But still, since the mind of man is part of the universal mind and reflects something of it in a however broken or as yet imperfect and crookedly seeing fashion, there may well be something of a real truth behind this view, though it is not likely to be the whole or the well understood truth. There are some certain or

probable laws of the universal working which are relevant to it and must enter into the account. First, it is sure that Nature has laws of which the observance leads to or helps well-being and of which the violation imposes suffering; but all of them cannot be given a moral significance. Then there is the certainty that there must be a moral law of cause and consequence in the total web of her weaving and this we would perhaps currently put into the formula that good produces good and evil evil, which is a proposition of undoubted truth, though also we see in this complicated world that evil comes out of what we hold to be good, and again out of evil disengages itself something that yet turns to good. Perhaps our system of values is too rigidly precise or too narrowly relative; there are subtle things in the totality, minglings, interrelations, cross-currents, suppressed or hidden significances which we do not take into account. The formula is true, but is not the whole truth, at least as now understood in its first superficial significance.

And at any rate in the ordinary notion of Karma we are combining two different notions of good. I can well understand that moral good does or ought to produce and increase moral good and moral evil to farther and to create moral evil. It does so in myself. The habit of love confirms and enhances my power of love; it purifies my being and opens it to the universal good. The habit of hatred on the contrary corrupts my being, fills it with poison, with bad and morbid toxic matter, and opens it to the general power of evil. My love ought also by a prolongation or a return to produce love in others and my hatred to give rise to hatred; that happens to a certain, a great extent, but it need not be and is not an invariable or rigorous consequence; still we may well see and believe that love does throw out widening ripples and helps to elevate the world while hatred has the opposite consequence. But what is the necessary connection between this good and evil on the one hand and on the other pleasure and pain? Must the ethical power always turn perfectly into some term of kindred hedonistic result? Not entirely; for love is a joy in itself, but also love suffers; hatred is a troubled and self-afflicting thing, but has too its own perverse delight of itself and

its gratifications; but in the end we may say that love, because it is born of the universal Delight, triumphs in its own nature and hatred because it is its denial or perversion, leads to a greater sum of misery to myself as to others. And of all true moral good and real evil this may be said that the one tends towards some supreme Right, the *ṛtam* of the Vedic Rishis, the highest law of a highest Truth of our being and that Truth is the door of the spirit's Ananda, its beatific nature, the other is a missing or perversion of the Right and the Truth and exposes us to its opposite, to false delight or suffering. And even in the perplexed steps of life some reflection of this identity must emerge.

This correspondence is, still, more essentially true in the inner field, in the spiritual, mental and emotional result and reaction of the good or the evil or of the effects of its outgoing action. But where is the firm link of correspondence between the ethical and the more vital and physical hedonistic powers of life? How does my ethical good turn into smiling fortune, crowned prosperity, sleek material good and happiness to myself and my ethical evil into frowning misfortune, rugged adversity, sordid material ill and suffering, — for that is what the desire soul of man and the intelligence governed by it seem to demand, — and how is the account squared or the transmutation made between these two very different energies of the affirmation and denial of good? We can see this much that the good or the evil in me translates itself into a good or an evil action which among other things brings about much mental and material happiness and suffering to others, and to this outgoing power and effect there ought to be an equal reaction of incoming power and effect, though it does not seem to work itself out immediately or with any discoverable exactness of correspondence. There does still appear to be a principle of rebound in Nature; our action has in some degree the motion of recoil of the boomerang and cycles back towards the will that has cast it on the world. The stone we hurl rashly against the universal Life is cast back at us and may crush, maim or injure our own mental and physical being. But this mechanical rebound is not the whole principle of Karma. Nor is Karma wholly a mixed ethical-hedonistic order



in its total significance, for there are involved other powers of our consciousness and being. Nor is it again a pure mechanism which we set going by our will and have then helplessly to accept the result; for the will which produced the effect, can also intervene to modify it. And above all the initiating and receiving consciousness can change the values and utilities of the reactions and make another thing of life than this automatic mechanism of fateful return or retribution to the half-blind embodied actor in a mute necessity of rigorous law of Nature.

The relation of our consciousness and will to Karma is the thing upon which all the subtler lines of action and consequence must depend; that connexus must be the hinge of the whole significance. The dependence of the pursuit of ethical values on a sanction by the inferior hedonistic values, material, vital and lower mental pleasure, pain and suffering, appeals strongly to our normal consciousness and will; but it ceases to have more than a subordinate force and finally loses all force as we grow towards greater heights of our being. That dependence cannot then be the whole or the final power or guiding norm of Karma. The relation of will to action and consequence must be cast on more subtle and liberal lines. The universal Spirit in the law of Karma must deal with man in the lower scale of values only as a part of the transaction and as a concession to man's own present motives. Man himself puts these values, makes that demand for pleasure and prosperity and dreads their opposites, desires heaven more than he loves virtue, fears hell more than he abhors sin, and while he does so, the world-dispensation wears to him that meaning and colour. But the spirit of existence is not merely a legislator and judge concerned to maintain a standard of legal justice, to dole out deterrents and sanctions, rewards and penalties, ferocious pains of hell, indulgent joys of paradise. He is the Divine in the world, the Master of a spiritual evolution and the growing godhead in humanity. That godhead grows however slowly beyond the dependence on the sanctions of pleasure and pain. Pain and pleasure govern our primary being and in that primary scale pain is Nature's advertisement of things we should avoid, pleasure her lure to things she would tempt us to pursue.

These devices are first empirical tests for limited objects; but as I grow, I pass beyond their narrower uses. I have continually to disregard Nature's original warnings and lures in order to get to a higher nature. I have to develop a nobler spiritual law of Karma.

This will be evident if we consider our own greater motives of action. The pursuit of Truth may entail on me penalties and sufferings; the service of my country or the world may demand from me loss of my outward happiness and good fortune or the destruction of my body; the increase of my strength of will and greatness of spirit may be only possible by the arduous of suffering and the firm renunciation of joys and pleasures. I must still follow after Truth, I must do the service to my race my soul demands from me; I must increase my strength and inner greatness and must not ask for a quite irrelevant reward, shun penalty or make a bargain for the exact fruits of my labour. And that which is true of my action in the present life, must be equally true of my connected action and self-development through many births. Happiness and sorrow, good fortune and ill-fortune are not my main concern whether in this birth or in future lives, but my perfection and the higher good of mankind purchased by whatever suffering and tribulation. Spinoza's dictum that joy is a passage to a greater perfection and sorrow a passage to a lesser perfection is a much too summary epigram. Delight will be indeed the atmosphere of perfection and attends too even the anguish of our labour towards it, but first a higher delight which has often much trouble for its price, and afterwards a highest spiritual Ananda which has no dependence on outward circumstances, but rather is powerful to new-shape their meanings and transform their reactions. These things may be above the first formulation of the world energy here, may be influences from superior planes of the universal existence, but they are still a part of the economy of Karma here, a process of the spiritual evolution in the body. And they bring in a higher soul nature and will and action and consequence, a higher rule of Karma.

The law of Karma is therefore not simply an extension of the human idea of practical justice into future births and

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a rectification there of the apparent injustice of life. A justice or rather a justness there must be in all the workings of the world-energy; Nature certainly seems to be scrupulous in her measures. But in the life of man there are many factors to be taken into the reckoning; there are too stages, grades, degrees. And on a higher step of our being things do not look the same nor are quite the same as on a lower grade. And even in the first normal scale there are many factors and not only the ethical-hedonistic standard. If it is just that the virtuous man should be rewarded with success and happiness and the wicked man punished with downfall and pain at some time, in some life, on earth or in heaven or in hell, it is also just that the strong man should have the reward of his cultivated strength, the intellectual man the prize of his cultivated skill, the will that labours in whatever field the fruit of its effort and its works. But it does not work rightly, you say, not morally, not according to the ethical law? But what is right working in this connection of will and action and consequence? I may be religious and honest, but if I am dull, weak and incompetent? And I may be selfish and impious, but if I have the swift flame of intellect, the understanding brain, the skill to adapt means to ends, the firm courageous will fixed on its end? I have then an imperfection which must impose its consequences, but also I have powers which must make their way. The truth is that there are several orders of energy and their separate characteristic working must be seen, before their relations can be rightly discovered in the harmonies of Nature. A complex web is what we have to unravel. When we have seen the parts in the whole, the elements and their affinities in the mass, then only can we know the lines of Karma.



## Section II

### The Lines of Karma



## The Foundation

THE IDEA of Karma has behind it two ideas that are its constituent factors, a law of Nature, of the energy or action of Nature, and a soul that lives under that law, puts out action into that energy and gets from it a return in accordance and measure with the character of its own activities. And here certain considerations have at once intervened which it will not do to ignore. This putting out of action and its return cannot have anything more than a mechanical importance, it cannot have a mental, moral and spiritual significance, if the action of universal Nature is something quite different from the soul's action in character, in meaning, in the law of her being that constitutes it, if it is not itself the energy, the work of a Mind, a Soul, a Spirit. If the individual energy is that of a soul putting out action and receiving a return in kind, physical, mental, moral and spiritual from the universal energy, the universal energy too that makes the return should be that of an All-Soul in which and in relation to which this individual flame of the All-Soul lives. And it is apparent, if we consider, that the individual's energy of action is not something miraculously separate and independent, it is not a power born of itself, living in itself, acting in its separate and wholly self-formed puissance. On the contrary it is the universal that acts in the individual energy and acts, no doubt with an individual application, but on universal lines and in harmony with its universal law. But if that were all the truth, then there would be no real individual and no responsibility of any kind except the responsibility of universal Nature to carry out the idea or to execute the force put forth in the individual as in the universal by the All-Soul, the cosmic Spirit. But there is also this soul of the individual, and that is a being of the Infinite and a conscious and efficient portion of the All-Soul, a deputy or representative, and puts forth the energy given to it according

to its own potentiality, type, limits with a will that is in some sense its own. The Spirit in the cosmos is the lord, the Ishwara of all Nature, but the individual soul is likewise a representative, a delegate Ishwara, the underlord at least if not the overlord of his nature, — the recipient, agent and overseer, let us say, of his own form and use of the universal energy of Nature.

And next we see that each being is actually in life, in the world an individual in a species and each species has a nature of its own, a Swabhava or way of the self-being, and each individual too a nature of his own, an individual way of his self-being within that of the species. The law of the action is determined generally by this swabhava of the species and individually by the swabhava of the individual but within that larger circle. Man is at once himself, in a certain way peculiar and unique, and a depressed portion of God and a natural portion of mankind. There is in other words a general and an individual Swadharma or natural principle and law of all action for the kind and for the individual in the kind. And it is clear too that every action must be a particular application, a single result, a perfect or imperfect, right or perverted use of the general and within it of the individual swadharma.

But again, if that were all, if each man came into life with his present nature ready determined for him and irrevocable and had to act according to it, there would be no real responsibility; for he would do good according to the good and evil according to the evil in his nature, he would be imperfect according to its imperfection or perfect according to its perfection; and he might have to suffer the return of his good or evil, bear exactly the just consequences of his perfection or his imperfection, but mechanically and not by his choice: for his apparent choice would be the compulsion of the nature in him and could not be in any way, directly or indirectly, the result of his spirit's will. But in fact there is within his being a power of development, a power of change, or in the language of our modern conceptions an evolutionary power. His nature is what it is because he has so made it by his past; he has induced this present formulation by a precedent will in his spirit. He has risen to humanity by



the force of his spirit and by the power of the All-Soul out of the vast possibilities of universal Nature. He has developed by his own long evolution of that humanity the character and law of action of his present individual being; he has built his own height and form of human nature. He may change what he has made, he may rise even, if that be within the possibilities of the universe, beyond human and to or towards superhuman nature. It is the possibility of the universal Nature and her law that determines his natural being and action, but it is part of her law to be subject to the spirit, and she will develop in reply to an insistent call; for then she must respond, she must supply the needed energy, she must determine the acts in that direction, she must assure its issue. His past and his present nature and the environment he has secured may present constant obstacles, but they must still yield in the end to the evolutionary will in him in proportion to its sincerity, wholeness and insistence. All the possibility of the All-being is in him, all the power of the All-Will is behind him. This evolution and all its circumstances, his life, its form, its events, its values arise out of that urge and are shaped according to the past, present or future active will of his spirit. As is his use of the energy, so was and will be the return of the universal energy to him now and hereafter. This is the fundamental meaning of Karma.

At the same time this action and evolution of the spirit taking birth in a body are not an easy and simple thing, as it would or might be if Nature were all of one piece and evolution were only a raising of the degrees of a single power. For there are many strands, many degrees, many forms of energy of Nature. There is in the world of birth an energy of physical being and nature, arising out of the physical an energy of vital being and nature, arising out of the vital an energy of mental being and nature, arising out of the mental an energy of spiritual or supramental being and nature. And each of these forms of energy has a law of its own, lines of its own action, a right to its own manner of operation and existence, because each is fundamental to some necessity of the whole. And we see accordingly that each in its impulse follows its

own lines regardless of the rest, each in the combination imposes as much of its domination as it can on the others. The mental being is itself a most complex thing and has several forms of energy, an intellectual, a moral, an emotional, a hedonistic energy of mental nature, and the will in each is in itself absolute for its own rule and is yet forced to be modified in action by the running into it and across it of the other strands. The way and the movement of the world action are indeed a difficult and entangled process, *gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ*, and therefore too the way and movement of our own action which we cannot separate in its law, however much the mere mind in us might like to have it so, from the law of the world action. And if all these energies are forms of energy of the nature of the Spirit, then it is likely that only when we rise into the consciousness of the supreme spiritual being can we hope wholly to understand all the integral secret and harmony of the world action and therefore the integral meaning and law of Karma.

It may therefore serve a partial purpose but can be of little eventual advantage to try to cut the knot of the riddle by reducing to the law of one form of energy alone all the apparent tangle of the cosmic action. The universe is not solely an ethical proposition, a problem of the antinomy of the good and the evil; the Spirit of the universe can in no way be imagined as a rigid moralist concerned only with making all things obey the law of moral good, or a stream of tendency towards righteousness attempting, hitherto with only a very poor success, to prevail and rule, or a stern Justicer rewarding and punishing creatures in a world that he has made or has suffered to be full of wickedness and suffering and evil. The universal Will has evidently many other and more supple modes than that, an infinity of interests, many other elements of its being to manifest, many lines to follow, many laws and purposes to pursue. The law of the world is not this alone that our good brings good to us and our evil brings evil, nor is its sufficient key the ethical-hedonistic rule that our moral good brings to us happiness and success and our moral evil brings to us sorrow and misfortune. There is a rule

of right in the world, but it is the right of the truth of Nature and of the truth of the spirit, and that is a vast and various rule and takes many forms that have to be understood and accepted before we can reach either its highest or its integral principle.

The will in the intellectual being may erect knowledge and truth of knowledge as the governing principle of the Spirit, the will in the volitional being may see Will or Power as very God, the will in the aesthetic being enthrone beauty and harmony as the sovereign law, the will in the ethical being have a vision of it as Right or Love or Justice, and so on through a long chapter. But even though all these may very well be supreme aspects of the Supreme, it will not do to shut up the acts of the Infinite into one formula. And for a beginning it is best to phrase the law of Karma as generally and vaguely as may be and put it simply thus without any particular colour or content that according to the energy put forth shall be its return, not with any mathematical precision of conscious will and its mechanical consequences, but subject to the complicated working of many world forces. If we thus state broadly our foundation, the simplicity of the ordinary solutions disappears, but that is a loss only to love of dogma or to the mind's indolence. The whole law of the cosmic action or even the one law governing all the others cannot well be the measure of a physical, mechanical and chemical energy, nor the law of a life force, nor a moral law or law of mind or of idea forces; for it is evident that none of these things by its single self covers or accounts for all the fundamental powers. There is likely to be something else of which all these are the means and energies. Our initial formula itself can be only a general mechanical rule, but still it is likely to be the practical rule of all parts of the mechanism, and if it only states itself and does at first nothing more, yet an impartial regard on the variety of its operations may open out many meanings and may lead us to the essential significance.

The practical and the efficient base of Karma is all the relation of the soul to the energies of Nature, the use by Purusha of Prakriti. It is the soul's demand on, consent to or use of the energies of Nature and the return and reflex of her energies on the soul that must determine the steps of our progress in

our births, whether that progress be in a given direction or a long up and down or in a perpetual circle. There is another, a circumstantial aspect of the law of Karma and that hinges on the turn of our action not only to our self, but to others. The nature of the energies we put forth and even the return and reflex of their consequence upon us affects not only ourselves but all around us and we must account too for the direction of our acts upon others, its effect upon them and the return of the direction and rebound of consequence of the effect upon our own life and being. But the energy we put forth on others is ordinarily of a mixed character, physical, vital, moral, mental and spiritual, and the return and consequence too are of a mixed character. A physical action, a vital pressure thrown forth from ourselves carries in it a mental or moral as well as a physical and vital power and issues often quite beyond our conscious will and knowledge and the consequence to ourselves and to others is found to be different enough in character and measure from anything we intended or could have calculated and foreseen. The calculation escapes us because too complex by far is the universal energy acting through us and our conscious will intervenes in it simply as an instrument; our real acceptance is that of a more fundamental power within, a secret, a subliminal assent of our subconscious and superconscious spirit. And the return too, whatever the agents, is of the same complex universal energy and determined by some difficult correlation of the force acting and the force acted upon in her.

But there is another, an ultimate and essential sense of Karma, a relation in it between the soul in us and the Supreme or the All-Self; on that all is founded and to that all leads and must refer to it at every step. That relation too is not so simple a thing as is imagined by the religions. For it must answer to a very vast spiritual sense underlying the whole process of Karma and there must be a connection of each of our workings in the use of the universal energy to that fundamental and perhaps infinite significance. These three things, the will of the soul in Nature and the action of Nature in and on the soul and through it and back to it, the effect of the intercrossing between the action of

the soul on others and the return to it of the force of its action complicated by theirs, and the meaning of the soul's action in relation to its own highest Self and the All-Self, to God, make up between them all the bearings of Karma.

## The Terrestrial Law

**A** CONSIDERATION of the lines of Karma ought certainly to begin with a study of the action of the world as it is, as a whole, however contrary it may be to the rule or to the desire of our moral or our intellectual reason, and to see if we cannot find in its own facts its own explanation. If the actual truth of the world breaks out from the too rigid cadres our moral sense or our intelligence would like to see imposed on the freely or the inevitably self-determining movement of the Infinite, on the immeasurable largeness of his being or the mighty complexities of his will, it is very likely that that is because our moral sense and our intellect, since they are mental and human, are too narrow to understand or to bind him. Any shifting of the base of the problem by which we get out of the difficulty, impose our limits on what overpasses us and compel God to be even as ourselves, may very well be an evasion and an intellectual device and not the way of truth. The problem of knowledge is after all this, to reflect the movements of the Infinite and see, and not to force it into a mould prepared for it by our intelligence.

The ordinary idea of Karma follows this latter unsound method. The world we see is to our notions, if not immoral, yet non-moral and contradictory to our idea of what it should be. Therefore we go behind it, discover that this earth life is not all, erect anew there our moral rule and rejoice to find that after all the universe does obey our human conceptions and therefore all is well. The mysterious conflict, the Manichean struggle, the inextricable tangle here of good and evil is not cured or accounted for, but we say that at least the good and the evil are justly dealt with according to their kind, this duly rewarded and that duly punished in other worlds or other births, there is therefore a dominant moral law and we may cherish a faith that the good will prevail, Ahuramazda conquer and not Ahriman,

and on the whole all is as it should be. Or if not, if the tangle is inextricable, if this world is evil or existence itself an enormous mistake — as it must be, man is inclined to think, if it does not suit his desires and conceptions, — then at least I individually by satisfying the moral law may get out of the tangle away to the pleasures of a better world or to the bodiless and mindless peace of Nirvana.

But the question is whether this is not a rather childish and impatient mood and whether these solutions come anywhere near solving the whole complexity of the problem. Let us grant that a dominant moral law governs, not action, — for that is either free or, if not free, compelled to be of all kinds, — but the result of action in the world and that a supreme good will work itself out in the end. The difficulty remains why that good should use evil as one and almost the chief of its means or the dominant moral law, sovereign, unescapable, categorical, imperative, the practical governor, if not the reason of our existence, should be compelled to fulfil itself through so much that is immoral and by the agency of a non-moral force, through hell on earth and hell beyond, through petty cruelty of punishment and huge fury of avenging calamity, through an immeasurable and, as it seems, never ending sequence of pain and suffering and torture. It must surely be because there are other things in the Infinite and therefore other laws and forces here and of these the moral law, however great and sovereign to itself, has to take account and is compelled to accommodate its own lines to their curve of movement. And if that is so our plain course, if we are to see the true connections, is to begin by studying the separate law and claim of these other forces: for till it is done we cannot know rightly how they act upon and condition or are acted upon and utilised by any moral rule that we may distinguish intervening in the complex of the world action. And first let us look at the terrestrial law as it is apart from any question of rebirth, the joining, the play, the rule, the intention of the forces here: for it may be that the whole principle is already there and that rebirth does not so much correct or change as complete its significance.

But on earth the first energy is the physical; the lines of

the physical energy creating the forms, deploying the forces of the material universe are the first apparent conditions of our birth and create the practical basis and the original mould of our earthly existence. And what is the law of this first energy, its self-nature, swabhava and swadharma? It is evidently not moral in the human sense of the word: the elemental gods of the physical universe know nothing about ethical distinctions, but only the bare literal rule of energy, the right track and circuit of the movement of a force, its right action and reaction, the just result of its operation. There is no morality, no hesitation of conscience in our or the world's elements. The fire is no respecter of persons and if the saint or the thinker is cast into it, it will not spare his body. The sea, the stormwind, the rock on which the ship drives do not ask whether the just man drowned in the waters deserved his fate. If there is a divine or a cosmic justice that works in these cruelties, if the lightning that strikes impartially tree or beast or man, is — but it would appear in the case of the man alone, for the rest is accident, — the sword of God or the instrument of Karma, if the destruction wrought by the volcano, the typhoon or the earthquake is a punishment for the sins of the community or individually of the sins in a past life of each man there that suffers or perishes, at least the natural forces know it not and care nothing about it and rather they conceal from us in the blind impartiality of their rage all evidence of any such intention. The sun shines and the rain falls on the just and the unjust alike; the beneficence and the maleficence of Nature, the gracious and dreadful Mother, her beauty and terror, her utility and her danger are bestowed and inflicted without favour or disfavour on all her children and the good man is no more her favourite than the sinner. If a law of moral punishment is imposed through the action of her physical forces, it must be by a Will from above her or a Force acting unknown to her in her inconscient bosom.

But such a Will could not be itself that of a moral Being ethical after the conceptions of man, — unless indeed it resembled man in his most coldly pitiless and savage moral reason or unreason. For its action involves terrors of punishment that



would be abhorred as atrocities in an all-powerful human ruler and could not be other than monstrous in a moral Divine Ruler. A personal God so acting would be a Jehovah-Moloch, a merciless and unrighteous demander of righteousness and mercy. On the other hand an inconscient Force mechanically executing an eternal ethical rule without an author or mover would be a paradox: for morality is a creation of conscious mind; an inconscient machinery could have no idea of good and evil, no moral intention or significance. An impersonal or omni-personal conscious Will or Spirit in the universe could well enact such a law and assure its execution, but must then be, although imposing on us good and evil and their results, itself beyond good and evil. And what is this but to say that the universal Being escapes from our ethical limitations and is a supramoral, appearing to us here in physical Nature as an infra-moral, Infinite?

Now, that a conscious Infinite is there in physical Nature, we are assured by every sign, though it is a consciousness not made or limited like ours. All her constructions and motions are those of an illimitable intuitive wisdom too great and spontaneous and mysteriously self-effective to be described as an intelligence, of a Power and Will working for Time in eternity with an inevitable and forecasting movement in each of its steps, even in those steps that in their outward or superficial impetus seem to us inconscient. And as there is in her this greater consciousness and greater power, so too there is an illimitable spirit of harmony and beauty in her constructions that never fails her, though its works are not limited by our aesthetic canons. An infinite hedonism too is there, an illimitable spirit of delight, of which we become aware when we enter into impersonal unity with her; and even as that in her which is terrible is a part of her beauty, that in her which is dangerous, cruel, destructive is a part of her delight, her universal Ananda. If then all else in us, our intelligence, our dynamic and volitional, our aesthetic, our hedonistic being, when they regard the physical universe, feel intuitively the satisfaction in it of something great and illimitable but still mysteriously of their own kind, must not our moral sense, our sense of Right, find too there the satisfaction of something of which it is itself the

reflection? An intuitive perception of this kind is at the root of our demand for a moral order in the universe. Yes, but here too our partial conceptions, our own moral canons are not sufficient; this is a greater and illimitable Right, not bound to the ethical formula, and its first principle is that each thing should observe the law of its own energy and each energy move in its own lines in the total scheme and fulfil its own function and make its own returns. The physical law is the right and justice, the duty, the ought of the physical world. The godhead of Fire in the Upanishad, questioned by the Spirit, "What is the power in thee?" makes answer "This is my power that whatever is cast to me, I burn," and a similar answer is made by each physical thing to the question of the life and the mind. It observes the lines of its physical energy and is concerned with no other law or justice. No law of Karma, the moral law included, could exist, if there were not to begin with this principle as the first foundation of order.

What then is the relation of man to this physical Nature, man this soul intervening in and physically born of her in a body subjected to her law of action? what his function as something that is yet more than her, a life and a mind and a spirit? what his swabhava, his swadharma? First, he owes to her a mechanical obedience of which she herself working in his body takes care: but also, as a soul evolving the power of consciousness secret in her, his business is to know and to use her law and even in knowing and using it to transcend her more material limit, habit, purpose and formula. Observance of Nature but also transcendence of first nature is continually the purpose of the Spirit within him. A continuous series of transcendences is the most significant thing in the world action and evolution itself is only Nature's constant impulse and effort of self-exceeding, of a greater self-becoming, her way of expressing more and more, getting out a greater form of birth and awakened power of presence of the self that is in her. Life brings in a whole range of these transcendences, mind another and greater range, and since mind is so evidently imperfect and incomplete, a thing of seeking in its very nature, there must surely be a range or many ranges

of transcendence above mind. Man meets with the powers of his mind the rule of the physical action and the law of vital Karma, brings in a law of mental and moral Karma and lifts along the ladder of these scales to something more, to a potency of spiritual action which may even lead him to an exceeding of Karma itself, a freedom from or of birth and becoming, a perfecting transcendence.

Man's exceeding of the physical law does not come solely by his evolution of a moral sense in a non-moral world of Nature. Its essential rule is rather a turning of a conscious intelligence and will on life and matter, morality itself only this knowledge and will seeking for a rule of truth and right of action, *satyam ṛtam*, in his relation to his inner self and to his fellow-beings. But his dealings with the purely physical lines of Nature are non-moral, a matter at first of observance where he must, of satisfaction by instinctive or experienced utilisings, of suffering at her hands by compulsion, and more and more, as he grows, of a struggle of his knowledge and will to know and master her forces for his use and pleasure, for instruments and expedients, for a greater base and circle of opportunities, for the joy itself of will and knowledge. He makes her forces his opportunities and to increase them faces her perils. He defies her powers, transgresses her limitations, sins constantly against her first prohibitions, takes her punishments and overcomes them, becomes by wrestling of his mind and will with her acquainted with her greater possibilities which she herself has left unused while she waited for his coming. She meets his effort with physical obstruction and opposition, with a No that constantly recedes, with the mask of his own ignorance, with the menace of her danger. One might suggest the fancy, — attributing to her that resistance which certain instincts in man oppose to the daring of spiritual adventure, to new enlargings of knowledge, new forms of will or new standards of conduct, regarding them stupidly as sin and impiety because they transgress what is established, — that to physical Nature in her first power life itself with its starts and deviations and stumblings and sufferings is a sin against her law of sure physical harmony and exact measure and much

more mind with its daring, its sin of boundless adventure, its final yearnings towards the unmeasured, the above-law, the infinite.

But in fact all that the godhead of physical Nature is concerned with in man's dealings with her is to observe a just law of return of her energies to his effort. Wherever his knowledge and will can harmonise itself with the lines of her energies, she makes a return according to its action on her: where it works on her with insufficiency, ignorance, carelessness, error, she overwhelms his effort or injures; as he wills more and discovers more, she returns to him a greater utility and fruit of her powers, consents to his masteries and favours his violences. He has arrived at a unity, a Yoga with her in her greater secret possibilities, — he has liberated them and, as he uses them, so he has from her their return. He observes and he extends for her her lines and she responds with an exact ministry and obedience. All this he can do at present within certain physical limits and lines of working and there is a modification but not a radical change. There are indications that by a more direct pressure of a mental and psychical energy on the physical, the response can be made more variable, the physical depart from what seem to be fixed limits and habits, and it is conceivable that as knowledge and will entered into the region of higher and yet higher powers, the action of physical energy might grow entirely responsive, giving whatever return is seemingly demanded from her, and its lines perfectly flexible. But even this transcendence would have to regard the great original measures fixed by the All-Will: there could be a free use, perhaps a large transformation of the physical energy, but not a departure from its fundamental law and purpose.

All this founds a reign of law, a principle of the just return of energy that is the neutral essence of Karma, but it has no eye of regard for ethical measures and no moral significance. Man may and does invent cruel and immoral means of getting at physical knowledge and its powers or turn to unethical ends the energies she places at his service, but that is a matter between his will and his own soul and of his relation with other living beings, his and their concern and not hers. Physical Nature gives impartially her

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results and rewards and demands from man observance not of the moral but the physical law: she asks for a just knowledge and a scrupulous practice of her physical lines and nothing else. There is no karmic retort from her on the many cruelties of science, no revolt against an unethical use of her facilities, much punishment of ignorance but none of wickedness. If there is something in the lower rounds of Nature which reacts against certain transgressions of the moral law, it begins obscurely on a higher scale, with life. A vital reaction of the kind there is and it produces physico-vital effects, but mark that in this kind of reaction there is no observance of our limits and measures, but rather the same promiscuous impartiality as in the acts of physical Nature. In this field we have to admit a law of vicarious punishment, a constant smiting of the innocent for the sins of the guilty which would seem shocking and brutally unethical and unjust to us if inflicted by a human being. Life seems to punish itself for its errors and excesses without any care to limit the reaction to the agent of the excess or the error. There is here an order of the lines of energy that is not at least primarily or in intention ethical, but rather concerned with a system of returns not governed by our moral ideas.

The movements of life seem indeed to be as little as the physical laid on ethical lines. The fundamental right and justice of life is to follow the curve of the vital energies, to maintain the functions of the life force and to give a return to its own powers. Its function is to survive, to reproduce itself, to grow and possess and enjoy, to prolong and enlarge and assure its action, power, having, pleasure as much as earth will allow. All means are good to life that secure these ends: the rest is a matter of right balance between the vital energy and its physical means, of a putting forth of its powers and the kind of return it gets for those powers. At first—and this continues even after the emergence of mind in life and as long as mind is subservient to the life force,—that is all we see. Vital nature works out her ends faultlessly enough, but not by any means blamelessly in the ethical sense. Death is her second means of self-preservation, destruction her constant instrument for change and renovation

and progress, suffering inflicted on oneself or on others oftenest her price for victory and pleasure. All life lives upon other life, makes a place for itself by encroachment and exploitation, possesses by association but even more by struggle. Life acts by mutual shock and mutual use of creatures by each other; but it works only partly by mutual help and very much by a mutual assault and devouring. And its reproduction is bound to a means that the ethical sense even when most tolerant feels to be animal and inferior, is inclined to regard as immoral in itself and, when raised to its ascetic or puritan acuties, rejects as vile. And yet when once we put aside our limited human conceptions and look with impersonal eyes on this vast and various and wonderful vital nature into which we are born, we find in it a mysteriously perfect order, the work of a deep and illimitable intuitive wisdom, an immense Power and will at its perfectly seeing work, a great whole of beauty and harmony built out of what seems to us a system of discords, a mighty joy of life and creation which no heaviest toll of individual death or suffering can tire or discourage and which, when we enter into oneness with the great Ananda of its movement, these things seem rather to cast into relief and against the hue of its ecstasy these shades not to matter. There is here also, in these steps of vital Nature and the law of her energies, a truth of the infinite; and this truth of the Infinite's insistence on life, life as it were for its own sake and for the joy of creation has its own standards of right and harmony, just balance and measure, fit action and reaction of energy that cannot be judged by the human rule. It is a premental and still impersonal Tapas and Ananda and therefore a still non-moral order.

Man's relation with vital Nature is, again, first to be one with it by observance and obedience to its rule, then to know and direct it by conscious intelligence and will and to transcend by that direction the first law of life, its rule and habit, formula, initial significance. At first he is compelled to obey its instincts and has to act even as the animal, but in the enlarged terms of a mentalised impulsion and an increasingly clear consciousness and responsible will in what he does. He too has first to strive

to exist, to make a place for himself and his kind, to grow and possess and enjoy, to prolong, to enlarge and assure the first vital lines of his life movement. He too does it even as the others, by battle and slaughter, by devouring, by encroachment, by laying his yoke on earth and her products and on her brute children and on his fellow-men. His virtue, his dharma of the vital nature, *virtus, aretē*, is at first an obligation to strength and swiftness and courage and all things that make for survival, mastery and success. Most even of the things in him that evolve an ethical significance have at root not a truly ethical but a dynamic character, — such as self-control, *tapasyā*, discipline. They are vital-dynamic, not ethical energies; they are a rightly massed and concentrated, rightly ordered putting forth of mentalised life forces and the return they seek and get are of the vital and dynamic kind, power, success, mastery, increased capacities of vital possession and expansion or the result of these things, vital-hedonistic, the satisfaction of his desires, vital happiness, enjoyment and pleasure.

Man's first business is to bring his conscious intelligence and will to enlarge the lines of life of the individual and the race. Here again it is to these two powers primarily and only secondarily and partially to any moral force that the life energy gives its returns. The battle in life's primitive values is to the strong and the race to the swift, and the weak and the torpid cannot claim the goal and the crown on the strength of their greater virtue; and there is in this a justice, while the moral principle of reward would be here an injustice, for it would be a denial of the principle of the right returns of energy which is fundamental to any possible law of Karma. Raise the action by the powers of the mind and still the greater successes, the glory and the victory, fall to the men of great intelligence and the men of great will and not necessarily to the more ethical intelligence or to the more moralised will. Morality counts in this dynamic aspect of life only as a prudential check or a concentrating *tapasya*. Life helps those who most wisely and faithfully follow her impulses while observing her limits and restraints or those who most powerfully aid her greater impulses of expansion. It is those that get the most

prudential profit out of her and these the most of her power and movement and joy.

The greater movement at the same time brings in a power of greater suffering as well as joy, the greater sins of life and its greater virtues. Man as he dares the perils of physical nature, dares too the perils of the vital energy by transgressing her safe rules and limits which she imposes automatically on the animal. There are balances of her use of her energies, safe measures and restraints which make living as secure as it can be, — for all living is naturally a peril and an adventure, but a certain prudence in Nature minimises the adventure as much as is consistent with her ends and the intelligence of man tries to do still better, to live securely and not dangerously, to exclude the more formidable incertitudes from the order of his life. But the instinct of expansion in man is continually breaking Nature's vital balances and disregarding his own limits and measures. He is avid of experience, of the unmeasured and unknown in power and experience and enjoyment as of the common and known and safe, of the perilous extremes as of the sane averages. He must sound all life's possibilities, test the wrong as well as the right use of her energies, pay his toll of suffering and get his prize of more splendid victories. As far as mind working in life's ways can do it, he has to enlarge the lines of life and to make a transformation of its action and its possibilities. This has hitherto been a greatening of forms and never gone so far as to make a radical change and override its first nature. It is only by a transformation of our inner life that we can get beyond the magnified, mentalised, reasoning and consciously willing animal that for the most part the greater number of us are and only by raising it up to unity with some spiritual power we have not yet reached that we can hope to transform vital nature and make her a free instrument of the higher spirit. Then man may be really what he strives to be, master of his life, in control of vital and physical Nature.

Meanwhile it is through an inward turn of his mind that he gets to something like a transcendence, a living not for life but for truth, for beauty, for power of the soul, for good and right,



love, justice. It is this endeavour that brings down into the lower rounds of energy the powers of a higher circle, something of a mental and a truly moral tending at its end to become a spiritual law of action and the fruits of action of Karma.

## Mind Nature and Law of Karma

**M**AN IS not after all in the essence of his manhood or in the inner reality of his soul a vital and physical being raised to a certain power of mental will and intelligence. If that were so, the creed that makes our existence a manifestation of a Will to life, a Life Force moved by no other object than its own play, heightening, efficient power, expansion, might have a good chance of being the sufficient theory of our universe, and the law of our Karma, the rule of our activities would be in entire consonance with that one purpose and ordered by that dominant principle. Certainly in a great part of this world's outer activities, — or if we, fixing our eye mainly on the vital play of the spirit of the universe, consider them as man's chief business and the main thing that matters, — there is a colourable justification for this limited view of the human being. But the more he looks into himself and the more he goes inward and lives intimately and pre-eminently in his mind and soul, the more he discovers that he is in his essential nature a mental being encased in body and emmeshed in the life activities, *manu, manomaya puruṣa*. He is more than a thinking, willing and feeling result of the mechanism of the physical or an understanding nexus of the vital forces. There is a mental energy of his being that overtops, pervades and utilises the terrestrial action and his own terrestrial nature.

