The Real Awakener



The Light of lights

Words of Sri Aurobindo – 24

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** The titles marked with an * are from the original. All the unmarked titles in the text are from the editor.*

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"What is there new that we have yet to accomplish? Love, for as yet we have only accomplished hatred and self-pleasing; Knowledge, for as yet we have only accomplished error and perception and conceiving; Bliss, for as yet we have only accomplished pleasure and pain and indifference; Power, for as yet we have only accomplished weakness and effort and a defeated victory; Life, for as yet we have only accomplished birth and growth and dying; Unity, for as yet we have only accomplished war and association.

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

– Sri Aurobindo
(13: 200-201)

Essays in Philosophy and Yoga (CWSA 13)

III. Writings from the Arya: 1914-1921*

Continued....

3. The Superman

a. The Superman – Gospel of Supermanhood

"The gospel of true supermanhood gives us a generous ideal for the progressive human race and should not be turned into an arrogant claim for a class or individuals. It is a call to man to do what no species has yet done or aspired to do in terrestrial history, evolve itself consciously into the next superior type already half foreseen by the continual cyclic development of the world-idea in Nature's fruitful musings. And when we so envisage it, this conception ranks surely as one of the most potent seeds that can be cast by thought into the soil of our human growth." (151)

(i) Ideal of Nietzsche

"Nietzsche first cast it, the mystic of Will-worship, the troubled, profound, half-luminous Hellenising Slav with his strange clarities, his violent half-ideas, his rare gleaming intuitions that came marked with the stamp of an absolute truth and sovereignty of light. But Nietzsche was an apostle who never entirely understood his own message." (151)

"Especially, in his concept of the Superman he never cleared his mind of a preliminary confusion. For if a sort of human godhead is the goal to which the race must advance, the first difficulty is that we have to decide to which of two

very different types of divinity the idea in us should owe allegiance. For the deity within may confront us either with the clear, joyous and radiant countenance of the God or the stern convulsed visage of the Titan." (152)

"To lose the link of Nature's moral evolution is a capital fault in the apostle of supermanhood; for only out of the unavoidable line of the evolution can that emerge in the bosom of a humanity long tested, ripened and purified by the fire of egoistic and altruistic suffering.

God and Titan, Deva and Asura, are indeed close kin in their differences; nor could either have been spared in the evolution. Yet do they inhabit opposite poles of a common existence and common nature. The one descends from the light and the infinity, satisfied, to the play; the other ascends from the obscurity and the vagueness, angry, to the struggle. All the acts of the God derive from the universal and tend to the universal." (152)

(ii) The Drift of Supermanhood

The Divine Man

"To evolve… in love, in happy mastery; to serve by rule and to rule by service; to be able to be bold and swift and even violent without hurt or wickedness and mild and kindly and even self-indulgent without laxity or vice or weakness; to make a bright and happy whole in oneself and, by sympathy, with mankind and all creatures. And in the end it is to evolve a large impersonal personality and to heighten sympathy into constant experience of world-oneness. For such are the Gods, conscious always of their universality and therefore divine.

Certainly, power is included. To be the divine man is to be self-ruler and world-ruler; but in another than the external sense. This is a rule that depends upon a secret sympathy and oneness which knows the law of another's being and of the world's being and helps or, if need be, compels it to realise its own greatest possibilities, but by a divine and essentially an inner compulsion. It is to take all qualities, energies, joys, sorrows, thoughts, knowledge, hopes, aims of the world around us into ourselves and return them enriched and transmuted in a sublime commerce and exploitation. Such an empire asks for no vulgar ostentation or golden trappings. The gods work oftenest veiled by light or by the storm-drift; they do not disdain to live among men even in the garb of the herdsman or the artisan; they do not shrink from the cross and the crown of thorns either in their inner evolution or their outward fortunes. For they know that the ego must be crucified and how shall men consent to this if God and the gods have not shown them the way? To take all that is essential in the human being and uplift it to its most absolute term so that it may become an element of light, joy, power for oneself and others, this is divinity. This, too, should be the drift of supermanhood." (153)

