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N O T E

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Grace of the Great

THE fifteenth of August is the day of Sri Aurobindo's birth. For his devotees and disciples it is the most important day of *Darshan* of the *darshaniya* Purusha. The day has acquired added significance with its choice by Providence for heralding the birth of India's independence, the first bugle-notes of which were sounded by Sri Aurobindo himself.

During the *darshan* there is no exchange of words; of visible touch there is none. The devotee gets barely a few seconds to stand before the sage. Yet they call, call in hundreds, from all over the country and even abroad. Is there any explanation for the ardour and zest with which they get drawn to him like needles to a magnet?

To stand before Sri Aurobindo is to stand before an image of the Vast," said one susceptible to subtle contacts. Eminence is a source of perennial attraction: to the weak-spirited it is a towering blazoner of the high destiny that awaits man; to the brave it is an inspiration, a challenging reminder of the high altitudes one has still to scale. True eminence elevates, true greatness greatens. In its presence one for-

gets his own diminutions and is lost, involuntarily, in that greatness. It is seeming greatness before which one feels dwarfed, small and slinks away with a possessing sense of his own imperfection and inferiority. But that is by the way. A great one always radiates greatness. The vibrations of his personality are not dumb. And if he is one who has tapped the original sources of life and light, holds in himself the dynamis of the Spirit which motivates all human effort, overtly or covertly, then his presence, his very air pulsates with the breath of the High Above. To seekers of light, to the children of the Spirit, the value of such a Presence cannot be overstated. It is capital.

A personality of Sri Aurobindo's stature is like a central Fire of the Spirit in the vicinity of which everything that comes by gets warmed up, gets lighted into a spark if it is dry enough. The infant sparks instinctively turn to him again and again until they grow and leap up into a flame—a tongue of the Fire itself. Such a one is a dynamo releasing power-currents of spiritual intensity. "Whether the others in the outer world know it or not, he radiates the rays of wisdom, throws out waves of life-giving strength, emanates the concrete influence spontaneously exercised for the onward march of the soul's progress in others."

"Towards him verily all existences yearn", say the sages of the Upanishad.

The ways of the spirit are different from the ways of the world. It has other means, wider and subtler means—and the more effective for that reason—than are palpable to the physical eye. For a Rishi to implant a seed of aspiration, to energise the godward push in you, the mediation of the word or the touch is no more indispensable than radiators for the sun to nourish the plants. There is a natural, direct, spontaneous outflow of power, spiritual sustenance and sympathy towards kindred souls that look to him for support, for help, for guidance.

Naturally the extent and intensity of his charge on the devotee depends upon the sincerity in his approach, on the ardour of his aspiration, on the nature of his need. Normally one does not know the true needs of his inner being *i.e.*, the soul's needs, which may be at variance with the preferences dictated by vital instincts or the claims of the clamorous mind. A calm mind, a blank one if that be possible, an attitude of loving trust with the thought 'you know my need better than I do', conduces to a state of utter receptivity which is the one condition for fruitful approach. May be you stand before him for just a moment, but it is of great moment. The workings of the Divine, of the God-man are *sui generis*. A single look from him is enough to work out the Destiny of the aspiring soul. Not for nothing have our

ancients attached a prime importance to the *kataksha* (side-long glance), the *Kripadrishti* (look of Grace of the Lord), of the Guru who represents Him for the disciple. A glance of grace from such a Master carries with it a self-effectuating force of truth-dynamis and could alter even the scales of inexorable Karma, lift up the submerged soul, sublimate it to the lofty goal towards which the journey proceeds.

The Mother's Message :
Forward, For Ever Forward!

“Forward, for ever forward !

At the end of the tunnel is the light...

At the end of the fight is the victory!”

IN these assured notes the Mother has voiced the authentic call. It is a call to the individual seeker after Light, to the spiritual fighter for victory. It is also a call to mankind groping in the night, crying for the Light.

Never before perhaps was humanity so distraught as it is today. Ideals for which its leaders toiled for centuries have crumbled down. Moral values are fast becoming things of the past. Ideals heralded with such a fanfare on the wings of Napoleonic victories in the last century no longer evoke even lip-sympathy. Truth as a governing principle in international relations has ceased to exist. Humanity appears to have fallen so low, slipped down so steep, that thinkers have begun to lose faith in the future.

Hegel's bitter epigram that the one lesson we learn from History is that mankind refuses to learn from it, is more true today than ever. Mankind has been continuously passing

through crisis after crisis apparently without any chastening effect. The latest cataclysm has had absolutely no effect towards heightening the voice of the collective conscience. In fact, the War has not yet stopped; it continues, with this difference—that the war is not openly on the battlefield but on other more crucial planes, and that not between the erstwhile Allies and the Enemy but among the Allies themselves. Nothing is more tragic than to see Humanity losing faith in itself, accepting the inevitability of another armageddon; there is not merely a looking forward with resignation but even a positive contribution to ultimate self-destruction. It is said that our present cycle of civilisation has almost failed and it shall go the way of those of earlier peoples.

It is to this disillusioned, reeling humanity that this call is addressed. A couple of centuries is but a speck in the long mighty roll of Time. Humanity is not a creation of an extra-cosmic Chance, destined to go round and round itself in each cycle and perish. The universe is a willed creation of a Supracosmic Truth-existence and has a purpose. Our earth is its pivotal point and Man, as its highest evolved being, occupies a supreme position. Mankind has progressively risen and continues to do so. Its progress may have been slow, but it is purposive. Starting from the individual unit, the aggregate units have been

progressively larger and larger—the family, the clan, the tribe, the larger groupings and the nations with their corresponding territorial habitats, the hamlet, the village, the city, the principality, the country. It was inevitable that each expansion from the smaller to the larger unit should have been accompanied by some crisis or other. Today when Nature is preparing to take the next inevitable leap from the nation-group to one International Group, the crisis is the severest. The group-egos are fighting hard for self-preservation and instinctively resist the process of being taken in by the Collective Whole. The present struggles, distrusts, rivalries—all result from this inner pressure for the next change. They are inevitable, even as physical ailments in the climacterics of the individual. Can they persist for ever? Mankind has a destiny, a destiny to grow into a perfect, ordered and willed creation of a Creative Intelligence and cannot escape it. The way may be long; the path may be dark at many turns and points; but the end is there, an “ending” into the Light of Peace and Harmony. It may have to struggle for its very life; forces of darkness and misery fight to the last to preserve Man for their long-established supremacy. Yet the Creative Spirit has willed; the Truth-Will working in the heart of Humanity cannot be denied for all time; victory over the malevolent forces is a certainty. To be disheartened by

temporary failures does not accord with the workings of Truth-Will turned towards the destination of mankind. The Truth, the Good, the Beautiful, cannot fail for ever. Steadfast adherence to these ideals should be active and, with faith in the wisdom of the guiding Will, mankind must direct its endeavours towards a larger and larger harmony leading eventually to the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. This no nation or group of nations can achieve by the help of the material forces at its disposal, nor by the helpful element of the so-called moral principles backing the brute force of men. It can be done only with the service of higher and supra-ethical spiritual elements reinforced by the Divine Powers that guard the onward march of men and nations. Indeed it is they that ultimately guide the destiny of mankind.

II

But the collective life depends for its strength and progress mainly on the lead and help given by its tallest figures. It is the individual who helps and on critical occasions orientates also the lines of development his environment shall take—though it is true that every individual is not meant for that role. The fulcrum of life and progress lies in a subtler and inner plane, and only those

who are competent to wield it are the real leaders who fight the battle and seek for the Light. It is to these seekers for Light, aspirants for Truth, that the message is primarily addressed. Of all the paths, that of the spiritual seeker is the hardest. A few are called to it and of them fewer meet with a reasonable measure of success. "The valley of death" is not a figment of poetic imagination. The Path towards the Spirit is rugged, at times tortuous, crowded with sombre shadows. Usually when an ardent spirit makes the choice and takes to the culture of an inner life, it is some element in his being that is open to the Light and is responsive to the higher Powers and receives the decisive touches and consummate gifts. But one point of contact or one element alone cannot sustain for ever the entire being. The aspiration naturally has to extend and pervade the other regions which are not all equally ready to open to the Divine. They have their own habits, their own magnets, their own inheritances. They cling to their past and do not easily yield to the Higher Influence. As a result, the seeker feels a conflict in his own being, one part pulling this way and another that way. This conflict within himself is particularly strong and pervasive in crucial stages when definitive steps are to be taken.

Inertia and obstruction to change are so strong in Nature that nothing changes with-

out resistance, and changes only when it must. The human mind opposes the enlargement of its boundaries by casting doubts repeatedly—at times very corroding doubts—on the very existence and active will of the Higher Truth. The vital and dynamic part in us, when it sees the very props of its normal activity e.g. desire, greed, ambition, being systematically flattened out, revolts violently or gets so depressed that the whole being seems to be enveloped in the feeling. The innate instincts, the deep-rooted habits of the body go on relentlessly with their own pull and add to the difficulty. It looks as if happiness and peace were things of the past with no possibility of return, even though one set out in the firm belief that God's rule of Love and Harmony were possible on earth. But this is a passage; the passage should not be mistaken for a perpetual misery, as an unending means. The traveller on this track, if he is sincere, feels the guidance of the Divine Grace, sees the finger-prints in the steady growth of what appears to be quite an unreasonable faith in the Goal, faith that the dark passage cannot last for ever, that one is securely led to the goal by the protecting Hand that set him on the journey. The pilgrim must not halt. If he does, he betrays his own soul which has impelled him to choose this other, more difficult life for the sublime purpose. He must go ahead. To advance, to move towards the

needed change is the law of life in the spiritual plane as well, not in the material alone. The unwavering soul is sure to be carried safe by the Grace of the Divine through the instrumentality of that substratum of light within—*faith*.

But resistance within one's own being is not the only block in the way of the spiritual seeker. Man does not exist all by himself apart from others. He cannot live by his own air. The interdependence of beings is entire and unqualified. There is a continuous interchange between himself and the rest of the universe, known and unknown to him and to that extent his progress is conditioned by the environmental influences. Besides, there are larger universal forces at work in the individual as a centre of their action. These cosmic Powers have a great role to play in the inner development of man as he begins to enlarge the ambit of his consciousness. But the cosmos is not a field of helpful Forces alone. The tradition that for every force of Light there is an opposing force of Darkness is not a myth. Forces do operate in the cosmic field obstructing the growth of man towards the Godhead. In the language of the ancient mystics, there is a regular battle between these forces of darkness and evil on the one hand, and those of Light and the Good on the other, which seek to help those who invoke their aid. But the

undivine forces cannot last for ever as they have no right and strength and support of truth in them for their sustenance. The spiritual warrior opposes and has to oppose the onslaughts of these forces initially by his own strength based on the solid Faith in the Grace of the Guide. Progressively his will and spiritual fibre get toned up with each trial of strength, and his endeavours are ultimately crowned with success by the directing hand of the Divine who is ever-watchful and answers to the needs of the hour. This, then, is the assurance, the assurance of victory, the assurance of light that is vouchsafed to us in the clarion call of the Divine Mother.