This character of man's being prevents us from resting satisfied with the vitalistic law of Karma: the lines of the vital energy are interfered with and uplifted and altered for man by the intervention of the awakened mental energy of the spirit that emerges in the material universe and creates here on earth the form of man for its habitation, his complex nature to be its expressive power, the gamut of its music, and the action of his thought, perception, will, emotions the notation of its

harmonies. The apparent inconscience of physical Nature, the beautiful and terrible, kindly and cruel conscious but amoral Life Force that is the first thing we see before us, are not the whole self-expression of the universal Being here and therefore not the whole of Nature. Man comes into it to express and realise a higher law of Nature and therefore a higher system of the lines of Karma. The mental energy divides itself and runs in many directions, has an ascending scale of the levels of its action, a great variety and combination of its dynamic aims and purposes. There are many strands of its weaving and it follows each along its own line and combines manifoldly the threads of one with the threads of another. There is in it an energy of thought that puts itself out for a return and a constant increase of knowledge, an energy of will that casts itself forth for a return and increase of conscious mastery, fulfilment of the being, execution of will in action, an energy of conscious aesthesis that feels out for a return and an increase of the creation and enjoyment of beauty, an energy of emotion that demands in its action a return and a constant increase of the enjoyment and satisfaction of the emotional power of the being. All these energies act in a way for themselves and yet depend upon and are inextricably accompanied and mingled with each other. At the same time mind has descended into matter and has to act in and through this world of the vital and physical energy and to consent to and make something of the lines of the vital and physical Karma.

Man, then, since he is a mental being, a means of the evolution of the mental self-expression of the spirit, cannot confine the rule of his action and nature to an obedience to the vital and physical law and an intelligent utilisation of it for the greater, more ordered, more perfect enjoyment of his vital and physical existence, perpetuation, reproduction, possession, enjoyment, expansion. There is a higher law of mental being and nature of which he is bound to become aware and to seek to impose it on his life and his action. At first he is very predominantly governed by the life needs and the movement of the life energies, and it is in applying his mental energy to them and to the world around him that he makes the earliest development of his powers of

knowledge and will and trains the crude impulses that lead him into the path of his emotional, aesthetic and moral evolution. But always there is a certain obscure element that takes pleasure in the action of the mental energies for their own sake and it is this, however imperfect at first in self-consciousness and intelligence, that represents the characteristic intention of Nature in him and makes his mental and eventually his spiritual evolution inevitable. The insistence of the external world around him and the need of utilising its opportunities and of meeting its siege and dangers causes his mind to be much obsessed by life and external action and the utility of thought and will and perception for his dealings with the physical and life forces, and to this preoccupation the finer more disinterested action and subtler cast of motive of the mind nature demanding its own inner development, seeking for knowledge, mastery, beauty, a purer emotional delight for their own sake, and the pursuits which are characteristic of this higher energy of the mental nature, appear almost as by-products and at any rate things secondary that can always be postponed and made subordinate to the needs and demands of the mentalised vital and physical being. But the finer and more developed mind in humanity has always turned towards an opposite self-seeing, inclined to regard this as the most characteristic and valuable element of our being and been ready to sacrifice much and sometimes all to its calls or its imperative mandate. Then life itself would be in reality for man only a field of action for the evolution, the opportunity of new experience, the condition of difficult effort and mastery of the mental and spiritual being. What then will be the lines of this mental energy and how will they affect and be affected by the lines of the vital and physical Karma?

Three movements of the mental energy of man projecting itself along the lines of life, successive movements that yet overlap and enter into each other, have created a triple strand of the law of his Karma. The first is that, primary, obvious, universal, predominant in his beginnings, in which his mind subjects and assimilates itself to the law of life in matter in order to make the most of the terrestrial existence for its own pleasure and profit,

*artha*, *kāma*, without any other modification or correction of its pre-existing lines than is involved in the very impact of the human intelligence, will, emotion, aesthesis. These indeed are forces that lift up and greatly enlarge and infinitely rarefy and subtilise by a consciously regulated and more and more skilful and curious use the first crude, narrow and essentially animal aims and movements common to all living creatures. And this element of the mentalised vital existence, these lines of its movement making the main grey solid stuff of the life of the average economic, political, social, domestic man may take on a great amplitude and an imposing brilliance, but they remain always in their distinctive, their original and still persistent character the lines of movement, the way of Karma of the thinking, willing, feeling, refining human animal, — not to be despised or excluded from our total way of being when we climb to a higher plane of conception and action, but still only a small part of human possibility and, if regarded as the main preoccupation or most imperative law of the human being, then limiting and degrading it; for, empowered up to a certain point to enlarge and dynamise and enrich, but not raise to a self-exceeding, they are useful for ascension only when themselves uplifted and transformed by a greater law and a nobler motive. The momentum of this energy may be a very powerful mental action, may involve much output of intelligence and will power and aesthetic perception and expenditure of emotional force, but the return it seeks is vital success and enjoyment and possession and satisfaction. The mind no doubt feeds its powers on the effort and its fullness on the prize, but it is tethered to its pasture. It is a mixed movement, mental in its means, predominantly vital in its returns; its standard of the values of the return are measured by an outward success and failure, an externalised or externally caused pleasure and suffering, good fortune and evil fortune, the fate of the life and the body. It is this powerful vital preoccupation which has given us one element of the current notion of law of Karma, its idea of an award of vital happiness and suffering as the measure of cosmic justice.

The second movement of mind running on the lines of life

comes into prominent action when man evolves out of his experience the idea of a mental rule, standard, ideal, a concretised abstraction which is suggested at first by life experience, but goes beyond, transcends the actual needs and demands of the vital energy and returns upon it to impose some ideal mental rule, some canon embodying a generalised conception of Right on the law of life. For its essence is the discovery or belief of the mind that in all things there is a right rule, a right standard, a right way of thought, will, feeling, perception, action other than that of the intuition of vital nature, other than that of the first dealings of mind seeking only to profit by the vital nature with a mainly vital motive, — for it has discovered a way of the reason, a rule of the self-governing intelligence. This brings into the seeking of vital pleasure and profit, *artha*, *kāma*, the power of the conception of a mental truth, justice, right, the conception of Dharma. The greater practical part of the Dharma is ethical, it is the idea of the moral law. The first mind movement is non-moral or not at all characteristically moral, has only, if at all, the conception of a standard of action justified by custom, the received rule of life and therefore right, or a morality indistinguishable from expediency, accepted and enforced because it was found necessary or helpful to efficiency, power, success, to victory, honour, approval, good fortune. The idea of Dharma is on the contrary predominantly moral in its essence. Dharma on its heights holds up the moral law in its own right and for its own sake to human acceptance and observance. The larger idea of Dharma is indeed a conception of the true law of all energies and includes a conscience, a rectitude in all things, a right law of thought and knowledge, of aesthesis, of all other human activities and not only of our ethical action. But yet in the notion of Dharma the ethical element has tended always to predominate and even to monopolise the concept of Right which man creates, — because ethics is concerned with action of life and his dealing with his vital being and with his fellow-men and that is always his first preoccupation and his most tangible difficulty, and because here first and most pressingly the desires, interests, instincts of the vital being find themselves cast into a

sharp and very successful conflict with the ideal of Right and the demand of the higher law. Right ethical action comes therefore to seem to man at this stage the one thing binding upon him among the many standards raised by the mind, the moral claim the one categorical imperative, the moral law the whole of his Dharma.

At first however the moral conceptions of man and the direction and output and the demand of return of the ethical energy in him get themselves inextricably mixed with his vital conceptions and demands and even afterwards lean on them very commonly and very considerably for a support and incentive. Human morality first takes up an enormous mass of customary rules of action, a conventional and traditional practice much of which is of a very doubtful moral value, gives to it an imperative sanction of right and slips into the crude mass or superimposes on it, but still as a part of one common and equal code, the true things of the ethical ideal. It appeals to the vital being, his desires, hopes and fears, incites man to virtue by the hope of rewards and the dread of punishment, imitating in this device the method of his crude and fumbling social practice: for that, finding its law and rule which, good or bad, it wishes to make imperative as supposing it to be at least the best calculated for the order and efficiency of the community, opposed by man's vital being, bribes and terrifies as well as influences, educates and persuades him to acceptance. Morality tells man, accommodating itself to his imperfection, mostly through the mouth of religion, that the moral law is imperative in itself, but also that it is very expedient for him personally to follow it, righteousness in the end the safest policy, virtue the best paymaster in the long run, — for this is a world of Law or a world ruled by a just and virtuous or at least virtue-loving God. He is assured that the righteous man shall prosper and the wicked perish and that the paths of virtue lie through pleasant places. Or, if this will not serve, since it is palpably false in experience and even man cannot always deceive himself, it offers him a security of vital rewards denied here but conceded in some hereafter. Heaven and hell, happiness and suffering in other lives are put before him as the bribe and

the menace. He is told, the better to satisfy his easily satisfied intellect, that the world is governed by an ethical law which determines the measure of his earthly fortunes, that a justice reigns and this is justice, that every action has its exact rebound and his good shall bring him good and his evil evil. It is these notions, this idea of the moral law, of righteousness and justice as a thing in itself imperative, but still needing to be enforced by bribe and menace on our human nature, — which would seem to show that at least for that nature they are not altogether imperative, — this insistence on reward and punishment because morality struggling with our first unregenerate being has to figure very largely as a mass of restraints and prohibitions and these cannot be enforced without some fact or appearance of a compelling or inducing outward sanction, this diplomatic compromise or effort at equivalence between the impersonal ethical and the personal egoistic demand, this marriage of convenience between right and vital utility, virtue and desire, — it is these accommodations that are embodied in the current notions of the law of Karma.

What real truth is there behind the current notions of Karma in the actual facts or the fundamental powers of the life of man here or the visible working of the law of the energies of the cosmos? There is evidently a substantial truth, but it is a part only of the whole; its reign or predominance belongs to a certain element only, to the emphasis of one line among many of a transitional movement between the law of the vital energy and a greater and higher law of the mind and spirit. A mixture of any two kinds of energy sets up a mixed and complex action of the output of the energy and the return, and a too sharp-cut rule affixing vital returns to a mental and moral output of force is open to much exception and it cannot be the whole inner truth of the matter. But still where the demand is for the vital return, for success, an outer happiness, good, fortune, that is a sign of the dominant intention in the energy and points to a balance of forces weighing in the indicated direction. At first sight, if success is the desideratum, it is not clear what morality has to say in the affair, since we see in most things that it is a right understanding



and intelligent or intuitive practice of the means and conditions and an insistent power of the will, a settled drive of the force of the being of which success is the natural consequence. Man may impose by a system of punishments a check on the egoistic will and intelligence in pursuit of its vital ends, may create a number of moral conditions for the world's prizes, but this might appear, as is indeed contended in certain vitalistic theories, an artificial imposition on Nature and a dulling and impoverishment of the free and powerful play of the mind force and the life force in their alliance. But in truth the greatest force for success is a right concentration of energy, *tapasyā*, and there is an inevitable moral element in Tapasya.

Man is a mental being seeking to establish a control over the life forces he embodies or uses, and one condition of that mastery is a necessary self-control, a restraint, an order, a discipline imposed on his mental, vital and physical being. The animal life is automatically subjected to certain measures; it is the field of an instinctive vital Dharma. Man, liberated from these automatic checks by the free play of his mind, has to replace them by willed and intelligent restraints, an understanding measure, a voluntary discipline. Not only a powerful expenditure and free play of his energies, but also a right measure, restraint and control of them is the condition of his life's success and soundness. The moral is not the sole element: it is not entirely true that the moral right always prevails or that where there is the dharma, on that side is the victory. The immediate success often goes to other powers, even an ultimate conquest of the Right comes usually by an association with some form of Might. But still there is always a moral element among the many factors of individual and collective or national success and a disregard of acknowledged right has at some time or other disastrous or fatal reactions. Moreover, man in the use of his energies has to take account of his fellows and the aid and opposition of their energies, and his relations with them impose on him checks, demands and conditions which have or evolve a moral significance. There is laid on him almost from the first a number of obligations even in the pursuit of vital success and

satisfaction which become a first empirical basis of an ethical order.

And there are cosmic as well as human forces that respond to this balance of the mental and moral and the vital order. First there is something subtle, inscrutable and formidable that meets us in our paths, a Force of which the ancient Greeks took much notice, a Power that is on the watch for man in his effort at enlargement, possession and enjoyments and seems hostile and opposite. The Greeks figured it as the jealousy of the gods or as Doom, Necessity, Ate. The egoistic force in man may proceed far in its victory and triumph, but it has to be wary or it will find this power there on the watch for any flaw in his strength or action, any sufficient opportunity for his defeat and downfall. It dogs his endeavour with obstacle and reverse and takes advantage of his imperfections, often dallying with him, giving him long rope, delaying and abiding its time, — and not only of his moral shortcomings but of his errors of will and intelligence, his excesses and deficiencies of strength and prudence, all defects of his nature. It seems overcome by his energies of Tapasya, but it waits its season. It overshadows unbroken or extreme prosperity and often surprises it with a sudden turn to ruin. It induces a security, a self-forgetfulness, a pride and insolence of success and victory and leads on its victim to dash himself against the hidden seat of justice or the wall of an invisible measure. It is as fatal to a blind self-righteousness and the arrogations of an egoistic virtue as to vicious excess and selfish violence. It appears to demand of man and of individual men and nations that they shall keep within a limit and a measure, while all beyond that brings danger; and therefore the Greeks held moderation in all things to be the greatest part of virtue.

There is here something in the life forces obscure to us, considered by our partial feelings sinister because it crosses our desires, but obedient to some law and intention of the universal mind, the universal reason or Logos which the ancients perceived at work in the cosmos. Its presence, when felt by the cruder kind of religious mind, generates the idea of calamity as a punishment for sin, — not observing that it has a punishment

too for ignorance, for error, stupidity, weakness, defect of will and tapasya. This is really a resistance of the Infinite acting through life against the claim of the imperfect ego of man to enlarge itself, possess, enjoy and have, while remaining imperfect, a perfect and enduring happiness and complete felicity of its world-experience. The claim is, we may say, immoral, and the Force that resists it and returns, however uncertainly and late to our eyes, suffering and failure as a reply to our imperfections, may be considered a moral Force, an agent of a just Karma, though not solely in the narrowly ethical sense of Karma. The law it represents is that our imperfections shall have their passing or their fatal consequences, that a flaw in our output of energy may be mended or counterbalanced and reduced in consequence, but if persisted in shall react even in excess of its apparent merits, that an error may seem to destroy all the result of the Tapasya, because it springs from a radical unsoundness in the intention of the will, the heart, the ethical sense or the reason. This is the first line of the transitional law of Karma.

A second line of Karmic response of the cosmic forces to our action puts on also an appearance which tempts us to give it a moral character. For there can be distinguished in Nature a certain element of the law of the talion or — perhaps a more appropriate figure, since this action seems rather mechanical than rational and deliberate — a boomerang movement of energy returning upon its transmitter. The stone we throw is flung back by some hidden force in the world life upon ourselves, the action we put out upon others recoils, not always by a direct reaction, but often by devious and unconnected routes, on our own lives and sometimes, though that is by no means a common rule, in its own exact figure or measure. This is a phenomenon so striking to our imagination and impressive to our moral sense and vital feelings that it has received some kind of solemn form and utterance in the thought of all cultures, — “What thou hast done, thou must suffer”, “He that uses the sword shall perish by the sword”; “Thou hast sown the wind and thou shalt reap the whirlwind”; — and we are tempted to erect it into a universal rule and accept it as sufficient evidence of a moral order. But the

careful thinker will pause long before he hastens to subscribe to any such conclusion, for there is much that militates against it and this kind of definite reaction is rather exceptional than an ordinary rule of human life. If it were a regular feature, men would soon learn the code of the draconic impersonal legislator and know what to avoid and the list of life's prohibitions and vetoes. But there is no such clear penal legislation of Nature.

The mathematical precision of physical Nature's action and reaction cannot indeed be expected from mental and vital Nature. For not only does everything become infinitely more subtle, complex and variable as we rise in the scale so that in our life action there is an extraordinary intertwining of forces and mixture of many values, but, even, the psychological and moral value of the same action differs in different cases, according to the circumstance, the conditions, the motive and mind of the doer. The law of the talion is no just or ethical rule when applied by man to men and, applied by superhuman dispenser of justice or impersonal law with a rude rule of thumb to the delicate and intricate tangle of man's life action and life motives, it would be no better. And it is evident too that the slow, long and subtle purposes of the universal Power working in the human race would be defeated rather than served by any universality of this too precise and summary procedure. Accordingly we find that its working is occasional and intermittent rather than regular, variable and to our minds capricious rather than automatic and plainly intelligible.

At times in the individual's life the rebound of this kind of Karma is decisively, often terribly clear and penal justice is done, although it may come to him in an unexpected fashion, long delayed and from strange quarters; but however satisfactory to our dramatic sense, this is not the common method of retributive Nature. Her ways are more tortuous, subtle, unobtrusive and indecipherable. Often it is a nation that pays in this way for past crimes and mistakes and the sign manual of the law of the talion is there to point the lesson, but individually it is the innocent who suffer. A commercially minded king of Belgium is moved to make a good thing of the nation's rubber estate and human

cattle farm in Africa and his agents murder and mutilate and immolate thousands of cheap negro lives to hasten the yield and swell his coffers. This able monarch dies in the splendour of riches and the sacred odour of good fortune, his agents in no way suffer: but here of a sudden comes Germany trampling her armed way towards a dream of military and commercial empire through prosperous Belgium and massacred men and women and mutilated children startlingly remind us of Karma and illustrate some obscure and capricious law of the talion. Here at least the nation in its corporate being was guilty of complicity, but at other times neither guilty individual nor nation is the payer, but perhaps some well-meaning virtuous blunderer gets the account of evil recompense that should have been paid in of rights by the strong despots before him who went on their way to the end rejoicing in power and splendour and pleasure.

It is evident that we cannot make much of a force that works out in so strange a fashion, however occasionally striking and dramatic its pointing at cause and consequence. It is too uncertain in its infliction of penalty to serve the end which the human mind expects from a system of penal justice, too inscrutably variable in its incidence to act as an indicator to that element in the human temperament which waits upon expediency and regulates its steps by a prudential eye to consequence. Men and nations continue to act always in the same fashion regardless of this occasional breaking out of the lightnings of a retaliatory doom, these occasional precisions of Karmic justice amidst the uncertainties of the complex measures of the universe. It works really not on the mind and will of man — except to some degree in a subtle and imperfect fashion on the subconscious mind — but outside him as a partial check and regulator helping to maintain the balance of the returns of energy and the life purposes of the world-spirit. Its action is like that of the first line of transitional Karma intended to prevent the success of the vital egoism of man and serves as an interim compression and compulsion until he can discover and succeed in spite of his vital self in obeying a higher law of his being and a purer dynamism of motive in his directing mind and governing spirit. It serves

therefore a certain moral purpose in the will in the universe, but is not itself, even in combination with the other, sufficient to be the law of a moral order.

A third possible and less outwardly mechanical line of Karma is suggested by the dictum that like creates like and in accordance with that law good must create good and evil must create evil. In the terms of a moral return or rather repayment to moral energies this would mean that by putting forth love we get a return of love and by putting forth hatred a return of hatred, that if we are merciful or just to others, others also will be to us just or merciful and that generally good done by us to our fellow-men will return in a recompense of good done by them in kind and posted back to our address duly registered in the moral post office of the administrative government of the universe. Do unto others as you would be done by, because then they will indeed so do to you, seems to be the formula of this moral device. If this were true, human life might indeed settle down into a very symmetrical system of a harmoniously moral egoism and a mercantile traffic in goodness that might seem fair and beautiful enough to those who are afflicted with that kind of moral aesthesis. Happily for the upward progress of the human soul, the rule breaks down in practice, the world-spirit having greater ends before it and a greater law to realise. The rule is true to a certain extent in tendency and works sometimes well enough and the prudential intelligence of man takes some account of it in action but it is not true all the way and all the time. It is evident enough that hatred, violence, injustice are likely to create an answering hatred, violence and injustice and that I can only indulge these propensities with impunity if I am sufficiently powerful to defy resistance or so long as I am at once strong enough and prudent enough to provide against their natural reactions. It is true also that by doing good and kindness I create a certain goodwill in others and can rely under ordinary or favourable circumstances not so much on gratitude and return in kind as on their support and favour. But this good and this evil are both of them movements of the ego and on the mixed egoism of human nature there can be no safe or

positive reliance. An egoistic selfish strength, if it knows what to do and where to stop, even a certain measure of violence and injustice, if it is strong and skilful, cunning, fraud, many kinds of evil, do actually pay in man's dealing with man hardly less than in the animal's with the animal, and on the other hand the doer of good who counts on a return or reward finds himself as often as not disappointed of his bargained recompense. The weakness of human nature worships the power that tramples on it, does homage to successful strength, can return to every kind of strong or skilful imposition belief, acceptance, obedience: it can crouch and fawn and admire even amidst movements of hatred and terror; it has singular loyalties and unreasoning instincts. And its disloyalties too are as unreasoning or light and fickle: it takes just dealing and beneficence as its right and forgets or cares not to repay. And there is worse; for justice, mercy, beneficence, kindness are often enough rewarded by their opposites and ill will an answer to goodwill is a brutally common experience. If something in the world and in man returns good for good and evil for evil, it as often returns evil for good and, with or without a conscious moral intention, good for evil. And even an unegoistic virtue or a divine good and love entering the world awakens hostile reactions. Attila and Jenghiz on the throne to the end, Christ on the cross and Socrates drinking his portion of hemlock are no very clear evidence for any optimistic notion of a law of moral return in the world of human nature.

There is little more sign of its sure existence in the world measures. Actually in the cosmic dispensation evil comes out of good and good out of evil and there seems to be no exact correspondence between the moral and the vital measures. All that we can say is that good done tends to increase the sum and total power of good in the world and the greater this grows the greater is likely to be the sum of human happiness and that evil done tends to increase the sum and total power of evil in the world and the greater this grows, the greater is likely to be the sum of human suffering and, eventually, man or nation doing evil has in some way to pay for it, but not often in any

intelligibly graded or apportioned measure and not always in clearly translating terms of vital good fortune and ill fortune.

In short, what we may call the transitional lines of Karma exist and have to be taken into account in our view of the action of the world forces. But they are not and cannot be the whole law of Karma. And they cannot be that because they are transitional, because good and evil are moral and not vital values and have a clear right only to a moral and not a vital return, because reward and punishment put forward as the conditions of good doing and evil doing do not constitute and cannot create a really moral order, the principle itself, whatever temporary end it serves, being fundamentally immoral from the higher point of view of a true and pure ethics, and because there are other forces that count and have their right, — knowledge, power and many others. The correspondence of moral and vital good is a demand of the human ego and like many others of its demands answers to certain tendencies in the world mind, but is not its whole law or highest purpose. A moral order there can be, but it is in ourselves and for its own sake that we have to create it and, only when we have so created it and found its right relation to other powers of life, can we hope to make it count at its full value in the right ordering of man's vital existence.



## The Higher Lines of Karma

THE THIRD movement of mind labours to bring the soul of man out of the tangle of the vital and mental forces and opens to him a field in which the mind raises itself, raises at least the head of its thought and will, above the vital demands and standards and there at that top of its activities, whatever its other concessions to the lower Karma, lives for the sake of the true values, the true demands of a mental being, even though one imprisoned in a body and set to wrestle with the conditions of life in a material universe. The innate demand of the mental being is for mental experience, for the mind's manifold strengths, its capacities, joys, growth, perfections, and for these things for their own sake because of the inevitable satisfaction they give to his nature, — the demand of the intellect for truth and knowledge, the demand of the ethical mind for right and good, the demand of the aesthetic mind for beauty and delight of beauty, the demand of the emotional mind for love and the joy of relation with our fellow-beings, the demand of the will for self-mastery and mastery of things and the world and our existence. And the values which the mental being holds for supreme and effective are the values of truth and knowledge, of right and good, of beauty and aesthetic delight, of love and emotional joy, of mastery and inner lordship. It is these things that he seeks to know and follow, to possess, discover, enjoy, increase. It is for this great adventure that he came into the world, to walk hardily through the endless fields they offer to him, to experiment, to dare, to test the utmost limit of each capacity and follow each possibility and its clue to the end as well as to observe in each its at present discovered law and measure. Here as in the other fields, as in the vital and physical, so in his mental provinces, it is the appointed work of his intelligence and will to know and master through an always enlarging experience the conditions

of an increasing light and power and right and truth and joy and beauty and wideness, and not only to discover the Truth and the Law and set up a system and an order, but to enlarge continually its lines and boundaries. And therefore in these fields, as in life, man, the mental being, cannot stop short too long in the partial truth of an established system and a temporary mistaken for an eternal order — here least, because as he advances he is always tempted still farther forward until he realises that he is a seeker of the infinite and a power of the absolute. His base here plunges into the obscure infinite of life and matter; but his head rises towards the luminous infinite of the spirit.

The third movement of the mental energy carries it therefore into its own native field and kingdom above the pressing subjection to the lowering and limiting claim of a vital and physical Karma. It is true that his lower being remains subject to the law of life and of the body, and it is true also that he must strive either to find in life or to bring into the world around him some law of truth, of right and good, of beauty, of love and joy, of the mind's will and mastery, for it is by that effort that he is man and not the animal and without it he cannot find his true satisfaction in living. But two things he has more and more to feel and to realise, first, that life and matter follow their own law and not, in man's sense of it at least, a moral, a rational, a mentally determined aesthetic or other mind order, and if he wishes to introduce any such thing into them, he must himself here create it, transcending the physical and the vital law and discovering another and a better, and secondly, that the more he follows these things for their own sake, the more he discovers their true form, *svarūpa*, and develops their force to prevail upon and lift up life into an air of higher nature. In other words he passes from the practical pursuit of a serviceable knowledge, morality, aesthesis, force of emotion and will-power, — serviceable for his vital aims, for life as it first is, — to an ideal pursuit of these things and the transformation of life into the image of his ideal. This he is unable indeed as yet to realise and is obliged to rest on balance and compromise, because he has not found the whole reconciling secret of that which lies beyond his ideals. But it is as

he pursues them in their purity, for their own imperative innate demand and attraction, on the line of their trend to their own infinite and absolute that he gets nearer in his total experience to the secret. There is so a chance of his discovering that as the beauty and irrefragable order of life and matter are due to the joy of the Infinite in life and in matter and the fidelity of the Force here at work to the hidden knowledge and will and idea of the Self and Spirit in them, so there is within his own hidden self, his own vast and covert spirit a secret of the Infinite's self-knowledge, will, joy, love and delight, mastery, right and truth of joy and action by which his own greater life rising above the vital and mental limitations can discover an infinite perfection and beauty and delight in itself and spontaneous irrefragable order.

Meanwhile this third movement of mind discovers a law of the return of mental energies, pure in its kind and as certain as the vital and the physical, as faithful to itself, to the self of mind and to mind nature, a law not of vital returns to mental dynamis, but of progression of the soul in the being and force of good and beauty and power — of mind-power and soul-power — and greatness and love and joy and knowledge. Mounting here the ethical mind no longer follows good for a reward now on earth or in another existence, but for the sake of good, and no longer shuns evil for fear of punishment on earth later on in this life or else in another life or in hell, but because to follow evil is a degradation and affliction of its being and a fall from its innate and imperative endeavour. This is to it a necessity of its moral nature, a truly categorical imperative, a call that in the total more complex nature of man may be dulled or suppressed or excluded by the claim of its other parts and their needs, but to the ethical mind is binding and absolute. The virtue that demands a reward for acting well and needs a penalty to keep it walking in the straight way, is no real portion, no true law of the ethical being, but rather a mixed creation, a rule of his practical reason that seeks always after utility and holds that to be right which is helpful and expedient, a rule that looks first not at the growth of the soul but at the mechanical securing of

a regulated outward conduct and to secure it bribes and terrifies the vital being into acquiescence and a reluctant subordination of its own instincts and natural ventures. The virtue so created is an expediency, a social decency, a prudent limitation of egoism, a commercial substitute for the true thing; or, at best, it is a habit of the mind and not a truth of the soul, and in the mind a fabrication, mixed and of inferior stuff, a conventional virtue, insecure, destructible by the wear and tear of life, easily confused with other expediences or purchasable or conquerable by them, — it is not a high and clear upbuilding, an enduring and inwardly living self-creation of the soul. Whatever its practical utility or service as a step of the transition, the mental habit of confusion and vitalistic compromise it fosters and the more questionable confusions and compromises that habit favours, have made conventional morality one of the chief of the forces that hold back human life from progressing to a true ethical order. If humanity has made any lasting and true advance, it has been not through the virtue created by reward and punishment or any of the sanctions powerful on the little vital ego, but by an insistence from the higher mind on the lower, an insistence on right for its own sake, on imperative moral values, on an absolute law and truth of ethical being and ethical conduct that must be obeyed whatever the recalcitrances of the lower mind, whatever the pains of the vital problem, whatever the external result, the inferior issue.

This higher mind holds its pure and complete sway only on a few high souls, in others it acts upon the lower and outer mind but amidst much misprision, confusion and distortion of thought and will and perverting or abating mixture; on the mass of men governed by the lower egoistic, vital and conventional standards of conduct its influence is indirect and little. None the less it gives the clue we have to follow in order to pursue the spiral ascent of the lines of Karma. And first we observe that the just man follows the ethical law for its own sake and not for any other purpose whatsoever, is just for the sake of justice, righteous for the sake of righteousness, compassionate for the sake of compassion, true for the sake of truth alone.

Harishchandra sacrificing self and wife and child and kingdom and subjects in an unswerving fidelity to the truth of the spoken word, Shivi giving his flesh to the hawk rather than fall from his kingly duty of protection to the fugitive, the Bodhisattwa laying his body before the famished tiger, images in which sacred or epic legend has consecrated this greater kind of virtue, illuminate an elevation of the ethical will and a law of moral energy that asks for no return from man or living thing or from the gods of Karma, lays down no conditions, makes no calculation of consequence, of less or more or of the greatest good of the greatest number, admits neither the hedonistic nor the utilitarian measure, but does simply the act as the thing to be done because it is right and virtue and therefore the very law of being of the ethical man, the categorical imperative of his nature.

This kind of high absoluteness in the ethical demand is appalling to the flesh and the ego, for it admits of no comfortable indulgence and compromise, no abating reserves or conditions, no profitable compact between the egoistic life and virtue. It is offensive too to the practical reason, for it ignores the complexity of the world and of human nature and seems to savour of an extremism and exclusive exaggeration as dangerous to life as it is exalted in ideal purpose. *Fiat justitia ruat coelum*, let justice and right be done though the heavens fall, is a rule of conduct that only the ideal mind can accept with equanimity or the ideal life tolerate in practice. And even to the larger ideal mind this absoluteness becomes untrustworthy if it is an obedience not to the higher law of the soul, but to an outward moral law, a code of conduct. For then in place of a lifting enthusiasm we have the rigidity of the Pharisee, a puritan fierceness or narrowness or the life-killing tyranny of a single insufficient side of the nature. This is not yet that higher mental movement, but a straining towards it, an attempt to rise above the transitional law and the vitalistic compromise. And it brings with it an artificiality, a tension, a coercion, often a repellent austerity which, disregarding as it does sanity and large wisdom and the simple naturalness of the true ethical mind and the flexibilities of life, tyrannising over but not transforming it, is not the higher perfection of our

nature. But still even here there is the feeling out after a great return to the output of moral energy, an attempt well worth making, if the aim can indeed so be accomplished, to build up by the insistence on a rigid obedience to a law of moral action that which is yet non-existent or imperfectly existent in us but which alone can make the law of our conduct a thing true and living, — an ethical being with an inalienably ethical nature. No rule imposed on him from outside, whether in the name of a supposed mechanical or impersonal law or of God or prophet, can be, as such, true or right or binding on man: it becomes that only when it answers to some demand or aids some evolution of his inner being. And when that inner being is revealed, evolved, at each moment naturally active, simply and spontaneously imperative, then we get the true, the inner and intuitive Law in its light of self-knowledge, its beauty of self-fulfilment, its intimate life significance. An act of justice, truth, love, compassion, purity, sacrifice becomes then the faultless expression, the natural outflowing of our soul of justice, our soul of truth, our soul of love and compassion, our soul of purity or sacrifice. And before the greatness of its imperative mandate to the outer nature the vital being and the practical reason and surface seeking intelligence must and do bow down as before something greater than themselves, something that belongs directly to the divine and the infinite.

Meanwhile we get the clue to the higher law of Karma, of the output and returns of energy, and see it immediately and directly to be, what all law of Karma, really and ultimately, if at first covertly, is for man, a law of his spiritual evolution. The true return to the act of virtue, to the ethically right output of his energy — his reward, if you will, and the sole recompense on which he has a right to insist, — is its return upon him in a growth of the moral strength within him, an upbuilding of his ethical being, a flowering of the soul of right, justice, love, compassion, purity, truth, strength, courage, self-giving that he seeks to be. The true return to the act of evil, to the ethically wrong output of energy — his punishment, if you will, and the sole penalty he has any need or right to fear, — is its return upon

him in a retardation of the growth, a demolition of the upbuilding, an obscuration, tarnishing, impoverishing of the soul, of the pure, strong and luminous being that he is striving to be. An inner happiness he may gain by his act, the calm, peace, satisfaction of the soul fulfilled in right, or an inner calamity, the suffering, disturbance, unease and malady of its descent or failure, but he can demand from God or moral Law no other. The ethical soul, — not the counterfeit but the real, — accepts the pains and sufferings and difficulties and fierce intimidations of life, not as a punishment for its sins, but as an opportunity and trial, an opportunity for its growth, a trial of its built or native strength, and good fortune and all outer success not as a coveted reward of virtue, but as an opportunity also and an even greater more difficult trial. What to this high seeker of Right can mean the vital law of Karma or what can its gods do to him that he can fear or long for? The ethical-vitalistic explanation of the world and its meaning and measures has for such a soul, for man at this height of his evolution no significance. He has travelled beyond the jurisdiction of the Powers of the middle air, the head of his spirit's endeavour is lifted above the dull grey-white belt that is their empire.

There can be no greater error than to suppose, misled by this absolute insistence of the ethical being, that the ethical is the single or the supreme demand of the Infinite upon us or the one law and line of the higher Karma, and that in comparison with it nothing else matters. The German thinker's idea that there is a categorical imperative laid upon man to seek after the right and good, an insistent law of right conduct, but no categorical imperative of the Oversoul compelling him to seek after the beautiful or the true, after a law of right beauty and harmony and right knowledge, is a singular misprision. It is a false deduction born of too much preoccupation with the transitional movement of man's mind and, there too, only with one side of its complex phenomena. The Indian thinkers had a wiser sight who while conceding right ethical being and conduct as a first need, still considered knowledge to be the greater ultimate demand, the indispensable condition, and much nearer to a full seeing

came that larger experience of theirs that either through an urge towards absolute knowledge or a pure impersonality of the will or an ecstasy of divine love and absolute delight, — and even through an absorbing concentration of the psychical and the vital and physical being, — the soul turns towards the Supreme and that on each part of our self and nature and consciousness there can come a call and irresistible attraction of the Divine. Indeed, an uplift of all these, an imperative of the Divine upon all the ways of our being, is the impetus of self-enlargement to a complete, an integralising possession of God, freedom and immortality, and that therefore is the highest law of our nature.

The fundamental movement of life knows nothing of an absolute ethical insistence, its only categorical imperative is the imperative of Nature herself compelling each being to affirm its life as it must or as best it can according to its own inborn self and way of expression of her, *Swabhava*. In the transitional movement of life informed by mind there is indeed a moral instinct developing into a moral sense and idea, — not complete for it leaves large ranges of conduct in which there is a lacuna or inconscience of the moral sense, a satisfied fulfilment of the egoistic desires at the expense of others, and not imperative since it is easily combated and overthrown by the earlier imposed, more naturally dominant law of the vital being. What the natural egoistic man obeys most rigorously is the collective or social rule of conduct impressed on his mind by law and tradition, *jus, mores*, and outside its conventional circle he allows himself an easy latitude. The reason generalises the idea of a moral law carrying with it an obligation man should heed and obey but may disregard at this outer or that inner peril, and it insists first and most on a moral law, an obligation of self-control, justice, righteousness, conduct, rather than a law of truth, beauty and harmony, love, mastery, because the regulation of his desires and instincts and his outward vital action is his first necessary preoccupation and he has to find his poise here and a settled and sanctioned order before he commences securely to go deeper and develop more in the direction of his inner being. It is the ideal mind that brings into this superficial moral sense, this



relative obligation, the intuition of an inner and absolute ethical imperative, and if it tends to give to ethics the first and most important and in some minds the whole place, it is still because the priority of action, long given to it in the evolution of mind on earth, moves man to apply first his idealism to action and his relations with other beings. But as there is the moral instinct in the mind seeking for good, so too there is the aesthetic instinct, the emotional and the dynamic and the instinct in man that seeks after knowledge, and the developing reason is as much concerned to evolve in all these directions as in the ethical and to find out their right law; for truth, beauty, love, strength and power are after all as necessary for the true growth of mind and of life and even for the fullness of the action as righteousness, purity and justice. Arriving on the high ideal plane these too become, no less than the ethical motive, no longer a seeking and necessity of this relative nature and importance, but a law and call to spiritual perfection, an inner and absolute divine imperative.

The higher mind of man seeks not only after good, but after truth, after knowledge. He has an intellectual as well as an ethical being and the impulse that moves it, the will to know, the thirst for truth is not less divine in its upward orientation than the will to good, not less too in its earlier workings, but even more, a necessity of the growth of our consciousness and being and the right ordering of our action, not less an imperative need laid upon man by the will of the spirit in the universe. And in the pursuit of knowledge as in the pursuit of good we see the same lines and stages of the evolution of energy. At first as its basis there is simply a life-consciousness seeking for its self, becoming more and more aware of its movements, actions and reactions, its environment, its habits, its fixed laws, gaining and enlarging and learning always to profit by self-experience. This is indeed the fundamental purpose of consciousness and use of intelligence, and intelligence with the thinking will in it is man's master faculty and supports and embraces, changes with its change and widens with its widening and increasingly perfects all the others. Mind in its first action pursues knowledge with a

certain curiosity, but turns it mainly to practical experience, to a help that enables it to fulfil better and to increase more assuredly the first uses and purposes of life. Afterwards it evolves a freer use of the intelligence, but there is still a dominant turn towards the vital purpose. And we may observe that as a power for the returns of life the world energy seems to attach a more direct importance and give more tangible results to knowledge, to the right practical workings of the intelligence than it yields to moral right. In this material world it is at least doubtful how far moral good is repaid by vital good and moral evil punished by a recoil, but it is certain that we do pay very usually for our errors, for stupidity, for ignorance of the right way of action, for any ignoring or misapplication of the laws that govern our psychical, vital and physical being; it is certain that knowledge is a power for life efficiency and success. Intelligence pays its way in the material world, guards itself against vital and physical suffering, secures its vital rewards more surely than moral right and ethical purpose.