Meditation : Its Place In Spiritual Life

IT is not unoften that we are struck by flashes of profound wisdom shooting forth from the most unsophisticated minds. Perhaps it is for their very simplicity and directness that they are set as focal points, at the moment, for Truth radiations.

An aged gentleman ripe with experience, a success in the world, once asked, perhaps scoffingly, a young novice in the spiritual path why he resorted to meditation so often and what it was. The youngster, almost an unlettered one, looked surprised and said, "Why, we meditate because it is *natural* for one to be quiet and meditate—say, like breathing."

Natural, that sums up in a word all that could be said of meditation. What is meditation? How is it natural? What is its place in the spiritual life?

Broadly speaking, meditation can be described as a poise of the being in which there is a general relaxation and the mind, withdrawn from its running course of activity, is left alone in the Quiet that stands like an immobile rock at the back of all its waves, ripples and even throbbings. Quiet is there

all the while, it is really more natural than the movement in which we appear to be helplessly involved. This relaxation of oneself, particularly of the mind, this felt poise in the Quiet is obviously what the youth had in his mind when he described meditation as natural.

Meditation is not the same as concentration though both are concerned with the inner consciousness of which Mind is the spear-head. In concentration, one withdraws his mental activity from its customary preoccupations and directs it with a strong will on any one particular object for a length of time. The object concentrated upon may be a concrete one in the mundane existence or an idea or image. The aim of this one-pointed effort is to progressively apprehend the object and identify oneself completely with its nature. If the object concentrated upon is an intellectual problem—say, in scientific research—in the very act of concentration, one's consciousness gets identified with the nature of the object, seizes on the truth that yields to it and conveys intimations of the same to the surface. The process is the same whatever the nature of the object or the aim of the concentration be. If one concentrates upon the chosen Deity, *Ishta-Devata*, for instance, the consciousness gradually gets centred round that object and slowly begins to absorb something of the

nature of the Deity, Devata, and in the end gets completely identified with it.

Thus concentration is a means, a sharp weapon to achieve a particular end. It is used in spiritual life, among other things, for centering the activities of the normal mind in its meandering course; but it is not indispensable. And even when the mind has recourse to it, whatever the benefits that accrue—for certainly the mind gets subtilised and sharpened—they do not usually go far deeper into the layers of the mind

Our consciousness has a vast gamut and apart from the gross and subtle layers of the thinking and reasoning mind there are others dominated by emotions, passions, desires and instinctively active or inactive impressions in the lower depths of the being. This entire consciousness has to be changed if one is to build up a successful inner life. Whatever the path chosen, the fundamental fact remains that our present human consciousness has got to be re-orientated, its nature subtilised and its centre of movement shifted to an inner and higher level. For only thus can it partake and absorb more and more of the higher vibrations until it ultimately assimilates or is assimilated into the deeper, purer strands of the ever-wakeful Spirit. It is only when this is established that any edifice could be erected. Naturally the

question arises: how is our normal consciousness to be changed into the other kind—into a spiritual consciousness? Obviously, the key is in our consciousness itself. For at its core, our consciousness is truly spiritual, substantially pure and luminous and divine in essence. This purity of its nature gets gradually obscured with each exterior layer of itself until on the surface we are aware of just a commingled and murky field of desires and passions, instincts and impulses with a veneer of the reasoning mind.

As we said earlier, it is indispensable to disturb the present set-up and shift the stress of the consciousness for any true spiritual life to be possible. Various are the methods tried for the purpose from times of yore. There are teachings which emphasise that work, Karma, done as a worship to the Lord in a disinterested spirit brings about the necessary change. There are others which point out that a devotional and complete abandoning of oneself to God does the needful. Again there is the common belief that study of the scriptures gives us the Knowledge, and the change follows as a matter of course if there is the faith and also the will to execute. Theoretically all these are quite sound; for, disinterested work, if done in the proper spirit, has an indirect or direct chastening influence on the being and nature of the doer;

devotional surrender of oneself in utter love to the Divine Beloved may efface the human ego and prepare the chalice of one's heart for the pouring of His or Her Love; study and reflection on the nature of the Spirit, on the relation of the Atman with the rest of the universe, can and do refine and heighten the mental level of the seeker, open to vaster vistas and give an intellectual comprehension of the true relation between the macrocosm and the microcosm. All these are possible and are facts of spiritual experience. But none of these is sufficient. The consciousness may not be touched in its core and the spiritual change is confined to the elements that have opened to the Higher Influence.

To change the habitual nature of the mind is to invite the inner, deeper or entire consciousness to come to the fore, and this cannot be achieved by human endeavour alone. But the thing is indispensable. Our consciousness is pure and fine in its deeper strata and at the core spiritual. If only one would calm the mental activity, withdraw the mind from its aimless movements, even though at intervals, but frequently, one can become aware of the frothy movements on the surface; one becomes aware at the back of the mind of something vacant, at first, some Quiet Blank as it were, on which thoughts were running about like pictures on a cinematographic screen. It is a simple

truth, so often overlooked, that the mind is not made up of thoughts. Thoughts come and go but some background is there all the while which they pass by. It is something really immobile and substantial. It is there all along, only the mind in its ignorant groping does not turn to it; we have only to let our mental activity drop in order to become aware of it. This is a first glimpse one gets at the initial steps to the gates of the inner consciousness. Deeper, one begins to *hear* the Silence, to feel the Peace that constitutes the very stuff of the being, why, of the very universe around us. Or, one withdraws his consciousness from other activities and takes a plunge into the heart, the *hrid-guha*, as it is expressively termed. As the consciousness withdraws into itself, he awakens to a strange world. There is no activity, no hectic movement; in fact the very breathing jars in the silent chambers of the soul. He enters the inner apartment, and the Higher Power, to which each seeker has opened himself through his human Guru, or else the World-Teacher, Jagadguru Himself, helps him, pulls him inside and begins to act more powerfully than it ever could if one had remained at the outer doors alone. Thus meditation, which is essentially a relaxation of one's mind regaining a truly natural poise of itself and rest in the consciousness, prepares a condition of receptivity in the being. The inner consciousness unrolls itself and in

response to the steady aspiration in heart, the peace and the Light within the depths of the being flow out. The being learns to find its natural habitat in the inner depths. The movement gathers momentum during each meditation and tends to prolong itself even during other hours effortlessly. Effortlessly, we have said, because the seeker has got attuned more and more progressively to the vibrations of the other inner or higher consciousness—which is the true home of the Spirit, his soul, and he finds it hard to return to the “normal” humdrum level. Of course in the beginning the pull outwards is too strong. But gradually it weakens and one finds that meditation has disciplined and corrected his norm, the tumultuous elements drop, each into its native serene poise. Indubitable results however are seen, naturally in the most developed and sensitive parts of the being. One learns to allow more and more of the inner consciousness to come to the surface and inevitably all his movements now begin to proceed from a newly shifted centre, from a true spiritual base. He has now no need to “meditate”. Meditation was a means to turn the mind back on itself, to its own source and once the real nature of consciousness has become manifest to the mind, which has learned to be normally quiet, meditation as a discipline ceases to continue, but continues as part of one’s nature and is *natural*.

From Old Moorings: Faith

AKBAR had an argument with Birbal over the relative merits of Allah and the Gods of the Hindus. "Without doubt, Allah is the Powerful" he said. "Look at the huge concourse of devotees at the gates of the Delhi mosques; don't you see that they come here because they find their prayers answered?" Birbal demurred: "It is just a question of faith, Your Highness," he said, "if one has faith, it does not really matter whom one worships—the God of the Brahmin, the Lord of the Yahudi or the Allah of the faithful." Akbar would not agree and there the topic was dropped. Birbal, however, as was his wont, wanted to convince the king. He ordered the construction of an imposing edifice, a temple in the countryside. He arranged to have it opened, when ready, amidst great rejoicings and in the august presence of the Emperor himself. The altar was concealed from the view. The temple drew a large number of worshippers from far and near and the number grew day by day. One night at a lonely hour Birbal took the monarch to the temple and asked him to see who was the God that drew such large crowds. Akbar stepped inside the sanctum to the altar; it was covered with cloth. Eagerly he removed it and behold! a pair of torn

miserable sandals on the altar! Birbal beamed; Akbar bowed and admitted the truth of Birbal's contention that Faith is God.

Whether or not the story is accurate history is quite immaterial for the purpose of the moral that is intended in the context. The story undoubtedly is a striking illustration of certain characteristic features of Birbal, Akbar and the generality of men. The unfailing wit and superior skill of the brilliant minister is brought to the fore; the graceful and timely appreciation of Akbar, his admiration for the admirable, the implied tact and, incidentally, political wisdom of the Mogul in admitting the errors in his reasoning and conviction, and a general magnanimity of the Emperor are certain arresting facets of the story. But when this is quoted to show that faith works wonders, we have to pause and accept it with qualification. For while it draws attention to a fact of mass psychology that the flock always follows and does not think, it lays stress on faith in such a way that it is treated as mere credulity and nothing else. Apparently the story purports to illustrate the powers of faith, but in the end, rather deeply, knocks the bottom out of it. In its zeal to over-emphasise the value of faith, it caricatures its true character and brings into ridicule the religious consciousness which is

indeed the outflowering of faith. The error, unconscious perhaps, lies in the denial or the ignoring of the truth or the intrinsic merit of anything outside in the world, independent of the believer, in order to justify, to support and to bring to fruition the acts and attitude of faith. This is a dangerous proposition. Faith, then, may mean a crude belief, dim and dark or enlightened and vanishes with the advent of the light of reason. But we must note that a dogmatic denial of the real value of external support, sacred symbols, is much worse. Faith is certainly an inner condition and attitude of the being; that is the basis on which any course of action can be proceeded with in any sphere of life. Assuming that the torn sandals took the place of the sacred symbol of worship, what happened to the people who crowded there day in and day out? In the purity of their innocence, in the ignorance of the character of the object they were supposed to worship they went and returned and enjoyed their visit, let us assume. There is nothing in it to show that their prayers were answered, nor is it necessary that a place of congregation is one where God grants the prayers of all men who gather there—and that too all sorts of prayers. Of course intense faith can work miracles—and in spite of the sandals. Could it mean, then, that there is nothing essentially religious or spiritual in the outer

world? An emphatic NO is our reply. There are sacred places, holy centres of spiritual Force, truly exalted personages who incessantly emanate rays of purity, peace and light. Approach to them not only verifies the faith within, but reinforces it, because they too are made of that faith appropriate to their dynamic presence. Does the sandal-symbol do such a thing? Abomination to think of. But let us turn to another story.