But the higher mind of humanity is no more content with a utilitarian use of knowledge as its last word in the seeking of the intelligence than with a vitalistic and utilitarian turn and demand of the ethical being. As in the ethical, so in the intellectual being of man there emerges a necessity of knowledge which is no longer its utility for life, its need of knowing rightly in order to act rightly, to deal successfully and intelligently with the world around it, but a necessity of the soul, an imperative demand of the inner being. The pursuit of knowledge for the sake of knowledge is the true, the intrinsic dharma of the intellect and not for the sake primarily or even necessarily at all for the securing or the enlargement of the means of life and success in action. The vital kinetic man tends indeed to regard this passion of the intellect as a respectable but still rather unpractical and often trivial curiosity: as he values ethics for its social effects or for its rewards in life, so he values knowledge for its external helpfulness; science is great in his eyes because of its inventions, its increase of comforts and means and appliances: his standard in all things is vital efficiency. But in fact Nature sees and stirs from the first

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to a larger and more inward Will and is moved with a greater purpose, and all seeking for knowledge springs from a necessity of the mind, a necessity of its nature, and that means a necessity of the soul that is here in nature. Its need to know is one with its need to grow, and from the eager curiosity of the child upward to the serious stress of mind of the thinker, scholar, scientist, philosopher the fundamental purpose of Nature, the constant in it, is the same. All the time that she seems busy only with the maintenance of her works, with life, with the outward, her secret underlying purpose is other, — it is the evolution of that which is hidden within her: for if her first dynamic word is life, her greater revealing word is consciousness and the evolution of life and action only the means of the evolution of the consciousness involved in life, the imprisoned soul, the Jiva. Action is a means, but knowledge is the sign and the growth of the conscious soul is the purpose. Man's use of the intelligence for the pursuit of knowledge is therefore that which distinguishes him most from other beings and gives him his high peculiar place in the scale of existence. His passion for knowledge, first world-knowledge, but afterwards self-knowledge and that in which both meet and find their common secret, God-knowledge, is the central drift of his ideal mind and a greater imperative of his being than that of action, though later in laying its complete hold on him, greater in the wideness of its reach and greater too in its effectiveness upon action, in the returns of the world energy to his power of the truth within him.

It is in the third movement of highest mind when it is preparing to disengage itself, its pure self of will and intelligence, the radiant head of its endeavour from subjection to the vital motive that this imperative of nature, this intrinsic need that creates in the mind of man the urge towards knowledge, becomes something much greater, becomes instead more and more plainly the ideal absolute imperative of the soul emerging from the husks and sheaths of ignorance and pushing towards the truth, towards the light as the condition of its fulfilment and the very call of the Divine upon its being. The lure of an external utility ceases to be at all needed as an incentive towards

knowledge, just as the lure of a vital reward offered now or hereafter ceases on the same high level of our ascent to be needed as an incentive to virtue, and to attach importance to it under whatever specious colour is even felt to be a degradation of the disinterestedness, a fall from the high purity of the soul motive. Already even in the more outward forms of intellectual seeking something of this absoluteness begins to be felt and to reign. The scientist pursues his discoveries in order that he may know the law and truth of the process of the universe and their practical results are only a secondary motive of the enquiring mind and no motive at all to the higher scientific intelligence. The philosopher is driven from within to search for the ultimate truth of things for the one sake of Truth only and all else but to see the very face of Truth becomes to him, to his absorbing mind and soul of knowledge, secondary or of no importance; nothing can be allowed to interfere with that one imperative. And there is the tendency to the same kind of exclusiveness in the interest and the process of this absolute. The thinker is concerned to seek out and enforce the truth on himself and the world regardless of any effect it may have in disturbing the established bases of life, religion, ethics, society, regardless of any other consideration whatsoever: he must express the word of the Truth whatever its dynamic results on life. And this absolute becomes most absolute, this imperative most imperative when the inner action surpasses the strong coldness of intellectual search and becomes a fiery striving for truth experience, a luminous inner truth living, a birth into a new truth consciousness. The enamoured of light, the sage, the Yogin of knowledge, the seer, the Rishi live for knowledge and in knowledge, because it is the absolute of light and truth that they seek after and its claim on them is single and absolute.

At the same time this also is a line of the world energy, — for the world Shakti is a Shakti of consciousness and knowledge and not only a Power of force and action, — and the output of the energy of knowledge brings its results as surely as the energy of the will seeking after success in action or after right ethical conduct. But the result that it brings on this higher plane of the

seeking in mind is simply and purely the upward growth of the soul in light and truth; that and whatever happiness it brings is the one supreme reward demanded by the soul of knowledge and the darkening of the light within, the pain of the fall from truth, the pain of the imperfection of not living only by its law and wholly in the light is its one penalty of suffering. The outward rewards and the sufferings of life are small things to the higher soul of knowledge in man: even his high mind of knowledge will often face all that the world can do to afflict it, just as it is ready to make all manner of sacrifices in the pursuit and the affirmation of the truth it knows and lives for. Bruno burning in the Roman fire, the martyrs of all religions suffering and welcoming as witnesses to the light within them torture and persecution, Buddha leaving all to discover the dark cause of universal suffering in this world of the impermanence and the way of escape into the supreme Permanence, the ascetic casting away as an illusion life in the world and its activities, enjoyments, attractions with the one will to enter into the absolute truth and the supreme consciousness are witnesses to this imperative of knowledge, its extreme examples and exponents.

The intention of Nature, the spiritual justification of her ways appears at last in this turn of her energies leading the conscious soul along the lines of truth and knowledge. At first she is physical Nature building her firm field according to a base of settled truth and law but determined by a subconscious knowledge she does not yet share with her creatures. Next she is Life growing slowly self-conscious, seeking out knowledge that she may move seemingly in them along her ways and increase at once the complexity and the efficacy of her movements, but developing slowly too the consciousness that knowledge must be pursued for a higher and purer end, for truth, for the satisfaction, as the life expression and as the spiritual self-finding of the soul of knowledge. But, last, it is that soul itself growing in the truth and light, growing into the absolute truth of itself which is its perfection, that becomes the law and high end of her energies. And at each stage she gives returns according to the development of the aim and consciousness of the being. At first there is the

return of skill and effectual intelligence — and her own need explains sufficiently why she gives the rewards of life not, as the ethical mind in us would have it, to the just, not chiefly to moral good, but to the skilful and to the strong, to will and force and intelligence, — and then, more and more clearly disengaged, the return of enlightenment and the satisfaction of the mind and the soul in the conscious use and wise direction of its powers and capacities and, last of all, the one supreme return, the increase of the soul in light, the satisfaction of its perfection in knowledge, its birth into the highest consciousness and the pure fulfilment of its own innate imperative. It is that growth, a divine birth or spiritual self-exceeding its supreme reward, which for the Eastern mind has been always the highest gain, — the growth out of human ignorance into divine self-knowledge.

## APPENDIX I

# The Tangle of Karma

**O**BVIOUSLY we must leave far behind us the current theory of Karma and its shallow attempt to justify the ways of the Cosmic Spirit by forcing on them a crude identity with the summary notions of law and justice, the crude and often savagely primitive methods of reward and punishment, lure and deterrent dear to the surface human mind. There is here a more authentic and spiritual truth at the base of Nature's action and a far less mechanically calculable movement. Here is no rigid and narrow ethical law bound down to a petty human significance, no teaching of a child soul by a mixed system of blows and lollipops, no unprofitable wheel of a brutal cosmic justice automatically moved in the traces of man's ignorant judgments and earthy desires and instincts. Life and rebirth do not follow these artificial constructions, but a movement spiritual and intimate to the deepest intention of Nature. A cosmic Will and Wisdom observant of the ascending march of the soul's consciousness and experience as it emerges out of subconscious Matter and climbs to its own luminous divinity fixes the norm and constantly enlarges the lines of the law — or, let us say, since law is a too mechanical conception, — the truth of Karma.

For what we understand by law is a single immutably habitual movement or recurrence in Nature fruitful of a determined sequence of things and that sequence must be clear, precise, limited to its formula, invariable. If it is not that, if there is too much flexibility of movement, if there intervenes too embarrassing a variety or criss-cross of action and reaction, a too rich complex of forces, the narrow uncompromising incompetence of our logical intelligence finds there not law but an incertitude and a chaos. Our reason must be allowed to cut and hew and arbitrarily select its suitable circumstances, isolate its immutable

data, skeletonise or mechanise life; otherwise it stands open-mouthed at a loss unable to think with precision or act with effect in a field of subtle and indefinite measures. It must be allowed to deal with mighty Nature as it deals with human society, politics, ethics, conduct; for it can understand and do good work only where it is licensed to build and map out its own artificial laws, erect a clear, precise, rigid, infallible system and leave as little room as possible for the endless flexibility and variety and complexity that presses from the Infinite upon our mind and life. Moved by this need we endeavour to forge for our own souls and for the cosmic Spirit even such a single and inflexible law of Karma as we would ourselves have made, had the rule of the world been left to us. Not this mysterious universe would we have made, but the pattern of a rational cosmos fitted to our call for a simple definite guidance in action and for a well-marked thumb rule facile and clear to our limited intelligence. But this force we call Karma turns out to be no such precise and invariable mechanism as we hoped; it is rather a thing of many planes that changes its face and walk and very substance as it mounts from level to higher level, and on each plane even it is not one movement but an indefinite complex of many spiral movements hard enough for us to harmonise together or to find out whatever secret harmony unknown to us and incalculable these complexities are weaving out in this mighty field of the dealings of the soul with Nature.

Let us then call Karma no longer a Law, but rather the many-sided dynamic truth of all action and life, the organic movement here of the Infinite. That was what the ancient thinkers saw in it before it was cut and shredded by lesser minds and turned into an easy and misleading popular formula. Action of Karma follows and takes up many potential lines of the spirit into its multitudinous surge, many waves and streams of combining and disputing world-forces; it is the processus of the creative Infinite; it is the long and multiform way of the progression of the individual and the cosmic soul in Nature. Its complexities cannot be unravelled by our physical mind ever bound up in the superficial appearance, nor by our vital mind of desire stumbling



forward in the cloud of its own instincts and longings and rash determinations through the maze of these myriad favouring and opposing forces that surround and urge and drive and hamper us from the visible and invisible worlds. Nor can it be perfectly classified, accounted for, tied up in bundles by the precisions of our logical intelligence in its inveterate search for clear-cut dogmas. On that day only shall we perfectly decipher what is now to us Nature's obscure hieroglyph of Karma when there rises in our enlarged consciousness the supramental way of knowledge. The supramental eye can see a hundred meeting and diverging motions in one glance and envelop in the largeness of its harmonising vision of Truth all that to our minds is clash and opposition and the collision and interlocked strife of numberless contending truths and powers. Truth to the supramental sight is at once single and infinite and the complexities of its play serve to bring out with an abundant ease the rich significance of the Eternal's many-sided oneness.

The complexity of the lines of Karma is much greater than we have yet seen in the steps of thought that we have been obliged to cut in order to climb to the summits where they converge. For the convenience of the mind we have chosen to speak as if there were four quite separate planes each with its separate lines of Karma,—the physical with its fixed law and very easily perceptible return to our energies, the life plane, complex, full of doubtful rewards and dangerous rebounds, rich promise and dark menace, the mind plane with its high trenchant unattainable absolutes each in its separateness so difficult to embody and all so hard to reconcile and combine and the supramental where Nature's absolutes are reached, her relativities ordered to their place and all these lower movements delivered and harmonised because they have found luminously their inner spiritual reason for existence. That division is not false in itself, but its truth is subject to two capital provisos which at once give them a complexity not apparent in the first formula. There are above and behind our human existence the four levels but there each plane contains in itself the others, although in each these others are subject to the dominant law

of the plane, — life for instance obeys on the mental level the law of mind and turns its movements into an instrumentation of the free intelligence. Again man exists here in the body and the physical world; he is open more or less to the vast movements of a life plane and the free movements of a mental world that are far vaster and freer in their potentialities than anything that we call here life and mind, but he does not live in that free mental light or in that vast vital force. His business is to bring down and embody here as much of that greater life and greater mind as can be precipitated into matter and equipped with a form and organised in the physical formula. In proportion as he ascends he does indeed rise above the physical and vital into the higher mental lines of Karma, but he cannot leave them entirely behind him. The saint, the intellectual man, scientist, thinker or creator, the seeker after beauty, the seeker after any mental absolute is not that alone; he is also, even if less exclusively than others, the vital and physical man; subject to the urgings of the life and the body, he participates in the vital and physical motives of Karma and receives the perplexed and intertwined return of these energies. It is not intended in his birth that he shall live entirely in mind, for he is here to deal with life and Matter as well and to bring as best he can a higher law into life and Matter. And since he is not a mental being in a mental world, it is not easy and in the end, we may suspect, not possible for him to impose entirely and perfectly the law of the mental absolutes, a mental good, beauty, love, truth and power on his lower parts. He has to take this other difficult truth into account that life and Matter have absolutes of their own armed with an equal right to formulation and persistence and he has to find some light, some truth, some spiritual and supramental power that can take up these imperatives also no less than the mind's imperatives and harmonise all in a grand and integral transformation. But the difficulty is again that if he is not open to the world of free intelligence, he is still less open to the deeper and vaster spiritual and supramental levels. There can indeed be great descents of spiritual light, purity, power, love, delight into the earth consciousness in its human formula;

but man as he is now can hold only a little of these things and he can give them no adequate organisation and shape and body in his mental movements or his life-action or his physical and material consciousness and dynamis. The moment he tries to get at the absolute of the spirit, he feels himself obliged to reject body, to silence mind, and to draw back from life. It is that urgent necessity, that inability of mind and life and body to hold and answer to the spirit that is the secret of asceticism, the philosophical justification of the illusionist, the compulsion that moves the eremite and the recluse. If on the other hand he tries to spiritualise mind and life and the body he finds in the end that he has only brought down the spirit to a lower formulation that cannot give all its truth and purity and power. He has to some extent spiritualised mind, but much more has he mentalised the spiritual and to mentalise the spiritual is to falsify and obscure it or at the very least to dilute its truth, to imprison its force, to limit and alter its potentialities. He has perhaps to a much less extent spiritualised his life, but much more has he vitalised the spiritual and to vitalise the spiritual is to degrade it. He has never yet spiritualised the body, at most he has minimised the physical by a spiritual refusal and abstinence or brought down some mental and vital powers mistaken for spiritual into his physical force and physical frame. More has not been done in the human past so far as we can discover, or if anything greater was done it was a transitory gain from the superconscient and has returned again into our superconscience.

The secret reason of man's failure to rise truly beyond himself is a fundamental incapacity in the mind, the life and the body to organise the highest integral truth and power of the spirit. And this incapacity exists because mind and life and matter are in their nature depressed and imperfect powers of the Infinite that need to be transformed into something greater than themselves before they can escape from their depression and imperfection; in their very nature they are a system of partial and separated values and cannot adequately express or embody the integral and the one, a movement of many divergent and mutually non-understanding or misunderstanding lines they cannot arrive

of themselves at any but a provisional, limited and imperfect harmony and order. There is no doubt a material Infinite, a vital Infinite, a mental Infinite in which we feel a perfection, a delight, an essential harmony, an inexpressible completeness which, when we experience it, makes us disregard the discords and imperfections and obscurities we see and even perceive them as elements of the infinite perfection. In other words the Spirit, the Infinite supports these depressed values and elicits from them a certain joy of his manifestation that is complete and illimitable enough in its own manner. But there is more behind and above, there are greater more unmistakably harmonious values, greater truly perfect powers of the Spirit than mind, life and matter and these wait for their expression and only when they are expressed can we escape from this system of harmony through discords and of a perfection on the whole that subsists by imperfection in the detail. And as we open to a greater knowledge, we find that even for such harmonies, stabilities, perfections as the energies of Mind, Life and Matter can realise, they depend really not on their own delegated and inferior power which is at best a more or less ignorant instrument but on a greater deeper organising force and knowledge of which they are the inadequate derivations. That force and knowledge is the self-possessed supramental power and will and the perfect and untrammelled supramental gnosis of the Infinite. It is that which has fixed the precise measures of Matter, regulates the motive instincts and impulsions of Life, holds together the myriad seekings of Mind; but none of these things are that power and gnosis and nothing therefore mental, vital or physical is final or can even find its own integral truth and harmony nor all these together their reconciliation until they are taken up and transformed in a supramental manifestation. For this supermind or gnosis is the entire organising will and knowledge of the spiritual, it is the Truth Consciousness, the Truth Force, the organic instrumentation of divine Law, the all-seeing eye of the divine Vision, the freely selecting and generating harmony of the eternal Ananda.

## APPENDIX II

### A Clarification

*In 1935, Sri Aurobindo was asked: “In ‘Rebirth and Karma’, second chapter,<sup>1</sup> I find that it is the ‘mental being’ which is put forth from life to life — that it is the reincarnating soul. But would not the mental being be a part of the personality — the mental, nervous and physical composite — which in the popular conception is the thing that is carried over or which takes a new body in the next life? And the ‘Self’ here is quite different from the ‘mental being’. . . . Is the ‘mental being’ then the same thing as the ‘psychic being’ which is carried over to the next life?”*

The mental being spoken of by the Upanishad is not part of the mental-nervous-physical composite — it is the manomaya purusha prana-sharira-neta, the mental being leader of the life and body. It could not be so described if it were part of the composite. Nor can the composite or part of it be the Purusha, — for the composite is composed of Prakriti. It is described as manomaya by the Upanishads because the psychic being is behind the veil and man being a mental being in the life and body lives in his mind and not in his psychic, so to him the manomaya purusha is the leader of the life and body, — of the psychic behind supporting the whole he is not aware or dimly aware in his best moments. The psychic is represented in man by the Prime Minister, the manomaya, itself being a mild constitutional king; it is the manomaya to whom Prakriti refers for assent to her actions. But still the statement of the Upanishads gives only the apparent truth of the matter, valid for man and the human stage only — for in the animal it would be rather the pranamaya purusha that is the *netā*, leader of mind and body. It is one reason why I have not yet allowed the publication of

<sup>1</sup> See page 275.

Rebirth and Karma because this had to be corrected and the deeper truth put in its place. I had intended to do it later on, but had not time to finish the remaining articles.

Other Writings from the *Arya*





# The Question of the Month



# The Needed Synthesis

What is the Synthesis needed at the present time?

Undoubtedly, that of man himself. The harmony of his faculties is the condition of his peace, their mutual understanding and helpfulness the means of his perfection. At war, they distract the kingdom of his being; the victory of one at the expense of another maims his self-fulfilment.

The peculiar character of our age is the divorce that has been pronounced between reason and faith, the logical mind and the intuitive heart. At first, the declaration of war between them was attended by painful struggles, a faith disturbed or a scepticism dissatisfied. But now their divorce has created exaggerated tendencies which impoverish human life by their mutual exclusiveness, on the one side a negative and destructive critical spirit, on the other an imaginative sentiment which opposes pure instinct and a faith founded on dreams to the sterile fanaticism of the intellect.

Yet a real divorce is impossible. Science could not move a step without faith and intuition and today it is growing full of dreams. Religion could not stand for a moment if it did not support itself by the intellectual presentation, however inadequate, of profound truths. Today we see it borrowing many of its weapons from the armoury of its opponent. But a right synthesis in virtue of a higher and reconciling truth can alone dissipate their mutual misunderstandings and restore to the race its integral self-development.

The synthesis then of religious aspiration and scientific faculty, as a beginning; and in the resultant progress an integrality also of the inner existence. Love and knowledge, the delight of the Bhakta and the divine science of the knower of Brahman, have to effect their unity; and both have to recover the fullness

of Life which they tend to banish from them in the austerity of their search or the rapture of their ecstasy.

The heart and the mind are one universal Deity and neither a mind without a heart nor a heart without a mind is the human ideal. Nor is any perfection sound and real unless it is also fruitful. The integral divine harmony within, but as its result a changed earth and a nobler and happier humanity.

## “Arya” — Its Significance

What is the significance of the name, “Arya”?

The question has been put from more than one point of view. To most European readers the name figuring on our cover<sup>1</sup> is likely to be a hieroglyph which attracts or repels according to the temperament. Indians know the word, but it has lost for them the significance which it bore to their forefathers. Western Philology has converted it into a racial term, an unknown ethnological quantity on which different speculations fix different values. Now, even among the philologists, some are beginning to recognise that the word in its original use expressed not a difference of race, but a difference of culture. For in the Veda the Aryan peoples are those who had accepted a particular type of self-culture, of inward and outward practice, of ideality, of aspiration. The Aryan gods were the supraphysical powers who assisted the mortal in his struggle towards the nature of the godhead. All the highest aspirations of the early human race, its noblest religious temper, its most idealistic velleities of thought are summed up in this single vocable.

In later times, the word Arya expressed a particular ethical and social ideal, an ideal of well-governed life, candour, courtesy, nobility, straight dealing, courage, gentleness, purity, humanity, compassion, protection of the weak, liberality, observance of social duty, eagerness for knowledge, respect for the wise and learned, the social accomplishments. It was the combined ideal of the Brahmana and the Kshatriya. Everything that departed from this ideal, everything that tended towards the ignoble, mean, obscure, rude, cruel or false, was termed un-Aryan. There is no word in human speech that has a nobler history.

<sup>1</sup> आर्य — *the word “ārya” printed in Devanagari script on the cover of the review. See page 97. — Ed.*

In the early days of comparative Philology, when the scholars sought in the history of words for the prehistoric history of peoples, it was supposed that the word Arya came from the root *ar*, to plough, and that the Vedic Aryans were so called when they separated from their kin in the north-west who despised the pursuits of agriculture and remained shepherds and hunters. This ingenious speculation has little or nothing to support it. But in a sense we may accept the derivation. Whoever cultivates the field that the Supreme Spirit has made for him, his earth of plenty within and without, does not leave it barren or allow it to run to seed, but labours to exact from it its full yield, is by that effort an Aryan.

If Arya were a purely racial term, a more probable derivation would be *ar*, meaning strength or valour, from *ar*, to fight, whence we have the name of the Greek war-god Ares, *areios*, brave or warlike, perhaps even *aretē*, virtue, signifying, like the Latin *virtus*, first, physical strength and courage and then moral force and elevation. This sense of the word also we may accept. "We fight to win sublime Wisdom, therefore men call us warriors." For Wisdom implies the choice as well as the knowledge of that which is best, noblest, most luminous, most divine. Certainly, it means also the knowledge of all things and charity and reverence for all things, even the most apparently mean, ugly or dark, for the sake of the universal Deity who chooses to dwell equally in all. But, also, the law of right action is a choice, the preference of that which expresses the godhead to that which conceals it. And the choice entails a battle, a struggle. It is not easily made, it is not easily enforced.

Whoever makes that choice, whoever seeks to climb from level to level up the hill of the divine, fearing nothing, deterred by no retardation or defeat, shrinking from no vastness because it is too vast for his intelligence, no height because it is too high for his spirit, no greatness because it is too great for his force and courage, he is the Aryan, the divine fighter and victor, the noble man, *aristos*, best, the *śreṣṭha* of the Gita.

Intrinsically, in its most fundamental sense, Arya means an effort or an uprising and overcoming. The Aryan is he who

strives and overcomes all outside him and within him that stands opposed to the human advance. Self-conquest is the first law of his nature. He overcomes earth and the body and does not consent like ordinary men to their dullness, inertia, dead routine and tamasic limitations. He overcomes life and its energies and refuses to be dominated by their hungers and cravings or enslaved by their rajasic passions. He overcomes the mind and its habits, he does not live in a shell of ignorance, inherited prejudices, customary ideas, pleasant opinions, but knows how to seek and choose, to be large and flexible in intelligence even as he is firm and strong in his will. For in everything he seeks truth, in everything right, in everything height and freedom.

Self-perfection is the aim of his self-conquest. Therefore what he conquers he does not destroy, but ennobles and fulfils. He knows that the body, life and mind are given him in order to attain to something higher than they; therefore they must be transcended and overcome, their limitations denied, the absorption of their gratifications rejected. But he knows also that the Highest is something which is no nullity in the world, but increasingly expresses itself here, — a divine Will, Consciousness, Love, Beatitude which pours itself out, when found, through the terms of the lower life on the finder and on all in his environment that is capable of receiving it. Of that he is the servant, lover and seeker. When it is attained, he pours it forth in work, love, joy and knowledge upon mankind. For always the Aryan is a worker and warrior. He spares himself no labour of mind or body whether to seek the Highest or to serve it. He avoids no difficulty, he accepts no cessation from fatigue. Always he fights for the coming of that kingdom within himself and in the world.

The Aryan perfected is the Arhat. There is a transcendent Consciousness which surpasses the universe and of which all these worlds are only a side-issue and a by-play. To that consciousness he aspires and attains. There is a Consciousness which, being transcendent, is yet the universe and all that the universe contains. Into that consciousness he enlarges his limited ego; he becomes one with all beings and all inanimate objects

in a single self-awareness, love, delight, all-embracing energy. There is a consciousness which, being both transcendental and universal, yet accepts the apparent limitations of individuality for work, for various standpoints of knowledge, for the play of the Lord with His creations; for the ego is there that it may finally convert itself into a free centre of the divine work and the divine play. That consciousness too he has sufficient love, joy and knowledge to accept; he is puissant enough to effect that conversion. To embrace individuality after transcending it is the last and divine sacrifice. The perfect Arhat is he who is able to live simultaneously in all these three apparent states of existence, elevate the lower into the higher, receive the higher into the lower, so that he may represent perfectly in the symbols of the world that with which he is identified in all parts of his being, — the triple and triune Brahman.



# Meditation

What exactly is meant by meditation in Yoga? And what should be its objects?

The difficulty our correspondent finds is in an apparent conflict of authorities, as sometimes meditation is recommended in the form of a concentrated succession of thoughts on a single subject, sometimes in the exclusive concentration of the mind on a single image, word or idea, a fixed contemplation rather than meditation. The choice between these two methods and others, for there are others, depends on the object we have in view in Yoga.

The thinking mind is the one instrument we possess at present by which we can arrive at a conscious self-organisation of our internal existence. But in most men thought is a confused drift of ideas, sensations and impressions which arrange themselves as best they can under the stress of a succession of immediate interests and utilities. In accordance with the general method of Nature much is used as waste material and only a small portion selected for definite and abiding formations. And as in physical Nature, so here the whole process is governed by laws which we rather suffer than use or control.

The concentration of thought is used by the Rajayogins to gain freedom and control over the workings of mind, just as the processes of governed respiration and fixed posture are used by the Hathayogins to gain freedom and control over the workings of the body and the vital functions.

By meditation we correct the restless wandering of the mind and train it like an athlete to economise all its energies and fix them on the attainment of some desirable knowledge or self-discipline. This is done normally by men in ordinary life, but Yoga takes this higher working of Nature and carries it to its

full possibilities. It takes note of the fact that by fixing the mind luminously on a single object of thought, we awaken a response in general Consciousness which proceeds to satisfy the mind by pouring into it knowledge about that object or even reveals to us its central or its essential truth. We awaken also a response of Power which gives us in various ways an increasing mastery over the workings of that on which we meditate or enables us to create it and make it active in ourselves. Thus by fixing the mind on the idea of Divine Love, we can come to the knowledge of that principle and its workings, put ourselves into communion with it, create it in ourselves and impose its law on the heart and the senses.

In Yoga concentration is used also for another object,— to retire from the waking state, which is a limited and superficial condition of our consciousness, into the depths of our being measured by various states of Samadhi. For this process contemplation of the single object, idea or name is more powerful than the succession of concentrated thoughts. The latter, however, is capable, by bringing us into indirect but waking communion with the deeper states of being, of preparing an integral Samadhi. Its characteristic utility, however, is the luminous activity of formative thought brought under the control of the Purusha by which the rest of the consciousness is governed, filled with higher and wider ideas, changed rapidly into the mould of those ideas and so perfected. Other and greater utilities lie beyond, but they belong to a later stage of self-development.

In the Yoga of Devotion, both processes are equally used to concentrate the whole being or to saturate the whole nature with thoughts of the object of devotion, its forms, its essence, its attributes and the joys of adoration and union. Thought is then made the servant of Love, a preparer of Beatitude. In the Yoga of Knowledge meditation is similarly used for discrimination of the True from the apparent, the Self from its forms, and concentrated contemplation for communion and entry of the individual consciousness into the Brahman.

An integral Yoga would harmonise all these aims. It would have also at its disposal other processes for the utilisation of thought and the mastery of the mind.

## Different Methods of Writing

What is the origin of the different methods of writing, — from right to left, from left to right or, like the Chinese, vertically?

The question is one of great interest but impossible to solve definitely for lack of substantial data. All one can do is to speculate on the most probable and satisfying explanation.

In the first place, it is evident that these differences are no mere accident nor the result of some trivial and local cause; for they coincide with great cultural divisions of humanity belonging to prehistoric times. It is the races called Aryan from their common original culture whose script is directed from left to right; the Mesopotamian races deriving their culture from the Chaldeans proceed from right to left; the Mongolians write vertically.

In the second place no explanation is possible if we adopt the view that writing is a comparatively recent invention in the history of the human race and borrowed by all the ancient nations from a common source, — a derivation, let us say, from Egyptian hieroglyphs popularised and spread broadcast over earth by the commercial activities of Phoenician traders. We must suppose on the contrary that these differences were developed at a very early time while the great cultures were in their formation and before the dispersal of the races representing them.

Undoubtedly, the general use of writing is a late development in the history of the present cycle of civilisation. And to this retardation two causes contributed, at first, the absence of a simple and easy system and, afterwards, the absence of a simple, common, but handy and durable material. While this state of things endured, writing would not be used for daily and ordinary purposes, but only in connection with great religious ceremonies or, where culture was materially more advanced, for

the preservation of important records or of treasured and sacred knowledge.

It is, therefore, in some circumstance intimately connected with religious ideas and practices that we must look for the explanation we are seeking; and it should be a circumstance common to all these cultures, yet capable of leading to so striking a difference.

The one important circumstance common, one might almost say central, to the ideas and practices of the ancient nations was the reverence for the sun and its supreme importance in religious ceremonies. Might not the direction adopted for their writing be determined by some difference in their attitude towards the direction of the sun in its daily movement from east to west?

The difference of attitude can only be explained if we suppose that for some reason the Aryan forefathers had their faces turned southwards, the Mesopotamian northwards and the Mongolian eastwards. In that case, the sun for the Aryans would move from their left to their right, for the Mesopotamians from their right to their left, for the Mongolians straight towards them, and this difference would be represented by the movement of the hand tracing the sacred symbols on some hard flat surface, of stone or other material used for these early scripts.

But what circumstance, again, could lead to this difference? We can only think of one, — that this tendency might have been formed during the constant migration of these races from their original habitat. If we accept Mr. Tilak's theory of an Aryan migration from the arctic regions southwards towards India, Persia and the Mediterranean countries; if we can suppose that the fathers of the Mesopotamian culture came from the south northwards and that the first Mongolian movement was from Central Asia to the east, we shall have the necessary conditions. We may thus explain also the Sanskrit terms for the four directions; for entering India from the west and following this line in their early colonisation, the east would be in front of the Aryans, *pūrva*, the west behind, *paścima*, the south on their right, *dakṣiṇa*, while the name for the north, *uttara*, higher, might possibly indicate a memory of their old northern home in

that supreme point of the earth where they still placed the sacred mountain of their gods.

Necessarily, this explanation is in the highest degree conjectural and depends on pure intellectual reasoning which is an unsafe guide in the absence of solid and sufficient data. Nevertheless, it is the one positive explanation that suggests itself to us and, as a hypothesis, is well worth taking into consideration.

# Occult Knowledge and the Hindu Scriptures

Are any of the following queries touched in Sanatan Dharma books of philosophy?

- 1) The nature and formation of animal souls.
- 2) The shape, size, formations, nature and colour of subtle bodies.
- 3) The difference between the subtle bodies of saints and ordinary people and the process of developing one into the other.
- 4) The rationale of the reincarnation theory.
- 5) The nature, constituents and situation of invisible worlds.

The first three questions are of a curious interest, the last two cover a very wide field. All except the fourth belong more or less to a kind of knowledge pursued with eager interest by a growing number of inquirers, but still looked on askance by the human mind in general,—the occult sciences. The Hindu Scriptures and books of philosophy do not as a rule handle such questions very directly or in any systematic fashion. They are concerned either with the great and central questions which have always occupied the human mind, the origin and nature of the universe, the why, whence and whither of life, the highest good and the means of attaining it, the nature of man and the destiny of the human soul and its relation with the Supreme, or else they deal with the regulation of ethics, society and the conduct of daily life. Occult knowledge has been left to be acquired by occult teaching. Nevertheless it was possessed by the ancient sages and our correspondent will find a great deal of more or less scattered information on these and cognate questions in the Veda, Upanishads and Puranas. But it is doubtful whether he would obtain a satisfactory answer to his queries in the form in which he has put them. He will find for instance a long description of invisible

worlds, — invisible, that is to say, to our physical senses, — in the Vishnu Purana, but it is picturesque rather than precise. We do not think he will find much about the constituents of the worlds or the size of subtle bodies.

The form of the third question lends itself to misconception. Obviously the method for an ordinary man to develop his subtle body into that of a saint, is to cease to be an ordinary man and to become a saint. There can be no other means. The subtle body is the mental case and reflects the changes of the mentality which is housed in it or the influence exercised on it by the activities and experiences of our physical existence.

Reincarnation is much more prominent and the ideas about it more systematised in Buddhist than in Hindu books. But most of the Hindu philosophies took some kind of reincarnation for granted. It was part of the ancient teaching which had come down to them from the earliest times. They are more concerned with its causes and the method of escape from the obligation of rebirth; the thing itself was for them a fact beyond question. But the nature of reincarnation is not the same for all the old thinkers. The Upanishads, for instance, seem to teach that the physical self is dissolved at death into its principle, ether; it is the mental being that appears to be born and reborn, but in reality birth and death are merely semblances and operations of Nature, — of Aditi full of the gods, *Aditi devatāmayī*; the spirit is really one in all bodies and is neither born nor dies. Nachiketas in the Katha Upanishad raises the question whether the man as we know and conceive him really survives death and this seems to be the sense of the answer that he receives.



# The Universal Consciousness

I have encountered in my life several examples of people living or trying to live in the universal consciousness and it seemed to me that it rendered them less compassionate, less humane, less tender to the sufferings of others. It seems to me that if it is necessary not to remain in the individual consciousness when it is a question of our own sufferings, it is otherwise when it is a question of sympathising with the sufferings of others. In my opinion we feel more keenly the troubles of our brothers in humanity if we remain in the individual consciousness. But I may be mistaken and ask only to be enlightened by you on this point.

Is it certain that such people are living in the universal consciousness? or, if they are, is it certain that they are really less humane and compassionate? May they not be exercising their humanity in another fashion than the obvious and external signs of sympathy and tenderness?

If a man is really insensible to the experiences of others in the world, he is not living in the full universal consciousness. Either he has shut himself up in an experience of an individual peace and self-content, or he is absorbed by his contact with some universal principle in its abstract form without regard to its universal action, or he is living inwardly apart from the universe in touch with something transcendent of world-experience. All these states are useful to the soul in its progress, but they are not the universal consciousness.

When a man lives in the cosmic self, he necessarily embraces the life of the world and his attitude towards that world struggling upward from the egoistic state must be one of compassion, of love or of helpfulness. The Buddhists held that immersion in the infinite non-ego was in itself an immersion in a sea of infinite compassion. The liberated Sannyasin is described in the Gita

and in other Hindu books as one whose occupation is beneficence to all creatures. But this vast spirit of beneficence does not necessarily exercise itself by the outward forms of emotional sympathy or active charity. We must not bind down all natures or all states of the divine consciousness in man to the one form of helpfulness which seems to us the most attractive, the most beautiful or the most beneficent. There is a higher sympathy than that of the easily touched emotions, a greater beneficence than that of an obvious utility to particular individuals in their particular sufferings.

The egoistic consciousness passes through many stages in its emotional expansion. At first it is bound within itself, callous therefore to the experiences of others. Afterwards it is sympathetic only with those who are identified in some measure with itself, indifferent to the indifferent, malignant to the hostile. When it overcomes this respect for persons, it is ready for the reception of the altruistic principle.

But even charity and altruism are often essentially egoistic in their immediate motive. They are stirred by the discomfort of the sight of suffering to the nervous system or by the pleasurable appreciation of others' appreciation of our kindness or by the egoistic self-appreciation of our own benevolence or by the need of indulgence in sympathy. There are philanthropists who would be troubled if the poor were not always with us, for they would then have no field for their charity.

We begin to enter into the universal consciousness when, apart from all individual motive and necessity, by the mere fact of unity of our being with all others, their joy becomes our joy, their suffering our suffering. But we must not mistake this for the highest condition. After a time we are no longer overcome by any suffering, our own or others', but are merely touched and respond in helpfulness. And there is yet another state in which the subjection to suffering is impossible to us because we live in the Beatitude, but this does not deter us from love and beneficence,—any more than it is necessary for a mother to weep or be overcome by the little childish griefs and troubles of her children in order to love, understand and soothe.

Nor is detailed sympathy and alleviation of particular sufferings the only help that can be given to men. To cut down branches of a man's tree of suffering is good, but they grow again; to aid him to remove its roots is a still more divine helpfulness. The gift of joy, peace or perfection is a greater giving than the effusion of an individual benevolence and sympathy and it is the most royal outcome of unity with others in the universal consciousness.



# The News of the Month

August–September 1914



# The News of the Month

## “L'IDÉE NOUVELLE”

In close connection with the intellectual work of synthesis undertaken by this Review a Society has been founded in French India under the name of the New Idea, (L'Idée Nouvelle). Its object is to group in a common intellectual life and fraternity of sentiment those who accept the spiritual tendency and idea it represents and who aspire to realise it in their own individual and social action.