Ekalavya, son of a hunter-chief, desired to acquire proficiency in archery and looked for a competent guide. Those were the days of the Mahabharata and to whom else could he turn but to that great Master of the age, the celebrated Dronacharya at Hastinapura? Thither the lad journeyed, presented himself before the preceptor with due respect and sought his favour. But the teacher declined: "Thou art born of a Nishada—hunter", he said. A lesser spirit would have broken. Undismayed, the boy bowed, took the dust of the Master's feet and departed. On return, he got ready a clay idol of the Acharya. This boy of faith saw in it and worshipped the Guru day by day and practised with his bow and arrow before the image till,—so the story goes—he acquired so much dexterity and command that even the incomparable Arjuna recognised his superior in him. Drona was

amazed. And later even when Ekalavya parted with his thumb in obedience to the wishes of Drona, his skill continued to be of the first order, though he had to become second to Arjuna, only to Arjuna.

When we come across stories of this kind we may not dismiss them, as old wives' tales; yet we are apt to repeat parrot-like the old saying "Faith bears fruit" *vishwasah phala-dayakah* and pass on. We do not pause to grasp the truths embedded in the narrative. In the story of Ekalavya there is a secret, a great occult truth we may say. The boy had so much faith in the teacher, that though there was no direct means of contact, he drew all the help he needed from the Guru through the power of sheer faith.

We may ask ourselves: what is this Faith? What are its rationale and *modus operandi*? And what is its place in the life of man?

Faith is primarily an attitude of the self-conscious being. It becomes a conviction in the mind, for it is based upon the soul's perception of truth of which the active mind may or may not be aware. Something in the being glimpses a truth, the central and radical part assents to it in a definite way. It is an aura of this vision and assent within that reaches the mind in the form of what we call faith. One may not

and does not really know why he has an unshakable belief at all in a particular thing that is of moment to him. But the mind tries to find some reason or justification for this persistent feeling of certitude and very often succeeds in improvising a "rational" explanation, but not always. The fact is that the faith is there self-based. It is constant and is active even when the normal faculties of the mind are suspended, as for instance in sleep; the faith is there awake in the subconscious regions of our being. Even when faith appears to be a result of the reasonings of the mind or the influences of the general environment it is just an appearance. The object of faith may be anything; a truth underlying a phenomenon in the material existence, truth in an ideal, the reality of the Invisible. There is a truth behind every appearance in creation and it may be any of these that has been seized by the inner being which seeks to realise and express it.

Every being in the universe has some faith or other at the bottom of its very existence. In fact, it is really a will-to-be. For even inanimate objects have a certain kind of cohesive force which is a 'will-to-be' in the lower grade of existence. Otherwise they simply could not be. The creative energy deployed by the supreme Consciousness for building up the worlds

implants an effective portion of its own nature in every formation. It is this element that makes all things from the amoeba to the solar system subsist.

Man, for instance, has an abiding faith in himself. As long as he has faith in his mental make-up, he thinks and reasons as a mental being. He has a faith in his life-energy and even a faith in the stability of his physical body and so lives and acts in the way he does. In a sense he can be said to be made of faith, *shraddhamayoyam purushah* (Gita). Of whatever faith one is, that he becomes, *yo yat-shraddhah sa eva sah*. The moment he loses the faith, the will breaks down, the main-spring of his activities is snapped and he ceases to live. For, faith is really a force of Will in the inner Consciousness, determined to work out the Destiny towards which the being wends its way. It is not a static mental belief; it is dynamic. Its basis of power is not less than that of knowledge. A strong faith does always endow one with the necessary strength and energy to work out or realise the end in view. It is obvious that this element of faith for any purpose, in one's mission in life is indispensable for progress in any walk of life. It is as much necessary for a scientist as for a mystic. This truth holds good not in the individual sphere of life

alone. It applies to the collective life as well. There, as here, faith is a power. The effectivity with which possibilities, political, economic or social, are actualised depends to a great extent on the degree and intensity of the faith-power that is harnessed to the endeavour. A strong faith active in the collective mind of a people finds its due expression in the high-powered vehicle of a Leader and never fails to achieve its object.

Therefore, the mass of men, either in a collective affair towards a common Ideal or in their individual line of life, cannot move an inch without the faith that is the soul-factor for all endeavours to be possible or meet with success. Indeed in a sense it is pervasive everywhere in God's creation under the cover of what is commonly called Will-to-be. And it is for this reason one can say it can be made to manifest through activity and association and constant practice in all fields of life. Where there is an apparent failing of faith in the mind, supposedly justified by the bitter fruits of hard labour one may experience, even there by perseverance one can get back the seemingly lost faith, for it is the inestimable treasure, light and life of the soul, the core of all being. The ancients knew this secret, they knew the character and value of *shraddha*, the untranslatable Sanskrit

word of which faith is the feeble English equivalent. The seers of the Rig Veda address their prayer with fervour to the Deity of Faith invoking her to bless them, to bestow her grace and bestow herself on them (Rig Veda X. 151), and hint at the means by which it can be attained when they sing:

“Faith one gets by the heart’s yearning,
by Faith the Riches”

Shraddham hridayaya akutya,

Shraddhaya vindate vasu.

Yes, it is by the heart’s yearning one wins the Faith. It is the cry of one’s core of being, the very voice of the soul that manifests the faith of immense potency. It is this faith, not the sham faith of the Birbal story, that enabled Ekalavya of the *Mahabharata* to appeal to and draw from Dronacharya, not from the unwilling and superficial personality of Drona, but from the larger being—call it the subliminal—of the great Teacher of archery, all that he had to learn and learn in such a way as to win the admiration of the greatest archer of the times.

Dipavali : Significance

FEW proofs of the essential oneness and solidarity of this vast country are more convincing than the institution of her Festivals. No doubt Bharatavarsha has been from the very beginnings of her recorded history, criss-crossed with a large number of kingdoms and sub-kingdoms, peopled with so many stocks and clans. Each of them has had its own characteristic way of life, social outlook and practice and tended to pride itself on its own ways and belittle those of others. In a well-known episode of the Mahabharata, Karna, the stalwart of the Kurus' cause, pours ridicule and contempt upon the customs of the Madra people in a manner that indicates a very concrete and sharp divergence and a lively sense of rivalry among the different peoples of the land. Yet over-riding and over-shadowing all the local variations stood like a sentinel the one Master-tradition that has spread all over the country and not only welded it into a living whole but has continued to this day to hold it together. That is the undefinable Dharma,—the spiritual, the religious and, in a larger sense, the cultural tradition of India. From Kamrup to Dwarka, from Kanya Kumari to Kashmir it is the same conception of Man's Quest, the same high roads along which course the strivings and expressions of the life-force and thought, individual and communal, that grip our attention.

India is a land of vast dimensions. Intersected with gigantic rivers and mountains, impenetrable forests and endless plains, this country was never served, till recently, with proper means of communication. And yet we find that the Dwija of Khatamandu recites the famous prayer to the Lord Sun, Gayatri, in precisely the same intonation, the same accents, to the very syllable, in which another does on the banks of the Kauveri. And Gayatri is just one mantra of the thousands that have been handed down from mouth to mouth and preserved throughout in their pristine form. We do not know if there are many parallels to this unique phenomenon dating from a dateless past. We cite this as just illustrative of the sameness of Tradition which is more spectacularly brought to the eye by our cycle of Festivals.

An Indian festival, like the Divali, is a picturesque web into the making of which so many strands have gone—religious, social and cultural—a raiment that adorns the entire fabric of society, cherished and preserved by all alike, men and women, old and young, in all the quarters of the land, north and south, east and west. There may be variations in details, differences in the social values attached thereto observable in the celebrations in the different parts of the

country. Thus for instance, in Maharashtra the Diwali is not merely a religious festival, but an occasion for family reunions, the meeting of brothers and sisters and also the commencement of the fresh crop-year. But in the south of Maharashtra in the Western Ghats, the occasion is more looked upon as the parting of the seasons and the coming of the sunny weather. In Bengal it is still different. But these details are really inconsequential. The Event which this occasion is, all over, understood to celebrate is one and one alone. Diwali, or more correctly Dipavali, the Row of Lights, is the joyous celebration of the death of the Titan of Hell, Narakasura at the hands of Lord Krishna : the Lord has eliminated, at long last, the Beelzebub, the champion of darkness, the contamination that afflicted the Earth is washed away and the myriad lights are put on to signalise His Victory which is indeed won for us His dear children.

The origin of this celebration is of course, to be traced to our mythology. But a myth, be it noted, is no yarn. It was Ruskin who described the myth as a story with a meaning attached to it other than what is apparent and a characteristic feature of it, he went on to add, is something extraordinary about its circumstances. And if we proceed to narrate here the story of Narakasura it is with a view to draw the

attention of the reader to the deeper significance of the festival, usually lost sight of in the socialities that have crowded round it.

The earliest mention of this story is to be found in the Mahabharata (*Sabhaparva*), its southern recension. But it is also to be found, with slight variations, in the Bhagavata. Briefly told this is the episode :

Bhama, son of the Earth, also known as Narakasura was the king of Pragjyotishapura. By virtue of his prowess and the boons secured by merit of Tapas from God, he became all-powerful and an intolerable menace to the gods, sages and to all men of piety. He conquered and plundered—not only the earth but the heaven as well. He carried away the daughter of Twashta, the divine architect, and also the fair daughters of the gods, gandharvas and others, numbering about a little more than sixteen thousand—all imprisoned in his mountain retreat. As a crowning piece of effrontery he robbed Aditi, the Mother of the Gods, of her ornamental ear-rings. That was too much for the Gods to bear and headed by Indra they supplicated Sri Krishna at Dwarka to kill Naraka, as none else was equal to the task. Sri Krishna readily consented and proceeded to the capital of Narakasura. Alone, unaided he fought the hosts, eliminated his five commanders. The course of his advance, as

described in the narrative, is interesting. First he had to rip open the six thousand sharp pointed fencings (*pasha*), then surmount a rocky and mountainous region and then wade through the red waters of the River (*lohitaganga*) ; after crossing another river he reached Pragjyotishapura. He met and killed the demons in their thousands and then plunged into the very bowels of the Earth, the *patalaloka*, the nether regions, and confronted the Titan. There ensued a fierce encounter. Sri Krishna dallied with him as it were and Naraka aimed his powerful Shakti towards Sri Krishna. But the latter was unhurt, he stood as if he had been "hit by a garland." And before Naraka could use the next weapon his head was cut assunder in the twinkling of the eye by the famous disc, *chakra*, of the Lord. Bhumi, Earth, arose and handed over the ear-rings of Aditi to the Lord and said :

He (Naraka) was created by you ;

He is ended by you as well ;

May you sport in your glory !

Sri Krishna thereafter rescued the imprisoned damsels who were pining for him, the Liberator long heralded by Narada, and at their earnest prayers took them for wives. The ear-rings were returned to Aditi and all was once more well.

This in brief is the legend. And it is this deliverance of Earth and her peoples from the clutches of the Dark Asura of Hell that is celebrated with such joy and enthusiasm by a grateful people. Early in the morning, before sunrise, they get up from their beds, anoint themselves with oil for a holy bath to wash out the contamination caused by the very existence of Naraka. Bathed, they celebrate the day with sweets, presents and mutual visits. In Maharashtra there is a system of the sister in the house worshipping with *arati* her brother or brothers. The brother stands for Sri Krishna who did the meritorious deed. Before stepping into the special square, lined with various designs in corn-powder, to receive the worship, the brother tastes a particular bitter fruit (*Karith*, in Marathi) which Sri Krishna is said to have tasted before setting out for the kill. As the evening approaches, all the houses are lit up, rows after rows of lamps and lights are lit, *the dipa-avali*; there is no darkness anywhere; it is slain. All is light and light.

Such a beautiful myth as this cannot be dissected and analysed without doing violence to its rounded perfection. We would rather leave the reader to feel the poetic imagery of the conception underlying this Saga of Lights, by himself in the privacy of his soul. We would only draw attention to a few striking features of this narration.

Prag-jyotisha-pura—the city of Light in the East (the East is where the light first breaks in)—is the scene of the Battle. The contestants are Sri Krishna, the Avatar of Supreme God Vishnu, and Bhauma—born of Bhumi—i.e. son of Earth, also known as Naraka-asura, the Titan of Hell. This titan has made life impossible on earth. He even strays into the region of the celestials, robs ornaments of Aditi, the Great Creatrix of the Gods and carries away by force the daughters of the Gods and conceals them in his mountain retreat. Who else can this Titan be but the Dark Force of Ignorance—that is born of Earth—that afflicts the life of Earth and her peoples, the Ignorance that imprisons Light and Knowledge? The correspondence between Bhauma's imprisonment of these *Kanyas* and the concealment of the Vedic Cows by Vala or the Panis is too patent to be missed. Also glaring is the similarity in the means of their deliverance. The Mighty God himself has to come, smash away every obstacle, thick and hard, and kill the arch-enemy with a blow. There it is Indra that does it; here it is Sri Krishna. Once this is done the daughters are liberated and are wedded to the Lord towards whom they rightly aspire. The theme is the same. A decisive conquest of the challenging Darkness and Ignorance by the liberating Power which results in the release and the flooding of the concealed Light.

There are other legends current in different parts of the country in connection with Dipavali. But the most ancient and sanctified by hoary tradition is the Krishna-Narakasura episode with which we associate this festival, in common with great men that have gone before us. So, the Lights are on. The Path is cleared and man's journey towards his Destiny has been rendered safe by the Leading Power. This is the message flashed out by the little leaping flames which all of us Indians delight in lighting up once a year, to remind ourselves, as it were, that the period of sloth, *tamas*, is past, the days of progress and endeavour have come.

Euthanasia—A Social Remedy?

Is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment?

(St. Matthew)

VOLTAIRE loved men no less than letters. He shunned cant and hypocrisy for their degrading clutch on the mind of society. He abhorred war and violence for their utter disregard of the sanctity of the human life. "Twenty years are required", he puts it picturesquely, "to bring man from the state of a plant in which he exists in the womb of his mother and from the state of an animal, which is his condition in infancy, to a state in which the maturity of reason begins to make itself felt. Thirty centuries are necessary in which to discover even a little of his stature. An eternity would be required to know anything of his soul. But one moment suffices in which to kill him." Thus wrote this father of the Age of Enlightenment in Europe in the 18th century. We have certainly travelled far within the two centuries that have gone by since then. Today man is no entity, no individual; he is a unit, a number in the serried ranks of the forces of the State, a cell of the body socio. He lives and moves as a member of society and the necessity of his life ceases with the end of his effective utility to it. Thenceforth he is a burden and the

quicker he removes himself from the scene, the better.

We are prompted to take note of this line of thinking on coming across a suggestion seriously put forward in the pages of the *British Medical Journal* that all old people who are usually a burden on the young should voluntarily take euthanasia. For sheer callous disregard of the accepted values of human life this proposal is hard to beat. It shows in bold glare the nadir to which the materialist civilisation has descended, shows the very dregs of the goblets of selfishness and self-aggrandisement to which men and nations have betaken themselves. The narrow and self-centred animal outlook that engenders such proposals is not the less repulsive for the voluntary sanction that is sought to be given to them. Voluntary or involuntary, the principle involved is the same—it is the sanctity of human life in itself, *per se*, its right to exist on its own. Are we justified in terminating an individual life whether for its own good as we allege or for our own riddance as we more honestly confess? The means used are really secondary. Once we deny the intrinsic value of life, it is more or less a matter of convenience and taste whether it is grape-shot or cyanide capsule that is used. It is also secondary—once it is accepted that a life can be ended when it ceases to be useful—whether

the consent of the individual is obtained or not. The clause of voluntary readiness is merely a concession to that irrational human heritage which Science and Reason have not yet fully succeeded in dislodging, viz. sentiment. And if life can be ended by others, why not by oneself? Euthanasia (with or without consent), homicide and even suicide thus hinge for their justification on the meaning and aim which we are prepared to concede to life.

It is a common argument that it is the recognition of the dignity of life that is responsible for the widespread use of euthanasia in our treatment of the sub-human species. The moment we see that life cannot be itself, it cannot function for its own growth and sustenance and that it can only drag on with utmost pain to itself, we put an end to the life of the animal, thus mercifully delivering it out of its useless struggles. That helps the cause of evolution in Nature by shortening its periods of agony and exhaustion. Could not the same be done with profit on the human level? The answer to this question depends, as we said, upon the significance we attach to the birth of man, the aim and goal set for his life. And we may at once say that whichever way we look and interpret the meaning of the existence of man on earth, whether in the downright manner of the past materialists

or as believers in the spiritual evolution of the soul, an unnatural ending of life is an aggression on its intention and defeat of its purpose.

Let us assume for a moment that man is just this body with a life and nothing more, his mind being a mere epiphenomenon if not the result of the interaction of life and body. Or accept this delineation of man by Santayana : 'Lalande or whoever it was, who searched the heavens with his telescope and could find no God, would not have found the human mind if he had searched the brain with a microscope.....Belief in such a spirit is simply belief in magic..... The only facts observed by the psychologist are physical facts.....the soul is only a fine quick organisation within the material animal.....a prodigious network of nerves and tissues growing in each generation out of a seed.' A 'prodigious network' and 'growing'—that sums up their evaluation of man. He is a product of Nature's evolution. He grows and helps others to grow. Progress is his watchword, happiness his goal. Life-force is his aide and the body his vehicle. He has an instinctive attraction to all that nourishes and strengthens his being, an equally instinctive repulsion from all that afflicts or maims it. This is a universal truth that could be observed with a striking uniformity in the lower species of life. Man.

struggles and endeavours to win happiness and joy no matter what the price. He would go through any amount of struggle and strife to achieve happiness. Who has not felt, at one time or other, one with the poet when he exclaims :

“Be it after a hundred years ! Joy surely awaits him that would but live!”*

He treats death as the enemy, for death ends all his hopes and chances of happiness. Even in death he clings to life. There have been scores of instances where we have heard that people who in moments of despair took poison, pathetically tried to come back to life and lamented their unfortunate move. To end one's own life is thus foolish enough. But to propose to end other people's lives for the reason that they can no longer contribute to our own happiness and are on the other hand an incubus like the old man on the back of Sindabad, is something infinitely worse.

Life is not made to order. After years of toil and experiment running into aeons, Nature has developed the human species through a series of progressive life-embodiments, and it is criminal to destroy wilfully a human organism into the making of which has gone such scrupulous care and sustained industry. We cannot lightly throw it away. The higher the species of life which has

* एति जीवन्त मानन्दो नरं वर्षे शतादपि

evolved consciousness that we harm and destroy, the more wasteful we are of Nature's effort. That would seem to be the just viewpoint of those in our country who have abstained from converting living beings into articles of food. The plant has life, it is true. But it is less developed, less organised and evolved than that of an animal and, in the economy of Nature, a minimum utilisation of lower products of evolution for the sustenance and growth of the higher is unavoidable, certainly permissible. Life is put forward by Nature on purpose—howsoever we may interpret the purpose—and it is demanded of us that we take the highest care to foster, sustain and help it to fulfil itself. Man is endowed with an intelligence—call it mind, call it consciousness—which shall guide and foster into fruitful channels the stream of life of which each one is full. If life flags, Nature rushes in with a fresh infusion of the sustaining strength. Till there is the least possibility of a life (deliberately put forth) realising even a modicum of its potentialities, life struggles to live and Nature does her best. To put an end to the life of man by external means is thus to interfere with the workings of Nature, to forcibly deny the claim of life to live a claim which it voices to its last gasp. To help life with all the means we are capable of, to enlarge it and uplift it should be our aim rather than to break it up, and eliminate

all possible chance of its recovery and growth. For one never knows. The potentialities of life, the resilience of the physical body and the workings of the human mind have always overflowed the bounds set to them by our scientific calculations and charts and have testified to the inadequacy of a purely empirical and materialistic interpretation of the fact and significance of life. Surely man is much more than a mind residing in a living body. The secret of his existence is to be found not in his physical body which is only a vehicle, not in the life-force which merely activates and enlivens the body, not even in the mind which functions as a sort of an ineffective, co-ordinating and leading agency of both the life and body, but in a deeper principle behind the exterior of man called variously as the psyche, the spirit, the soul. It is the underlying fact of the soul that gives meaning and direction to all life. The soul is the central entity round which is organised the complex personality of man, it is the fulcrum around which revolves the ever-moving wheel of life. The soul is a developing proposition put forth into manifestation: to grow and build itself in the perfected figure and status visualised for it before it was cast into the seed-form is its one business. All the rest of man has value only for its instrumental function; all the circumstances and events of life are determined by the needs

of the growing soul, its demands and its willings :

‘On inner values hangs the outer plan’
(*Sri Aurobindo.*)

Considered in the context of this ‘delivering thought’ the whole question of euthanasia, suicide, falls into its proper perspective. The soul has chosen a particular life, a particular body for its embodiment and is utilising it for its growth. It gathers up experiences, takes the substance out of them and grows by absorbing the essence of all—good and evil, pleasant and painful. It profits even by the bitter and the painful in a manner that can hardly be conceived of by our normal mind but could be perhaps imagined, particularly when we remember how the higher reaches of our mind contemplate with serenity, even with a certain delight, drawing the *rasa* in the most tragic episodes narrated in literature or enacted on the stage. The soul demands these experiences and makes use of them, whatever the body may feel about it or the life-force that has to bear the initial shock of the world. Shall we then be justified in closing the span of an individual life—be it animal or human—because the body is suffering or is unfit to be of service? Are we sure that the soul which is the one essential thing that invests the entire life with a meaning may not be wanting

after all to go through the experience? And if we deny it the chance of doing so by our precipitate action, would not the soul have to go through the same round once again for an identical experience? For, when a soul chooses an experience, it is with a view to derive a certain element for its growth and it must have it before it proceeds further. The question is not so simple as it looks; nor are our motives in these matters altogether altruistic. As Sri Aurobindo says: "There are many other factors which make people incline to this short and merciful way out of the difficulty—the nervous inability to bear the sight and hearing of so much suffering, the unavailing trouble, the disgust and inconvenience—all tend to give force to the idea that the animal itself would want to be out of it. But what does the animal really feel about it—may it not be clinging to life in spite of the pain? Or may not the soul have accepted these things for a quicker evolution into a higher state of life? If so, the mercy dealt out may conceivably interfere with the animal's Karma. In fact the right decision might vary in each case and depend on a knowledge which the human mind has not—and it might well be said that until it has, it has not the right to take life."