The Society has already made a beginning by grouping together young men of different castes and religions in a common ideal. All sectarian and political questions are necessarily foreign to its idea and its activities. It is on a higher plane of thought superior to external differences of race, caste, creed and opinion and in the solidarity of the spirit that unity can be realised.

The Idée Nouvelle has two rules only for its members, first, to devote some time every day to meditation and self-culture, the second, to use or create daily at least one opportunity of being helpful to others. This is, naturally, only the minimum of initial self-training necessary for those who have yet to cast the whole trend of their thought and feeling into the mould of a higher life and to enlarge the egoistic into a collective consciousness.

The Society has its headquarters at Pondicherry with a reading-room and library. A section has been founded at Karikal and others are likely to be opened at Yanaon and Mahe.

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## AN INDO-FRENCH COMMITTEE IN PARIS

An Indo-French Committee (Comité Franco-Hindou) has been founded in Paris and M. Pierre Loti has been invited to become its Honorary President. The Committee proposes to develop intellectual, scientific, artistic and economic relations between France and India. It is a good deal for one Committee! Let us at least hope that it will be able to carry out the first item of its programme. No doubt, everything that brings men and nations nearer to each other helps in the formation of a general intelligence more synthetic and comprehensive than the old divided mind of humanity; but it is above all in the realm of thought and by the exchange of ideas and the deeper experiences that the best fruits are likely to be borne. Every new tie, especially every tie of the spirit between Europe and India, between the West of today and the East of yesterday and tomorrow, is a welcome sign of the times for those who know how much the world's progress depends on their union.

M. Pierre Loti, in a letter addressed to the President of the Committee, thus expresses his veneration for India: —

“And now I salute thee with awe, with veneration and wonder, ancient India of whom I am the adept, the India of the highest splendours of Art and Philosophy, the India also of monstrous mysteries that terrify, India our cradle, India where all that has been produced since her beginnings was ever impetuous and colossal. May thy awakening astonish that Occident, decadent, mean, daily dwindling, slayer of nations, slayer of gods, slayer of souls, which yet bows down still, ancient India, before the prodigies of thy primordial conceptions.”

We cannot but subscribe to the sentiment, if not to all the phrases, of this fine piece of literature.

But what are these monstrous and terrifying mysteries of which M. Loti speaks? Terror is no longer in the mode, the age of mysteries is over and the age of monstrosities has never been. Ignorance is the only monstrosity.

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## MR. TILAK'S BOOK ON THE GITA

In an interview with the representative of an Indian journal Mr. Bal Gangadhar Tilak has given a brief account of the work on the Gita which he has been writing during his six years' internment in Mandalay. He begins:—

“You know that the Gita is regarded generally as a book inculcating quietistic Vedanta or Bhakti. For myself, I have always regarded it as a work expounding the principles of human conduct from a Vedantic ethical point of view, that is, reconciling the philosophy of active life with the philosophy of knowledge and the philosophy of devotion to God.”

Mr. Tilak then expresses his belief that before Shankara and Ramanuja, the great Southern philosophers, wrote their commentaries, the Gita was understood in its natural sense, but from that time forward artificial and sectarian interpretations prevailed and the element of Karmayoga in the Song Celestial was disregarded. His book is intended to restore this natural sense and central idea of the famous Scripture. It will contain a word for word rendering preceded by an introduction of some fifteen chapters in which he discusses the Vedanta and the ethics of the Gita and compares the ethical philosophy of Western thinkers with that of the Indian schools of thought. Although the book will be published first in Marathi, we are promised a version also in English.

We look forward with interest to a work which, proceeding from a scholar of such eminence and so acute an intellect, one especially whose name carries weight with all Hindus, must be considered an event of no small importance in Indian religious thought. We welcome it all the more because it seems to be conceived in the same free and synthetic spirit as animates this Review. It is a fresh sign of the tendency towards an increasingly liberal movement of religious opinion in orthodox India, the dissolution of the old habit of unquestioning deference to great authorities and the consequent rediscovery of the true catholic sense of the ancient Scriptures.

Those who have studied the Gita with a free mind, still more

those who have tried to live it, cannot doubt for a moment the justice of Mr. Tilak's point of view. But is not the tendency of the Gita towards a supra-ethical rather than an ethical activity? Ethics is, usually, the standardising of the highest current social ideals of conduct; the Song Celestial, while recognising their importance, seeks to fix the principle of action deeper in the centre of a man's soul and points us ultimately to the government of our outward life by the divine self within.

August 1914

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#### THE WAR

The "Arya", a Review of pure Philosophy, has no direct concern with political passions and interests and their results. But neither can it ignore the enormous convulsion which is at present in progress, nor at such a time can it affect to deal only with the pettier happenings of the intellectual world as if men were not dying in thousands daily, the existence of great empires threatened and the fate of the world hanging in the balance. The War has its aspects, of supreme importance to a synthetic Philosophy, with which we would have the right to deal. But now is not the hour, now in this moment of supreme tension and wide-spread agony. Therefore, for the time, we suppress this heading in our Review and shall replace it by brief notes on subjects of philosophical interest, whether general or of the day. Meanwhile, with the rest of the world, we await in silence the predestined result.

September 1914

# South Indian Vaishnava Poetry



# Andal

## The Vaishnava Poetess

**P**REOCCUPIED from the earliest times with divine knowledge and religious aspiration the Indian mind has turned all forms of human life and emotion and all the phenomena of the universe into symbols and means by which the embodied soul may strive after and grasp the Supreme. Indian devotion has especially seized upon the most intimate human relations and made them stepping-stones to the supra-human. God the Guru, God the Master, God the Friend, God the Mother, God the Child, God the Self, each of these experiences — for to us they are more than merely ideas, — it has carried to its extreme possibilities. But none of them has it pursued, embraced, sung with a more exultant passion of intimate realisation than the yearning for God the Lover, God the Beloved. It would seem as if this passionate human symbol were the natural culminating-point for the mounting flame of the soul's devotion: for it is found wherever that devotion has entered into the most secret shrine of the inner temple. We meet it in Islamic poetry; certain experiences of the Christian mystics repeat the forms and images with which we are familiar in the East, but usually with a certain timorousness foreign to the Eastern temperament. For the devotee who has once had this intense experience it is that which admits to the most profound and hidden mystery of the universe; for him the heart has the key of the last secret.

The work of a great Bengali poet has recently reintroduced this idea to the European mind, which has so much lost the memory of its old religious traditions as to welcome and wonder at it as a novel form of mystic self-expression. On the contrary it is ancient enough, like all things natural and eternal in the human soul. In Bengal a whole period of national poetry has

been dominated by this single strain and it has inspired a religion and a philosophy. And in the Vaishnavism of the far South, in the songs of the Tamil Alvars we find it again in another form, giving a powerful and original turn to the images of our old classic poetry; for there it has been sung out by the rapt heart of a woman to the Heart of the Universe.

The Tamil word, Alvar, means one who has drowned, lost himself in the sea of the divine being. Among these canonised saints of Southern Vaishnavism ranks Vishnuchitta, Yogin and poet, of Villipattan in the land of the Pandyas. He is termed *Perialwar*, the great Alvar. A tradition, which we need not believe, places him in the ninety-eighth year of the Kaliyuga. But these divine singers are ancient enough, since they precede the great saint and philosopher Ramanuja whose personality and teaching were the last flower of the long-growing Vaishnava tradition. Since his time Southern Vaishnavism has been a fixed creed and a system rather than a creator of new spiritual greatnesses.

The poetess Andal was the foster-daughter of Vishnuchitta, found by him, it is said, a new-born child under the sacred tulsi-plant. We know little of Andal except what we can gather from a few legends, some of them richly beautiful and symbolic. Most of Vishnuchitta's poems have the infancy and boyhood of Krishna for their subject. Andal, brought up in that atmosphere, cast into the mould of her life what her foster-father had sung in inspired hymns. Her own poetry — we may suppose that she passed early into the Light towards which she yearned, for it is small in bulk, — is entirely occupied with her passion for the divine Being. It is said that she went through a symbolic marriage with Sri Ranganatha, Vishnu in his temple at Srirangam, and disappeared into the image of her Lord. This tradition probably conceals some actual fact, for Andal's marriage with the Lord is still celebrated annually with considerable pomp and ceremony.

# Nammalwar

## The Supreme Vaishnava Saint and Poet

**M**ARAN, renowned as Nammalwar (“Our Saint”) among the Vaishnavas and the greatest of their saints and poets, was born in a small town called Kuruhur, in the southernmost region of the Tamil country — Tiru-nelveli (Tinnevely). His father, Kari, was a petty prince who paid tribute to the Pandyan King of Madura. We have no means of ascertaining the date of the Alwar’s birth, as the traditional account is untrustworthy and full of inconsistencies. We are told that the infant was mute for several years after his birth. Nammalwar renounced the world early in life and spent his time singing and meditating on God under the shade of a tamarind tree by the side of the village temple.

It was under this tree that he was first seen by his disciple, the Alwar Madhura-kavi, — for the latter also is numbered among the great Twelve, “lost in the sea of Divine Love”. Tradition says that while Madhura-kavi was wandering in North India as a pilgrim, one night a strange light appeared to him in the sky and travelled towards the South. Doubtful at first what significance this phenomenon might have for him, its repetition during three consecutive nights convinced him that it was a divine summons and where this luminous sign led he must follow. Night after night he journeyed southwards till the guiding light came to Kuruhur and there disappeared. Learning of Nammalwar’s spiritual greatness he thought that it was to him that the light had been leading him. But when he came to him, he found him absorbed in deep meditation with his eyes fast closed and although he waited for hours the Samadhi did not break until he took up a large stone and struck it against the ground violently. At the noise Nammalwar opened his eyes, but still remained

silent. Madhura-kavi then put to him the following enigmatical question, "If the little one (the soul) is born into the dead thing (Matter)<sup>1</sup> what will the little one eat and where will the little one lie?" to which Nammalwar replied in an equally enigmatic style, "That will it eat and there will it lie."

Subsequently Nammalwar permitted his disciple to live with him and it was Madhura-kavi who wrote down his songs as they were composed. Nammalwar died in his thirty-fifth year, but he has achieved so great a reputation that the Vaishnavas account him an incarnation of Vishnu himself, while others are only the mace, discus, conch etc. of the Deity.

From the philosophical and spiritual point of view, his poetry ranks among the highest in Tamil literature. But in point of literary excellence, there is a great inequality; for while some songs touch the level of the loftiest world-poets, others, even though rich in rhythm and expression, fall much below the poet's capacity. In his great work known as the *Tiru-vay-moli* (the Sacred Utterance) which contains more than a thousand stanzas, he has touched all the phases of the life divine and given expression to all forms of spiritual experience. The pure and passionless Reason, the direct perception in the high solar realm of Truth itself, the ecstatic and sometimes poignant love that leaps into being at the vision of the "Beauty of God's face", the final Triumph where unity is achieved and "I and my Father are one" — all these are uttered in his simple and flowing lines with a strength that is full of tenderness and truth.

The lines which we translate below are a fair specimen of the great Alwar's poetry;<sup>2</sup> but it has suffered considerably in the translation, — indeed the genius of the Tamil tongue hardly permits of an effective rendering, so utterly divergent is it from that of the English language.

<sup>1</sup> The form of the question reminds one of Epictetus' definition of man, "Thou art a little soul carrying about a corpse." Some of our readers may be familiar with Swinburne's adaptation of the saying, "A little soul for a little bears up the corpse which is man."

<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo's translation of "Nammalwar's Hymn of the Golden Age" appears in *Translations, volume 5 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO.* — Ed.



Arguments  
to  
*The Life Divine*



## Chapter XIX

# Life

### ARGUMENT

Mind as a final action of Supermind is a creative and not only a perceptive power; in fact, material force itself being only a Will in things working darkly as the expression of subconscious Mind, Mind is the immediate creator of the material universe. But the real creator is Supermind; for wherever there is Mind conscious or subconscious, there must be Supermind regulating from behind the veil its activities and educing from them their truth of inevitable result. Not a mental Intelligence, but Supermind is the creator of the universe. — Mind manifests itself in the form of Force to which we give the name of Life, and Life in Matter is an energy or power in dynamic movement which builds up forms, energises, maintains, disintegrates and recreates; death itself is only a process of life. It is one all-pervading Life or constant movement of dynamic energy which creates all these forms of the material universe and is not destroyed in the destruction of its forms. — The distinction between animal and plant life is unreal and that between the animate and the inanimate unessential. Plant-life has been found to be identical in organisation with animal-life and, although the organisation may differ, life is also present in the metal, the earth, the atom. This life-force pervades the universe and is present in every form of it and there is a constant interchange of its energies which creates the symptoms and characteristics of vitality recognised by us; but even where these are suspended, Life is present and only withdraws by a process of dispersion which replaces the process of continual reconstitution of the form. The presence of these symptoms and characteristics is not the essential nor is their absence a sign of the

*Sri Aurobindo prefixed brief summaries or "arguments" to fifteen chapters of The Life Divine when they were first published in the Arya in 1916 and 1917. He omitted these summaries when he revised the book in 1939–40.*

absence of Life-force. Even where we do not detect Life, it exists. — Conscious nervous sensation accompanies life in the animal, but much of the action of nervous or life energy is subconscious; in the plant, as in many actions of man, the nervous sensation is present but the mentality of the sensation is subconscious. In the very atom there is a subconscious will and desire which must also be present in all atomic aggregates because they are present in the Force which constitutes the atom. That force is Chit-shakti, force of conscious being, variously represented in various forms of life. — Life is an energising of conscious being in substance of Matter, which on one side is constantly supplying the material of physical formation and on the other labouring to release mind and sense from their subconscious sleep in Matter. It is therefore the dynamic link between Mind and Matter. To create form and evolve consciousness out of its imprisonment in form is the sense of the omnipresent Life in the universe.

## Chapter XX

# Death, Desire and Incapacity

### ARGUMENT

Life is the same whatever its workings and its terms need not be limited to those proper to physical existence. Life is a final operation of divine conscious-force for individualising existence; it is the energy-aspect of Mind when that creates and relates itself to form of substance: it has all the universal conscious-force of existence behind it and is not a separate entity or movement. Life in us must become conscious of this divine Force behind it in order to become divine. — Life, at first darkened, ignorant, divided and helplessly subject, seeks as it develops to become master and enjoyer, to grow in Power; but until it escapes from the bonds of individuality it must be subject to its three badges of limitation, Death, Desire and Incapacity. — The nature of physical life imposes death because all life exists by a mutual devouring and struggle and Life itself feeds upon the forms it creates; but the fundamental justification of Death is the necessity of a constant variation of experience in succession of Time, the soul seeking thus to enlarge itself and move towards the realisation of its own infinity. — The process of Death results inevitably from the division of substance; life's attempt to aggrandise its being thus divided and limited translates itself into the hunger that devours. This hunger is the crude form of Desire, and Desire is the necessary lever for self-affirmation; but eventually Desire has to grow out of the law of Hunger into the law of Love. — Desire itself is the result of the limitation of capacity which is the consequence of divided Life working as the energy of ignorant mind, all-force being only possible to all-knowledge. Therefore growth by struggle is the third Law of Life. This strife again has to divinise itself and become the clasp of Love. Until then Death, Desire and Strife are and must be the triple mask of the divine Life-principle in its cosmic self-affirmation.

## Chapter XXI

# The Ascent of Life

### ARGUMENT

The development of Life starts from an original status of division, subconscious will and inert subjection to mechanical forces. This is the type of material existence. — The terms of the second status which we recognise as vitality, are death, hunger and conscious desire, sense of limited capacity and the struggle for survival and mastery. This is the basis of the Darwinian conception of Life, the struggle for life and the survival of the fittest. But this struggle involves a third status whose preparation is marked by the emergence of the conscious principle of love. — The third status contradicts the others in appearance, but really fulfils them. Life begins with division and aggregation based on the refusal of the atom, the first principle of ego and individuality to accept death and fusion by dissolution. This gives a firm basis for the creation of aggregate forms to be occupied by vital and mental individualities. In the next stage we have the general principle of death and dissolution by which the individual form fuses itself in its elements into other lives. This principle of constant fusion and interchange is the law of Life and extends into vital and mental existence as well as the physical. The two principles of individual persistence and mutual fusion have to be harmonised and this can only be done by the emergence and full development of mind which alone is subtle enough to persist in individual consciousness beyond all fusion and dissolution of forms. Here the union and harmony of the persistent individual and the persistent aggregate life become possible. — Love is the power by which this union and harmony are worked out; for love exists by the persistence of the individual and his conscious acceptance of the necessity and desire of interchange and self-giving. Its growth means the emergence of Mind imposing its law on the material existence, for Mind does not need to devour

in order to possess and grow; it increases by giving and confirms itself by fusion with others. — Subconscious will in the atom becomes hunger and conscious desire in the vital being. Love is the transfiguration of desire, a desire of possessing others but also of self-giving; at first subject to hunger and the desire of possession it reveals its own true law by an equal or greater joy in self-giving. — The inert subjection of the will in the atom to the not-self becomes in the vital being the sense of limited capacity and the struggle for possession and mastery. In the third status the not-self is recognised as a greater self and subjection to its law and need freely accepted; at the same time the individual by making the aggregate life and all it has to give his own, fulfils his impulse of possession. This is the Mind's reconciliation of the two conflicting principles which we find at the root of all existence. — But the true and perfect reconciliation can only come by passing beyond Mind and founding all the operations of life on the essential freedom and unity of the spirit.

## Chapter XXII

# The Problem of Life

### ARGUMENT

Life being a divided movement of consciousness although really an undivided force becomes a clash of opposing truths each striving to fulfil itself. Mind has to solve the thousand and one problems resulting but in Life itself, not merely in thought. The difficulty lies in its ignorance of itself and the world. Man knows only the surface of his own being and does not know the universality of the Force of which he is a part; therefore he can master neither himself nor the world. He has to know and solve the problem or else give place to some higher evolutionary being. — The poise of Life is determined by the relation of the Force to the Consciousness which drives it. Accordingly we have, besides the Infinite Existence, first the life of material Nature ruled by the infallible Inconscient; secondly the life of conscious being in material Nature emerging out of the Inconscient, fallible, bewildered, only half-potent, which is our own; and thirdly the life of the real Man to which we are moving where Consciousness and Force are fulfilled and in harmony and the One at unison with the many. That life will be founded on the awareness of one Consciousness in many minds, one Force working in many lives, one Delight of being in many hearts and bodies. — Man's difficulties; first, he only knows and governs a part of himself, the greater part of himself is subconscious and it is this greater cosmic part that really governs his surface being. This is what is meant by his being governed by his Nature and by the Lord seated within through the Maya or apparent denial of Sachchidananda by Himself. It is only by becoming one with the Lord that man can be master of himself, but this union must be in the Divine Maya, in the superconscient and not only or chiefly in this lower Maya of the mental existence. — Secondly, he is separated by his individuality from the universal and does not



know his fellow-beings. He must be not only in sympathy with them, but arrive at a conscious unity with all and this conscious unity exists only in what is now superconscient to us. — Thirdly, Life is at war with body, Mind at war with the life and the body, each trying to subject the others to its own law. Only the supramental can find the law of immortal harmony which shall reconcile this discord of our mortality. Each of these principles has besides a soul in it which seeks a self-fulfilment beyond what the present force of life, mind or body can give. There is a conflict between opposing instincts of the body, opposing desires and impulses of the life, opposing ideas of the mind. The principle of unity is above in the supermind. — Man as he develops becomes acutely aware of all these discords and seeks a reconciliation with himself and with his fellow-beings. This can only come by the perfection of his own existence through the principle in himself to which he has not yet attained and by embracing consciously the life of others in his own through a universal consciousness which must also be gained by the superconscient becoming conscient in us through an upward evolution.

## Chapter XXIII

# The Double Soul in Man

### ARGUMENT

The ascent of Life is in its nature the ascent of the divine Delight in things from its dumb conception in Matter to its luminous consummation in Spirit. Like the other original divine principles, this Delight also must be represented in us by a cosmic principle corresponding to it in the apparent existence. It is the soul or psychic being. — As there is a subliminal luminous mind behind our surface mind, a subliminal life behind our mortal life, a subliminal wider corporeality behind our gross body, so we have a double soul, the superficial desire-soul and the true psychic entity. — The superficial in us is the small and egoistic, the subliminal is in touch with the universal. So our subliminal or true psychic being is open to the universal delight of things, the superficial desire-soul is shut off from it. It feels the outward touches of things, not their essence and therefore not their *rasa* or true touch; and because it cannot reach the universal world-soul, it cannot find its own true soul which is one with the world-soul. — The desire-soul returns the triple response of pleasure, pain and indifference, but the psychic being behind it has the equal delight of all of its experiences; it compels the desire-soul to more and more experience and to a change of its values. By bringing this soul to the surface we can overcome the duality of pleasure and pain, as is actually done in certain directions of experience by the artist, Nature-lover, God-lover, etc. each in his own fashion. But the difficulty is to do it in the desire-soul at its centre where it comes into contact with practical living; for here the human mind shrinks from the application of the principle of equality. — To bring this subliminal soul to the surface is not enough; for it is open passively to the world-soul but cannot possess the world. Those who thus arrive, become close to the universal delight, but not masters of life. For there

are two principles of order and mastery, one false, the ego-sense, the other true, the Lord who is one in the many. By merely suppressing the ego-sense in the impersonal delight we gain the centreless Impersonal and are fulfilled in our static being but not in our active being. We must therefore gain the other centre in the Supermind by which we shall consciously possess and not merely undergo the delight of the One in His universal existence.

## Chapter XXIV

### Matter

#### ARGUMENT

Life and Mind are in the fact of evolution conditioned by the body and therefore by the principle of Matter. The body is the chief difficulty in the way of a spiritual transformation of life; it has therefore been regarded by spiritual aspiration as an enemy and the escape from the material existence has been made an indispensable condition of the final emancipation. — The quarrel begins with the struggle between Life and Matter with the apparent defeat of life in death as its constant circumstance; it continues with the struggle of the Mind against the life and the body and culminates with the struggle of the spirit against all its instruments; but the right end and solution of these discords is not an escape and a severance but the complete victory of the higher over the lower. — We have to examine the problem of the reality of Matter. Our present experience of Matter does not give us its truth; for Matter is only an appearance of the Reality, a form of its force-action presented to the principle of sense in the universal consciousness. As Mind is only a final dividing action of Supermind and Life of Conscious-Force working in the conditions of the Ignorance, so Matter as we know it is only the final form taken by conscious-being as the result of that same working. Mind precipitating itself into Life to create form gives to the universal principle of Being the appearance of material substance instead of pure substance, that is to say, of substance offering itself to the contact of mind as a stable thing or object. This contact of mind with its object is Sense. — In the divine Mind there is a movement which presents to the divine Knower the forms of Himself as objects to His knowledge and this would create a division between the Knower and the object of knowledge if there were not at the same time, inevitably, another movement by which He feels the object as

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Himself. This movement, in the divided state of existence created by dividing Mind, is represented to us as the contact of sense which becomes a basis for contact through the thought-mind by which we return towards unity. — Since the action of Mind is to divide infinitely the one infinite existence, Matter, the result of that action, becomes in its apparent nature an infinite atomic division and atomic aggregation of infinite substance. But its reality is one and indivisible, even as is the reality of Life and of Mind. Matter is Sachchidananda represented to His own mental experience as a formal basis of objective knowledge, action and delight.

## Chapter XXV

# The Knot of Matter

### ARGUMENT

Spirit and Matter are the two ends of a unity, Spirit the soul and reality of Matter, Matter the form and body of Spirit. There is an ascending series of substance and Spirit at the summit is itself pure substance of being. Brahman is the sole material as well as the sole cause of the universe and Matter also is Brahman; it is, like Life, Mind and Supermind, a mode of the eternal Sachchidananda. — Still, practically, Matter seems to be cut off from Spirit and even its opposite and the material existence incompatible therefore with the spiritual. Matter is the culmination of the principle of Ignorance in which Consciousness has lost and forgotten itself and the self-luminous Spirit is represented by a brute inconscient Force in whose mere action there appears to be no self-knowledge, mind or heart. In this huge no-mind Mind emerges and has to labour besieged and limited by the universal Ignorance and in this heartless Inconscience a heart has manifested which has to aspire opposed and corrupted by the brutality of material Force. This is the form-absorbed Consciousness returning progressively to itself, but obliged to work under the conditions of Matter, that is to say, always bound and limited in its results. — For Matter is the opposite of the Spirit's freedom and mastery, the culmination of bondage; it is a huge force of movement, but of inertly driven movement subject to a law of which it has no conscience nor initiative but mechanically obeys. It opposes therefore to the attempt of Life to impose itself and freely utilise and the attempt of Mind to impose itself and know and freely guide the constant opposition of its inertia; it yields reluctantly to a certain extent, but brings always in the end a definite denial, limit and obstruction. For this reason knowledge, power, love, etc. are always pursued, accompanied and hedged in by their opposites. — For Matter is the culmination

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of the principle of division and struggle. It can only unify by an association which carries with it the possibility of dissociation and an assimilation which devours. Therefore Life and Mind in Matter working under this law of division and struggle, that is to say, of death, desire and limitation, aggregation and subsequent dissociation, labour without any finality or certainty of assured progress. — But especially the divisions of Matter bring in the law of pain. Ignorance and Inertia would not be necessarily a cause of pain if the Mind and Life were not aware of an infinite Consciousness, Light and Power in which they live but are prevented from participating by the Ignorance and Inertia of Matter or were not stirred to possess this wideness partly or wholly. Man especially, because he is most self-conscious, develops this awareness to a high degree, nor can he be permanently satisfied with increase of power or knowledge within the limits of the material world, for that is also limited and inconclusive and, being aware of and impelled by the infinite within and around him, he cannot escape the necessity of seeking to know and possess it. This progression of the conscious being out of the Inconscient to the infinite Consciousness might be a happy outflowering but for the principle of rigid division and imprisonment of each divided being in his own ego which imposes the law of struggle, the dualities of attraction and repulsion, pleasure and pain, effort and failure, action and reaction, satisfaction and dissatisfaction. All this is the denial of Ananda and implies, if the negation be insuperable, the futility of existence; for if in this existence the satisfaction sought by the Infinite in the finite cannot be found, then ultimately it must be abandoned as an error and a failure. — This is the basis of the pessimist theory of material existence which supposes Matter to be the form and Mind the cause of the universe and both of these to be eternally subject to limitation and ignorance. But if on the contrary it is immortal and infinite Spirit which has veiled itself in Matter and is emerging, the development of a liberated supramental being who shall impose in Mind, Life and Matter a higher law than that of limitation and division, is the inevitable conclusion from the nature of cosmic existence. There is no reason why such a

being should not liberate and make divine the physical existence as well as the mind and life, unless our present view of Matter represents the sole possible relation here between sense and its object in which case, indeed, fulfilment must be sought only in worlds beyond. But there are other states even of Matter and an ascending series of the gradations of substance, and their higher law is possible to the material being because it is there in it already latent and potential.



## Chapter XXVI

# The Ascending Series of Substance

### ARGUMENT

The materiality of Matter consists in a concentration of the density of substance and its resistance to the conscious-force of which through sense it becomes the object. An ascending scale of substance from Matter to Spirit must mean a diminution of resistance, division and bondage and an increasing subtlety, flexibility, power of assimilation, interchange, transmutation, unification. — There is such an ascending scale from the dense to the subtle even in material substance and beyond the subtlest material essence we have grades of other substance corresponding to the series of Matter, Life, Mind, Supermind and Spirit. Each, that is to say, is the basis of a world or other kind of existence in which these higher principles successively dominate the others and fulfil themselves with their aid. In each therefore there is an ever wider range of being, consciousness and force ascending from the inconscience of material substance to the infinite self-consciousness of spiritual. But all these principles are interconnected. Matter contains all of them and evolves them out of itself in obedience to the constant pressure of the higher worlds, an evolution which must continue until they are able to express themselves fully in the material principle. — Man is the fit instrument for this fulfilment. He has other bodies besides the physical in which he can become conscious and so enter into the supraphysical grades of substance and impose their law upon his material existence. Therefore his complete perfection is through the ascent to supermind and the conquest of the physical also by the supramental substance so that he will be able to command a diviner physical life and conquer death in a divine body.

## Chapter XXVII

# The Sevenfold Chord of Being

### ARGUMENT

There are, therefore, seven or else eight principles of being and the four which constitute human existence are a refraction of the four which constitute divine existence, but in inverted order. The Divine descends from pure existence to Supermind to cast itself into cosmic existence; the creature ascends from Matter to Mind towards the Divine and meets it where mind and Supermind meet with a veil between them. By the rending of the veil each of the four divine human principles can find its transfigured self in its divine equivalent. This transfiguration is the only possible positive goal of the creative evolution. — The presence of the seven principles is essential to all cosmic being. For cosmic being cannot exist except as the All-existence figuring itself in its self-conception as Time and Space, nor can this figuration take place except by an infinite Force which being of the nature of an all-determining and all-apprehending Will must repose on the action of an all-comprehending infinite Consciousness. Nor could the result be a cosmos but for a power of infinite knowledge and will determining out of the infinity in each figure of things their law, form and course through a self-limitation by Idea proceeding from a boundless liberty within. That power of Knowledge-Will, that Idea is the fourth name of the Divine; it is the Supermind or supreme Gnosis. — The lower trilogy is also necessary in some form however different it may be from our experience of Life, Mind and Matter. For there must be a subordinate power and action of Supermind measuring, creating fixed standpoints of mutual view and interaction in the universal self-diffusion as between an infinite number of centres of the one Consciousness; and such a power would be what we mean by Mind. So too, Mind once given, Life, which is the working of will and energy and conscious dynamis of being dependent on

such fixed standpoints of interaction, must accompany it and substance with differentiation of form must also be present. — It follows that in every cosmic arrangement the seven principles must be existent, either manifested in simultaneous apparent action or else all apparently involved in one of them which then becomes the initial principle, but all secretly at work and bound to evolve into manifestation. Therefore out of initial Matter latent Life and Mind have emerged as apparent Life and Mind, and latent Supermind and the hidden Spirit must emerge as apparent Supermind and the triune glory of Sachchidananda.

## Chapter XXVIII

# The Knowledge and the Ignorance

### ARGUMENT

The seven principles of existence are, then, one in their reality, inseparable in their sevenfold action. They create the harmony of the universe and there is no essential reason why this should not be a complete harmony free from the element of discord, division and limitation. — The Vedic seers believed in such a creation and held its formation in man — called immortality — to be the object of man's Godward effort. But this is difficult for the human mind to accept, except in a beyond, because here the Inconscient seems to be all and the conscient soul an accident or an alien unable fully to realise itself. Here Ignorance seems to be the law. — It is true that here we start from the Inconscient and are governed by the Ignorance; we must therefore examine this power of Consciousness and determine its operation and origin, — not accepting the refusal of some philosophies to consider the question because it is insoluble; and first we must fix what we mean by the Ignorance. — In the Veda the Ignorance is the non-perceiving of the essential unity which is beyond mind and of the essence and self-law of things in their original unity and actual universality; it is a false knowledge based on division of the undivided, insistence on the fragmentary and little and rejection of the vast and complete view of things; it is the undivine Maya. — The Vedantic distinction of Vidya and Avidya made the opposition more trenchant, Vidya being the knowledge of unity, Avidya the knowledge of multiplicity, but the knowledge of both was held to be necessary for the Truth and the Immortality; the Ignorance was not a mere falsehood and seeing of unreality. The One really becomes

*Chapter XXVIII of The Life Divine as published in the Arya was extensively revised in 1939–40, becoming the present Book Two, Part I, Chapter VII.*

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the Many. — Later, the opposition was supposed to be rigid and irreconcilable, the world unreal, a super-imposition of name and form on featureless Unity by Mind, the Ignorance an absolute nescience of the Truth. — This we reject, because such dialectical oppositions, flawed at their source, represent no actual reality of existence as a whole; there is no irreconcilable opposition of dual principles, Ignorance creative, Knowledge destructive of world-existence, but an essential unity. As pain is an effect of the universal Delight produced in the recipient by incapacity, as incapacity is a disposition of the universal Will-force, so ignorance is a particular action of the universal Knowledge. — Consciousness, which is Power, takes three poises; its plenitude of the divine knowledge invariable in unity and multiplicity and beyond; its dwelling upon apparent oppositions, the extreme being the superficial appearance of complete nescience in the Inconscient; and a mediary term or compromise between the two which is a superficial and partial emergence of self-conscious knowledge, our own egoistic ignorance or false-knowledge. The exact relations between these three have to be determined.

## Chapter XXIX

# Memory, Self-Consciousness and the Ignorance

### ARGUMENT

Memory is believed by some schools to be the constituent of our continuous personality; but memory is only a mechanism, a device, a substitute for direct consciousness. The mind is directly conscious of existence in the present, holds existence in the past by its substitute memory, infers its future existence from this direct present self-consciousness and the memory of its continuity in the past. — This sense of self-conscious existence it extends into the idea of eternity, but the only eternity the mind really seizes is a continuous succession of moments of being in eternal Time; of this eternity it possesses only the present moment, a limited portion of the past held fragmentarily and nothing at all of the future, while it is unable to know any timeless eternity of conscious being, any real eternal Self. Therefore the nature of our Mind is an Ignorance seizing at knowledge by successive action in the moments of Time. — If mind is all, then we must remain for ever in this Ignorance which is not absolute nescience, but an ineffectual and fragmentary seizing at knowledge. But there are really two powers of our conscious being, Ignorance of the mind, Knowledge beyond mind, simultaneously existing, either separately in an eternal dualism or, as is really the fact, as superior and inferior, sovereign and dependent states of the same consciousness, by which the Knower sees his timeless being and the action of Time in that self through the Knowledge while he sees himself in Time and travelling in the succession of its moments by the Ignorance. For this reason the Upanishad declares that Brahman can really be known only by knowing

*Chapter XXIX of The Life Divine as published in the Arya was revised in 1939–40, becoming the present Book Two, Part I, Chapter VIII.*

him as both the Knowledge and the Ignorance and so only can one arrive at the status of immortality. — Ignorance is therefore the consciousness of being in the succession of Time, and it is so called because, actually self-divided by the moments of Time, the field of space and the forms of the multiplicity, it cannot know either eternal Being or the World, either the transcendent or the universal reality. Its knowledge is partly true, partly false, because it ignores the essence and sees only fugitive parts of the phenomenon. — It is through self-consciousness that the mind can arrive most readily at the eternal Reality; the rest of its means of knowledge are, like memory, devices and substitutes for direct consciousness. It is easy therefore to regard the knowledge of the self within as real and the rest as not-self and illusion. But the distinction is illusory and self-absorption in the stable self within is only one state of consciousness like self-dispersion in thought and memory and will. The real self is the Eternal who is capable simultaneously of the mobility in Time and the immobility basing Time. All object of knowledge is that real and eternal self whether seen in essence and stability or in phenomenon and instability of Time. — The Ignorance is a means by which it is rendered into values of knowledge and action, Time being a sort of bank on which we draw for valuation and action in the present, with a realised store in the account of the past and an unrealised infinite deposit to be taken from the future so as to be made valuable for Time-experience and valid for Time-activity. But, behind, all is known and ready for use according to the will of the Self in its dealings with Time and Space and Causality.

## Chapter XXX

# Memory, Ego and Self-Experience

### ARGUMENT

Consciousness of Self has two different aspects, the awareness of a stable, immutable and timeless Self beyond mentality and the awareness of a various self-experience in the process of Time and the field of Space. There is a constant shifting of the point of Time, a constant though less obvious changing of the habitation and the environment and in these a constant subjective modifying of the experience of the states of personality and the experience of the environment.—Memory here is an indispensable factor in the linking of past and present experience and is necessary to secure its continuity and coherence. Still Memory is not all; it is only a mediator between the mind-sense and the coordinating mind.—It is the mind-sense which shapes the object of experience as a wave of the conscious being into a movement of emotion, vitality, sensation or thought-perception. There is also an act of mental observation and valuation of this wave in the sense-mind. There is also the subject or mental being who thus modifies his mental becoming and observes and values it by an act of mind. It is when the mental being stands back from the mental becoming and even from the mental act that he begins to perceive himself as something different from all becoming, mutable in that, but immutable beyond it. He is not two selves, one that is and one that becomes, but one immutable who sees changing phenomena of his being, the immutability evident to a direct and pure self-consciousness, the mutable evident indirectly through a conditional and secondary mental consciousness.—It is the character of this indirect mental consciousness which can experience only by succession of Time that brings in the device

*Chapter XXX of The Life Divine as published in the Arya was revised in 1939–40, becoming the present Book Two, Part I, Chapter IX.*



of Memory. Memory is not the essence of mental experience of becoming, nor of its continuity, nor of the recurrence of the same experience or the same cause and effect in Time. These are circumstances of the movement of the stuff of conscious being and conscious force of being, a movement which is really undivided though only seen by mind in artificial divisions. Memory is a device by which the experiences of the mind-sense are linked together and these artificial divisions in Time bridged over so that the coordinating mind and will may better and better use the material of experience and impose order on its conscious knowledge of its self and its conscious action in its environment. It is an aid to our ignorance of self developing, in the evolution of mind out of inconscient force, knowledge of self by experience. — The ego-sense is a mental device by which the mental being develops towards knowledge of that which experiences as well as of that which is experienced. Memory only tells us that the successive experiences have happened in the same field of conscious being; it is the coordinating and distinguishing mind which tells us that it is the same mental being who experiences. — Mind-substance suffers the changes of becoming; mind-sense experiences them; memory assures the mind-sense of its continuity of experience; the coordinating mind of knowledge relates them together and relates them also to the ego or being who, it says, is the same in past and present whether he forgets or remembers. In the animal this may be little more than a coordination in the sense-mind by a discernment largely involved in the sensations and the memories, but in man it becomes a coordinating reason superior to sense and memory. It is by this development that the ego-sense becomes distinct and disengaged from its aids. — But it is itself only a device and basis for self-development of true self-knowledge; it is a stage in the evolution from nescience to partial knowledge and from partial knowledge to true self-consciousness. The evolving Mind becomes by it aware of an “I” that becomes and then of a self superior to the becoming. It may fix on either to the rejection of the other, but in doing so it acts on an imperfect self-knowledge. It is as yet ignorant of all even of the individual

becoming which is not superficial; ignorant of the universal becoming except indirectly, as a not-self exterior to it. Its attempt to find the true relation of the self and its becomings is based therefore on an Ignorance; that can only be truly known by an attempt to live out the relation in an integral development of self-knowledge. That is the natural goal of our evolution which is the movement of the Ignorance to exceed itself and arrive at the conscious Truth of its being and conscious knowledge of all being.