Woman : Her Place in Society

Silence is women's glory—Aristotle.

THE cry of halt in some quarters to the increasing tendency of women in our country for careers outside the home is none too early. The question is not a simple one of balancing the budget or even of the equality of sexes. The approach, to be more fruitful and convincing, must be made from deeper considerations, the prime one of which is whether any one can do any work he likes, whether all are fitted for every function. Life's reply to this question is in the negative. A division of labour, a marked distinction in capacity from person to person, from genus to genus, species to species is a rule none could escape observing in the workings of Nature. Particular instruments are equipped with particular capacities to discharge particular functions. In the very nature of things, the woman is built and designed to play a part radically different from that meant for man. Not that man could not do what the woman does in many spheres of life, and *vice versa*. It can be done, but at what cost, what avoidable waste of energy and time ?

And what is a woman ?

We do not know how much truth there is in the statement that woman is an unfinish-

ed man. Possibly it underlines the fact that woman *is* the weaker sex, *abala*, to be led and fulfilled by man. Strength, bravery, beauty are the natural hall-marks of manhood. Yes, beauty also. For as Schoepenhaur observed, it is just sexual passion, carnal sense in man that reads beauty in the other sex. If one were to detach oneself from his usual eddies of passion and whirls of desires and look at the entire creation, he cannot fail to be struck by the preponderance of beauty, symmetry and wholeness in the full-blown male species.

A charging lion, a strutting cock or a peacock in the animal species and a well-developed, unadorned body of man are specimens of finished products of human creation, fine examples of the living sculpture in Nature that compare very favourably with the female of the respective species. Man is the king of nature and woman is his aide. An indispensable aide, indeed. The woman is incomplete without man; she is rudderless without the captain; woman is *shakti*, man is *shakta*, the Purusha. It is man's business to rule and run the kingdom of nature and woman's to assist him to bring out his potentialities, to moisten the dry elements in him with the sap, *rasa*, of life, to irrigate his soul with the vitalising waters of the substance of her being. Hers is not to rival but to complement his life.

It is a blasphemy to say that woman is inferior to man. Treated as units in human creation, as soul to soul, there is certainly an equality, it is an equality of the soul. But, soul-equality is not the same as equality of equipment in nature or gift. In some respects the woman is superior, more abundantly endowed by Nature than man is; in others she is decidedly less gifted but that does not make her inferior. For woman has a larger vitality, powers of resistance and endurance, greater fund of energy, *rajasic* passion than man; she has greater capacity of conservation as well as of self-giving. But as a rule she is not amenable to the reign and light of reason. Man, on the other hand, is built on more harmonious lines; his life movements are apt to be less violent and are, of necessity, subject to greater control. A balanced combination of the strong ruling hand of man and the supple channel of throbbing vitality that is women—is what would appear to be the ideal condition for human progress in Nature's scheme.

Thus considered, the question becomes one of equipment and natural proclivity rather than of academic theory or of opportunity and training. Man is designed by Nature to brave the rigours of life, to storm the citadels of Power and fight the battle of the growing Spirit. The woman has to

supply the sinews of war for the struggle for life and progress, to rear and bring up the future soldiers, to build and keep running a happy and secure base called HOME and discharge the responsibilities devolving on her as a mentor, as a friend, as a healer "to warn, to comfort, to command." *Wordsworth*

There is a certain sanctity attached to this role of woman as a mentor, as a friend, as a mother and an alter-ego whose interests are exclusively merged in those of the more active partner.

Recent experiments in some societies like those of the Soviet Union have endeavoured to change the avocation of woman from the home and hearth to the more public offices and functions. On sheerly economic grounds, the results may have been attractive. But the life of man—and of woman also—covers a wider field than that of bread. And even on a strictly utilitarian basis, it is an open question whether society gets its money's worth from woman employees, whether it does not lose something of what is exclusively the woman's contribution to the sum of human progress and achievement as a result of depriving the growing and impressionable children of the motherly care and affection in their early years. Public canteens and children's homes can only succeed in building up

automatons, human beings trained to a pattern.

As a mother, the woman is irreplaceable. Her tenderness of heart, her loving industry and care are too precious to be frittered away by extraneous demands on her person and time, demands imposed by the exigencies of life-less and soul-killing office-careers. As a better-half shaping the environmental atmosphere with diligence and grace—and that means so much of sustenance and support—her value to the partner in life is of special importance admitting of no trifling with it.

We are aware there are many sides to this question as to every other question. But what we have stated sums up one aspect of the truth and this shall not be overlooked as long as society in its present form stands, as long as marriage as an institution is allowed to continue.

The age-long tradition that woman is the weaker sex, *abala*, is causally bound up with the institution of marriage. And this tradition in turn is the result of a general social opinion—shall we say a universal deep-rooted belief—that woman is inferior to man ; if a cure is desired it is to come not by ladies flocking to the telephone counters or *abkari* uniforms but by the cultivation of a counter collective

suggestion that woman is equal to man. If that is done—and how to do it is a different question altogether—much of the weakness attributed to her as Nature's gift could be minimised.

There is also the possibility that as a consequence of that new factor marriage as an institution may disappear and a period of social anarchy may set in, to be succeeded by a different order of living. But till then, as long as society continues to live and progress with the family for its unit, it is best for our women to strive and perfect themselves in the model of the women-seers of the Rig Veda or the Brahmavadinis of the Upanishads or of the heroic types of Indian womanhood whose fidelity, devotion and loyalty to higher ideals are sung and recorded in the epics that have moulded and enlivened the character of these great peoples of India from immemorial times.

“Satyameva Jayate”

Truth Alone Wins

“**T**RUTH alone wins, not falsehood.”
Satyameva jayate na anritam—so reads the Upanishad and the affirmative part of the statement now forms the motto of the reborn State of India.

A number of interesting questions arise in the wake of the selection of this gem from the sacred text. Is it practicable, is it even permissible to import moral maxims and religious precepts into secular affairs like statecraft? Are we going to run our affairs on the conviction that truth alone wins? And does Truth really win? Certainly not in private life. The good man, the truthful man almost always goes under with the man of deceit and falsehood walking away with the plums. Truth rarely wins when it could pay, and when it wins at all it is too late. Does it win in the collective life of the community? It is the practical man, the realist, the politician who rules the roost. Surely commerce would come to a standstill, social intercourse would be reduced to a crude and bare give-and-take, and political life reduced to an absurdity if only Truth and its values were to form the basis of conduct.

And are the conditions in international dealings such as would permit a nation to adopt with safety a guiding principle of this kind? Let alone the low abyss into which international life has fallen at the moment. Does history warrant our belief and faith in the invincibility of Truth as opposed to falsehood? Quite the contrary, we should think. How was the epic war of the Kurus won? Is it not a fact that this war for the establishment of Dharmarajya was won by the Pandavas with ministrations of falsehood at crucial moments? Even the gods conspired to bring about the downfall of that unflinching adherent of lofty sentiments—Karna. Was it truth, was it straightforwardness and honesty that won when Rama welcomed Vibhishana, the traitor to his country's cause and learnt from him the secrets of the enemy's defences? Or to take recent events, when historians tell us that it was sheer propaganda at the opportune moment that shattered the morale of the German nation and won the first Great War for the Allies, are we to believe that Truth was broadcast and truth it was that won? The wisdom of its choice for motto apart, even as a statement of fact this saying appears to be of doubtful validity. Well, this is one side that is apparent to the common mind.

But is it really so? Are all men of wisdom and years, all religions and ethics

wrong in ascribing lasting strength and inevitable victory to Truth? Does truth win only in school text-books? We think not. There are virtues and virtues. There are a large number of injunctions and decrees in the moral and religious codes of all peoples which are designed to curb the crude and subdue and regulate the animal bent of man into truly human and right social relations. These commandments differ, in the very nature of things, from time to time, from clime to clime. But there are some precepts which stand the same for all time, for all peoples. That is so because they answer to certain deeper truths of nature, because they embody principles which stand at the base and govern all life-movements and social institutions. They represent certain verities that are eternal and dynamic factors that obey the laws of Truth underlying all existence. Harmony is one such. Beauty, its child is another. Truth, Satyam, is indeed the soul of these eternal principles and is for this reason universally accepted as a living ideal by all religions and philosophies.

And what is Truth? Without going into the metaphysical aspect of the matter we can at once describe it as a right perception, right thought, and an undeflected expression of it in life. We follow truth because it is the straight and most natural course to tread;

the dignity of manhood demands that we do the right thing. Truth is self-existent and requires no extraneous considerations for its fulfilment. It is neither moral nor immoral, but *amoral*. It does not depend upon religious sanction. Least of all on utilitarian considerations (though the Englishman has discovered with instinctive business-sense that it *pays* in the long run to be honest and is therefore the best policy!) Considerations such as those of utility and material benefits simply do not enter into this look of things. Really these apply only to the half-animal human kingdom. With the development of man these make way for higher and nobler impulses.

Violence is immediately very effective ; it accomplishes its purpose without delay ; but we, as civilised men, try to abjure it in private life and therefore in the normal social life. This is a mark of progress and civilisation. Short-term calculations slowly give play to more lasting values on a larger basis with the enlightened advance of humanity. Man has learnt that his problem is bigger and other than that of bread and cheese, that his life is too vast and too significant to be a slave of expediency alone. Mans' growth to his fuller manhood lies not in tricks and subterfuges, deceit and low cunning that is natural to animal intelligence, but in a brave and noble

endeavour to shed the petty clings to his lower nature, to respond to the call of sublime ideals and accept the rule of higher principles in life.

What is true of men is necessarily true of aggregates of men and institutions fashioned by men. In certain respects, it is easier to adopt and enforce a sterner way of life and force the pace on a collective level than on the individual, and this is where a strong State can give the lead. Societies and nations are rated great or small and accepted by people as such according as to whether they raise the level of human living to eminences by a collective effort or they stagnate in the quagmires of individual and sectional jealousies and manoeuvrings.