## Chapter XXXI

# The Boundaries of the Ignorance

### ARGUMENT

We know only a part even of our superficial life and conscious becoming, fastening only on a little of our experience of self and things, memorising less, using still less for knowledge and action. What we reject, Nature stores and uses in our development, for the most part by her subconscious action. Our waking self is only a superimposition, a visible summit; the great body of our being is submerged or subliminal. — The subliminal self perceives, remembers, understands, uses all that we fail to perceive, remember or use. It provides all the material of our surface being which is only a selection from its wider existence and activity. It is only the physical and vital part of our existence which is, properly speaking, subconscious; the subliminal self is the true mental being and in relation to our waking mind it is rather secretly circumconscient; for it envelops as well as supports. Of all this larger part of our being we are ignorant. — We are ignorant also of the superconscient, that which we ordinarily call spirit or oversoul; yet this we find to be our highest and widest self, Sachchidananda creating and governing all that we are and become by His divine Maya. We are ignorant of the subliminal sea of our being which casts up the wave of our superficial existence; we are ignorant also of the superconscient ether of our being which constitutes, contains, overroofs and governs both the subliminal sea and the superficial wave. — We are ignorant of ourselves in Time, for we know only a part of the present life we are living; yet that exists only by all our past of which we are ignorant and its trend is determined by all our future of which we are still more ignorant. For our superconscient Self is eternal

*Chapter XXXI of The Life Divine as published in the Arya was extensively revised in 1939–40, becoming the present Book Two, Part I, Chapter XI.*

in its being and Time is only one of its modes, our subliminal is eternal in its becoming and Time is its infinite field of experience. — We are equally ignorant of the world, holding it to be not-self, ignorant of ourselves in Space; for the world is one Self developing the movement of its conscious force in its self-conceptive extension as Space. We confine ourselves in our consciousness to a single knot of the one indivisible Matter, a single eddy of the one indivisible Life, a single station of the one indivisible Mind, a single soul-manifestation of the one indivisible Spirit. Yet it is only by knowing the One that this individual mind, life, body, soul can know itself or its action. — Thus ignorance of self is the nature of our mind, but an ignorance full of the impulse towards self-possession and self-knowledge. A many-sided Ignorance striving to become an all-embracing Knowledge is the definition of man the mental being.

## Chapter XXXII

# The Integral Knowledge

### ARGUMENT

The ignorance in which we live is a sevenfold self-ignorance; an ignorance of the Absolute and knowledge only of the relations of being and becoming; an ignorance of our timeless and immutable self-existence and knowledge only of the cosmic becoming; an ignorance of our cosmic self and knowledge only of our egoistic existence; an ignorance of our eternal becoming in Time and knowledge only of the one life present to our memory; an ignorance of our larger and complex being in the world and knowledge only of our surface waking existence; an ignorance of the higher principles of our existence and knowledge only of the life, mind and body; an ignorance therefore of the right law and enjoyment of living and a knowledge only of the confused strife of the dualities. — Our conception of the Ignorance determines our conception of the knowledge and by that of the aim of our existence, which coincides with the ideal of the earlier Vedic thought. — We confirm by it our rejection of the extreme views which hold the absolute Non-existence or absolute Existence to be alone true and the relative world of being and becoming an ignorance to be renounced. There is the unmanifest Absolute and there is its manifestation; to fulfil the manifestation and live in the sense of it as the Absolute manifesting himself is the Knowledge. — We reject the view that regards the One, Infinite, Formless, Spirit, Superconscient as the sole truth and the opposite terms as unreal or eventually false and vain values to be abandoned. We accept it and them also not as alternates, but as simultaneous values of the manifestation and their union in our consciousness and right use of their relations as the knowledge.

*Chapter XXXII of The Life Divine as published in the Arya was extensively revised and enlarged in 1939–40, becoming the present Book Two, Part II, Chapter XV, "Reality and the Integral Knowledge".*

— We reject equally the views that affirm a pluralistic Becoming without Being or see Mind, Life or Matter as the original principle, and we reject the limitation to our apparent Nature which is their practical conclusion. Becoming as the working out of the energies of Being, Mind, Life and Matter as inferior terms of the higher divine Nature to be illumined, uplifted, transformed by the higher terms is our view of the knowledge.

— We reject also intermediate theories like that which makes God and cosmos one, — perceiving as we do that cosmos exists in God who exceeds it and not God by the cosmos, — or like that which seeks to abandon the earth and find fulfilment only in heavens where the Many enjoy the presence of the One, — perceiving, as we do, that there is a higher knowledge which leads to complete identity and that divine life based upon it need not be confined to heavens beyond, but may embrace the earth also. — Ignorance is an initial state of knowledge, the essence of which is to create a sense of limitation and division; it is this which we have to overcome and transcend without creating an opposite self-limitation. The integral aim of our existence can only be the possession and power and joy of our integral self-knowledge.

## Chapter XXXIII

# The Progress to Knowledge

### ARGUMENT

To rise out of the sevenfold Ignorance into the integral Knowledge is the progress of man's being; it is to grow in all his complex existence and consciousness into the full possession and enjoyment of his whole and his true being. — He starts with three categories, himself, Nature or cosmos and God, and though he tries to deny any two of these in order to affirm the third only, he cannot really succeed; for he is neither separate nor sufficient to himself, cosmos also is not sufficient to itself, but points always to an infinite, one and absolute behind it, and to affirm the Absolute to the exclusion of these two others leaves man unsatisfied and cosmos unexplained. — In affirming himself man has first to put himself in front and act and feel as if God and the world existed for him and were less important to him than himself; this is his egoistic phase necessary to disengage his individuality out of Nature and as if against her and to bring it out into force and capacity. He has to affirm himself in the Ignorance before he can perfect himself in the Knowledge. Afterwards he has to seek for himself in Nature and God and others, but it is still himself that he seeks to know and possess and his own perfection or salvation which is his motive. — In the progressive enlargement of his knowledge he gets rid of his sevenfold ignorance; of the temporal by growing into his eternal being with its pre-existence and subsequent existence in Time; of the psychological by enlarging his self-knowing beyond the waking self into the subconscious and superconscious; of the constitutional by realising his spiritual being and its categories; of the cosmic by discovering his timeless self; of the egoistic by

*Chapter XXXIII of The Life Divine as published in the Arya was extensively revised in 1939–40, becoming the present Book Two, Part II, Chapter XVII, "The Progress to Knowledge — God, Man and Nature".*

realising the cosmic consciousness; of the original by opening to the Absolute of whom Self, individual and Nature are so many faces. — At the same time he realises the unity of himself and Nature in the first three steps of knowledge, of himself and God in the others; of himself with all beings relatively in Nature and absolutely in God; of God and Nature because it is the Self who has become all these beings and the nature of the Lord which is apparent in cosmos. — The knowledge of Nature leads him to the same results as soon as he goes beyond Matter and Life to Mind; for he discovers a subconscious and superconscious, a soul in Matter, and perceives a supernature in which he realises the Self, the Spirit, the Absolute. — In the quest of God he begins by seeing him through Nature and himself, crudely and obscurely at first, till he finds more luminously the one Truth behind all religions; for all seize on the Divine in many aspects and their variety is necessary in order that man should come to know God entirely. — When he arrives at the unity of his knowledge of God, man and Nature, he has the complete knowledge, the sense and goal of humanity's progress and labour and the sure foundation of all perfections and all harmonies.



## APPENDIX I

### Chapter I

# The Human Aspiration

## ARGUMENT IN BRIEF

A search for God, (for a spiritual or divine Reality within oneself and behind, above or within the phenomenon of existence,) for perfection, for freedom, for an absolute Truth and Bliss, for immortality has been the persistent preoccupation of the highest human thought since the earliest times. This preoccupation seems to be a perpetual element in man's nature; for it survives the longest periods of scepticism.

This aspiration is in contradiction with his present existence and normal experience of himself which is that of a mortal being full of imperfections, ego-ridden, largely animal, subject to transitory joys and much pain and suffering, bound by mechanical necessity. But the direct contradiction between what he is and what he seeks to be need not be a final argument against the validity of his aspiration. For such contradictions are part of Nature's general method; the aspiration may be realisable either by a revolutionary individual effort or by an evolutionary general progress.

The problems of existence are problems of harmony. Discords and disorder of the materials, oppositions, demand a solution by accordance, by the discovery of a harmony. Thus the accordance of an inanimation and inertia in a containing Matter and the active indwelling stress of Life is Nature's first problem, its initial difficulty; its perfect solution would be immortality in a material body. The accordance of an unconscious Matter and

*In December 1940 Sri Aurobindo wrote an "Argument in Brief" and a shorter summary of Book One, Chapter I of the revised Life Divine. Around the same time he drafted a summary of Book One, Chapter XXIV. These summaries, similar to the "arguments" published in the Arya, are reproduced here from his manuscripts.*

an unconscious or half-conscious Life with a conscious Mind and Will is her second problem; the possession of a direct and perfect instrumentation of knowledge in a living body would be its complete solution. The accordance of a mortal mind, life and body with a secretly indwelling immortal spirit is the final problem; the spiritualisation or divinisation of mind, life and body, a divine life, would be the perfect solution. The search after these solutions by the human being is not irrational; it is rather the very effort and striving of Nature within him.

Life appears in Matter, Mind in Life because they are already there. Matter is a form of veiled Life; Life a form of veiled Mind; Mind may well be a form and veil of a higher power, the Spirit, which is supramental in its nature. Nature has implanted an impulse towards life in certain forms of Matter and evolves it there, a similar evolutionary impulse towards mind in certain forms of life, an impulse in certain minds towards what is beyond Mind, towards the unveiling of Spirit, the evolution of a spiritual being. Each impulse justifies itself by the creation of the necessary organs and faculties.

There is therefore no reason to put a limit to evolutionary possibility by taking our present organisation or status of existence as final. The animal is a laboratory in which Nature has worked out man; man may very well be a laboratory in which she wills to work out superman, to disclose the soul as a divine being, to evolve a divine nature.

#### SHORTER SYNOPSIS OF THE CHAPTER

Man's highest aspiration has been always a seeking for God, perfection, freedom, an absolute truth and bliss, immortality.

A direct contradiction exists between this aspiration and his present state of mortality, imperfection, bondage to mechanical necessity, ego and animality.

This contradiction between what he is now and what he seeks to be is not a final argument against his aspiration. Contradictions are part of Nature's method; the aspiration may be achievable by individual effort or by an evolutionary progress.

The problems of existence are problems of harmony.

The accordance of an active life-principle with the inanimate Matter containing it is Nature's first evolutionary problem; its complete solution would be immortality in the body.

The accordance of conscious mind with an unconscious matter and half-conscious life is her second evolutionary problem; a direct and perfect instrumentation of knowledge in a living body would be its complete solution.

The accordance of immortal spirit with a mortal mind, life and body is her third and final problem; its complete solution would be the evolution of a divine being and a divine nature.

As Nature has implanted the impulse to life in matter, to mind in life, so she has implanted in mind the impulse towards the evolution of what is beyond mind, spiritual, supramental. Each impulse justifies itself by the creation of the necessary organs and faculties.

The animal is a laboratory in which she has worked out man; man may be a laboratory in which she wills to work out the superman, the being of a divine nature.

## APPENDIX II

### Chapter XXIV

## Matter

Life then is not an inexplicable dream or impossible evil; it is a force of being, a pulsation of the divine All-existence capable of divine outflowing. But there still remains the problem of Matter.

This problem is of a fundamental importance. For all here, mind, life, body, depend on Matter, evolve out of it; Matter is their support, conditions their emergence and action. Man rose out of the animal by developing a body capable of a progressive mental illumination; to rise beyond himself to a divine manhood or supermanhood he must develop a physical instrumentation or body capable of a still greater supramental illumination.

But the body seems to be from the beginning the soul's great obstacle. Its opposition is a compelling cause of asceticism and of the condemnation put by most religions upon Matter.

The conflict begins with Life and increases as higher principles evolve. There is a discord between Life and Matter ending in death, the defeat of Life; but really there is a constant compromise, Life using Matter and even death for its own continuance: Mind struggles with the limitations of life and matter, and there is a half victory, a constant compromise. When spirit awakens to itself it finds itself hampered by mind, life and body, oppressed by its instruments. The solution proposed is to carry this discord to its logical conclusion. Life rejects body, mind rejects life, the spirit abandons its instruments and departs from world into its own infinity.

This solution is not a solution, it is only the individual's escape from the problem; the labour of the world and its discord continues. But if Sachchidananda is the world's indwelling reality, discord cannot be the fundamental principle. The real

solution must be a true and complete conquest and taking up of body by life, of life by mind, of all three by the spirit.

This can seem possible only when we have found the real truth of Matter as of Soul, Mind and Life. As Life is found to be force of Spirit, and Mind to be consciousness of Spirit, so Matter is found to be body and substance of Spirit.

Matter as a thing in itself is non-existent. What we see of it is a form or forms created by a particular relation between our sense-experience and the all-existence in which we move. Science discovers that Matter resolves into forms of Energy; Philosophy discovers that Matter is only a substantial appearance and the one reality is Spirit. But what brings about this phenomenon of forms of Energy or this appearance of Spirit?

There should be only states of spirit or currents of Energy; whence these phenomena of forms? It can be attributed to an action of consciousness, an intervention of Mind, — sense-mind creates the forms it seems to perceive; Thought works upon them and gives them their values. But the embodied individual thought or sense which thus conceives or perceives is itself a creation and cannot be the creator. There must be a universal Mind not known to us because subconscious to us in the form of the universe, superconscious to us in the spirit. Such a universal Mind may have determined and constructed the relations of form with form and the rhythms of the universe.<sup>1</sup>

But how is this done?

Existence in its activity is a Consciousness-Force which presents the workings of its Force to its consciousness as forms of being. The Force of Existence of the one sole conscious being can by its workings produce no results that are not forms of that Being. Matter as substance of forms must then be itself a form or substance of spirit; it can be nothing else.

The appearances it assumes, the phenomena of Matter are the result of the dividing action of Mind. Consciousness

<sup>1</sup> The embodied individual mind is a surface fragmentation of the universal consciousness repeating by its perceptions this creation and so by a sort of reflection creating for its own thought and sense its own perceptual and conceptual universe.

descending from Supermind appears as Mind, an inferior power of Supermind, Force appears as Life, an energy instrumental to Mind; Mind descending into Life becomes by involution in it subconscious and gives to the material workings of Life the appearance of inconscience. The inconscience, inertia, atomic disaggregation of Matter is due to this involved action of Mind. The creative life-energy of Mind involved in Matter and there turned into what appears to us as an inconscient material Energy gives to form or substance of being on which it works the aspect of inconscience. Mind here is a first action of Supermind in the involutory descent working in these conditions, separated from the Supermind, Life is a similar action of Force of Being, Matter the form taken by Being itself as a result of this working.

The fragmentation of Matter is due to the dividing action of Mind which does not abrogate the essential unity of Existence. The object is to push the principle of Multiplicity in the One to its extreme which can only be done by division and separateness of consciousness and of form. For an awareness of things from separate centres of consciousness is meant to be the basic experience of existence here. The movement of Mind the dividing principle makes the knower regard the forms of his own universal being as other than he, but it has also a movement of union which heals this phenomenal division. In divine Mind the two actions are simultaneous and prevent the division from being real. In ignorant or involved Mind the division seems real; the movement towards union becomes a contact of consciousness and primarily a contact of sense. Material substance is the form in which Mind acting through sense contacts being as object, — as a general object, a mass of objective existence and a multitude of objects in that mass of being.

## Part Four

From the *Standard Bearer*

1920





## Ourselves

THE “STANDARD BEARER” comes into the field today entrusted with a special mission and as the bearer of an ideal and a message. The standard it carries is not that of an outward battle, but the ensign of a spiritual ideal and of a life that must be its expression and the growing body of its reality. Our endeavour shall be to prepare the paths and to accomplish the beginning of a great and high change which we believe to be and aim at making the future of the race and the future of India. Our ideal is a new birth of humanity into the spirit; our life must be a spiritually inspired effort to create a body of action for that great new birth and creation.

A spiritual ideal has always been the characteristic idea and aspiration of India. But the progress of Time and the need of humanity demand a new orientation and another form of that ideal. The old forms and methods are no longer sufficient for the purpose of the Time-Spirit. India can no longer fulfil herself on lines that are too narrow for the great steps she has to take in the future. Nor is ours the spirituality of a life that is aged and world-weary and burdened with the sense of the illusion and miserable inutility of all God’s mighty creation. Our ideal is not the spirituality that withdraws from life but the conquest of life by the power of the spirit. It is to accept the world as an effort of manifestation of the Divine, but also to transform humanity by a greater effort of manifestation than has yet been accomplished, one in which the veil between man and God shall be removed, the divine manhood of which we are capable shall come to birth and our life shall be remoulded in the truth and light and power of the spirit. It is to make of all our action a sacrifice to the master of our action and an expression of the greater self in man and of all life a Yoga.

The West has made the growth of the intellectual, emotional,

vital and material being of man its ideal, but it has left aside the greater possibilities of his spiritual existence. Its highest standards are ideals of progress, of liberty, equality and fraternity, of reason and science, of efficiency of all kinds, of a better political, social and economical state, of the unity and earthly happiness of the race. These are great endeavours, but experiment after experiment has shown that they cannot be realised in their truth by the power of the idea and the sentiment alone: their real truth and practice can only be founded in the spirit. The West has put its faith in its science and machinery and it is being destroyed by its science and crushed under its mechanical burden. It has not understood that a spiritual change is necessary for the accomplishment of its ideals. The East has the secret of that spiritual change, but it has too long turned its eyes away from the earth. The time has now come to heal the division and to unite life and the spirit.

This secret too has been possessed but not sufficiently practised by India. It is summarised in the rule of the Gita, *yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi*. Its principle is to do all actions in Yoga, in union with God, on the foundation of the highest self and through the rule of all our members by the power of the spirit. And this we believe to be not only possible for man but the true solution of all his problems and difficulties. This then is the message we shall constantly utter and this the ideal that we shall put before the young and rising India, a spiritual life that shall take up all human activities and avail to transfigure the world for the great age that is coming. India, she that has carried in herself from of old the secret, can alone lead the way in this great transformation of which the present *sandhyā* of the old *yuga* is the forerunner. This must be her mission and service to humanity,— as she discovered the inner spiritual life for the individual, so now to discover for the race its integral collective expression and found for mankind its new spiritual and communal order.

Our first object shall be to declare this ideal, insist on the spiritual change as the first necessity and group together all who accept it and are ready to strive sincerely to fulfil it: our second shall be to build up not only an individual but a communal life

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on this principle. An outer activity as well as an inner change is needed and it must be at once a spiritual, cultural, educational, social and economical action. Its scope, too, will be at once individual and communal, regional and national, and eventually a work not only for the nation but for the whole human people. The immediate object of this action will be a new creation, a spiritual education and culture, an enlarged social spirit founded not on division but on unity, on the perfect growth and freedom of the individual, but also on his unity with others and his dedication to a larger self in the people and in humanity, and the beginning of an endeavour towards the solution of the economic problem founded not on any Western model but on the communal principle native to India.

Our call is to young India. It is the young who must be the builders of the new world, — not those who accept the competitive individualism, the capitalism or the materialistic communism of the West as India's future ideal, nor those who are enslaved to old religious formulas and cannot believe in the acceptance and transformation of life by the spirit, but all who are free in mind and heart to accept a completer truth and labour for a greater ideal. They must be men who will dedicate themselves not to the past or the present but to the future. They will need to consecrate their lives to an exceeding of their lower self, to the realisation of God in themselves and in all human beings and to a whole-minded and indefatigable labour for the nation and for humanity. This ideal can be as yet only a little seed and the life that embodies it a small nucleus, but it is our fixed hope that the seed will grow into a great tree and the nucleus be the heart of an ever extending formation. It is with a confident trust in the spirit that inspires us that we take our place among the standard-bearers of the new humanity that is struggling to be born amidst the chaos of a world in dissolution and of the future India, the greater India of the rebirth that is to rejuvenate the mighty outworn body of the ancient Mother.



Part Five

From the *Bulletin*  
*of Physical Education*

1949–1950



The Supramental Manifestation  
upon Earth





## Message

**I** TAKE the opportunity of the publication of this issue of the “Bulletin d’Éducation Physique” of the Ashram to give my blessings to the Journal and the Association — J.S.A.S.A. (Jeunesse Sportive de l’Ashram de Sri Aurobindo). In doing so I would like to dwell for a while on the deeper *raison d’être* of such Associations and especially the need and utility for the nation of a widespread organisation of them and such sports or physical exercises as are practised here. In their more superficial aspect they appear merely as games and amusements which people take up for entertainment or as a field for the outlet of the body’s energy and natural instinct of activity or for a means of the development and maintenance of the health and strength of the body; but they are or can be much more than that: they are also fields for the development of habits, capacities and qualities which are greatly needed and of the utmost service to a people in war or in peace, and in its political and social activities, in most indeed of the provinces of a combined human endeavour. It is to this which we may call the national aspect of the subject that I would wish to give especial prominence.

In our own time these sports, games and athletics have assumed a place and command a general interest such as was seen only in earlier times in countries like Greece, Greece where all sides of human activity were equally developed and the gymnasium, chariot-racing and other sports and athletics had the same importance on the physical side as on the mental side the Arts and poetry and the drama, and were especially stimulated and attended to by the civic authorities of the city state. It was Greece that made an institution of the Olympiad and the recent re-establishment of the Olympiad as an international institution is a significant sign of the revival of the ancient spirit. This kind of interest has spread to a certain extent to our own country and

India has begun to take a place in international contests such as the Olympiad. The newly founded State in liberated India is also beginning to be interested in developing all sides of the life of the nation and is likely to take an active part and a habit of direction in fields which were formerly left to private initiative. It is taking up, for instance, the question of the foundation and preservation of health and physical fitness in the nation and the spreading of a general recognition of its importance. It is in this connection that the encouragement of sports and associations for athletics and all activities of this kind would be an incalculable assistance. A generalisation of the habit of taking part in such exercises in childhood and youth and early manhood would help greatly towards the creation of a physically fit and energetic people.

But of a higher import than the foundation, however necessary, of health, strength and fitness of the body is the development of discipline and morale and sound and strong character towards which these activities can help. There are many sports which are of the utmost value towards this end, because they help to form and even necessitate the qualities of courage, hardihood, energetic action and initiative or call for skill, steadiness of will or rapid decision and action, the perception of what is to be done in an emergency and dexterity in doing it. One development of the utmost value is the awakening of the essential and instinctive body consciousness which can see and do what is necessary without any indication from mental thought and which is equivalent in the body to swift insight in the mind and spontaneous and rapid decision in the will. One may add the formation of a capacity for harmonious and right movements of the body, especially in a combined action, economical of physical effort and discouraging waste of energy, which result from such exercises as marches or drill and which displace the loose and straggling, the inharmonious or disorderly or wasteful movements common to the untrained individual body. Another invaluable result of these activities is the growth of what has been called the sporting spirit. That includes good humour and tolerance and consideration for all, a right attitude and friendliness to competitors and rivals, self-control and scrupulous observance

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of the laws of the game, fair play and avoidance of the use of foul means, an equal acceptance of victory or defeat without bad humour, resentment or ill-will towards successful competitors, loyal acceptance of the decisions of the appointed judge, umpire or referee. These qualities have their value for life in general and not only for sport, but the help that sport can give to their development is direct and invaluable. If they could be made more common not only in the life of the individual but in the national life and in the international where at the present day the opposite tendencies have become too rampant, existence in this troubled world of ours would be smoother and might open to a greater chance of concord and amity of which it stands very much in need. More important still is the custom of discipline, obedience, order, habit of team-work, which certain games necessitate. For without them success is uncertain or impossible. Innumerable are the activities in life, especially in national life, in which leadership and obedience to leadership in combined action are necessary for success, victory in combat or fulfilment of a purpose. The role of the leader, the captain, the power and skill of his leadership, his ability to command the confidence and ready obedience of his followers is of the utmost importance in all kinds of combined action or enterprise; but few can develop these things without having learned themselves to obey and to act as one mind or as one body with others. This strictness of training, this habit of discipline and obedience is not inconsistent with individual freedom; it is often the necessary condition for its right use, just as order is not inconsistent with liberty but rather the condition for the right use of liberty and even for its preservation and survival. In all kinds of concerted action this rule is indispensable: orchestration becomes necessary and there could be no success for an orchestra in which individual musicians played according to their own fancy and refused to follow the indications of the conductor. In spiritual things also the same rule holds; a sadhak who disregarded the guidance of the Guru and preferred the untrained inspirations of the novice could hardly escape the stumbles or even the disasters which so often lie thick around the path to spiritual realisation.

I need not enumerate the other benefits which can be drawn from the training that sports can give or dwell on their use in the national life; what I have said is sufficient. At any rate, in schools like ours and in universities sports have now a recognised and indispensable place; for even a highest and completest education of the mind is not enough without the education of the body. Where the qualities I have enumerated are absent or insufficiently present, a strong individual will or a national will may build them up, but the aid given by sports to their development is direct and in no way negligible. This would be a sufficient reason for the attention given to them in our Ashram, though there are others which I need not mention here. I am concerned here with their importance and the necessity of the qualities they create or stimulate for our national life. The nation which possesses them in the highest degree is likely to be the strongest for victory, success and greatness, but also for the contribution it can make towards the bringing about of unity and a more harmonious world order towards which we look as our hope for humanity's future.

## Perfection of the Body

**T**HE PERFECTION of the body, as great a perfection as we can bring about by the means at our disposal, must be the ultimate aim of physical culture. Perfection is the true aim of all culture, the spiritual and psychic, the mental, the vital and it must be the aim of our physical culture also. If our seeking is for a total perfection of the being, the physical part of it cannot be left aside; for the body is the material basis, the body is the instrument which we have to use. *Śarīraṁ khalu dharmasādhanam*, says the old Sanskrit adage, — the body is the means of fulfilment of dharma, and dharma means every ideal which we can propose to ourselves and the law of its working out and its action. A total perfection is the ultimate aim which we set before us, for our ideal is the Divine Life which we wish to create here, the life of the Spirit fulfilled on earth, life accomplishing its own spiritual transformation even here on earth in the conditions of the material universe. That cannot be unless the body too undergoes a transformation, unless its action and functioning attain to a supreme capacity and the perfection which is possible to it or which can be made possible.

I have already indicated in a previous message a relative perfection of the physical consciousness in the body and of the mind, the life, the character which it houses as, no less than an awakening and development of the body's own native capacities, a desirable outcome of the exercises and practices of the physical culture to which we have commenced to give in this Ashram a special attention and scope. A development of the physical consciousness must always be a considerable part of our aim, but for that the right development of the body itself is an essential element; health, strength, fitness are the first needs, but the physical frame itself must be the best possible. A divine life in a material world implies necessarily a union of the two ends

of existence, the spiritual summit and the material base. The soul with the basis of its life established in Matter ascends to the heights of the Spirit but does not cast away its base, it joins the heights and the depths together. The Spirit descends into Matter and the material world with all its lights and glories and powers and with them fills and transforms life in the material world so that it becomes more and more divine. The transformation is not a change into something purely subtle and spiritual to which Matter is in its nature repugnant and by which it is felt as an obstacle or as a shackle binding the Spirit; it takes up Matter as a form of the Spirit though now a form which conceals and turns it into a revealing instrument, it does not cast away the energies of Matter, its capacities, its methods; it brings out their hidden possibilities, uplifts, sublimates, discloses their innate divinity. The divine life will reject nothing that is capable of divinisation; all is to be seized, exalted, made utterly perfect. The mind now still ignorant, though struggling towards knowledge, has to rise towards and into the supramental light and truth and bring it down so that it shall suffuse our thinking and perception and insight and all our means of knowing till they become radiant with the highest truth in their inmost and outermost movements. Our life, still full of obscurity and confusion and occupied with so many dull and lower aims, must feel all its urges and instincts exalted and irradiated and become a glorious counterpart of the supramental super-life above. The physical consciousness and physical being, the body itself must reach a perfection in all that it is and does which now we can hardly conceive. It may even in the end be suffused with a light and beauty and bliss from the Beyond and the life divine assume a body divine.

But first the evolution of the nature must have reached a point at which it can meet the Spirit direct, feel the aspiration towards the spiritual change and open itself to the workings of the Power which shall transform it. A supreme perfection, a total perfection is possible only by a transformation of our lower or human nature, a transformation of the mind into a thing of light, our life into a thing of power, an instrument of right action, right use for all its forces, of a happy elevation of its being

lifting it beyond its present comparatively narrow potentiality for a self-fulfilling force of action and joy of life. There must be equally a transforming change of the body by a conversion of its action, its functioning, its capacities as an instrument beyond the limitations by which it is clogged and hampered even in its greatest present human attainment. In the totality of the change we have to achieve, human means and forces too have to be taken up, not dropped but used and magnified to their utmost possibility as part of the new life. Such a sublimation of our present human powers of mind and life into elements of a divine life on earth can be conceived without much difficulty; but in what figure shall we conceive the perfection of the body?

In the past the body has been regarded by spiritual seekers rather as an obstacle, as something to be overcome and discarded than as an instrument of spiritual perfection and a field of the spiritual change. It has been condemned as a grossness of Matter, as an insuperable impediment and the limitations of the body as something unchangeable making transformation impossible. This is because the human body even at its best seems only to be driven by an energy of life which has its own limits and is debased in its smaller physical activities by much that is petty or coarse or evil; the body in itself is burdened with the inertia and inconstancy of Matter, only partly awake and, although quickened and animated by a nervous activity, subconscious in the fundamental action of its constituent cells and tissues and their secret workings. Even in its fullest strength and force and greatest glory of beauty, it is still a flower of the material Inconstancy; the inconstancy is the soil from which it has grown and at every point opposes a narrow boundary to the extension of its powers and to any effort of radical self-exceeding. But if a divine life is possible on earth, then this self-exceeding must also be possible.

In the pursuit of perfection we can start at either end of our range of being and we have then to use, initially at least, the means and processes proper to our choice. In Yoga the process is spiritual and psychic; even its vital and physical processes are given a spiritual or psychic turn and raised to a higher motion

than belongs properly to the ordinary life and Matter, as for instance in the Hathayogic and Rajayogic use of the breathing or the use of Asana. Ordinarily a previous preparation of the mind and life and body is necessary to make them fit for the reception of the spiritual energy and the organisation of psychic forces and methods, but this too is given a special turn proper to the Yoga. On the other hand, if we start in any field at the lower end we have to employ the means and processes which Life and Matter offer to us and respect the conditions and what we may call the technique imposed by the vital and the material energy. We may extend the activity, the achievement, the perfection attained beyond the initial, even beyond the normal possibilities but still we have to stand on the same base with which we started and within the boundaries it gives to us. It is not that the action from the two ends cannot meet and the higher take into itself and uplift the lower perfection; but this can usually be done only by a transition from the lower to a higher outlook, aspiration and motive: this we shall have to do if our aim is to transform the human into the divine life. But here there comes in the necessity of taking up the activities of human life and sublimating them by the power of the spirit. Here the lower perfection will not disappear; it will remain but will be enlarged and transformed by the higher perfection which only the power of the spirit can give. This will be evident if we consider poetry and art, philosophic thought, the perfection of the written word or the perfect organisation of earthly life: these have to be taken up and the possibilities already achieved or whatever perfection has already been attained included in a new and greater perfection but with the larger vision and inspiration of a spiritual consciousness and with new forms and powers. It must be the same with the perfection of the body.

The taking up of life and Matter into what is essentially a spiritual seeking, instead of the rejection and ultimate exclusion of them which was the attitude of a spirituality that shunned or turned away from life in the world, involves certain developments which a spiritual institution of the older kind could regard as foreign to its purpose. A divine life in the world or



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an institution having that for its aim and purpose cannot be or cannot remain something outside or entirely shut away from the life of ordinary men in the world or unconcerned with the mundane existence; it has to do the work of the Divine in the world and not a work outside or separate from it. The life of the ancient Rishis in their Ashramas had such a connection; they were creators, educators, guides of men and the life of the Indian people in ancient times was largely developed and directed by their shaping influence. The life and activities involved in the new endeavour are not identical but they too must be an action upon the world and a new creation in it. It must have contacts and connections with it and activities which take their place in the general life and whose initial or primary objects may not seem to differ from those of the same activities in the outside world. In our Ashram here we have found it necessary to establish a school for the education of the children of the resident sadhaks, teaching upon familiar lines though with certain modifications and taking as part and an important part of their development an intensive physical training which has given form to the sports and athletics practised by the Jeunesse Sportive of the Ashram and of which this Bulletin is the expression. It has been questioned by some what place sports can have in an Ashram created for spiritual seekers and what connection there can be between spirituality and sports. The first answer lies in what I have already written about the connections of an institution of this kind with the activities of the general life of men and what I have indicated in the previous number as to the utility such a training can have for the life of a nation and its benefit for the international life. Another answer can occur to us if we look beyond first objects and turn to the aspiration for a total perfection including the perfection of the body.

In the admission of an activity such as sports and physical exercises into the life of the Ashram it is evident that the methods and the first objects to be attained must belong to what we have called the lower end of the being. Originally they have been introduced for the physical education and bodily development of the children of the Ashram School, and these are too young

for a strictly spiritual aim or practice to enter into their activities and it is not certain that any great number of them will enter the spiritual life when they are of an age to choose what shall be the direction of their future. The object must be the training of the body and the development of certain parts of mind and character so far as this can be done by or in connection with this training, and I have already indicated in a previous number how and in what directions this can be done. It is a relative and human perfection that can be attained within these limits; anything greater can be reached only by the intervention of higher powers, psychic powers, the power of the spirit. Yet what can be attained within the human boundaries can be something very considerable and sometimes immense: what we call genius is part of the development of the human range of being, and its achievements, especially in things of the mind and will, can carry us half-way to the divine. Even what the mind and will can do with the body in the field proper to the body and its life, in the way of physical achievement, bodily endurance, feats of prowess of all kinds, a lasting activity refusing fatigue or collapse and continuing beyond what seems at first to be possible, courage and refusal to succumb under an endless and murderous physical suffering, these and other victories of many kinds sometimes approaching or reaching the miraculous are seen in the human field and must be reckoned as a part of our concept of a total perfection. The unflinching and persistent reply that can be made by the body as well as the mind of man and by his life-energy to whatever call can be imposed on it in the most difficult and discouraging circumstances by the necessities of war and travel and adventure is of the same kind, and their endurance can reach astounding proportions and even the unconscious in the body seems to be able to return a surprising response.

The body, we have said, is a creation of the Inconscient and itself inconscient or at least subconscious in parts of itself and much of its hidden action; but what we call the Inconscient is an appearance, a dwelling place, an instrument of a secret Consciousness or a Superconscient which has created the miracle we call the universe. Matter is the field and the creation of the

Inconscient and the perfection of the operations of inconscient Matter, their perfect adaptation of means to an aim and end, the wonders they perform and the marvels of beauty they create, testify, in spite of all the ignorant denial we can oppose, to the presence and power of consciousness of this Superconscience in every part and movement of the material universe. It is there in the body, has made it and its emergence in our consciousness is the secret aim of evolution and the key to the mystery of our existence.

In the use of such activities as sports and physical exercises for the education of the individual in childhood and first youth, which should mean the bringing out of his actual and latent possibilities to their fullest development, the means and methods we must use are limited by the nature of the body and its aim must be such relative human perfection of the body's powers and capacities and the powers of mind, will, character, action of which it is at once the residence and the instrument so far as these methods can help to develop them. I have written sufficiently about the mental and moral parts of perfection to which these pursuits can contribute and this I need not repeat here. For the body itself the perfections that can be developed by these means are those of its natural qualities and capacities and, secondly, the training of its general fitness as an instrument for all the activities which may be demanded from it by the mind and the will, by the life-energy or by the dynamic perceptions, impulses and instincts of our subtle physical being which is an unrecognised but very important element and agent in our nature. Health and strength are the first conditions for the natural perfection of the body, not only muscular strength and the solid strength of the limbs and physical stamina, but the finer, alert and plastic and adaptable force which our nervous and subtle physical parts can put into the activities of the frame. There is also the still more dynamic force which a call upon the life-energies can bring into the body and stir it to greater activities, even feats of the most extraordinary character of which in its normal state it would not be capable. There is also the strength which the mind and will by their demands and stimulus and by their secret powers

which we use or by which we are used without knowing clearly the source of their action can impart to the body or impose upon it as masters and inspirers.

Among the natural qualities and powers of the body which can be thus awakened, stimulated and trained to a normal activity we must reckon dexterity and stability in all kinds of physical action, such as swiftness in the race, dexterity in combat, skill and endurance of the mountaineer, the constant and often extraordinary response to all that can be demanded from the body of the soldier, sailor, traveller or explorer to which I have already made reference, or in adventure of all kinds and all the wide range of physical attainment to which man has accustomed himself or to which he is exceptionally pushed by his own will or by the compulsion of circumstance. It is a general fitness of the body for all that can be asked from it which is the common formula of all this action, a fitness attained by a few or by many, that could be generalised by an extended and many-sided physical education and discipline. Some of these activities can be included under the name of sports; there are others for which sports and physical exercises can be an effective preparation. In some of them a training for common action, combined movement, discipline are needed and for that our physical exercises can make one ready; in others a developed individual will, skill of mind and quick perception, forcefulness of life-energy and subtle physical impulsion are more prominently needed and may even be the one sufficient trainer. All must be included in our conception of the natural powers of the body and its capacity and instrumental fitness in the service of the human mind and will, and therefore in our concept of the total perfection of the body.

There are two conditions for this perfection, an awakening in as great an entirety as possible of the body consciousness and an education, an evocation of its potentialities, also as entire and fully developed and, it may be, as many-sided as possible. The form or body is, no doubt, in its origin a creation of the Inconscient and limited by it on all sides, but still of the Inconscient developing the secret consciousness concealed within

it and growing in light of knowledge, power and Ananda. We have to take it at the point it has reached in its human evolution in these things, make as full a use of them as may be and, as much as we can, further this evolution to as high a degree as is permitted by the force of the individual temperament and nature. In all forms in the world there is a force at work, unconsciously active or oppressed by inertia in its lower formulations, but in the human being conscious from the first, with its potentialities partly awake, partly asleep or latent: what is awake in it we have to make fully conscious; what is asleep we have to arouse and set to its work; what is latent we have to evoke and educate. Here there are two aspects of the body consciousness, one which seems to be a kind of automatism carrying on its work in the physical plane without any intervention of the mind and in parts even beyond any possibility of direct observation by the mind or, if conscious or observable, still proceeding or capable of continuing, when once started, by an apparently mechanical action not needing direction by the mind and continuing so long as the mind does not intervene.

There are other movements taught and trained by the mind which can yet go on operating automatically but faultlessly even when not attended to by the thought or will; there are others which can operate in sleep and produce results of value to the waking intelligence. But more important is what may be described as a trained and developed automatism, a perfected skill and capacity of eye and ear and the hands and all the members prompt to respond to any call made on them, a developed spontaneous operation as an instrument, a complete fitness for any demand that the mind and life-energy can make upon it. This is ordinarily the best we can achieve at the lower end, when we start from that end and limit ourselves to the means and methods which are proper to it. For more we have to turn to the mind and life-energy themselves or to the energy of the spirit and to what they can do for a greater perfection of the body. The most we can do in the physical field by physical means is necessarily insecure as well as bound by limits; even what seems a perfect health and strength of the body is precarious and can be broken down at

any moment by fluctuations from within or by a strong attack or shock from outside: only by the breaking of our limitations can a higher and more enduring perfection come. One direction in which our consciousness must grow is an increasing hold from within or from above on the body and its powers and its more conscious response to the higher parts of our being. The mind pre-eminently is man; he is a mental being and his human perfection grows the more he fulfils the description of the Upanishad, a mental being, Purusha, leader of the life and the body. If the mind can take up and control the instincts and automatisms of the life-energy and the subtle physical consciousness and the body, if it can enter into them, consciously use and, as we may say, fully mentalise their instinctive or spontaneous action, the perfection of these energies, their action too become more conscious and more aware of themselves and more perfect. But it is necessary for the mind too to grow in perfection and this it can do best when it depends less on the fallible intellect of physical mind, when it is not limited even by the more orderly and accurate working of the reason and can grow in intuition and acquire a wider, deeper and closer seeing and the more luminous drive of energy of a higher intuitive will. Even within the limits of its present evolution it is difficult to measure the degree to which the mind is able to extend its control or its use of the body's powers and capacities and when the mind rises to higher powers still and pushes back its human boundaries, it becomes impossible to fix any limits: even, in certain realisations, an intervention by the will in the automatic working of the bodily organs seems to become possible.

Wherever limitations recede and in proportion as they recede, the body becomes a more plastic and responsive and in that measure a more fit and perfect instrument of the action of the spirit. In all effective and expressive activities here in the material world the cooperation of the two ends of our being is indispensable. If the body is unable whether by fatigue or by natural incapacity or any other cause to second the thought or will or is in any way irresponsible or insufficiently responsive, to that extent the action fails or falls short or becomes in some

degree unsatisfying or incomplete. In what seems to be an exploit of the spirit so purely mental as the outpouring of poetic inspiration, there must be a responsive vibration of the brain and its openness as a channel for the power of the thought and vision and the light of the word that is making or breaking its way through or seeking for its perfect expression. If the brain is fatigued or dulled by any clog, either the inspiration cannot come and nothing is written or it fails and something inferior is all that can come out; or else a lower inspiration takes the place of the more luminous formulation that was striving to shape itself or the brain finds it more easy to lend itself to a less radiant stimulus or else it labours and constructs or responds to poetic artifice. Even in the most purely mental activities the fitness, readiness or perfect training of the bodily instrument is a condition indispensable. That readiness, that response too is part of the total perfection of the body.

The essential purpose and sign of the growing evolution here is the emergence of consciousness in an apparently inconscient universe, the growth of consciousness and with it growth of the light and power of the being; the development of the form and its functioning or its fitness to survive, although indispensable, is not the whole meaning or the central motive. The greater and greater awakening of consciousness and its climb to a higher and higher level and a wider extent of its vision and action is the condition of our progress towards that supreme and total perfection which is the aim of our existence. It is the condition also of the total perfection of the body. There are higher levels of the mind than any we now conceive and to these we must one day reach and rise beyond them to the heights of a greater, a spiritual existence. As we rise we have to open to them our lower members and fill these with those superior and supreme dynamisms of light and power; the body we have to make a more and more and even entirely conscious frame and instrument, a conscious sign and seal and power of the spirit. As it grows in this perfection, the force and extent of its dynamic action and its response and service to the spirit must increase; the control of the spirit over it also must grow and the plasticity

of its functioning both in its developed and acquired parts of power and in its automatic responses down to those that are now purely organic and seem to be the movements of a mechanic inconscience. This cannot happen without a veritable transformation, and a transformation of the mind and life and very body is indeed the change to which our evolution is secretly moving and without this transformation the entire fullness of a divine life on earth cannot emerge. In this transformation the body itself can become an agent and a partner. It might indeed be possible for the spirit to achieve a considerable manifestation with only a passive and imperfectly conscious body as its last or bottommost means of material functioning, but this could not be anything perfect or complete. A fully conscious body might even discover and work out the right material method and process of a material transformation. For this, no doubt, the spirit's supreme light and power and creative joy must have manifested on the summit of the individual consciousness and sent down their fiat into the body, but still the body may take in the working out its spontaneous part of self-discovery and achievement. It would be thus a participator and agent in its own transformation and the integral transformation of the whole being; this too would be a part and a sign and evidence of the total perfection of the body.

If the emergence and growth of consciousness is the central motive of the evolution and the key to its secret purpose, then by the very nature of that evolution this growth must involve not only a wider and wider extent of its capacities, but also an ascent to a higher and higher level till it reaches the highest possible. For it starts from a nethermost level of involution in the Inconscience which we see at work in Matter creating the material universe; it proceeds by an Ignorance which is yet ever developing knowledge and reaching out to an ever greater light and ever greater organisation and efficacy of the will and harmonisation of all its own inherent and emerging powers; it must at last reach a point where it develops or acquires the complete fullness of its capacity, and that must be a state or action in which there is no longer an ignorance seeking for knowledge but Knowledge self-possessed, inherent in the being, master of



its own truths and working them out with a natural vision and force that is not afflicted by limitation or error. Or if there is a limitation, it must be a self-imposed veil behind which it would keep truth back from manifestation in Time but draw it out at will and without any need of search or acquisition in the order of a right perception of things or in the just succession of that which has to be manifested in obedience to the call of Time.

This would mean an entry or approach into what might be called a truth-consciousness self-existent in which the being would be aware of its own realities and would have the inherent power to manifest them in a Time-creation in which all would be Truth following out its own unerring steps and combining its own harmonies; every thought and will and feeling and act would be spontaneously right, inspired or intuitive, moving by the light of Truth and therefore perfect. All would express inherent realities of the spirit; some fullness of the power of the spirit would be there. One would have overpassed the present limitations of mind: mind would become a seeing of the light of Truth, will a force and power of the Truth, Life a progressive fulfilment of the Truth, the body itself a conscious vessel of the Truth and part of the means of its self-effectuation and a form of its self-aware existence. It would be at least some initiation of this Truth-consciousness, some first figure and action of it that must be reached and enter into a first operation if there is to be a divine life or any full manifestation of a spiritualised consciousness in the world of Matter. Or, at the very least, such a Truth-consciousness must be in communication with our own mind and life and body, descend into touch with it, control its seeing and action, impel its motives, take hold of its forces and shape their direction and purpose. All touched by it might not be able to embody it fully, but each would give some form to it according to his spiritual temperament, inner capacity, the line of his evolution in Nature: he would reach securely the perfection of which he was immediately capable and he would be on the road to the full possession of the truth of the Spirit and of the truth of Nature.

In the workings of such a Truth-consciousness there would

be a certain conscious seeing and willing automatism of the steps of its truth which would replace the infallible automatism of the inconscient or seemingly inconscient Force that has brought out of an apparent Void the miracle of an ordered universe, and this could create a new order of the manifestation of the Being in which a perfect perfection would become possible; even a supreme and total perfection would appear in the vistas of an ultimate possibility. If we could draw down this power into the material world, our agelong dreams of human perfectibility, individual perfection, the perfectibility of the race, of society, inner mastery over self and a complete mastery, governance and utilisation of the forces of Nature could see at long last a prospect of total achievement. This complete human self-fulfilment might well pass beyond limitations and be transformed into the character of a divine life. Matter after taking into itself and manifesting the power of life and the light of mind would draw down into it the superior or supreme power and light of the spirit and in an earthly body shed its parts of inconscience and become a perfectly conscious frame of the spirit. A secure completeness and stability of the health and strength of its physical tenement could be maintained by the will and force of this inhabitant; all the natural capacities of the physical frame, all powers of the physical consciousness would reach their utmost extension and be there at command and sure of their flawless action. As an instrument the body would acquire a fullness of capacity, a totality of fitness for all uses which the inhabitant would demand of it far beyond anything now possible. Even it could become a revealing vessel of a supreme beauty and bliss, — casting the beauty of the light of the spirit suffusing and radiating from it as a lamp reflects and diffuses the luminosity of its indwelling flame, carrying in itself the beatitude of the spirit, its joy of the seeing mind, its joy of life and spiritual happiness, the joy of Matter released into a spiritual consciousness and thrilled with a constant ecstasy. This would be the total perfection of the spiritualised body.

All this might not come all at once, though such a sudden illumination might be possible if a divine Power and Light and

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Ananda could take their stand on the summit of our being and send down their force into the mind and life and body illumining and remoulding the cells, awaking consciousness in all the frame. But the way would be open and the consummation of all that is possible in the individual could progressively take place. The physical also would have its share in that consummation of the whole.

There would always remain vistas beyond as the infinite Spirit took up towards higher heights and larger breadths the evolving Nature, in the movement of the liberated being towards the possession of the supreme Reality, the supreme existence, consciousness, beatitude. But of this it would be premature to speak: what has been written is perhaps as much as the human mind as it is now constituted can venture to look forward to and the enlightened thought understand in some measure. These consequences of the Truth-consciousness descending and laying its hold upon Matter would be a sufficient justification of the evolutionary labour. In this upward all-uplifting sweep of the Spirit there could be a simultaneous or consecutive downward sweep of the triumph of a spiritualised Nature all-including, all-transmuting and in it there could occur a glorifying change of Matter and the physical consciousness and physical form and functioning of which we could speak as not only the total but the supreme perfection of the body.

## The Divine Body

**A** DIVINE life in a divine body is the formula of the ideal that we envisage. But what will be the divine body? What will be the nature of this body, its structure, the principle of its activity, the perfection that distinguishes it from the limited and imperfect physicality within which we are now bound? What will be the conditions and operations of its life, still physical in its base upon the earth, by which it can be known as divine?

If it is to be the product of an evolution, and it is so that we must envisage it, an evolution out of our human imperfection and ignorance into a greater truth of spirit and nature, by what process or stages can it grow into manifestation or rapidly arrive? The process of the evolution upon earth has been slow and tardy — what principle must intervene if there is to be a transformation, a progressive or sudden change?

It is indeed as a result of our evolution that we arrive at the possibility of this transformation. As Nature has evolved beyond Matter and manifested Life, beyond Life and manifested Mind, so she must evolve beyond Mind and manifest a consciousness and power of our existence free from the imperfection and limitation of our mental existence, a supramental or truth-consciousness, and able to develop the power and perfection of the spirit. Here a slow and tardy change need no longer be the law or manner of our evolution; it will be only so to a greater or less extent so long as a mental ignorance clings and hampers our ascent; but once we have grown into the truth-consciousness its power of spiritual truth of being will determine all. Into that truth we shall be freed and it will transform mind and life and body. Light and bliss and beauty and a perfection of the spontaneous right action of all the being are there as native powers of the supramental truth-consciousness and these will in

their very nature transform mind and life and body even here upon earth into a manifestation of the truth-conscious spirit. The obscurations of earth will not prevail against the supramental truth-consciousness, for even into the earth it can bring enough of the omniscient light and omnipotent force of the spirit to conquer. All may not open to the fullness of its light and power, but whatever does open must to that extent undergo the change. That will be the principle of transformation.

It might be that a psychological change, a mastery of the nature by the soul, a transformation of the mind into a principle of light, of the life-force into power and purity would be the first approach, the first attempt to solve the problem, to escape beyond the merely human formula and establish something that could be called a divine life upon earth, a first sketch of supermanhood, of a supramental living in the circumstances of the earth-nature. But this could not be the complete and radical change needed; it would not be the total transformation, the fullness of a divine life in a divine body. There would be a body still human and indeed animal in its origin and fundamental character and this would impose its own inevitable limitations on the higher parts of the embodied being. As limitation by ignorance and error is the fundamental defect of an untransformed mind, as limitation by the imperfect impulses and strainings and wants of desire are the defects of an untransformed life-force, so also imperfection of the potentialities of the physical action, an imperfection, a limitation in the response of its half-consciousness to the demands made upon it and the grossness and stains of its original animality would be the defects of an untransformed or an imperfectly transformed body. These could not but hamper and even pull down towards themselves the action of the higher parts of the nature. A transformation of the body must be the condition for a total transformation of the nature.

It might be also that the transformation might take place by stages; there are powers of the nature still belonging to the mental region which are yet potentialities of a growing gnosis lifted beyond our human mentality and partaking of the light

and power of the Divine and an ascent through these planes, a descent of them into the mental being might seem to be the natural evolutionary course. But in practice it might be found that these intermediate levels would not be sufficient for the total transformation since, being themselves illumined potentialities of mental being not yet supramental in the full sense of the word, they could bring down to the mind only a partial divinity or raise the mind towards that but not effectuate its elevation into the complete supramentality of the truth-consciousness. Still these levels might become stages of the ascent which some would reach and pause there while others went higher and could reach and live on superior strata of a semi-divine existence. It is not to be supposed that all humanity would rise in a block into the supermind; at first those only might attain to the highest or some intermediate height of the ascent whose inner evolution has fitted them for so great a change or who are raised by the direct touch of the Divine into its perfect light and power and bliss. The large mass of human beings might still remain for long content with a normal or only a partially illumined and uplifted human nature. But this would be itself a sufficiently radical change and initial transformation of earth-life; for the way would be open to all who have the will to rise, the supramental influence of the truth-consciousness would touch the earth-life and influence even its untransformed mass and a hope would be there and a promise eventually available to all which now only the few can share in or realise.

In any case these would be beginnings only and could not constitute the fullness of the divine life upon earth; it would be a new orientation of the earthly life but not the consummation of its change. For that there must be the sovereign reign of a supramental truth-consciousness to which all other forms of life would be subordinated and depend upon it as the master principle and supreme power to which they could look up as the goal, profit by its influences, be moved and upraised by something of its illumination and penetrating force. Especially, as the human body had to come into existence with its modification of the previous animal form and its erect figure of a new power of

life and its expressive movements and activities serviceable and necessary to the principle of mind and the life of a mental being, so too a body must be developed with new powers, activities or degrees of a divine action expressive of a truth-conscious being and proper to a supramental consciousness and manifesting a conscious spirit. While the capacity for taking up and sublimating all the activities of the earth-life capable of being spiritualised must be there, a transcendence of the original animality and the actions incurably tainted by it or at least some saving transformation of them, some spiritualising or psychicising of the consciousness and motives animating them and the shedding of whatever could not be so transformed, even a change of what might be called its instrumental structure, its functioning and organisation, a complete and hitherto unprecedented control of these things must be the consequence or incidental to this total change. These things have been already to some extent illustrated in the lives of many who have become possessed of spiritual powers but as something exceptional and occasional, the casual or incomplete manifestation of an acquired capacity rather than the organisation of a new consciousness, a new life and a new nature. How far can such physical transformation be carried, what are the limits within which it must remain to be consistent with life upon earth and without carrying that life beyond the earthly sphere or pushing it towards the supra-terrestrial existence? The supramental consciousness is not a fixed quantity but a power which passes to higher and higher levels of possibility until it reaches supreme consummations of spiritual existence fulfilling supermind as supermind fulfils the ranges of spiritual consciousness that are pushing towards it from the human or mental level. In this progression the body also may reach a more perfect form and a higher range of its expressive powers, become a more and more perfect vessel of divinity.

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This destiny of the body has rarely in the past been envisaged or else not for the body here upon earth; such forms would rather be imagined or visioned as the privilege of celestial beings and not possible as the physical residence of a soul still bound to terrestrial nature. The Vaishnavas have spoken of a spiritualised conscious body, *cinmaya deha*; there has been the conception of a radiant or luminous body, which might be the Vedic *jyotirmaya deha*. A light has been seen by some radiating from the bodies of highly developed spiritual persons, even extending to the emission of an enveloping aura and there has been recorded an initial phenomenon of this kind in the life of so great a spiritual personality as Ramakrishna. But these things have been either conceptual only or rare and occasional and for the most part the body has not been regarded as possessed of spiritual possibility or capable of transformation. It has been spoken of as the means of effectuation of the dharma and dharma here includes all high purposes, achievements and ideals of life not excluding the spiritual change: but it is an instrument that must be dropped when its work is done and though there may be and must be spiritual realisation while yet in the body, it can only come to its full fruition after the abandonment of the physical frame. More ordinarily in the spiritual tradition the body has been regarded as an obstacle, incapable of spiritualisation or transmutation and a heavy weight holding the soul to earthly nature and preventing its ascent either to spiritual fulfilment in the Supreme or to the dissolution of its individual being in the Supreme. But while this conception of the role of the body in our destiny is suitable enough for a sadhana that sees earth only as a field of the ignorance and earth-life as a preparation for a saving withdrawal from life which is the indispensable condition for spiritual liberation, it is insufficient for a sadhana which conceives of a divine life upon earth and liberation of earth-nature itself as part of a total purpose of the embodiment of the spirit here. If a total transformation of the being is our aim, a transformation of the body must be an indispensable part of it; without that no full divine life on earth is possible.

It is the past evolution of the body and especially its animal



nature and animal history which seems to stand in the way of this consummation. The body, as we have seen, is an offspring and creation of the Inconscient, itself inconscient or only half-conscious; it began as a form of unconscious Matter, developed life and from a material object became a living growth, developed mind and from the subconsciousness of the plant and the initial rudimentary mind or incomplete intelligence of the animal developed the intellectual mind and more complete intelligence of man and now serves as the physical base, container and instrumental means of our total spiritual endeavour. Its animal character and its gross limitations stand indeed as an obstacle to our spiritual perfection; but the fact that it has developed a soul and is capable of serving it as a means may indicate that it is capable of further development and may become a shrine and expression of the spirit, reveal a secret spirituality of Matter, become entirely and not only half-conscious, reach a certain oneness with the spirit. This much it must do, so far at least it must transcend its original earth-nature, if it is to be the complete instrument of the divine life and no longer an obstacle.

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Still the inconveniences of the animal body and its animal nature and impulses and the limitations of the human body at its best are there in the beginning and persist always so long as there is not the full and fundamental liberation, and its inconscience or half-conscience and its binding of the soul and mind and life-force to Matter, to materiality of all kinds, to the call of the unregenerated earth-nature are there and constantly oppose the call of the spirit and circumscribe the climb to higher things. To the physical being it brings a bondage to the material instruments, to the brain and heart and senses, wed to materiality and materialism of all kinds, to the bodily mechanism and its needs and obligations, to the imperative need of food and the preoccupation with the means of getting it and storing it as one of the besetting interests of life, to fatigue and sleep, to

the satisfaction of bodily desire. The life-force in man also is tied down to these small things; it has to limit the scope of its larger ambitions and longings, its drive to rise beyond the pull of earth and follow the heavenlier intuitions of its psychic parts, the heart's ideal and the soul's yearnings. On the mind the body imposes the boundaries of the physical being and the physical life and the sense of the sole complete reality of physical things with the rest as a sort of brilliant fireworks of the imagination, of lights and glories that can only have their full play in heavens beyond, on higher planes of existence, but not here; it afflicts the idea and aspiration with the burden of doubt, the evidence of the subtle senses and the intuition with uncertainty and the vast field of supraphysical consciousness and experience with the imputation of unreality and clamps down to its earth-roots the growth of the spirit from its original limiting humanity into the supramental truth and the divine nature. These obstacles can be overcome, the denials and resistance of the body surmounted, its transformation is possible. Even the inconscient and animal part of us can be illumined and made capable of manifesting the god-nature, even as our mental humanity can be made to manifest the superhumanity of the supramental truth-consciousness and the divinity of what is now superconscious to us, and the total transformation made a reality here. But for this the obligations and compulsions of its animality must cease to be obligatory and a purification of its materiality effected by which that very materiality can be turned into a material solidity of the manifestation of the divine nature. For nothing essential must be left out in the totality of the earth-change; Matter itself can be turned into a means of revelation of the spiritual reality, the Divine.

The difficulty is dual, psychological and corporeal: the first is the effect of the unregenerated animality upon the life, especially by the insistence of the body's gross instincts, impulses, desires; the second is the outcome of our corporeal structure and organic instrumentation imposing its restrictions on the dynamism of the higher divine nature. The first of these two difficulties is easier to deal with and conquer; for here the will can intervene and impose on the body the power of the higher nature. Certain of these

impulses and instincts of the body have been found especially harmful by the spiritual aspirant and weighed considerably in favour of an ascetic rejection of the body. Sex and sexuality and all that springs from sex and testifies to its existence had to be banned and discarded from the spiritual life, and this, though difficult, is not at all impossible and can be made a cardinal condition for the spiritual seeker. This is natural and unescapable in all ascetic practice and the satisfaction of this condition, though not easy at first to fulfil, becomes after a time quite feasible; the overcoming of the sex instinct and impulse is indeed binding on all who would attain to self-mastery and lead the spiritual life. A total mastery over it is essential for all spiritual seekers, the eradication of it for the complete ascetic. This much has to be recognised and not diminished in its obligatory importance and its principle.

But all recognition of the sex principle, as apart from the gross physical indulgence of the sex impulse, could not be excluded from a divine life upon earth; it is there in life, plays a large part and has to be dealt with, it cannot simply be ignored, merely suppressed or held down or put away out of sight. In the first place, it is in one of its aspects a cosmic and even a divine principle: it takes the spiritual form of the Ishwara and the Shakti and without it there could be no world-creation or manifestation of the world-principle of Purusha and Prakriti which are both necessary for the creation, necessary too in their association and interchange for the play of its psychological working and in their manifestation as soul and Nature fundamental to the whole process of the Lila. In the divine life itself an incarnation or at least in some form a presence of the two powers or their initiating influence through their embodiments or representatives would be indispensable for making the new creation possible. In its human action on the mental and vital level sex is not altogether an undivine principle; it has its nobler aspects and idealities and it has to be seen in what way and to what extent these can be admitted into the new and larger life. All gross animal indulgence of sex desire and impulse would have to be eliminated; it could only continue among those who

are not ready for the higher life or not yet ready for a complete spiritual living. In all who aspired to it but could not yet take it up in its fullness sex will have to be refined, submit to the spiritual or psychic impulse and a control by the higher mind and the higher vital and shed all its lighter, frivolous or degraded forms and feel the touch of the purity of the ideal. Love would remain, all forms of the pure truth of love in higher and higher steps till it realised its highest nature, widened into universal love, merged into the love of the Divine. The love of man and woman would also undergo that elevation and consummation; for all that can feel a touch of the ideal and the spiritual must follow the way of ascent till it reaches the divine Reality. The body and its activities must be accepted as part of the divine life and pass under this law; but, as in the other evolutionary transitions, what cannot accept the law of the divine life cannot be accepted and must fall away from the ascending nature.

Another difficulty that the transformation of the body has to face is its dependence for its very existence upon food, and here too are involved the gross physical instincts, impulses, desires that are associated with this difficult factor, the essential cravings of the palate, the greed of food and animal gluttony of the belly, the coarsening of the mind when it grovels in the mud of sense, obeys a servitude to its mere animal part and hugs its bondage to Matter. The higher human in us seeks refuge in a temperate moderation, in abstemiousness and abstinence or in carelessness about the body and its wants and in an absorption in higher things. The spiritual seeker often, like the Jain ascetics, seeks refuge in long and frequent fasts which lift him temporarily at least out of the clutch of the body's demands and help him to feel in himself a pure vacancy of the wide rooms of the spirit. But all this is not liberation and the question may be raised whether, not only at first but always, the divine life also must submit to this necessity. But it could only deliver itself from it altogether if it could find out the way so to draw upon the universal energy that the energy would sustain not only the vital parts of our physicality but its constituent matter with no need of aid for sustenance from any outside substance of

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Matter. It is indeed possible even while fasting for very long periods to maintain the full energies and activities of the soul and mind and life, even those of the body, to remain wakeful but concentrated in Yoga all the time, or to think deeply and write day and night, to dispense with sleep, to walk eight hours a day, maintaining all these activities separately or together, and not feel any loss of strength, any fatigue, any kind of failure or decadence. At the end of the fast one can even resume at once taking the normal or even a greater than the normal amount of nourishment without any transition or precaution such as medical science enjoins, as if both the complete fasting and the feasting were natural conditions, alternating by an immediate and easy passage from one to the other, of a body already trained by a sort of initial transformation to be an instrument of the powers and activities of Yoga. But one thing one does not escape and that is the wasting of the material tissues of the body, its flesh and substance. Conceivably, if a practicable way and means could only be found, this last invincible obstacle too might be overcome and the body maintained by an interchange of its forces with the forces of material Nature, giving to her her need from the individual and taking from her directly the sustaining energies of her universal existence. Conceivably, one might rediscover and re-establish at the summit of the evolution of life the phenomenon we see at its base, the power to draw from all around it the means of sustenance and self-renewal. Or else the evolved being might acquire the greater power to draw down those means from above rather than draw them up or pull them in from the environment around, all about it and below it. But until something like this is achieved or made possible we have to go back to food and the established material forces of Nature.

In fact we do, however unconsciously, draw constantly upon the universal energy, the force in Matter to replenish our material existence and the mental, vital and other potencies in the body: we do it directly in the invisible processes of interchange constantly kept up by Nature and by special means devised by her; breathing is one of these, sleep also and repose. But as her basic means for maintaining and renewing the gross physical

body and its workings and inner potencies Nature has selected the taking in of outside matter in the shape of food, its digestion, assimilation of what is assimilable and elimination of what cannot or ought not to be assimilated; this by itself is sufficient for mere maintenance, but for assuring health and strength in the body so maintained it has added the impulse towards physical exercise and play of many kinds, ways for the expenditure and renewal of energy, the choice or the necessity of manifold action and labour. In the new life, in its beginnings at least, it would not be necessary or advisable to make any call for an extreme or precipitate rejection of the need of food or the established natural method for the maintenance of the still imperfectly transformed body. If or when these things have to be transcended it must come as a result of the awakened will of the spirit, a will also in Matter itself, an imperative evolutionary urge, an act of the creative transmutations of Time or a descent from the transcendence. Meanwhile the drawing in of the universal energy by a conscious action of the higher powers of the being from around or from above, by a call to what is still to us a transcending consciousness or by an invasion or descent from the Transcendence itself, may well become an occasional, a frequent or a constant phenomenon and even reduce the part played by food and its need to an incidence no longer preoccupying, a necessity minor and less and less imperative.

Meanwhile food and the ordinary process of Nature can be accepted, although its use has to be liberated from attachment and desire and the grosser indiscriminating appetites and clutch at the pleasures of the flesh which is the way of the Ignorance; the physical processes have to be subtilised and the grossest may have to be eliminated and new processes found or new instrumentalities emerge. So long as it is accepted, a refined pleasure in it may be permitted and even a desireless ananda of taste take the place of the physical relish and the human selection by likings and dislikings which is our present imperfect response to what is offered to us by Nature. It must be remembered that for the divine life on earth, earth and Matter have not to be and cannot be rejected but have only to be sublimated and to

reveal in themselves the possibilities of the spirit, serve the spirit's highest uses and be transformed into instruments of a greater living.

The divine life must always be actuated by the push towards perfection; a perfection of the joy of life is part and an essential part of it, the body's delight in things and the body's joy of life are not excluded from it; they too have to be made perfect. A large totality is the very nature of this new and growing way of existence, a fullness of the possibilities of the mind transmuted into a thing of light, of the life converted into a force of spiritual power and joy, of the body transformed into an instrument of a divine action, divine knowledge, divine bliss. All can be taken into its scope that is capable of transforming itself, all that can be an instrument, a vessel, an opportunity for the expression of this totality of the self-manifesting Spirit.

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There is one problem raised by sex for those who would reject *in toto* the obligations imposed by the animality of the body and put forward by it as an insistent opposition in the way of the aspirant to a higher life: it is the necessity of the prolongation of the race for which the sex activity is the only means already provided by Nature for living beings and inevitably imposed upon the race. It is not indeed necessary for the individual seeker after a divine life to take up this problem or even for a group who do not seek after it for themselves alone but desire a wide acceptance of it by mankind as at least an ideal. There will always be the multitude who do not concern themselves with it or are not ready for its complete practice and to these can be left the care for the prolongation of the race. The number of those who lead the divine life can be maintained and increased, as the ideal extends itself, by the voluntary adhesion of those who are touched by the aspiration and there need be no resort to physical means for this purpose, no deviation from the rule of a strict sexual abstinence. But yet there may be circumstances in

which, from another standpoint, a voluntary creation of bodies for souls that seek to enter the earth-life to help in the creation and extension of the divine life upon earth might be found to be desirable. Then the necessity of a physical procreation for this purpose could only be avoided if new means of a supraphysical kind were evolved and made available. A development of this kind must necessarily belong to what is now considered as the sphere of the occult and the use of concealed powers of action or creation not known or possessed by the common mind of the race. Occultism means rightly the use of the higher powers of our nature, soul, mind, life-force and the faculties of the subtle physical consciousness to bring about results on their own or on the material plane by some pressure of their own secret law and its potentialities, for manifestation and result in human or earthly mind and life and body or in objects and events in the world of Matter. A discovery or an extension of these little known or yet undeveloped powers is now envisaged by some well-known thinkers as a next step to be taken by mankind in its immediate evolution; the kind of creation spoken of has not been included among these developments, but it could well be considered as one of the new possibilities. Even physical science is trying to find physical means for passing beyond the ordinary instrumentation or procedure of Nature in this matter of propagation or the renewal of the physical life-force in human or animal beings; but the resort to occult means and the intervention of subtle physical processes, if it could be made possible, would be a greater way which could avoid the limitations, degradations, incompleteness and heavy imperfection of the means and results solely available to the law of material force.

In India there has been always from the earliest times a widely spread belief in the possibility and reality of the use of these powers by men with an advanced knowledge of these secret things or with a developed spiritual knowledge and experience and dynamic force and even, in the Tantras, an organised system of their method and practice. The intervention of the Yogi in bringing about a desired birth of offspring is also generally believed in and often appealed to and the bestowal on



the child so obtained of a spiritual attainment or destiny by his will or his blessing is sometimes asked for and such a result is recorded not only in the tradition of the past but maintained by the witness of the present. But there is here still the necessity of a resort to the normal means of propagation and the gross method of physical Nature. A purely occult method, a resort to supraphysical processes acting by supraphysical means for a physical result would have to be possible if we are to avoid this necessity: the resort to the sex impulse and its animal process could not be transcended otherwise. If there is some reality in the phenomenon of materialisation and dematerialisation claimed to be possible by occultists and evidenced by occurrences many of us have witnessed, a method of this kind would not be out of the range of possibility. For in the theory of the occultists and in the gradation of the ranges and planes of our being which Yoga-knowledge outlines for us there is not only a subtle physical force but a subtle physical Matter intervening between life and gross Matter, and to create in this subtle physical substance and precipitate the forms thus made into our grosser materiality is feasible. It should be possible and it is believed to be possible for an object formed in this subtle physical substance to make a transit from its subtlety into the state of gross Matter directly by the intervention of an occult force and process, whether with or even without the assistance or intervention of some gross material procedure. A soul wishing to enter into a body or form for itself a body and take part in a divine life upon earth might be assisted to do so or even provided with such a form by this method of direct transmutation, without passing through birth by the sex process or undergoing any degradation or any of the heavy limitations in the growth and development of its mind and material body inevitable to our present way of existence. It might then assume at once the structure and greater powers and functionings of the truly divine material body which must one day emerge in a progressive evolution to a totally transformed existence both of life and form in a divinised earth-nature.

But what would be the internal or external form and structure and what the instrumentation of this divine body? The

material history of the development of the animal and human body has left it bound to a minutely constructed and elaborated system of organs and a precarious order of their functioning which can easily become a disorder, open to a general or local disorganisation, dependent on an easily disturbed nervous system and commanded by a brain whose vibrations are supposed to be mechanical and automatic and not under our conscious control. According to the materialist all this is a functioning of Matter alone whose fundamental reality is chemical. We have to suppose that the body is constructed by the agency of chemical elements building up atoms and molecules and cells and these again are the agents and only conductors at the basis of a complicated physical structure and instrumentation which is the sole mechanical cause of all our actions, thoughts, feelings, the soul a fiction and mind and life only a material and mechanical manifestation and appearance of this machine which is worked out and automatically driven with a figment of consciousness in it by the forces inherent in inscient Matter. If that were the truth it is obvious that any divinisation or divine transformation of the body or of anything else would be nothing but an illusion, an imagination, a senseless and impossible chimera. But even if we suppose a soul, a conscious will at work in this body it could not arrive at a divine transformation if there were no radical change in the bodily instrument itself and in the organisation of its material workings. The transforming agent will be bound and stopped in its work by the physical organism's unalterable limitations and held up by the unmodified or imperfectly modified original animal in us. The possibility of the disorders, derangements, maladies native to these physical arrangements would still be there and could only be shut out by a constant vigilance or perpetual control obligatory on the corporeal instrument's spiritual inhabitant and master. This could not be called a truly divine body; for in a divine body an inherent freedom from all these things would be natural and perpetual; this freedom would be a normal and native truth of its being and therefore inevitable and unalterable. A radical transformation of the functioning and, it may well be, of the structure and certainly of the

too mechanical and material impulses and driving forces of the bodily system would be imperative.

What agency could we find which we could make the means of this all-important liberation and change? Something there is in us or something has to be developed, perhaps a central and still occult part of our being containing forces whose powers in our actual and present make-up are only a fraction of what could be, but if they became complete and dominant would be truly able to bring about with the help of the light and force of the soul and the supramental truth-consciousness the necessary physical transformation and its consequences. This might be found in the system of Chakras revealed by Tantric knowledge and accepted in the systems of Yoga, conscious centres and sources of all the dynamic powers of our being organising their action through the plexuses and arranged in an ascending series from the lowest physical to the highest mind centre and spiritual centre called the thousand-petalled lotus where ascending Nature, the Serpent Power of the Tantrics, meets the Brahman and is liberated into the Divine Being. These centres are closed or half-closed within us and have to be opened before their full potentiality can be manifested in our physical nature: but once they are opened and completely active, no limit can easily be set to the development of their potencies and the total transformation to be possible.

But what would be the result of the emergence of these forces and their liberated and diviner action on the body itself, what their dynamic connection with it and their transforming operation on the still existing animal nature and its animal impulses and gross material procedure? It might be held that the first necessary change would be the liberation of the mind, the life-force, the subtle physical agencies and the physical consciousness into a freer and a diviner activity, a many-dimensional and unlimited operation of their consciousness, a large outbreak of higher powers and the sublimation of the bodily consciousness itself, of its instrumentation, capacity, capability for the manifestation of the soul in the world of Matter. The subtle senses now concealed in us might come forward into a free action and the material senses themselves become means or channels for the vision of what is

now invisible to us or the discovery of things surrounding us but at present unseizable and held back from our knowledge. A firm check might be put on the impulses of the animal nature or they might be purified and subtilised so as to become assets and not liabilities and so transformed as to be parts and processes of a diviner life. But even these changes would still leave a residue of material processes keeping the old way and not amenable to the higher control and, if this could not be changed, the rest of the transformation might itself be checked and incomplete. A total transformation of the body would demand a sufficient change of the most material part of the organism, its constitution, its processes and its set-up of nature.

Again, it might be thought that a full control would be sufficient, a knowledge and a vision of this organism and its unseen action and an effective control determining its operations according to the conscious will; this possibility has been affirmed as something already achieved and a part of the development of the inner powers in some. The cessation of the breathing while still the life of the body remained stable, the hermetic sealing up at will not only of the breath but of all the vital manifestations for long periods, the stoppage of the heart similarly at will while thought and speech and other mental workings continued unabated, these and other phenomena of the power of the will over the body are known and well-attested examples of this kind of mastery. But these are occasional or sporadic successes and do not amount to transformation; a total control is necessary and an established and customary and, indeed, a natural mastery. Even with that achieved something more fundamental might have to be demanded for the complete liberation and change into a divine body.