We have heard of kingdoms and empires built on the edifice of treachery and falsehood and driven at the point of the sword. But where are they now? Where is the empire of Aurangzeb, the empire of Albuquerque or the Reich of Hitler? Allowing for the ravages of time, they have not even left legacies, cultural and moral, for posterity to inherit. They may have been prosperous for the brief period of their reign. But we cannot afford to blind ourselves by the glare of momentary blazes.

As we said earlier, a nation or an individual is in the ultimate scale of values successful or unsuccessful in the measure of the contribution made or not made, directly or indirectly, to the elevation of society, its level of thought and action, towards a working support to the enlarging reign of Higher Ideals. A single example of Rama, the dutiful son who renounced the throne to keep the word of his father, a Jesus who laid down his life for his Faith, a Rana Pratap who perished with his sword or a Joan of Arc who walked to the stake, in vindication of a righteous cause—these and similar to these have influenced groups of humanity in an unmistakable manner and history treasures their memory for their successful contribution towards the establishment of a nobler purpose in life.

Men and nations have this responsibility to discharge and that demand is not necessarily in conflict with the temporal good of the individual unit: the latter can be harmonised with the former and both of them promoted in the truest sense on the royal road of Truth without compromise of principles or resort to untruth. Sri Aurobindo was once asked if untruth was not permissible in such exceptional cases as for saving one's own life or another's. He replied with an emphatic NO and added that it was always possible to save

oneself and save others also by keeping to truth. Trials of strength between principles and expediency, between Truth and Falsehood, are frequent in the lives of men and nations. Humanity is richer by reason of such testing tugs and in the long run chooses its saviours from those who upheld the standard of Truth and refused to be drawn into ignoble submission to Mara the Tempter, to Lucifer the Asura.

In India this spirit, this tradition, runs in the blood of her sons. No man is more honoured than he who sees the Truth—the Rishi, no man a hero who does not dedicate his life or part of it at least to the cause of an Ideal, a Truth, that stands above lay calculations and considerations. If in spite of such a living tradition—and that it is so was amply testified by the incredibly large number of self-sacrificing men and women thrown up during the past five decades of the nation's fight for freedom, a phenomenon without parallel elsewhere in history—kingdoms fell and the nation lay vanquished, it is because of the failure of leaders of men and society to go beyond their narrow interests and parochialisms in later times rather than to any inefficacy of Truth, Satyam, as the guide and Pole Star of our lives.

Even today, after all the onslaughts of foreign invasions and conquests with their

attendent graftings of alien thought and way of life on our own, the average Indian has an instinctive regard for God, for Spirit, for Truth and men of Truth. He does not regard truthful living as a chimera whether for himself or for his corporate society. The ideal of Ramarajya has a living appeal to him. And if any nation is competent to make a beginning and give a lead in the way of establishing Satyam as a basis of its public life and extending it as a base for international conduct, it is this country—India of the sages. Here the collective consciousness of the people has imbibed the psychic quality and spirit to a marked degree of refinement and the people, as a whole, respond more readily and naturally to the demands of Higher Ideals than any other. It was on this sacred soil that man first awoke to Light and the mystic seers hymned the supremacy of Truth, *Satyam* its way, the Law, the Right, *Ritam*, and its faultless working—*ritasya panthah*. And to-day millenniums later their descendants, in their hour of resurrection find themselves led to choose the very same watchword for their standard.

Truth, Satyam, is an impersonal Power. Truth is dynamic, luminous and life-giving. Falsehood, its opposite, is the enemy of truth, enemy of the soul and begets darkness that covers with smoke the natural glow of one's

personality —‘*anritam tamaso ruḥam*’ says the Mahabharata (Shantiparva, 160 : 11). Falsehood and its brood, its less naked and dressed-up *avatars* may appear to succeed and do succeed frequently for the moment—that is perhaps inevitable in the present imperfect state of human development—but they defeat the man himself. Man loses regard for his own self, he becomes less than a man. It is weakness with its issue cowardice that resorts to falsehood. Strength alone dares truth and truth begets strength. Only a strong man can be truthful, only a strong nation can afford to hold Truth aloft. Would to God, that this hoary land unique for the continuity of the long line of Inspiration leading it from the ancient Vedic dawns down to our own times be also unique for the fully out-flowered strength of her children in all the walks of life, so that of her it could be said :

‘*There none was weak, so falsehood could not live*’ (Sri Aurobindo).

Our Yoga and the Challenge of Pragmatism

TWO philosophers had set out for a walk. Passing by a lake they happened to see in it two fishes. 'Look' said one, 'the fishes are playing.'

'How do you know they are playing?' asked the other.

'How do you know that I do not know they are playing?'

'How do you know that I did not know that you do not know?'

And we do not know where the argument ended. No body cared to look closely at the fish. For all that we know, they may have been peacefully asleep, and our philosophers forgetting that their feet are nailed to the earth were battling in the clouds or in the rarefied air of the void. Such has been the state generally of Philosophy in the West. There have been, however, occasional outbursts of thought-movements which are bold and brilliant and appeal to the realistic sense of the serious thinker. One such fascinating idea in the field of higher thought is the utilitarian element as the *raison d'etre* in any philosophic system. We shall make a

brief study of the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo in this context and place it *vis a vis* the modern concept of Pragmatism. Before proceeding to examine its implications, it is pertinent to recall to our mind the general philosophic environment in the West that gave birth to this challenge in the last century.

Philosophy is indeed an enquiry into the truth, the meaning and aim of life, but the study is carried on in the West not along the current or touching springs of life as in the East but mainly in what has been so appropriately termed, a 'conceptual vacuum'. In the East the Seer precedes the philosopher; in the West, it is the thinker at his best who is the philosopher, mentioned with respect in scholarly circles and admired vaguely by the intellectual classes of various types. While the latter seeks to ideate the meaning of life, the former propagates to competent minds the truth as seen and realised by himself. The starting-point of the seeker of truth in the East was a daring attempt at direct experience and seizure of the truth behind life as we see it and philosophy came in later as a means of systematised presentation of such truths to the intellect. But in the West, it was just the other way. Life, or rather so much of it as could be conveniently handled, was pressed into the conceptual mould of the mind for reinterpretation in terms of the developing sciences and their theories. But

the human mind is by no means the highest or the infallible instrument of man for sounding the depths of Life. In its very nature it is analytical and it naturally proceeds to consider things piece by piece and arrives at conclusions which are at best one-sided where they are not wrong-sided. Inevitably any system of thought based mainly on the operation of the Intellect suffers from the same limitations. Philosopher after philosopher in Europe have struck upon brilliant ideated truths and were so much overwhelmed by the Power of the Idea that they took it to be the All-truth, the sole truth of life and proceeded to interpret everything in its terms and wove out whole systems of thought seeking to justify the standpoint.

Thus Plato enunciated his Doctrine of Ideas. The Universal Class was for him the only truth; men may die but Man lives. The truth of the individual unit had no place in his scheme of things. It is interesting to recall that there is a parallel conception of *jati* and *vyakti*, Class and Individual, in the Indian systems of Philosophy. Arguments have been advanced as to whether *vyakti* is paramount or the *jati*; the conclusive note however seems to have been struck with the reconciliation, so characteristic of Indian thought, that the truth lies in the concept of the individual as qualified by the Class, *jati vishishhta vyakti*.

Locke observed that Knowledge comes to us from experience and through our senses—the mind, he said, was a clean slab on which are recorded sense-experiences. Sensations are the stuff of thought and it follows, he concluded, that Matter is the material of mind. Berkeley looked at the problem from another side and proved, as convincingly as the other, that everything being just a bundle of perceptions, Matter is but a state of mind, a form of mind. The German philosopher Kant who has exercised a most pervading influence on European thought, sought for the truth of life, not within it but outside of it and perceived it in what he termed the Transcendent Unity of apperception. Later the French Philosopher Bergson denied any basis for the materialism of Locke or the Idealism of Berkeley, or even the Transcendentalism of Kant and went on to fix the meaning of the universal movement on the *Elan Vital*. All existence is a becoming, a movement and *Life*, he said, was the sole truth of the Universe, and the world and all its creations were expressions of this surging stream of vitality that we call life.

But the Truth of existence is not one and single ; it is manysided and could not be thus imprisoned in the formulae carved out of the mind. Based upon Intellect, operating with the means developed and circumscribed within the range of the intellect, these

philosophies never exerted any effective influence beyond the range of the intellect. Philosophy became just one more of the sciences best left to the care of the specialist in his laboratory. It had no vitality in it to impinge upon the normal life and mind of man and orientate his life one way or the other. That was possible, for instance, in ancient India for the reason that philosophy pointed to truths that were *lived* and could be lived by any one with the requisite competence therefor. Philosophy here has been dynamic. The truth of Adwaita, for example, has influenced, not merely influenced, but shaped in a positive manner the thought and life-outlook and to a large extent the other-worldliness of millions. Whether that is the sole Truth and a life based upon the perception of that Ideal is the highest possible end for man is a different question altogether. What matters is the fact that Philosophy was not a theory, a result of profound speculation but a perceived and lived truth.

Cold logic—the rightful boast of European science—has also been its curse. The attempt to segregate thought from life resulted in the shearing of its living roots and even the most fascinating flower of such thinkings could not but fade and turn out to be lifeless. It was a metaphysical structure built by the mind, whose value for the proper use of life and its betterment was void of

practical importance. For, "if it does not correspond to facts knowable or known to us, if its concepts cannot be verified by us as facts of experience, then the best of systems is just a 'flower of reason', if not a cobweb of mental constructions in the world of ideas that are divorced from facts and are not valid for acceptance as truths that can be lived." Philosophy became but another name for scholasticism and Cicero's appraisal of European philosophy that 'there is nothing so absurd but that it may be found in the books of the philosophers' seemed after all not far from truth.

It was inevitable that this overtone of intellectualism should have provoked a sharp reaction. After Hegel in the 18th century, such a turn was inescapable if European thought was not to perish in the ruins of its own ideation. In his *Study of History*, Prof. Toynbee remarks that Challenge is a most important factor in the survival or failure of Civilisation. Faced with a situation that questions its very right to exist and threatens to exterminate it, the Civilisation turns round, seeks for and tries to refind the central truth that lay at the basis of its life. Its efforts are directed to renovate its forms suitably to the new demands and in the measure of its success it justifies or fails to justify its claim for a further extension or another commencement of life. This is a

truth that extends to all Nature; and the challenge with which Philosophy in Europe was confronted was this: the question was asked, do these systems of thought have a practical bearing on life? Does their application result in effecting our way of life in any particular manner? Do they ennoble life or rob it of its zest? Philosophy was thus challenged to prove its credentials for acceptance by serious minds since it claimed to fathom the secret of human living. It was natural that this new departure in the lines of thinking—Pragmatism as the guiding rule of life and thought—should have taken roots in the growing race of Americans in the last century, a people whose feet are firmly set on earth, whose heart-beats are close to the roots of life.