Again, it might be urged that the organic structure of the body no less than its basic outer form would have to be retained as a necessary material foundation for the retention of the earth-nature, the connection of the divine life with the life of earth and a continuance of the evolutionary process so as to prevent a breaking upward out of and away from it into a state of being which would properly belong to a higher plane and not

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to a terrestrial divine fulfilment. The prolonged existence of the animal itself in our nature, if sufficiently transformed to be an instrument of manifestation and not an obstacle, would be necessary to preserve the continuity, the evolutionary total; it would be needed as the living vehicle, *vāhana*, of the emergent god in the material world where he would have to act and achieve the works and wonders of the new life. It is certain that a form of body making this connection and a bodily action containing the earth-dynamism and its fundamental activities must be there, but the connection should not be a bond or a confining limitation or a contradiction of the totality of the change. The maintenance of the present organism without any transformation of it would not but act as such a bond and confinement within the old nature. There would be a material base but it would be of the earth earthy, an old and not a new earth with a diviner psychological structure; for with that structure the old system would be out of harmony and it would be unable to serve its further evolution or even to uphold it as a base in Matter. It would bind part of the being, a lower part to an untransformed humanity and unchanged animal functioning and prevent its liberation into the superhumanity of the supramental nature. A change is then necessary here too, a necessary part of the total bodily transformation, which would divinise the whole man, at least in the ultimate result, and not leave his evolution incomplete.

This aim, it might be said, would be sufficiently served if the instrumentation of the centres and their forces reigned over all the activities of the nature with an entire domination of the body and made it both in its structural form and its organic workings a free channel and means of communication and a plastic instrument of cognition and dynamic action for all that they had to do in the material life, in the world of Matter. There would have to be a change in the operative processes of the material organs themselves and, it may well be, in their very constitution and their importance; they could not be allowed to impose their limitations imperatively on the new physical life. To begin with, they might become more clearly outer ends of the channels of communication and action, more

serviceable for the psychological purposes of the inhabitant, less blindly material in their responses, more conscious of the act and aim of the inner movements and powers which use them and which they are wrongly supposed by the material man in us to generate and to use. The brain would be a channel of communication of the form of the thoughts and a battery of their insistence on the body and the outside world where they could then become effective directly, communicating themselves without physical means from mind to mind, producing with a similar directness effects on the thoughts, actions and lives of others or even upon material things. The heart would equally be a direct communicant and medium of interchange for the feelings and emotions thrown outward upon the world by the forces of the psychic centre. Heart could reply directly to heart, the life-force come to the help of other lives and answer their call in spite of strangeness and distance, many beings without any external communication thrill with the message and meet in the secret light from one divine centre. The will might control the organs that deal with food, safeguard automatically the health, eliminate greed and desire, substitute subtler processes or draw in strength and substance from the universal life-force so that the body could maintain for a long time its own strength and substance without loss or waste, remaining thus with no need of sustenance by material aliments, and yet continue a strenuous action with no fatigue or pause for sleep or repose. The soul's will or the mind's could act from higher sources upon the sex centre and the sex organs so as to check firmly or even banish the grosser sexual impulse or stimulus and instead of serving an animal excitation or crude drive or desire turn their use to the storing, production and direction towards brain and heart and life-force of the essential energy, *ojas*, of which this region is the factory so as to support the works of the mind and soul and spirit and the higher life-powers and limit the expenditure of the energy on lower things. The soul, the psychic being, could more easily fill all with the light and turn the very matter of the body to higher uses for its own greater purpose.

This would be a first potent change, but not by any means

all that is possible or desirable. For it may well be that the evolutionary urge would proceed to a change of the organs themselves in their material working and use and diminish greatly the need of their instrumentation and even of their existence. The centres in the subtle body, *sūkṣma śarīra*, of which one would become conscious and aware of all going on in it, would pour their energies into material nerve and plexus and tissue and radiate them through the whole material body; all the physical life and its necessary activities in this new existence could be maintained and operated by these higher agencies in a freer and ampler way and by a less burdensome and restricting method. This might go so far that these organs might cease to be indispensable and even be felt as too obstructive: the central force might use them less and less and finally throw aside their use altogether. If that happened they might waste by atrophy, be reduced to an insignificant minimum or even disappear. The central force might substitute for them subtle organs of a very different character or, if anything material was needed, instruments that would be forms of dynamism or plastic transmitters rather than what we know as organs.

This might well be part of a supreme total transformation of the body, though this too might not be final. To envisage such changes is to look far ahead and minds attached to the present form of things may be unable to give credence to their possibility. No such limits and no such impossibility of any necessary change can be imposed on the evolutionary urge. All has not to be fundamentally changed: on the contrary, all has to be preserved that is still needed in the totality, but all has to be perfected. Whatever is necessary for the evolutionary purpose for the increasing, enlarging, heightening of the consciousness, which seems to be its central will and aim here, or the progression of its enabling means and preserving environment, has to be kept and furthered; but what has to be overpassed, whatever has no longer a use or is degraded, what has become unhelpful or retarding, can be discarded and dropped on the way. That has been evident in the history of the evolution of the body from its beginning in elementary forms to its most developed type, the

human; there is no reason why this process should not intervene in the transition from the human into the divine body. For the manifestation or building of a divine body on earth there must be an initial transformation, the appearance of a new, a greater and more developed type, not a continuance with little modifications of the present physical form and its limited possibilities. What has to be preserved must indeed be preserved and that means whatever is necessary or thoroughly serviceable for the uses of the new life on earth; whatever is still needed and will serve its purpose but is imperfect, will have to be retained but developed and perfected; whatever is no longer of use for new aims or is a disability must be thrown aside. The necessary forms and instrumentations of Matter must remain since it is in a world of Matter that the divine life has to manifest, but their materiality must be refined, uplifted, ennobled, illumined, since Matter and the world of Matter have increasingly to manifest the indwelling Spirit.

The new type, the divine body, must continue the already developed evolutionary form; there must be a continuation from the type Nature has all along been developing, a continuity from the human to the divine body, no breaking away to something unrecognisable but a high sequel to what has already been achieved and in part perfected. The human body has in it parts and instruments that have been sufficiently evolved to serve the divine life; these have to survive in their form, though they must be still further perfected, their limitations of range and use removed, their liability to defect and malady and impairment eliminated, their capacities of cognition and dynamic action carried beyond the present limits. New powers have to be acquired by the body which our present humanity could not hope to realise, could not even dream of or could only imagine. Much that can now only be known, worked out or created by the use of invented tools and machinery might be achieved by the new body in its own power or by the inhabitant spirit through its own direct spiritual force. The body itself might acquire new means and ranges of communication with other bodies, new processes of acquiring knowledge, a new aesthesis, new potencies



of manipulation of itself and objects. It might not be impossible for it to possess or disclose means native to its own constitution, substance or natural instrumentation for making the far near and annulling distance, cognising what is now beyond the body's cognisance, acting where action is now out of its reach or its domain, developing subtleties and plasticities which could not be permitted under present conditions to the needed fixity of a material frame. These and other numerous potentialities might appear and the body become an instrument immeasurably superior to what we can now imagine as possible. There could be an evolution from a first apprehending truth-consciousness to the utmost heights of the ascending ranges of supermind and it may pass the borders of the supermind proper itself where it begins to shadow out, develop, delineate expressive forms of life touched by a supreme pure existence, consciousness and bliss which constitute the worlds of a highest truth of existence, dynamism of tapas, glory and sweetness of bliss, the absolute essence and pitch of the all-creating Ananda. The transformation of the physical being might follow this incessant line of progression and the divine body reflect or reproduce here in a divine life on the earth something of this highest greatness and glory of the self-manifesting Spirit.

## Supermind and the Life Divine

**A** DIVINE life upon earth, the ideal we have placed before us, can only come about by a spiritual change of our being and a radical and fundamental change, an evolution or revolution of our nature. The embodied being upon earth would have to rise out of the domination over it of its veils of mind, life and body into the full consciousness and possession of its spiritual reality, and its nature also would have to be lifted out of the consciousness and power of consciousness proper to a mental, vital and physical being into the greater consciousness and greater power of being and the larger and freer life of the spirit. It would not lose these former veils but they would no longer be veils or imperfect expressions but true manifestations; they would be changed into states of light, powers of spiritual life, vehicles of a spiritual existence. But this again could not be if mind, life and body were not taken up and transformed by a state of being and a force of being superior to them, a power of Supermind as much above our incomplete mental nature as that is above the nature of animal life and animated Matter, as it is immeasurably above the mere material nature.

The Supermind is in its very essence a truth-consciousness, a consciousness always free from the Ignorance which is the foundation of our present natural or evolutionary existence and from which nature in us is trying to arrive at self-knowledge and world-knowledge and a right consciousness and the right use of our existence in the universe. The Supermind, because it is a truth-consciousness, has this knowledge inherent in it and this power of true existence; its course is straight and can go direct to its aim, its field is wide and can even be made illimitable. This is because its very nature is knowledge: it has not to acquire knowledge but possesses it in its own right;

its steps are not from nescience or ignorance into some imperfect light, but from truth to greater truth, from right perception to deeper perception, from intuition to intuition, from illumination to utter and boundless luminousness, from growing widenesses to the utter vasts and to very infinitude. On its summits it possesses the divine omniscience and omnipotence, but even in an evolutionary movement of its own graded self-manifestation by which it would eventually reveal its own highest heights, it must be in its very nature essentially free from ignorance and error: it starts from truth and light and moves always in truth and light. As its knowledge is always true, so too its will is always true; it does not fumble in its handling of things or stumble in its paces. In the Supermind feeling and emotion do not depart from their truth, make no slips or mistakes, do not swerve from the right and the real, cannot misuse beauty and delight or twist away from a divine rectitude. In the Supermind sense cannot mislead or deviate into the grossnesses which are here its natural imperfections and the cause of reproach, distrust and misuse by our ignorance. Even an incomplete statement made by the Supermind is a truth leading to a further truth, its incomplete action a step towards completeness. All the life and action and leading of the Supermind is guarded in its very nature from the falsehoods and uncertainties that are our lot; it moves in safety towards its perfection. Once the truth-consciousness was established here on its own sure foundation, the evolution of divine life would be a progress in felicity, a march through light to Ananda.

Supermind is an eternal reality of the divine Being and the divine Nature. In its own plane it already and always exists and possesses its own essential law of being; it has not to be created or to emerge or evolve into existence out of involution in Matter or out of non-existence, as it might seem to the view of mind which itself seems to its own view to have so emerged from life and Matter or to have evolved out of an involution in life and Matter. The nature of Supermind is always the same, a being of knowledge, proceeding from truth to truth, creating or

rather manifesting what has to be manifested by the power of a pre-existent knowledge, not by hazard but by a self-existent destiny in the being itself, a necessity of the thing in itself and therefore inevitable. Its manifestation of the divine life will also be inevitable; its own life on its own plane is divine and, if Supermind descends upon the earth, it will bring necessarily the divine life with it and establish it here.

Supermind is the grade of existence beyond mind, life and Matter and, as mind, life and Matter have manifested on the earth, so too must Supermind in the inevitable course of things manifest in this world of Matter. In fact, a supermind is already here but it is involved, concealed behind this manifest mind, life and Matter and not yet acting overtly or in its own power: if it acts, it is through these inferior powers and modified by their characters and so not yet recognisable. It is only by the approach and arrival of the descending Supermind that it can be liberated upon earth and reveal itself in the action of our material, vital and mental parts so that these lower powers can become portions of a total divinised activity of our whole being: it is that that will bring to us a completely realised divinity or the divine life. It is indeed so that life and mind involved in Matter have realised themselves here; for only what is involved can evolve, otherwise there could be no emergence.

The manifestation of a supramental truth-consciousness is therefore the capital reality that will make the divine life possible. It is when all the movements of thought, impulse and action are governed and directed by a self-existent and luminously automatic truth-consciousness and our whole nature comes to be constituted by it and made of its stuff that the life divine will be complete and absolute. Even as it is, in reality though not in the appearance of things, it is a secret self-existent knowledge and truth that is working to manifest itself in the creation here. The Divine is already there immanent within us, ourselves are that in our inmost reality and it is this reality that we have to manifest; it is that which constitutes the urge towards the divine living and makes necessary the creation of the life divine even in this material existence.

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A manifestation of the Supermind and its truth-consciousness is then inevitable; it must happen in this world sooner or later. But it has two aspects, a descent from above, an ascent from below, a self-revelation of the Spirit, an evolution in Nature. The ascent is necessarily an effort, a working of Nature, an urge or *nîsus* on her side to raise her lower parts by an evolutionary or revolutionary change, conversion or transformation into the divine reality and it may happen by a process and progress or by a rapid miracle. The descent or self-revelation of the Spirit is an act of the supreme Reality from above which makes the realisation possible and it can appear either as the divine aid which brings about the fulfilment of the progress and process or as the sanction of the miracle. Evolution, as we see it in this world, is a slow and difficult process and, indeed, needs usually ages to reach abiding results; but this is because it is in its nature an emergence from inconscient beginnings, a start from nescience and a working in the ignorance of natural beings by what seems to be an unconscious force. There can be, on the contrary, an evolution in the light and no longer in the darkness, in which the evolving being is a conscious participant and cooperator, and this is precisely what must take place here. Even in the effort and progress from the Ignorance to Knowledge this must be in part if not wholly the endeavour to be made on the heights of the nature, and it must be wholly that in the final movement towards the spiritual change, realisation, transformation. It must be still more so when there is a transition across the dividing line between the Ignorance and the Knowledge and the evolution is from knowledge to greater knowledge, from consciousness to greater consciousness, from being to greater being. There is then no longer any necessity for the slow pace of the ordinary evolution; there can be rapid conversion, quick transformation after transformation, what would seem to our normal present mind a succession of miracles. An evolution on the supramental levels could well be of that nature; it could be equally, if the being so chose, a more leisurely passage of one supramental state or condition of things to something beyond but still supramental, from level to divine level, a building up of

divine gradations, a free growth to the supreme Supermind or beyond it to yet undreamed levels of being, consciousness and Ananda.

The supramental knowledge, the truth-consciousness of the Supermind is in itself one and total: even when there is a voluntary limitation of the knowledge or what might seem to be a partial manifestation, it is so voluntarily; the limitation does not proceed from or result in any kind of ignorance, it is not a denial or withholding of knowledge, for all the rest of the truth that is not brought into expression is implicit there. Above all, there are no contradictions: whatever would seem to be opposites to the mind, here carry in themselves their own right relation and reconciling agreement, — if indeed any reconciliation were needed, for the harmony of these apparent opposites is complete. The mind tends to put the personal and the impersonal in face of each other as if they were two contraries, but the Supermind sees and realises them as, at the lowest, complements and mutually fulfilling powers of the single Reality and, more characteristically, as interfused and inseparable and themselves that single Reality. The Person has his aspect of impersonality inseparable from himself without which he could not be what he is or could not be his whole self: the Impersonal is in its truth not a state of existence, a state of consciousness and a state of bliss, but a Being self-existent, conscious of self, full of his own self-existent bliss, bliss the very substance of his being, — so, the one single and illimitable Person, Purusha. In the Supermind the finite does not cut up or limit the infinite, does not feel itself contrary to the infinite; but rather it feels its own infinity: the relative and temporal is not a contradiction of eternity but a right relation of its aspects, a native working or an imperishable feature of the eternal. Time there is only the eternal in extension and the eternal can be felt in the momentary. Thus the integral Divine is there in the Supermind and no theory of illusion or self-contradictory Maya need be thrust in to justify its way of existence. It will be obvious that an escape from life is not necessary for the Divine to find itself or its reality; it possesses that always whether in cosmic life or in its transcendent existence. The divine life cannot

be a contradiction of the Divine or of the supreme reality; it is part of that reality, an aspect or expression of it and it can be nothing else. In life on the supramental plane all the Divine is possessed, and when the Supermind descends on earth, it must bring the Divine with it and make that full possession possible here.

The divine life will give to those who enter into it and possess it an increasing and finally a complete possession of the truth-consciousness and all that it carries in it; it will bring with it the realisation of the Divine in self and the Divine in Nature. All that is sought by the God-seeker will be fulfilled in his spirit and in his life as he moves towards spiritual perfection. He will become aware of the transcendent reality, possess in the self-experience the supreme existence, consciousness, bliss, be one with Sachchidananda. He will become one with cosmic being and universal Nature: he will contain the world in himself, in his own cosmic consciousness and feel himself one with all beings; he will see himself in all and all in himself, become united and identified with the Self which has become all existences. He will perceive the beauty of the All-Beautiful and the miracle of the All-Wonderful; he will enter in the end into the bliss of the Brahman and live abidingly in it and for all this he will not need to shun existence or plunge into the annihilation of the spiritual Person in some self-extinguishing Nirvana. As in the Self, so in Nature, he can realise the Divine. The nature of the Divine is Light and Power and Bliss; he can feel the divine Light and Power and Bliss above him and descending into him, filling every strand of his nature, every cell and atom of his being, flooding his soul and mind and life and body, surrounding him like an illimitable sea and filling the world, suffusing all his feeling and sense and experience, making all his life truly and utterly divine. This and all else that the spiritual consciousness can bring to him the divine life will give him when it reaches its utmost completeness and perfection and the supramental truth-consciousness is fulfilled in all himself; but even before that he can attain to something of it all, grow in it, live in it, once the Supermind has descended upon him and has the direction of his

existence. All relations with the Divine will be his: the trinity of God-knowledge, divine works and devotion to God will open within him and move towards an utter self-giving and surrender of his whole being and nature. He will live in God and with God, possess God, as it is said, even plunge in him forgetting all separate personality, but not losing it in self-extinction. The love of God and all the sweetness of love will remain his, the bliss of contact as well as the bliss of oneness and the bliss of difference in oneness. All the infinite ranges of experience of the Infinite will be his and all the joy of the finite in the embrace of the Infinite.

The descent of the Supermind will bring to one who receives it and is fulfilled in the truth-consciousness all the possibilities of the divine life. It will take up not only the whole characteristic experience which we recognise already as constituting the spiritual life, but also all which we now exclude from that category but which is capable of divinisation, not excluding whatever of the earth-nature and the earth-life can be transformed by the touch of the Supermind and taken up into the manifested life of the Spirit. For a divine life on earth need not be a thing apart and exclusive having nothing to do with the common earthly existence: it will take up human being and human life, transform what can be transformed, spiritualise whatever can be spiritualised, cast its influence on the rest and effectuate either a radical or an uplifting change, bring about a deeper communion between the universal and the individual, invade the ideal with the spiritual truth of which it is a luminous shadow and help to uplift into or towards a greater and higher existence. Mind it will uplift towards a diviner light of thought and will, life towards deeper and truer emotion and action, towards a larger power of itself, towards high aims and motives. Whatever cannot yet be raised into its own full truth of being, it will bring nearer to that fullness; whatever is not ready even for that change, will still see the possibility open to it whenever its still incomplete evolution has made it ready for self-fulfilment. Even the body, if it can bear the touch of Supermind, will become more aware of its own truth, — for there is a body consciousness



that has its own instinctive truth and power of right condition and action, even a kind of unexpressed occult knowledge in the constitution of its cells and tissues which may one day become conscious and contribute to the transformation of the physical being. An awakening must come in the earth-nature and in the earth-consciousness which will be, if not the actual beginning, at least the effective preparation and the first steps of its evolution towards a new and diviner world order.

This would be the fulfilment of the divine life which the descent of Supermind and the working of the truth-consciousness taking hold of the whole nature of the living being would bring about in all who could open themselves to its power or influence. Even its first immediate effect would be on all who are capable the possibility of entering into the truth-consciousness and changing all the movements of the nature more and more into the movements of the supramental truth, truth of thought, truth of will, truth in the feelings, truth in the acts, true conditions of the whole being even to the body, eventually transformation, a divinising change. For those who could so open themselves and remain open, there would be no limitation to this development and even no fundamental difficulty; for all difficulties would be dissolved by the pressure of the supramental light and power from above pouring itself into the mind and the life-force and the body. But the result of the supramental descent need not be limited to those who could thus open themselves entirely and it need not be limited to the supramental change; there could also be a minor or secondary transformation of the mental being within a freed and perfected scope of the mental nature. In place of the human mind as it now is, a mind limited, imperfect, open at every moment to all kinds of deviation from the truth or missing of the truth, all kinds of error and openness even to the persuasions of a complete falsehood and perversion of the nature, a mind blinded and pulled down towards inconscience and ignorance, hardly arriving at knowledge, an intellect prone to interpret the higher knowledge in abstractions and indirect figures seizing and holding even the messages of the higher intuition with an uncertain and disputed grasp, there could emerge

a true mind liberated and capable of the free and utmost perfection of itself and its instruments, a life governed by the free and illumined mind, a body responsive to the light and able to carry out all that the free mind and will could demand of it. This change might happen not only in the few, but extend and generalise itself in the race. This possibility, if fulfilled, would mean that the human dream of perfection, perfection of itself, of its purified and enlightened nature, of all its ways of action and living, would be no longer a dream but a truth that could be made real and humanity lifted out of the hold on it of inconscience and ignorance. The life of the mental being could be harmonised with the life of the Supermind which will then be the highest order above it, and become even an extension and annexe of the truth-consciousness, a part and province of the divine life. It is obvious that if the Supermind is there and an order of supramental being is established as the leading principle in earth-nature, as mind is now the leading principle, but with a sureness, a complete government of the earthly existence, a capacity of transformation of all upon their level and within their natural boundaries of which the mind in its imperfection was not capable, an immense change of human life, even if it did not extend to transformation, would be inevitable.

It remains to consider what might be the obstacles in the way of this possibility, especially those offered by the nature of the earth-order and its function as a field of a graded evolution in which our humanity is a stage and, it might be argued, its very imperfection an evolutionary necessity, how far could or would Supermind by its presence and government of things overcome this difficulty while respecting the principle of gradation, and whether it could not rectify the wrong and ignorant order imposed by the Ignorance and Inconscience and substitute for it a right gradation in which the perfection and divinisation would be possible. Certainly, the way for the individual would be open; whatever group of human beings aspire as united in an endeavour at a perfect individual and collective living or aspire to the divine life, would be assisted towards the attainment of its aspiration: that at least the Supermind would make its minimum

consequence. But the greater possibility is also there and might even be offered to the whole of humanity. This, then, we have to consider, what would the descent of the Supermind mean for mankind and what would be its result or its promise for the whole life and evolutionary future and destiny of the human race?

## Supermind and Humanity

**W**HAT THEN would be the consequence for humanity of the descent of Supermind into our earthly existence, its consequence for this race born into a world of ignorance and inconstancy but capable of an upward evolution of its consciousness and an ascent into the light and power and bliss of a spiritual being and spiritual nature? The descent into the earth-life of so supreme a creative power as the Supermind and its truth-consciousness could not be merely a new feature or factor added to that life or put in its front but without any other importance or only a restricted importance carrying with it no results profoundly affecting the rest of earth-nature. Especially it could not fail to exercise an immense influence on mankind as a whole, even a radical change in the aspect and prospect of its existence here, even if this power had no other capital result on the material world in which it had come down to intervene. One cannot but conclude that the influence, the change made would be far-reaching, even enormous: it would not only establish the Supermind and a supramental race of beings upon the earth, it could bring about an uplifting and transforming change in mind itself and, as an inevitable consequence, in the consciousness of man, the mental being, and would equally bring about a radical and transforming change in the principles and forms of his living, his ways of action and the whole build and tenor of his life. It would certainly open to man the access to the supramental consciousness and the supramental life; for we must suppose that it is by such a transformation that a race of supramental beings would be created, even as the human race itself has arisen by a less radical but still a considerable uplifting and enlargement of consciousness and conversion of the body's instrumentation and its indwelling and evolving mental and spiritual capacities and powers out of a first animal state. But even without any

such complete transformation, the truth-principle might so far replace the principle we see here of an original ignorance seeking for knowledge and arriving only at a partial knowledge that the human mind could become a power of light, of knowledge finding itself, not the denizen of a half-way twilight or a servant and helper of the ignorance, a purveyor of mingled truth and error. Mind might even become in man, what it is in its fundamental origin, a subordinate, limited and special action of the Supermind, a sufficiently luminous receptacle of truth, and at least all falsity in its works might cease.

It could at once be objected that this would alter the whole evolutionary order and its balance and leave an incurable gap in its completeness: there would be an unbridged gulf between man and the animal and no way for the evolutionary *nisus* to journey over it in the progress of the consciousness from animality to divinity; for some kind of divinity would be involved in the suggested metamorphosis. It might be contended that the true process of evolution is to add a new principle, degree or stage to the already existing order and not to make any alteration in any previously established feature. Man came into being but the animal remained the animal and made no progress towards a half-humanity: all slight modifications of consciousness, capacities or habits in domestic animals produced by the association with man or by his training of them are only slight alterations of the animal intelligence. Still less can the plant move towards animal consciousness or brute Matter become in the slightest degree, even subconsciously or half subconsciously, aware of itself or responsive or reactive. The fundamental distinctions remain and must remain unaltered in the cosmic order. But this objection presumes that the new humanity must be all of one level; there may well be gradations of consciousness in it which would bridge the distance between its least developed elements and the higher animals who, although they cannot pass into a semi-human kind, might still progress towards a higher animal intelligence: for certain experiments show that these are not all entirely unprogressive. These gradations would serve the purpose of the transition quite as well as the least developed humans

in the present scale without leaving a gap so wide as to disturb the evolutionary order of the universe. A considerable saltus can, as it is, be observed separating the different orders, Matter and the plant, the plant and the lower animals, one species of animals and another, as well as that always existing and large enough between the highest animal and man. There would therefore be no incurable breach in the evolutionary order, no such distance between human mind and animal mind, between the new type of human being and the old animal level as could not be overleaped or would create an unbridgeable gulf for the most developed animal soul in its passage to the least developed type of the new humanity. A leap, a saltus, there would be, as there is now; but it would not be between animality and divinity, from animal mind to Supermind: it would be between a most highly developed animal mind turning towards human possibilities — for without that the passage from animal to man could not be achieved — and a human mind waking to the possibility, not yet the full achievement, of its own higher yet unattained capacities.

One result of the intervention of Supermind in the earth-nature, the descent of the supreme creative Truth-Power, might well be a change in the law of evolution, its method and its arrangement: a larger element of the principle of evolution through knowledge might enter into the forces of the material universe. This might extend itself from a first beginning in the new creation and produce increasing effects in the order which is now wholly an evolution in the ignorance, and indeed starts from the complete nescience of the Inconscient and proceeds towards what can be regarded even in its highest attainment of knowledge as a lesser ignorance, since it is more a representation than a direct and complete possession of knowledge. If man began to develop the powers and means of a higher knowledge in something like fullness, if the developing animal opened the door of his mentality to beginnings of conscious thought and even a rudimentary reason, — at his highest he is not so irrevocably far from that even now, — if the plant developed its first subconscious reactions and attained to some kind of primary nervous sensitiveness, if Matter, which is a blind form of the Spirit, were

to become more alive with the hidden power within it and to offer more readily the secret sense of things, the occult realities it covers, as for instance, the record of the past it always preserves even in its dumb inconscience or the working of its involved forces and invisible movements revealing veiled powers in material nature to a subtler generalised perception of the new human intelligence, this would be an immense change promising greater changes in the future, but it would mean only an uplifting and not a disturbance of the universal order. Evolution would itself evolve, but it would not be perturbed or founder.

It is difficult for us to conceive in theory or admit as a practical possibility the transformation of the human mentality I have suggested as a change that would naturally take place under the lead of the supramental Truth-consciousness, because our notions about mind are rooted in an experience of human mentality in a world which starts from inconscience and proceeds through a first almost complete nescience and a slowly lessening ignorance towards a high degree but always incomplete scope and imperfect method of only partially equipped knowledge which does not serve fully the needs of a consciousness always pushing towards its own still immeasurably distant absolute. The visible imperfections and limitations of mind in the present stage of its evolution here we take as part of its very nature; but in fact the boundaries in which it is still penned are only temporary limits and measures of its still incomplete evolutionary advance; its defects of methods and means are faults of its immaturity and not proper to the constitution of its being; its achievement, although extraordinary under the hampering conditions of the mental being weighed down by its instrumentation in an earthly body, is far below and not beyond what will be possible to it in its illumined future. For mind is not in its very nature an inventor of errors, a father of lies bound down to a capacity of falsehood, wedded to its own mistakes and the leader of a stumbling life as it too largely is at present owing to our human shortcomings: it is in its origin a principle of light, an instrument put forth from the Supermind and, though set to work within limits and even set to create limits, yet the limits are luminous borders for

a special working, voluntary and purposive bounds, a surface of the finite ever extending itself under the eye of infinity. It is this character of Mind that will reveal itself under the touch of Supermind and make human mentality an adjunct and a minor instrumentation of the supramental knowledge. It will even be possible for the mind no longer limited by the intellect to become capable of a sort of mental gnosis, a luminous reproduction of the Truth in a diminished working, extending the power of the Light not only to its own but to lower levels of consciousness in their climb towards self-transcendence. Overmind, Intuition, Illumined Mind and what I have called Higher Mind, these and other levels of a spiritualised and liberated mentality, will be able to reflect in the uplifted human mind and its purified and exalted feeling and force of life and action something of their powers and prepare the ascent of the soul to their own plateaus and peaks of an ascending existence. This is essentially the change which can be contemplated as a result of the new evolutionary order, and it would mean a considerable extension of the evolutionary field itself and will answer the question as to the result on humanity of the advent of Supermind into the earth-nature.

If mind in its origin from Supermind is itself a power of Supermind, a principle of Light and a power of Light or a force for Knowledge specialised in its action for a subordinate purpose, yet it assumes a different aspect when in the working out of this purpose it separates itself more and more from the supramental light, from the immediate power and supporting illumination of the supramental principle. It is as it departs more and more in this direction from its own highest truth that it becomes a creator or parent of ignorance and is or seems to be the highest power in a world of ignorance; it becomes itself subject to ignorance and seems only to arrive at a partial and imperfect knowledge. The reason of this decline is that it is used by the Supermind principally for the work of differentiation which is necessary if there is to be a creation and a universe. In the Supermind itself, in all its creation there is this differentiating power, the manifestation of the One in the Many and



the Many in the One; but the One is never forgotten or lost in its multiplicity which always consciously depends upon and never takes precedence over the eternal oneness. In the mind, on the contrary, the differentiation, the multiplicity does take precedence and the conscious sense of the universal oneness is lost and the separated unit seems to exist for itself and by itself as a sufficient self-conscious integer or in inanimate objects as the inconscient integer.

It should be noted, however, that a world or plane of mind need not be a reign of ignorance where falsity, error or nescience must have a place; it may be only a voluntary self-limitation of knowledge. It could be a world where all possibilities capable of being determined by mind could manifest themselves in the successions of Time and find a true form and field of their action, the expressive figure of themselves, their capacity of self-development, self-realisation of a kind, self-discovery. This is actually what we meet when we follow in psychic experience the line of descent by which the involution takes place which ends in Matter and the creation of the material universe. What we see here is not the planes or worlds of the descent in which mind and life can keep something of their truth and something of the light of the spirit, something of their true and real being; here we see an original inconscience and a struggle of life and mind and spirit to evolve out of the material inconscience and in a resultant ignorance to find themselves and grow towards their full capacity and highest existence. If mind succeeds in that endeavour there is no reason why it should not recover its true character and be once more a principle and power of Light and even in its own way aid in the workings of a true and complete knowledge. At its highest it might pass out of its limitations into the supramental truth and become part and function of the supramental knowledge or at the least serve for a minor work of differentiation in the consensus of that knowledge: in the lower degree below Supermind it might be a mental gnosis, a spiritual or spiritualised perception, feeling, activity, sense which could do the works of knowledge and not of ignorance. Even at a still lower level it could be an increasingly luminous passage leading

from light to light, from truth to truth and no longer a circling in the mazes of half-truth and half-nescience. This would not be possible in a world where untransformed mind or human mind burdened with its hampering disabilities, as it now is, will still be the leader or the evolution's highest achievement, but with Supermind for the leading and dominant power this might well happen, and might even be regarded as one result and an almost inevitable result of its descent into the human world and its touch on the mind of humanity.

How far this would go, whether the whole of humanity would be touched or only a part of it ready for the change, would depend on what was intended or possible in the continued order of the universe. If the old evolutionary principle and order must be preserved, then only a section of the race would pass onward, the rest would keep the old human position, level and function in the ascending order. But even so there must be a passage or bridge between the two levels or orders of being by which the evolution would make its transition from one to the other; the mind would there be capable of contact with and modification by the supramental truth and thus would be the means of the soul's passing on upward: there must be a status of mind capable of receiving and growing in the Light towards Supermind though not reaching it; through that, as even now happens in a lesser degree through a dimmer medium, the lustre of a greater truth would send down its rays for the liberation and uplift of the soul in the ignorance. Supermind is here veiled behind a curtain and, though not organised for its own characteristic action, it is the true cause of all creation here, the power for the growth of truth and knowledge and the ascension of the soul towards the hidden Reality. But in a world where Supermind has made its appearance, it could hardly be a separate factor isolated from the rest, it would inevitably not only create superman but change and uplift man. A total change of the mental principle, such as has been suggested, cannot be ruled out as impossible.

Mind as we know it, as a power of consciousness quite distinct from Supermind, no longer a power devolved from it, connected with it and dependent upon it, but practically

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divorced from its luminous origin, is marked by several characteristics which we conceive to be the very signs of its nature: but some of these belong to Supermind also and the difference is in the way and scope of their action, not in their stuff or in their principle. The difference is that mind is not a power of whole knowledge and only when it begins to pass beyond itself a power of direct knowledge: it receives rays of the truth but does not live in the sun; it sees as through glasses and its knowledge is coloured by its instruments, it cannot see with the naked eye or look straight at the sun. It is not possible for mind to take its stand in the solar centre or anywhere in the radiant body or even on the shining circumference of the orb of perfect truth and acquire or share in its privilege of infallible or absolute knowledge. It would be only if it had already drawn near to the light of Supermind that it could live anywhere near this sun in the full splendour of its rays, in something of the full and direct blaze of Truth, and the human mind even at its highest is far from that; it can only live at most in a limited circle, in some narrow beginnings of a pure insight, a direct vision and it would take long for it, even in surpassing itself, to reach to an imitative and fragmentary reflection of a dream of the limited omniscience and omnipotence which is the privilege of a delegated divinity, of the god, of a demiurge. It is a power for creation, but either tentative and uncertain and succeeding by good chance or the favour of circumstance or else, if assured by some force of practical ability or genius, subject to flaw or pent within unescapable limits. Its highest knowledge is often abstract, lacking in a concrete grasp; it has to use expedients and unsure means of arrival, to rely upon reasoning, argumentation and debate, inferences, divinations, set methods of inductive or deductive logic, succeeding only if it is given correct and complete data and even then liable to reach on the same data different results and varying consequences; it has to use means and accept results of a method which is hazardous even when making a claim to certitude and of which there would be no need if it had a direct or a supra-intellectual knowledge. It is not necessary to push the description further; all this is the very nature of our terrestrial ignorance and its shadow

hangs on even to the thought and vision of the sage and the seer and can be escaped only if the principle of a truth-conscious supramental knowledge descends and takes up the governance of the earth-nature.

It should be noted, however, that even at the bottom of the involutory descent, in the blind eclipse of consciousness in Matter, in the very field of the working of the Inconscient there are signs of the labour of an infallible force, the drive of a secret consciousness and its promptings, as if the Inconscient itself were secretly informed or impelled by a Power with a direct and absolute knowledge; its acts of creation are infinitely surer than the workings of our human consciousness at its best or the normal workings of the Life-power. Matter, or rather the Energy in Matter seems to have a more certain knowledge, a more infallible operation of its own and its mechanism once set going can be trusted for the most part to do its work accurately and well. It is so that man is able, taking hold of a material energy, to mechanise it for his own ends and trust it under proper conditions to do for him his work. The self-creating life-power, amazingly abundant in its invention and fantasy, yet seems to be more capable of flaw, aberration and failure; it is as if its greater consciousness carried in it a greater capacity for error. Yet it is sure enough ordinarily in its workings: but as consciousness increases in the forms and operations of life, and most when mind enters in, disturbances also increase as if the increase of consciousness brought with it not only richer possibilities but more possibilities of stumbling, error, flaw and failure. In mind, in man, we seem to reach the height of this antinomy, the greatest, highest, widest reach and achievements of consciousness, the greatest amount of uncertainty, defect, failure and error. This, we may conjecture, may be because in inconscient Nature there is a truth of energy at work which follows infallibly its own law, an energy which can walk blindfold without stumbling because the automatic law of the truth is within it, operating surely without swerving or mistake when there is no external intervention or interference. But in all normally automatic processes of existence there is this law: even the body has an unexpressed knowledge of

its own, a just instinct in its action within certain limits and this when not interfered with by life's desires and mind's errors can work with a certain accuracy and sureness. But Supermind alone has the truth-consciousness in full and, if this comes down and intervenes, mind, life and body too can attain to the full power of the truth in them and their full possibility of perfection. This, no doubt, would not take place at once, but an evolutionary progress towards it could begin and grow with increasing rapidity towards its fullness. All men might not reach that fullness till a later time, but still the human mind could come to stand perfected in the Light and a new humanity take its place as part of the new order.

This is the possibility we have to examine. If it is destined to fulfil itself, if man is not doomed to remain always as a vassal of the Ignorance, the disabilities of the human mind on which we have dwelt are not such as must remain irredeemably in possession and binding for ever. It could develop higher means and instrumentalities, pass over the last borders of the Ignorance into a higher knowledge, grow too strong to be held back by the animal nature. There would be a liberated mind escaping from ignorance into light, aware of its affiliation to Supermind, a natural agent of Supermind and capable of bringing down the supramental influence into the lower reaches of being, a creator in the light, a discoverer in the depths, an illuminant in the darkness, helping perhaps to penetrate even the Inconscient with the rays of a secret Superconscience. There would be a new mental being not only capable of standing enlightened in the radiance of the Supermind but able to climb consciously towards it and into it, training life and body to reflect and hold something of the supramental light, power and bliss, aspiring to release the secret divinity into self-finding and self-fulfilment and self-poise, aspiring towards the ascension to the divine consciousness, able to receive and bear the descent of the divine light and power, fitting itself to be a vessel of the divine Life.

## Supermind in the Evolution

**A** NEW humanity would then be a race of mental beings on the earth and in the earthly body, but delivered from its present conditions in the reign of the cosmic Ignorance so far as to be possessed of a perfected mind, a mind of light which could even be a subordinate action of the supermind or Truth-consciousness, and in any case capable of the full possibilities of mind acting as a recipient of that truth and at least a secondary action of it in thought and life. It could even be a part of what could be described as a divine life upon earth and at least the beginnings of an evolution in the Knowledge and no longer entirely or predominantly in the Ignorance. How far this would go, whether it would eventually embrace the whole of humanity or only an advanced portion of it, would depend upon the intention in the evolution itself, on the intention in whatever cosmic or transcendent Will is guiding the movements of the universe. We have supposed not only the descent of the supermind upon the earth but its embodiment in a supramental race with all its natural consequences and a new total action in which the new humanity would find its complete development and its assured place in the new order.

But it is clear that all this could only come as a result of the evolution which is already taking place upon earth extending far beyond its present bounds and passing into a radically new movement governed by a new principle in which mind and man would be subordinate elements and no longer mind the utmost achievement or man the head or leader. The evolution we see around us at present is not of that kind and, it might be said, shows few signs of such a possibility, so few that the reason, at present our only sure guide, has no right to hazard belief in it. Earth, the earth we see, with its life deeply immersed and founded in inconscience and ignorance, is not built for such a

development or capable of holding such an advent; its materiality and limitations condemn it to be permanently the field of a far inferior order. It may be said too that for such an order there must be a place somewhere and even if supermind is not a mere unwarranted speculation and is a concrete reality, there is no need and no place for its embodying itself here. Mind, as marking the full play of the knowledge possible to the ignorance, must have its field somewhere and to keep the earth as its natural field would best serve the economy of cosmic Nature. A materialistic philosophy would admit of no possibility of a divine life in Matter; but even a philosophy admitting a soul or spirit or a spiritual terminus of the evolutionary movement here could very well deny the capacity of earth for a divine life: a divine existence could only be achieved by a departure from earth and the body. Even if cosmic existence is not an illusion or Maya, a divine or a completely spiritual being is likely to be possible only in another less material world or only in the pure spirit. At any rate, to the normal human reason the odds seem to be heavily against any early materialisation on earth of anything divine.

Again, if too strong a stress is laid on the present or apparent character of the evolution here as it is presented to us by physical science, it might be urged that there is no warrant for expecting any emergence of a principle higher than human mind or of any such thing as superhuman beings in a world of Matter. Consciousness is itself dependent upon Matter and material agencies for its birth and its operations and an infallible Truth-consciousness, such as we suppose supermind to be, would be a contradiction of these conditions and must be dismissed as a chimera. Fundamentally, physical science regards evolution as a development of forms and vital activities; the development of a larger and more capable consciousness is a subordinate result of the development of life and form and not a major or essential characteristic or circumstance and it cannot go beyond limits determined by the material origin of mind and life. Mind has shown itself capable of many extraordinary achievements, but independence of the material organ or of physical conditions or

a capability for any such thing as a power of direct and absolute knowledge not acquired by material means would be beyond the conditions imposed by Nature. At a certain point therefore the evolution of consciousness can go no further. Even if a something definite and independent which we call a soul exists, it is limited by its natural conditions here where Matter is the basis, physical life the condition, mind the highest possible instrument; there is no possibility of an action of consciousness apart from the body or surpassing this physical, vital or mental Nature. This fixes the limits of our evolution here.

It might be suggested also that until something clearly recognisable like supermind manifests itself with some definiteness and fullness or until it descends and takes possession of our earth-consciousness, we cannot be certain that it exists; till then mind holds the place as a general arbiter or field of reference for all knowledge and mind is incapable of any certain or absolute knowledge; it has to doubt all, to test all and yet to achieve all, but cannot be secure in its knowledge or its achievement. That, incidentally, establishes the necessity of such a principle as the supermind or Truth-consciousness in any intelligible universe, for without it there is no issue, no goal for either life or knowledge. Consciousness cannot achieve its own entire meaning, its own supreme result without it; it will end in an inconsequence or a fiasco. To become aware of its own truth and all truth is the very aim of its existence and it cannot do so, so long as it has to tend towards truth, towards knowledge in ignorance and through the ignorance: it must develop or it must reach a power of itself whose very nature is to know, to see, to possess in its own power. This is what we call supermind and, once it is admitted, all the rest becomes intelligible. But till then we are in doubt and it may be contended that even if supermind is admitted as a reality, there can be no certainty of its advent and reign: till then all effort towards it may end in failure. It is not enough that the supermind should be actually there above us, its descent a possibility or a future intention in Nature. We have no certainty of the reality of this descent until it becomes an objectivised fact in our earthly being. Light has often tried



to descend upon the earth, but the Light remains unfulfilled and incomplete; man may reject the Light, the world is still full of darkness and the advent seems to be little more than a chance; this doubt is to some extent justified by the actualities of the past and still existing possibilities of the future. Its power to stand would disappear only if supermind is once admitted as a consequent part of the order of the universe. If the evolution tends from Matter to Supermind, it must also tend to bring down Supermind into Matter and the consequences are inevitable.

The whole trouble of this incertitude arises from the fact that we do not look straight at the whole truth of the world as it is and draw from it the right conclusion as to what the world must be and cannot fail to be. This world is, no doubt, based ostensibly upon Matter, but its summit is Spirit and the ascent towards Spirit must be the aim and justification of its existence and the pointer to its meaning and purpose. But the natural conclusion to be drawn from the supremacy and summit existence of Spirit is clouded by a false or imperfect idea of spirituality which has been constructed by intellect in its ignorance and even by its too hasty and one-sided grasp at knowledge. The Spirit has been thought of not as something all-pervading and the secret essence of our being, but as something only looking down on us from the heights and drawing us only towards the heights and away from the rest of existence. So we get the idea of our cosmic and individual being as a great illusion, and departure from it and extinction in our consciousness of both individual and cosmos as the only hope, the sole release. Or we build up the idea of the earth as a world of ignorance, suffering and trial and our only future an escape into heavens beyond; there is no divine prospect for us here, no fulfilment possible even with the utmost evolution on earth in the body, no victorious transformation, no supreme object to be worked out in terrestrial existence. But if supermind exists, if it descends, if it becomes the ruling principle, all that seems impossible to mind becomes not only possible but inevitable. If we look closely, we shall see that there is a straining of mind and life on their heights towards their own perfection, towards

some divine fulfilment, towards their own absolute. That and not only something beyond and elsewhere is the true sign, the meaning of this constant evolution and the labour of continual birth and rebirth and the spiral ascent of Nature. But it is only by the descent of supermind and the fulfilment of mind and life by their self-exceeding that this secret intention in things, this hidden meaning of Spirit and Nature can become utterly overt and in its totality realisable. This is the evolutionary aspect and significance of supermind, but in truth it is an eternal principle existing covertly even in the material universe, the secret supporter of all creation, it is that which makes the emergence of consciousness possible and certain in an apparently inconscient world and compels a climb in Nature towards a supreme spiritual Reality. It is, in fact, an already and always existent plane of being, the nexus of Spirit and Matter, holding in its truth and reality and making certain the whole meaning and aim of the universe.

If we disregard our present ideas of evolution, all changes, — if we can regard consciousness and not life and form as the fundamental and essential evolutionary principle and its emergence and full development of its possibilities as the object of the evolutionary urge. The inconscience of Matter cannot be an insuperable obstacle; for in this inconscience can be detected an involved consciousness which has to evolve; life and mind are steps and instruments of that evolution; the purposeful drive and workings of the inconscient material Energy are precisely such as we can attribute to the presence of an involved consciousness, automatic, not using thought like the mind but guided by something like an inherent material instinct practically infallible in all its steps, not yet cognitive but miraculously creative. The entirely and inherently enlightened Truth-consciousness we attribute to supermind would be the same reality appearing at an ultimate stage of the evolution, finally evolved and no longer wholly involved as in Matter or partly and imperfectly evolved and therefore capable of imperfection and error as in life and mind, now possessed of its own natural fullness and perfection, luminously automatic, infallible. All the objections to a complete

evolutionary possibility then fall away; it would, on the contrary, be the inevitable consequence contained not only in Nature as a whole but even in material Nature.

In this vision of things the universe will reveal itself in its unity and totality as a manifestation of a single Being, Nature as its power of manifestation, evolution as its process of gradual self-revelation here in Matter. We would see the divine series of the worlds as a ladder of ascent from Matter to supreme Spirit; there would reveal itself the possibility, the prospect of a supreme manifestation by the conscious and no longer a veiled and enigmatic descent of the Spirit and its powers in their fullness even into this lowest world of Matter. The riddle of the universe need be no longer a riddle; the dubious mystery of things would put off its enigma, its constant ambiguity, the tangled writings would become legible and intelligible. In this revelation, supermind would take its natural place and no longer be a matter of doubt or questioning to an intelligence bewildered by the complexity of the world; it would appear as the inevitable consequence of the nature of mind, life and Matter, the fulfilment of their meaning, their inherent principle and tendencies, the necessary perfection of their imperfection, the summit to which all are climbing, the consummation of divine existence, consciousness and bliss to which it is leading, the last result of the birth of things and supreme goal of this progressive manifestation which we see here in life.

The full emergence of supermind may be accomplished by a sovereign manifestation, a descent into earth-consciousness and a rapid assumption of its powers and disclosing of its forms and the creation of a supramental race and a supramental life: this must indeed be the full result of its action in Nature. But this has not been the habit of evolutionary Nature in the past upon earth and it may well be that this supramental evolution also will fix its own periods, though it cannot be at all a similar development to that of which earth has hitherto been the witness. But once it has begun, all must unavoidably and perfectly manifest and all parts of Nature must tend towards a greatest possible luminousness and perfection. It is this certainty that authorises us to believe

that mind and humanity also will tend towards a realisation that will be far beyond our present dreams of perfection. A mind of light will replace the present confusion and trouble of this earthly ignorance; it is likely that even those parts of humanity which cannot reach it will yet be aware of its possibility and consciously tend towards it; not only so, but the life of humanity will be enlightened, uplifted, governed, harmonised by this luminous principle and even the body become something much less powerless, obscure and animal in its propensities and capable instead of a new and harmonised perfection. It is this possibility that we have to look at and that would mean a new humanity uplifted into Light, capable of a spiritualised being and action, open to governance by some light of the Truth-consciousness, capable even on the mental level and in its own order of something that might be called the beginning of a divinised life.

## Mind of Light

**A** NEW humanity means for us the appearance, the development of a type or race of mental beings whose principle of mentality would be no longer a mind in the Ignorance seeking for knowledge but even in its knowledge bound to the Ignorance, a seeker after Light but not its natural possessor, open to the Light but not an inhabitant of the Light, not yet a perfected instrument, truth-conscious and delivered out of the Ignorance. Instead, it would be possessed already of what could be called a mind of Light, a mind capable of living in the truth, capable of being truth-conscious and manifesting in its life a direct in place of an indirect knowledge. Its mentality would be an instrument of the Light and no longer of the Ignorance. At its highest it would be capable of passing into the supermind and from the new race would be recruited the race of supramental beings who would appear as the leaders of the evolution in earth-nature. Even, the highest manifestations of a mind of Light would be an instrumentality of the supermind, a part of it or a projection from it, a stepping beyond humanity into the superhumanity of the supramental principle. Above all, its possession would enable the human being to rise beyond the normalities of his present thinking, feeling and being into those highest powers of the mind in its self-exceedings which intervene between our mentality and supermind and can be regarded as steps leading towards the greater and more luminous principle. This advance like others in the evolution might not be reached and would naturally not be reached at one bound, but from the very beginning it would be inevitable: the pressure of the supermind creating from above out of itself the mind of Light would compel this certainty of the eventual outcome. The first gleamings of the new Light would carry in themselves the seed of its highest flamings; even in the first beginnings, the certainty

of their topmost powers would be there; for this is the constant story of each evolutionary emergence: the principle of its highest perfection lies concealed in the involution which precedes and necessitates the evolution of the secret principle.

For throughout the story of evolution there are two complementary aspects which constitute its action and are necessary to its totality; there is hidden in the involution of Nature the secret power and principle of being which lies concealed under the veil cast on it by material Nature and there is carried in that Nature itself the inevitable force of the principle compelling the process of emergence of its inherent powers and characters, the essential features which constitute its reality. As the evolutionary principle emerges, there are also two constant features of the process of the emergence: there are the gradations by which it climbs out of the involution and manifests more and more of its power, its possibilities, the force of the Godhead within it, and there is a constant manifestation of all types and forms of its being which are the visible, indicative and efficient embodiments of its essential nature. There appear in the evolutionary process organised forms and activities of Matter, the types of life and the living beings, the types of mind and the thinking beings, the luminosities and greatnesses of the spiritual principle and the spiritual beings whose nature, character, personality, mark the stages of the ascent towards the highest heights of the evolution and the ultimate largest manifestation of what it is in itself and must become by the force of time and the all-revealing Spirit. This is the real sense and drive of what we see as evolution: the multiplication and variation of forms is only the means of its process. Each gradation contains the possibility and the certainty of the grades beyond it: the emergence of more and more developed forms and powers points to more perfected forms and greater powers beyond them, and each emergence of consciousness and the conscious beings proper to it enables the rise to a greater consciousness beyond and the greater order of beings up to the ultimate godheads of which Nature is striving and is destined to show herself capable. Matter developed its organised forms until it became capable of embodying living

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organisms; then life rose from the subconsciousness of the plant into conscious animal formations and through them to the thinking life of man. Mind founded in life developed intellect, developed its types of knowledge and ignorance, truth and error till it reached the spiritual perception and illumination and now can see as in a glass dimly the possibility of supermind and a truth-conscious existence. In this inevitable ascent the mind of Light is a gradation, an inevitable stage. As an evolving principle it will mark a stage in the human ascent and evolve a new type of human being; this development must carry in it an ascending gradation of its own powers and types of an ascending humanity which will embody more and more the turn towards spirituality, capacity for Light, a climb towards a divinised manhood and the divine life.

In the birth of the mind of Light and its ascension into its own recognisable self and its true status and right province there must be, in the very nature of things as they are and very nature of the evolutionary process as it is at present, two stages. In the first, we can see the mind of Light gathering itself out of the Ignorance, assembling its constituent elements, building up its shapes and types, however imperfect at first, and pushing them towards perfection till it can cross the border of the Ignorance and appear in the Light, in its own Light. In the second stage we can see it developing itself in that greater natural light, taking its higher shapes and forms till it joins the supermind and lives as its subordinate portion or its delegate. In each of these stages it will define its own grades and manifest the order of its beings who will embody it and give to it a realised life. Thus there will be built up, first, even in the Ignorance itself, the possibility of a human ascent towards a divine living; then there will be, by the illumination of this mind of Light in the greater realisation of what may be called a gnostic mentality, in a transformation of the human being, even before the supermind is reached, even in the earth-consciousness and in a humanity transformed, an illumined divine life.

## Supermind and Mind of Light

**T**HE ESSENTIAL character of Supermind is a Truth-consciousness which knows by its own inherent right of nature, by its own light: it has not to arrive at knowledge but possesses it. It may indeed, especially in its evolutionary action, keep knowledge behind its apparent consciousness and bring it forward as if from behind the veil; but even then this veil is only an appearance and does not really exist: the knowledge was always there, the consciousness its possessor and present revealer. This too is only in the evolutionary play and on the supramental plane itself the consciousness lives always in an immediacy of knowledge and acts by a direct immediacy of knowledge. In Mind as we see it here the action is very different; it starts from an apparent absence of knowledge, a seeming ignorance or nescience, even, in material Nature, from an inconscience in which any kind of knowing does not seem at all to exist. It reaches knowledge or the action of knowledge by steps which are not at all immediate but rather knowledge at first seems utterly impossible and foreign to the very substance of this Matter. Yet, in the blindness of Matter itself there are signs of a concealed consciousness which in its hidden fundamental being sees and has the power to act according to its vision and even by an infallible immediacy which is inherent in its nature. This is the same Truth that is apparent in Supermind but is here involved and seems not to be. The Mind of Light is a subordinate action of Supermind, dependent upon it even when not apparently springing direct from it, in which the secret of this connection becomes evident and palpable.

The Truth-consciousness is not only a power of knowledge; it is a being of consciousness and knowledge, a luminous many-sided dynamis and play of the omniscient Spirit; in it there can be a spiritual feeling, a spiritual sensation, a spiritual essentiality of



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substance that knows and reveals, that acts and manifests in an omniscience which is one with omnipotence. In Mind this Truth-consciousness and these workings of the Truth-consciousness can be there and even though it limits itself in Mind and has a subordinate or an indirect working, its action can be essentially the same. There can even be a hidden immediacy which hints at the presence of something absolute and is evidence of the same omnipotence and omniscience. In the Mind of Light when it becomes full-orbed this character of the Truth reveals itself, though in a garb that is transparent even when it seems to cover: for this too is a truth-consciousness and a self-power of knowledge. This too proceeds from the Supermind and depends upon it even though it is limited and subordinate. What we have called specifically the Mind of Light is indeed the last of a series of descending planes of consciousness in which the Supermind veils itself by a self-chosen limitation or modification of its self-manifesting activities, but its essential character remains the same: there is in it an action of light, of truth, of knowledge in which inconscience, ignorance and error claim no place. It proceeds from knowledge to knowledge; we have not yet crossed over the borders of the truth-conscious into ignorance. The methods also are those of a self-luminous knowing and seeing and feeling and a self-fulfilling action within its own borders; there is no need to seek for something missing, no fumbling, no hesitation: all is still a gnostic action of a gnostic power and principle. There has been a descent from full Supermind into Mind, but this Mind though a self-limited is not yet an agnostic consciousness unsure of itself or unsure of its workings; there is still a comprehending or an apprehending consciousness which goes straight to its object and does not miss its mark or have to hunt for it in the dark or in insufficient light: it sees, knows, puts its hand immediately on things of self and things of Nature. We have passed into Mind but Mind has still not broken its inherent connection with the supramental principle.

Still there is an increasing self-limitation which begins even with Overmind: Overmind is separated by only a luminous border from the full light and power of the supramental Truth and

it still commands direct access to all that Supermind can give it. There is a further limitation or change of characteristic action at each step downwards from Overmind to Intuition, from Intuition to Illumined Mind, from Illumined Mind to what I have called the Higher Mind: the Mind of Light is a transitional passage by which we can pass from supermind and superhumanity to an illumined humanity. For the new humanity will be capable of at least a partly divinised way of seeing and living because it will live in the light and in knowledge and not in the obscuration of the Ignorance.

Still, again there will be a difference between the superhuman and the human, a difference in nature and power but a difference especially in the access and way of admission to the Truth-consciousness and its activities: there may indeed be two orders of its truth, direct and half-direct, immediate and near or even only a reception at a distance. But this we must consider afterwards; at present it is sufficient to mark certain differences in the descending order of gnostic mind which culminates here. We may say that there is a higher hemisphere of our being in which Mind, luminous and aware of its workings, still lives in the Light and can be seen as a subordinate power of the Supermind; it is still an agent of the Truth-consciousness, a gnostic power that has not descended into the mental ignorance; it is capable of a mental gnosis that preserves its connection with the superior light and acts by its power. This is the character of Overmind in its own plane and of all the powers that are dependent on the Overmind: the Supermind works there but at one remove as if in something that it has put forth from itself but which is no longer entirely itself but is still a delegate of the Truth and invested with its authority. We are moving towards a transitional border beyond which lies the possibility of the Ignorance, but the Ignorance is not yet here. In the order of the evolutionary descent we stand in the Mind of Light on that border and a step downward can carry us beyond it into the beginnings of an ignorance which still bears on its face something of the luminosity that it is leaving behind it. On the other hand, in the ascending order of the evolution we reach a transition in which we see the

light, are turned towards it, reflect it in our consciousness and one further step carries us into the domain of the Light. The Truth becomes visible and audible to us and we are in immediate communication with its messages and illuminations and can grow into it and be made one with its substance. Thus there is a succession of ranges of consciousness which we can speak of as Mind but which belongs practically to the higher hemisphere, although in their ontological station they are within the domain of the lower hemisphere. For the whole of being is a connected totality and there is in it no abrupt passage from the principle of Truth and Light into their opposite. The creative truth of things works and can work infallibly even in the Inconscient: the Spirit is there in Matter and it has made a series of steps by which it can travel from it to its own heights in an uninterrupted line of gradations; the depths are linked to the heights and the Law of the one Truth creates and works everywhere.

Even in the material world which seems to us a world of ignorance, a world of the workings of a blind and inconscient Force starting from inconscience and proceeding through ignorance and reaching with difficulty towards an imperfect Light and Knowledge, there is still a secret Truth in things which arranges all, guides towards the Self many contrary powers of being and rises towards its own heights where it can manifest its own highest truth and fulfil the secret purpose of the universe. Even this material world of existence is built upon a pattern of the truth in things which we call Law of Nature, a truth from which we climb to a greater truth until we emerge in the Light of the Supreme. This world is not really created by a blind force of Nature: even in the Inconscient the presence of the supreme Truth is at work; there is a seeing Power behind it which acts infallibly and the steps of the Ignorance itself are guided even when they seem to stumble; for what we call the Ignorance is a cloaked Knowledge, a Knowledge at work in a body not its own but moving towards its own supreme self-discovery. This Knowledge is the covert Supermind which is the support of the creation and is leading all towards itself and guides behind this multitude of minds and creatures and objects which seem

each to be following its own law of nature; in this vast and apparently confused mass of existence there is a law, a one truth of being, a guiding and fulfilling purpose of the world-existence. The Supermind is veiled here and does not work according to its characteristic law of being and self-knowledge, but without it nothing could reach its aim. A world governed by an ignorant mind would soon drift into a chaos; it could not in fact come into existence or remain in existence unless supported by the secret Omniscience of which it is the cover; a world governed by a blind inconscient force might repeat constantly the same mechanical workings but it would mean nothing and arrive nowhere. This could not be the cause of an evolution that creates life out of Matter, out of life mind, and a gradation of planes of Matter, Life and Mind culminating in the emergence of Supermind. The secret truth that emerges in Supermind has been there all the time, but now it manifests itself and the truth in things and the meaning of our existence.

It is in this series of the order of existence and as the last word of the lower hemisphere of being, the first word of the higher hemisphere that we have to look at the Mind of Light and see what is its nature and the powers which characterise it and which it uses for its self-manifestation and workings, its connection with Supermind and its consequences and possibilities for the life of a new humanity.

## Note on the Texts



## Note on the Texts

ESSAYS IN PHILOSOPHY AND YOGA consists of short prose pieces written by Sri Aurobindo after May 1909 and published by him in journals or books or both before his passing in 1950. Most of them are on aspects of philosophy and yoga. Short prose pieces written between 1910 and 1950 but not published during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime are included in *Essays Divine and Human*, volume 12 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. Short prose writings published between 1910 and 1950 on certain specialised subjects — the Vedas, the Upanishads, Indian culture, political theory, education, poetics — are included in the volumes of THE COMPLETE WORKS dealing with those subjects.

*Essays in Philosophy and Yoga* is divided into five parts according to the date of writing and original place of publication of the constituent pieces: Part One, essays from the *Karmayogin*, 1909–10; Part Two, *The Yoga and Its Objects*, written around 1912; Part Three, writings from the *Arya*, 1914–21; Part Four, an essay from the *Standard Bearer*, 1920; Part Five, writings from the *Bulletin of Physical Education*, 1949–50.

### PART ONE: ESSAYS FROM THE *KARMAYOGIN* (1909–1910)

Sri Aurobindo was the editor of and principal writer for the *Karmayogin*, “A Weekly Review of National Religion, Literature, Science, Philosophy, &c.”, between June 1909 and February 1910. Most of the contents of the *Karmayogin* are published in volume 8 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. The fourteen pieces selected for inclusion in the present volume deal with philosophical and yogic subjects rather than with politics or literature. All but two of them were published in one or more of three booklets: *The Ideal of the*

*Karmayogin* (c. 1918, 1919, 1921, 1927, 1937, 1945, 1950 and subsequently), *Man — Slave or Free?* (c. 1922 and subsequently) and *The Need in Nationalism and Other Essays* (1923).

The Ideal of the Karmayogin. Published in the first issue of the *Karmayogin*, 19 June 1909, and later in *The Ideal of the Karmayogin*.

Karmayoga. Published in the first issue of the *Karmayogin*, 19 June 1909, and later in *The Ideal of the Karmayogin*.

Man — Slave or Free? Published in the *Karmayogin*, 26 June 1909, and later in *Man — Slave or Free?* and *The Need in Nationalism*.

Yoga and Human Evolution. Published in the *Karmayogin*, 3 July 1909, and later in *Man — Slave or Free?*

Yoga and Hypnotism. Published in the *Karmayogin*, 17 July 1909, and later in *Man — Slave or Free?*

The Greatness of the Individual. Published in the *Karmayogin*, 24 July 1909, and later in *The Ideal of the Karmayogin*.

The Process of Evolution. Published in the *Karmayogin*, 18 September 1909, and later in *The Ideal of the Karmayogin*.

Stead and the Spirits. Published in the *Karmayogin*, 27 November 1909.

Stead and Maskelyne. Published in the *Karmayogin*, 1 January 1910.

Fate and Free-Will. Published in the *Karmayogin*, 29 January 1910, and later in *Man — Slave or Free?* and *The Need in Nationalism*.

The Three Purushas. Published in the *Karmayogin*, 12 February 1910, and later in *The Ideal of the Karmayogin*.

The Strength of Stillness. Published in the *Karmayogin*, 19 February 1910, and later in *The Ideal of the Karmayogin*.

The Principle of Evil. Published in the *Karmayogin*, 26 February 1910, and later in *Man — Slave or Free?* and *The Need in Nationalism*.

The Stress of the Hidden Spirit. Published in the *Karmayogin*, 26 February 1910, and later in *The Ideal of the Karmayogin*.

## PART TWO: THE YOGA AND ITS OBJECTS (CIRCA 1912)

The Yoga and Its Objects. This essay, which is mentioned in a letter written by Sri Aurobindo in 1912, was first published as a booklet in



1921 under the title “The Yoga and Its Object”. The title was changed to the present form in the second edition, issued in 1922. New editions were published in 1931, 1938, 1943, 1946, 1949 and subsequently. In 1934 Sri Aurobindo wrote that the booklet represented “an early stage” of his sadhana “and only a part of it is applicable to the Yoga as it has at present taken form after a lapse of more than twenty years”. The Appendix consists of explanations of certain words and phrases in the essay, written by Sri Aurobindo in June 1938 in answer to questions posed by a disciple.

### PART THREE: WRITINGS FROM THE ARYA (1914–1921)

The monthly *Arya*, “a Review of pure philosophy”, was launched in August 1914 and ran until January 1921. Almost all its contents were written by Sri Aurobindo, particularly after the departure of his co-editors Paul Richard and Mirra Richard (the Mother) in February 1915. We reproduce here facsimiles of the front cover of the first issue of the *Arya* and the note printed inside the cover of every issue. This note undoubtedly was written by Sri Aurobindo.

#### Notes on the *Arya*

The “Arya’s” Second Year. Published in the *Arya* in July 1915. The next month the same subject was dealt with in four paragraphs of the essay “Our Ideal” that were omitted when it was reprinted in the 1920 edition of *Ideal and Progress*. The omitted paragraphs are printed here as an appendix.

The “Arya’s” Fourth Year. Published in the *Arya* in July 1918. Note that while the preceding piece was written just before the *beginning* of the *Arya*’s second year, this one was written at the *end* of the fourth year of the journal.

#### On Ideals and Progress

First published in the *Arya* in 1915 and 1916, these five essays were issued together in 1920 under the title *Ideal and Progress*. This was the

first of three collections of essays issued in 1920 and 1921 under the series title *Ideal and Progress*. New editions were published in 1922 (lightly revised), 1946 and subsequently. In 1951 and 1966 the book appeared under the editorial title *Ideals and Progress*. Another title, *On Ideals and Progress*, which appeared above the title of the first essay in 1920 and 1922, has been used as the title of this section in the present volume.

*On Ideals*. Published in the *Arya* in June 1916.

*Yoga and Skill in Works*. Published in the *Arya* in July 1916.

*Conservation and Progress*. Published in the *Arya* in May 1916.

*The Conservative Mind and Eastern Progress*. Published in the *Arya* in July 1916.

*Our Ideal*. Published in the *Arya* in August 1915. When this essay was included in *Ideal and Progress* in 1920, four paragraphs referring to the *Arya* were deleted: the original first paragraph and the fourth, third and second paragraphs from the end. The first sentence of the last paragraph was also deleted: "We shall develop our general thought in later numbers; at present we content ourselves with restating our ideal." When Sri Aurobindo revised the second edition, he inserted a new sentence at this point: "What then shall be our ideal?" In the present edition, the four omitted paragraphs are reproduced as an appendix to "The 'Arya's' Second Year" (see above under "Notes on the *Arya*").

### The Superman

First published in the *Arya* in 1915, these three essays were issued together in 1920 under the title *The Superman*. This was the second collection of essays issued at that time under the series title *Ideal and Progress*. New editions were published in 1922 (lightly revised), 1944, 1950 and subsequently.

*The Superman*. Published in the *Arya* under the title "The Type of the Superman" in April 1915.

*All-Will and Free-Will*. Published in the *Arya* in March 1915.

*The Delight of Works*. Published in the *Arya* in August 1915.

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### Evolution

First published in the *Arya* in 1915 and 1918, these three essays were reprinted in 1920 or 1921 under the title *Evolution*. This was the third collection of essays issued at that time under the series title *Ideal and Progress*. New editions were published in 1923 (lightly revised), 1933, 1944, 1950 and subsequently.

*Evolution*. Published in the *Arya* in August 1915.

*The Inconscient*. Published in the *Arya* in September 1915.

*Materialism*. Published in the *Arya* in October 1918.

### Thoughts and Glimpses

The first section, “Aphorisms”, was published in three instalments in the *Arya* in March, May and June 1915, the second, “Thoughts and Glimpses”, in two instalments in May 1916 and August 1917. Between 1920 and 1922 all the pieces were published as a booklet entitled *Thoughts and Glimpses*. New editions were published in 1923 (lightly revised), 1932, 1941, 1944, 1950 and subsequently.

### Heraclitus

The chapters of this work first appeared in the *Arya* between December 1916 and June 1917. It began as an examination of *Herakleitos* by R. D. Ranade (Poona: Aryabhushana Press, 1916). Sri Aurobindo’s *Heraclitus* was published as a book in 1941 (lightly revised), 1947 and subsequently.

### The Problem of Rebirth

These sixteen essays were first published in the *Arya* between 1915 and 1921. Those comprising Section I appeared without a general title in two groups: November and December 1915, and March to December 1919. Those comprising Section II came out under the headings “The Lines of Karma” and “The Higher Lines of Karma” between August 1920 and January 1921.

Sometime during the 1920s, Sri Aurobindo collected and revised the sixteen essays with the intention of publishing them as a book to be entitled *The Problem of Rebirth*. The revision included the addition of three long passages: the last paragraph of “The Significance of Rebirth”, the last three paragraphs of “Involution and Evolution”, and the last three paragraphs of “Karma, Will and Consequence”. Most of the pages of the proposed book were set in type and a few copies — possibly proof copies — were printed, but the book was never published. The letter reprinted in Appendix II explains why. It may be noted that in this letter Sri Aurobindo referred to the collection of essays as “Rebirth and Karma”. The editors, who are responsible for the division into sections, use this phrase as the subtitle of Section I. (The same phrase was used as the title of the entire book in an edition published in the United States in 1991.)

*The Problem of Rebirth* was first published posthumously in 1952. The third edition of the book, published in 1978, incorporated some revisions made by Sri Aurobindo that had not been discovered when the earlier editions were printed.

Rebirth. Published in the *Arya* in November 1915.

The Reincarnating Soul. Published in the *Arya* in December 1915.

Rebirth, Evolution, Heredity. Published in the *Arya* in March 1919.

Rebirth and Soul Evolution. Published in the *Arya* in April 1919.

The Significance of Rebirth. Published in the *Arya* in May 1919.

The Ascending Unity. Published in the *Arya* in June 1919.

Involution and Evolution. Published in the *Arya* in July 1919.

Karma. Published in the *Arya* in August 1919.

Karma and Freedom. Published in the *Arya* in September 1919.

Karma, Will and Consequence. Published in the *Arya* in October 1919.

Rebirth and Karma. Published in the *Arya* in November 1919.

Karma and Justice. Published in the *Arya* in December 1919.

The Foundation. Published in the *Arya* in August 1920. The title of the essay was printed under the heading “The Lines of Karma”.

The Terrestrial Law. Published in the *Arya* in two instalments in September and October 1920. The title of the essay was printed under the heading “The Lines of Karma”.

Mind Nature and Law of Karma. Published in the *Arya* in two in-

stalments in October and November/December 1920. The title of the essay was printed under the heading “The Lines of Karma”.

**The Higher Lines of Karma.** Published in two instalments in the last two issues of the *Arya*: November/December 1920 and January 1921. The second instalment was printed with the subheading “The Lines of Truth”. This subheading was deleted in the unreleased edition of *The Problem of Rebirth*.

**Appendix I: The Tangle of Karma.** This incomplete essay was written around 1927, presumably for inclusion with the other essays of *The Problem of Rebirth*.

**Appendix II: A Clarification.** Sri Aurobindo wrote this note on 25 December 1935 in reply to a question put by a disciple.

### Other Writings from the *Arya*

#### The Question of the Month

These six pieces appeared under the heading “The Question of the Month” in the first six issues of the *Arya*, August 1914–January 1915. In 1941 the first three and the sixth pieces were published along with five reviews from the *Arya* under the title *Views and Reviews*. (These reviews are published in *Early Cultural Writings*, volume 1 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO.) The titles of the pieces were added at that time. New editions of this book were brought out in 1946 and subsequently. In 1972 the fourth and fifth pieces were reprinted for the first time since 1914 in *The Hour of God and Other Writings*.

**The Needed Synthesis.** Published in the *Arya* in August 1914.

**“Arya” — Its Significance.** Published in the *Arya* in September 1914.

**Meditation.** Published in the *Arya* in October 1914.

**Different Methods of Writing.** Published in the *Arya* in November 1914. Editorial title. At the time *View and Reviews* was being planned, Sri Aurobindo wrote that this piece was “too slight for inclusion in a book”.

**Occult Knowledge and the Hindu Scriptures.** Published in the *Arya* in December 1914. Editorial title. In the *Arya* the following sentence preceded the question: “One of our Subscribers sends us the following Question:”

The Universal Consciousness. Published in the *Arya* in January 1915. In the *Arya* the following sentence preceded the question: “One of our subscribers in Europe puts to us the following difficulty:— ”

#### The News of the Month

This brief-lived feature was halted after the second issue of the *Arya*, September 1914.

#### South Indian Vaishnava Poetry

Sri Aurobindo published these essays on Andal and Nammalwar, two of the *alwars* or Vaishnava devotional poets of Tamil Nadu, in the *Arya* in May and July 1915. In the same issues he published translations of some of their poems, which he executed with the help of the poet Subramania Bharati. The translations are published in *Translations*, volume 5 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO.

#### Arguments to *The Life Divine*

Between February 1916 and April 1917 Sri Aurobindo wrote “arguments” for Chapters XIX to XXXIII of *The Life Divine* as they originally appeared in the *Arya*. The first argument was followed by this note:

In response to the desire of some of our subscribers we shall prefix henceforth a brief summary or argument to each chapter of the “Life Divine.”

*The Life Divine* was revised before publication as a book in 1939–40. At this time Sri Aurobindo renumbered *Arya* Chapters XXVIII to XXXIII as Book Two, Part I, Chapters VII, VIII, IX, XI, XV and XVII. In the revised text all the arguments published in the *Arya* were omitted.

In December 1940 Sri Aurobindo wrote an “Argument in Brief” and a “Shorter Synopsis” of the first chapter of *The Life Divine*, possibly to show how such summaries might be made. Around the same time he wrote a draft of an argument to most of Book One, Chapter

XXIV. This contains some new turns of phrase and some explanatory material not found in the chapter itself (see especially the footnote). These three pieces are reproduced here from his manuscripts.

PART FOUR: FROM THE *STANDARD BEARER* (1920)

The *Standard Bearer* was launched in August 1920 by the Prabartak Sangha of Chandernagore, a group then working under the inspiration of Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo wrote at least one article for this monthly journal. Some of his earlier writings (for example, “Hathayoga” and “Things Seen in Symbols”, included in *Early Cultural Writings*) were also published in the *Standard Bearer*.

*Ourselves*. This essay was written for publication in the first issue of the *Standard Bearer*, 15 August 1920. The editors have compared the sometimes defective text published in the journal with that of a manuscript draft.

PART FIVE: FROM THE *BULLETIN OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION*  
(1949–1950)

The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth

These eight essays, Sri Aurobindo’s last prose writings, first appeared in the quarterly *Bulletin of Physical Education* (at present called *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*) in 1949 and 1950. Unable to write as a result of his failing eyesight, Sri Aurobindo dictated them to a secretary. The series was left unfinished on his passing in December 1950. It was published as a book in 1952 under the title *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth*. (This title was provided or at least approved by the Mother.) The book has been reprinted several times. In 1953 and subsequently it was brought out in the United States under the title *The Mind of Light*.

*Message*. Published in the *Bulletin* in February 1949; dated 30 December 1948.

Perfection of the Body. Published in the *Bulletin* in April 1949; dated 23 March 1949.

The Divine Body. Published in the *Bulletin* in August 1949.

Supermind and the Life Divine. Published in the *Bulletin* in November 1949.

Supermind and Humanity. Published in the *Bulletin* in February 1950; dated 13 January 1950.

Supermind in the Evolution. Published in the *Bulletin* in April 1950.

Mind of Light. Published in the *Bulletin* in August 1950.

Supermind and Mind of Light. Published in the *Bulletin* in November 1950.

#### THE PRESENT EDITION

In 1971 most of the contents of the present volume were published in *The Supramental Manifestation and Other Writings*, volume 16 of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library. A new, rearranged and slightly enlarged edition was brought out in 1989.

The present edition is the first to be published under the title *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*. It contains all the contents of *The Supramental Manifestation and Other Writings* as well as some writings that appeared in other volumes of the Centenary Library. All the constituent pieces have been checked against the versions published by Sri Aurobindo in books and journals.