Thought, they said, cannot be divorced from life. It is a part of life, meant for life and to be cultivated with an eye to life. We must seek for the truth of Existence in life itself and not in an ideative isolation. Philosophy, they continued, 'has been occupied not with objects but with *a priori* concepts of objects'. "Philosophy lives in words, but truth and fact well up into our lives that exceed verbal formulation", said William James, the noted protagonist of the new school. Every philosophy is valid to the extent it affects life, is true in the measure of the enrichment and growth it imparts

or is capable of imparting to life. With typical turn of phrase, they argued that the truth of an idea or a concept lay not in its invulnerability in logic or epistemology but in 'its cash-value or efficacy'. Charles Sanders Pierce, originator of this attractive stream of thought, said 'to find the meaning of an idea examine the consequences to which it leads in action.' He may not have been, perhaps, fully conscious of the full import and significance of the Idea he was voicing ; but the utterance was an inspired one and we whole-heartedly accept it, but with an extended connotation as we shall see in due course.

Thus Pragmatism shifted the emphasis from the origin and nature of knowledge in Philosophy to its practical implication. As a modern American author puts it pithily: "Scholasticism asked, what *is* the thing—and lost itself in quiddities; Darwinism asked, what is its origin—and lost itself in nebulas; Pragmatism asks, what are its consequences—and turns the face of thought to action and future."

It must be noted however, that this was not altogether a new mode of thought. It was in fact a fresh formulation of the instinct with which man has, from the beginning of time, learnt to distinguish between the good and the not-good, between that which helps him acquire strength and that which

diminishes his stature. Francis Bacon had put it succinctly when he said the 'rule which is the most effective in practice is also the most true in history.' We need not concern ourselves with the pros and cons of the controversy that greeted this fresh departure of thought; nor is it necessary for our purpose to examine the propriety of extending the pragmatic method to all fields of activity that concern man, including the confines of religious philosophy, as is done by philosophers like Dewey. Suffice it to note that the one important conclusion re-established by Pragmatism as a way of thinking was that no system of thought or mode of life could claim allegiance of the human mind unless it served for the distinct enlargement and progress of man. For here on this globe, man is the central figure; he is no spectator. Well has it been said that it is for Gods and angels and not for man to be the spectator on this arena of human life.

II

But is man so important after all that he should be the sole gauge of all progress in the world? Does this mighty movement of Nature really revolve round this dot of human life that appears one moment and disappears the next? Is it not more correct to say that man is yet one more creature thrown up by Nature to subserve the execu-

tion of some Law Eternal of her own—whether it be the Wheel of Karma or the perpetual clash of a Manichean Duality or the blind drive of a mechanical Energy? The relative importance and consequence of Man has formed topic for endless debate. Sri Aurobindo is one with the progressive line of thought in the West in investing the Homo Sapiens with a cardinal importance. He accepts the truth of Evolution but in a spiritual sense. Man is the highest form of life evolved by Nature so far and is the crown of her labours. It is in him that Nature, evolving Nature, seeks a conscious embodiment of her purpose and will, a leader who will lead the creation along the most fruitful course. The scrupulous care with which the human organism has come to be developed in the long course of millenniums, nay, of aeons, and the tireless energy and amazing eye for detail exhibited in designing this miniature universe, the microcosm containing and reflecting within a single frame the elements of the entire universe—Macrocosm, bespeak the importance which the Builder of the worlds attaches to this puny yet significant product of her labours. Yet it may be asked if man, as he is today, is fitted for the role he may have been designed for. Has he the necessary equipment, the sight and the power with which to mount the steed of Life and direct it to the heights of consummation? Man has grown, but grown

in certain directions alone at the cost of an apparent set-back in other parts. Thus for instance, with the growing shift of emphasis on the development of the thinking faculty, the physical part of him has suffered a visible diminution. The body Beautiful as an ideal is preserved not in life, but in Art Galleries, in sculptured monuments to the Grecian culture of the body. Physical strength—'brute strength' as it is called—is indulgently associated with the comparatively unadvanced races and its importance as a solid base for the mighty edifice under erection is totally forgotten. Or again, with the growth of the thinking and reasoning mind, certain faculties of direct knowledge with which man was gifted, e.g. the instinctive guidance, which is really a kind of intuition in the physical, that was self-operative has now receded into the background. The mind has to labour and arrive at knowledge which was effortlessly grasped and automatically acted upon in the earlier cycles of human progress. The *forte* of man today is the faculty of thought with Reason for its adjutant. It has indeed worked wonderfully well, and discovered many mysteries of Material Nature. Man has mastered the elements to a considerable extent, has probed deep into the exterior secrets of Nature and has erected a civilisation which he now finds beyond his limited mental capacity to control and direct for an assured

drive towards the necessary orientation. He has unleashed Forces whose origin he knows not and whose inexorable tempo he vainly tries to arrest so as to suit the faltering steps of his intelligence. He lacks the requisite stature of the spirit and lacks also the light in the mind that is required to assume a directing control over the concatenation of forces and events following upon the fortuitous discoveries which he has either partly anticipated or wholly stumbled upon. The crux of the problem facing man is simply this: his "material progress and mastery is not the result of and in keeping with a spiritual progress and mastery which alone has the power to contradict and counter-act the terrible danger coming from these new discoveries. We cannot and must not stop progress, but we must achieve it in an equilibrium between the inside and the outside." (The Mother : New Year Prayers). How is man going to do it? Nature has flung the Question before him and awaits the answer. For on the nature of his response depends her future course of action. Should man fail to realise the gravity of the hour and be found lacking in the will to rise above his present limitation and shape himself into a surpassing perfection of the present formulation of his being, Nature will be obliged to cast him off on the roadside even as she has left the Dodo and the Dinosaur before and proceed to

build yet another vehicle for the realisation of her Purpose.

Leaving aside the question of his ultimate destiny for the moment, no one disputes that man, as he is at present, is a very imperfect creature. With a physique that is no match for most of the other developed species on earth, a life-force severely circumscribed and constantly failing to meet the demands of the body and the mind, a mind that is mostly at the mercy of invasive visitations from the unknown or partly and vaguely felt regions—call it the subconscious and the subliminal—man is hardly in an enviable position. Nor does anyone question that it is this imperfection in the make-up of man that is reflected in the imperfect order of the world without. Imperfect men can but create imperfect patterns of society. It is, to say the least, illogical to expect harmony, ordered progress and happiness in a community where the members constituting it are themselves each full of disharmony in the individual frame of being not to speak of the discord between the members themselves. All our laws, social reforms, Plans, political permutations are at best ameliorative measures that may succeed, for the time being, in softening the rigours of the friction, in erecting a simulacrum of what is called Unity in society, unity of community but what really amounts to

nothing more than a forced association, a fastening of the fringes here and there, an adhesion for limited ends and not a cohesion in fellow-being and brotherhood. Nations will continue to war, societies will continue to rival and clash, gallows will continue to besmirch the face of Earth as long as the root of the problem is not tackled in a definitive manner. Indeed, of the ever-increasing problems with which man is faced, the first and most important one—on the fruitful solution of which depends the solution of the rest—is *himself*. In a sense he is the heart of the evolving Spirit's body on Earth and as long as the heart suffers from a malaise, as long as its beats lack the rhythm of health, the body will continue to ail however much one might embellish a limb here and a limb there.

Man is imperfect. From the present state of his development he has to proceed and reach the acme of his possible progress. A harmony in the growth of all the elements of his being—body and mind, life and soul—is the condition indispensable for his perfection, the urgency of which has to be fully realised. Again man is divided from the rest of his fellow-beings by separation in consciousness. At heart he feels he is separate, his interests are different from those of others, and they are to increase and bear fruit in cooperation with those of

others if advantageous or in suppression of them if necessary. All social conventions and legal restrictions serve to curb down this primitive trait in man; they do not eradicate it. The present-day Unity, political and social is just a union under the compulsion of expediency and self-interest now masquerading under the plea of altruism, now disguising itself as fellowship in fraternity. True and lasting unity can proceed only from a feeling, knowledge and understanding deeper than has been generally possible till now. At first, there must be a psychological realisation at least of such a necessity leading to a possible change in the natural constitution including the inner make-up of man. As with man, so with the aggregate of men. Collectivities approach each other for self-aggrandisement alone and when they clash they do more sharply than in the case of individuals because they are just aggregates of diverse egos. Within itself again, the collective Ego is eternally at war with its constituents, both struggling for supremacy over each other. Here again the solution has to come from the individual reaching a reasonable stage of a psychological, an inner perfection; he has to realise his true place in the totality which is at once his field and expression; he has to harmonise himself with the higher needs of his own being first, and thus grow to be competent to promote the well-being,

jointly and severally, of the collective Whole. Then it is possible for him to play his part in the just extension of this principle of oneness and union to a larger Whole embracing the many collectivities in its orbit. The inner growth and perfection of man is the one key for the solution of all the diverse problems of humanity. After all, it is the individual in the multiplicity that we call the aggregate, and it is that individual who answers to the demands of a larger life and perfection that counts in the onward march of the group.

All our sciences, all our wisdoms and philosophies are to be measured in terms of their contribution towards the solution of this crucial problem. Do they help man to enlarge the boundaries of his limited vision, to rise above the muddy waters of the whirlpool of his self-centred movements, to reach towards an increasing perfection of his manhood, in a word to ennoble, to enrich and even transform life into the image of its Ideal that has been the dream of the Seer-Poets of all lands from times immemorial? A line of thought, a way of living that fulfils these demands has pragmatic value in excelsis, beyond the challenge of Logic or Theology and merits serious consideration at the hands of every earnest seeker after Truth, every lover of humanity. And it is in this light that we view the place of Sri Aurobindo's

system as related to Pragmatism, and show that the ideal way of life that could be lived and the means for its realisation as seen and taught by Sri Aurobindo is the highest form of Pragmatism in an extended and higher sense of the term. And the way of life and the means leading to it is Yoga, not as is commonly understood in the West, or even in India, but in a specific sense of the term as we shall presently see. For Yoga is an art of life and as every art has a technique and practical application, Yoga too has its own line of procedure and practice and consummation. And this is especially so, in the case of the Yoga that is characteristic of the Personality of Sri Aurobindo.

III

It is a fundamental tenet of this Yoga and the philosophy based upon it that the Universe is a reality, since the basic and ultimate Reality—call it the Brahman—is its conscious Creator. This creation, our universe is a progressive manifestation of that Reality which is the Supreme Spirit and the Earth is the significant centre of this unfolding movement of the Spirit. The earth is, as it were, the solid body of the Spirit providing the base for its superb edifice under preparation; and it is as such that supreme importance is attached to it, not by man alone who is a self-conscious creature obliged to live on it

somehow, but by those Forces also that are generated, of necessity, in the course of Evolution, as well as by those which have helped in its formation. These are the demiurges who hold it as a most prized possession and guard it sleeplessly from the malevolent. For there are two classes of Forces, those who work for progress, light and knowledge and those who restrain and oppose all formative powers of progress and are themselves entrenched in the steep rock of Ignorance. It is these latter against whom protection is necessary—these dark forces of malevolence as the ancient seers of India perceived and taught. Indeed the Atharva text reads :

‘यां रक्षन्ति अस्वप्ना विश्वदानीं देवा भूमिं पृथिवीमप्रमादम्’

(XII.1.7)

In other words, there is a meaning, a purpose in the existence of this earth and the teeming multitude of soulful forms that proceed from it. Each formation is a part of the whole with a specific purpose before it. Life is real and whether the creature is aware of it or not it is moving towards the fulfilment of the purpose. This outlook leads to certain notable consequences on life and action. First, there is a recognition that nothing is *waste*; there is nothing so insignificant that it can be brushed aside as useless. The smallest details acquire an

importance all their own, the precise nature of their significance depending on our interpretation of the Goal of life. The seeker values life in the world as a field for the expression of his personality and as the ground providing for the working out of his destiny. His own life he looks upon as a sacred trust from a Higher Power of which he has to make the best use, to perfect it in the truth of the spirit and make it an illumined centre of faultless activity. He takes to *action* as a direct means of forging his own individual growth and as the effective means for canalising the outflow of his increasing strength and purity towards the good of the race. He works not because he cannot help it, not even to help maintain the existing set-up of society, but in order to contribute his own share for the ennoblement and uplift of the general life, for executing the Divine Intention in creation to which he has joyfully dedicated himself. He puts a premium on action as a part of his Sadhana for normalising in the exterior parts of his being the working of the higher faculties developed in his inner life and also for preserving a happy harmony in the development of his inner substance and his outer being. It is demanded of the Sadhaka of this Integral Yoga that he bring to bear even on the smallest action he is called upon to do, all the culture that pertains to his inner development. This emphasis, by

Sri Aurobindo, on a spiritual life, a life lived in the deeper truths of existence, providing a basis for and inspiring a concurrent life of action enhances the value of action, enlarges and sublimates the Yoga of the Gita. The external life of the Yogin shall be a faithful reflection of his inner life and his enlightened activity in the world a means of mutual enrichment between the inner and the outer life.

Recognition of a purpose behind life lends true earnestness and dignity to human living. There is no Original Sin besetting man and this creation towards redemption from which it is his duty to mournfully strive. The disease that afflicts is not Sin but Ignorance. It is an ignorance that is universal in character. All the imperfections of our world proceed from the twistings and limitations imposed by this pervasive ignorance. But Ignorance is not co-terminous with Creation. It is a phase in the long course of development of the worlds. Ignorance is not a permanent strand woven into the web of this our creation. It is really an incomplete state of knowledge struggling for a fuller knowledge in the larger reaches of the being for a harmonic and wholesome expression. It is not a total absence of knowledge, it is an imperfect knowledge which seizes the Truth in parts and mistakes them for the whole

truth, it struggles towards perfection even when it is perverse. With the progressive growth of Knowledge, Ignorance recedes and disappears. Hence the effort of man has to be directed towards an increasing growth from his present imperfect condition into a perfect status of being. His life is a progression from the wrong and perverse to the Right and Perfect, from a lesser truth to a greater truth, from a tiny arc to a complete circle.

When the life of a man is governed mainly by the demands of his physical needs and propensities, his movements, responses and stresses are markedly different from and inferior to those of one who lives largely a life of action, surging with vitality, and spends himself out in activity. Remarkably different from both is the way of life, thought and action of the thinker who lives normally on the levels of the thinking mind. The man who has built an inner life, the life of the spirit, is still different from the rest. Each order of life is real and all of them together constitute a progressive series. Each way of life has something distinctive of its own which gives it a stamp of difference. It is not that man passes from stage to stage in the manner indicated ; in life, all these exist simultaneously in one, some more vivid, some less and dull, and some more pronounced, some less and inchoate. And

according as the one or the other is predominant in shaping the main stream of his life, we describe the man as leading that particular life. The law of things in any order of life dominated and controlled by Ignorance is necessarily different from the law operative in another order where the governing principle is different from that of Ignorance. Man undergoes the drive of action and interaction of the mechanical laws that characterise creation in its present stage of Ignorance and is subject to evil, misery and suffering that issue from it only so long as he confines himself to it; the moment he takes steps to live, at least by a part of himself to begin with, in another and higher sphere of life, it is the laws of that order of life that begin to operate and correct the workings of the lower order. The farther he outlives the life of ignorance, the freer he is from the touches of the forces that operate in that sphere. It does not mean, of course, that he withdraws from life itself for the supposed reason that it is shrouded in an incurable ignorance; he leaves the life of ignorance and grows into a life of knowledge.

In a sense, man is awakening to the inevitable Dawn of Knowledge, to the necessity of reaching to it and is fumbling for the proper means to attain to it. The knowledge however is not a mental knowledge,

not even a knowledge of the intuitive and inspirational kind, though that is of great value inasmuch as it proceeds from a source higher and purer than that of the knowledge we are accustomed to normally. That knowledge which he has to aspire for is not mental and limited to one part of man ; it is vibrant in the entire consciousness of him. It is this fullest kind of knowledge which Sri Aurobindo calls the Integral knowledge. His teaching affirms that it is possible for man—and shows the way to realise it—to develop his consciousness to such a state of sensitivity and receptivity that it could, by a spontaneous movement embrace the content of knowledge in its entirety, directly. When this Knowledge dawns and rises to be normal, man is informed in all his parts with the right perception, the right thought and the right movement.

In the absence of a faultless and direct knowledge to lead and enlighten him, man sees in half-lights, and false lights, walks in half-lit nights, acts from a dark corner, a wrong angle. He mistakes his ego to be his true soul, the spirit and serves the ego and not the soul, and carries out its dictates. His world moves round his own ego and naturally clashes with other egos. Clash, strife and battle are the inevitable result, all tending to give an appearance (which struck keen observers, Naturalists like Darwin) of

competition rather than cooperation, war rather than love, understanding and sympathy being the basis of life and progress. This however is just a phase, not the entire or final truth. If man suffers to day from clash in the impacts of other men and goes under before the onrush of the universal forces around him it is because he has, in his ignorance, closed himself in his small shell and maintains doggedly his precarious and apparent isolation in the world around. He has to outgrow and shed off this isolation and learn to desist from shrinking from the universal contacts and this he can do only by enlarging his consciousness, by progressively identifying himself with the Life of the larger universe to which indeed he belongs in a concrete sense. It is a fact of spiritual experience, a truth glimpsed by many in the higher flights of their idealistic thinkings, that behind the apparent diversities and oppositions on the surface of things there is a truer base—corresponding to what Spinoza spoke of as *Substance* ‘stand under’—in the deeper layer of existence where all beings find their unity, also equality among themselves. It is there that all meet in union. We may call it the Oneness in Spirit spread all over the creation. To get at that truth, represented in the individual initially by the **Psyche**, by means of an intensive aspiration and discipline is an essential part of this **Sadhana**. From this centre spring naturally

the true relations with others ; love and harmony radiate like light from the sun and to such a man truly,

“...a kelson of creation is love ”.

(Walt Whitman)

This recognition of the incomplete and self-cabined life man leads and the possibility of developing a larger life participating more freely and harmoniously in the greater life around and the inevitability of harmony displacing disharmony with the progressive displacement of ignorance by knowledge are the salient features at the doors of this Yoga.

There is also a recognition of the disjointed nature of the component parts that make up the personality of man. At present, the being of man is constituted of different parts, each with its own particular way of life, mode of working and distinctness of purpose. The physical part plunged in its roots in the Dark, what Sri Aurobindo calls the Inconscience, and with its preponderant inertia, the life itself with its natural preference for dynamic upsurges and the mind partly submerged and partly emerging out of these two and swinging alternately between both, an emotive element struggling for free expression from below, all these form a chaotic conglomeration. When one part is developed, the others are neglected or it is

built up at the cost of the others. This teaching insists that every one of the different parts has rightful claim and share in the life of man. Each is to be perfected in conjunction with the rest, the perfection of one carries with it the eventual completion of the others. The Yoga initiates a movement of integration whereby the progress of each part of the being is followed by a period of assimilation during which the other parts receive and absorb what the leading element has won and conferred upon them ; and it is only when they are thus regenerated and made better bases for further progress that the next movement of spiritual advance could follow for their proper role.

The problem of man, thus, resolves itself into a radical Ignorance with its many branches overshadowing and embracing the complex being of man. To this are to be traced all his natural deficiencies that weigh down his capacity for right action, and befog him amidst dubious twilights of groping knowledge ; it is these deficiencies that set on him the shocks which dilute happiness, subject him also to the sufferings that mortify life, and bring about the disharmonies that dismember the members of his own being. Man is possessed of an intelligent will to overcome and overpass the boundaries of this Ignorance ; in fact he has accomplished a good deal by his mental effort. The first

important step in the eventual elimination of Ignorance has been already taken ; there is a general recognition of the presence of such a distorting Agency and a beginning has been made to combat it. But these efforts have failed to make substantial progress ; the realisation is coming upon man that mental will alone cannot overcome this Titanic Ignorance. Ignorance has to be displaced and that can be done, according to this Teaching, only by a higher Power of Knowledge, a direct power from the Divine Being that governs the human Creation. It is a higher form of the Spirit, the super-conscious principle that could alone deliver the human consciousness out of the bounds of Ignorance and of the clings to the Inconscience that hold the mind and body of man in their grip. It is this principle of supreme Knowledge and Will, a characteristic mode of the Spirit at the summit of this creation, a Power and faculty of which our own mind and will are distant derivations in a diminished form, that is termed the Supermind by Sri Aurobindo.

To strive for and achieve the establishment of this principle of Supermind is the central aim of this Yoga. The Supermind is that creative poise of the Divine Consciousness which alone could give the lift to the higher step in the evolution of the human spirit into that which is the sole solution of the Problem of man. To make the higher

Divine principle directly active in this life on Earth, to raise life to its fuller expression of the hidden truths of the Spirit, to actualise what to us may be ideas and Ideals—Ideals of Knowledge, Beauty, Harmony, Delight—this is the aim of the Integral Yoga. And this is superbly pragmatic, for the pragmatism of the Yoga is based upon the eternal verities of the spirit, the abiding factors that determine standards of conduct answering to the needs of terrestrial life lived for the sake of the Universal and the Divine from which it is derived.