The Titan

"But the Titan will have nothing of all this; it is too great and subtle for his comprehension. His instincts call for a visible, tangible mastery and a sensational domination. How shall he feel sure of his empire unless he can feel something writhing helpless under his heel, – if in agony, so much the better? What is exploitation to him, unless it diminishes the exploited? To be able to coerce, exact, slay, overtly, irresistibly,

– it is this that fills him with the sense of glory and dominion. For he is the son of division and the strong flowering of the Ego. To feel the comparative limitation of others is necessary to him that he may imagine himself immeasurable; for he has not the real, self-existent sense of infinity which no outward circumstance can abrogate. Contrast, division, negation of the wills and lives of others are essential to his self-development and self-assertion. The Titan would unify by devouring, not by harmonising; he must conquer and trample what is not himself either out of existence or into subservience so that his own image may stand out stamped upon all things and dominating all his environment.

In Nature, since it started from division and egoism, the Titan had to come first; he is here in us as the elder god, the first ruler of man's heaven and earth. Then arrives the God and delivers and harmonises. Thus the old legend tells us that the Deva and the Asura laboured together to churn the ocean of life for the supreme draught of immortality, but, once it had been won, Vishnu kept it for the God and defrauded the fiercer and more violent worker. And this seems unjust; for the Asura has the heavier and less grateful portion of the burden. He begins and leads; he goes his way hewing, shaping, planting: the God follows, amends, concludes, reaps. He prepares fiercely and with anguish against a thousand obstacles the force that we shall use: the other enjoys the victory and the delight. And therefore to the great God Shiva the stained and stormy Titan is very dear, – Shiva who took for himself the fierce, dark and bitter poison first churned up from the sea of life and left to others the nectar. But the choice that Shiva made with knowledge and from love, the Titans made

from darkness and passion, – desirous really of something very different and deceived by their stormy egoism. Therefore the award of Vishnu stands; to the God shall fall the crown and the immortality and not, unless he divinise himself, to the proud and strenuous Asura." (153-154)

(iii) The Error in Exclusive Worship of One Principle

"But God is complex, not simple; and the temptation of the human intellect is to make a short cut to the divine nature by the exclusive worship of one of its principles. Knowledge, Love whose secret word is Delight, Power and Unity are some of the Names of God. But though they are all divine, yet to follow any of them exclusively is to invite, after the first energy is over, His departure from us and denial; for even unity, exclusively pursued, ceases to be a true oneness. Yet this error we perpetually commit. Is it Love in whose temple we adore? Then we shut its gates upon Power as a child of the world and the devil and bid Knowledge carry elsewhere her lack of sweetness and remoteness from the heart's fervour. We erect an idol of Power and would pass all else through the fire of Moloch before its sombre and formidable image, expelling Love with scorn as a nurse of weaklings and degrading Knowledge to the position of a squire or even a groom of Force. Or we cultivate Knowledge with a severe aloofness and austerity to find at last the lotus of the heart dulled and fading – happy if its more divine faculties are not already atrophied – and ourselves standing impotent with our science while the thunders of Rudra crash through and devastate the world we have organised so well by our victorious and clear-minded efficiency. Or we run after a vague and mechanical zero we call unity and when we have

sterilised our secret roots and dried up the wells of Life within us, discover, unwise unifiers, that we have achieved death and not a greater existence. And all this happens because we will not recognise the complexity of the riddle we are set here to solve." (155-156)

"Love fails because it hastily rejects the material of the world's discords or only tramples them underfoot in an unusual ecstasy; Power because it seeks only to organise an external arrangement. The world's discords have to be understood, seized, transmuted. Love must call Power and Knowledge into the temple and seat them beside her in a unified equality; Power must bow its neck to the yoke of Light and Love before it can do any real good to the race.

Unity is the secret, a complex, understanding and embracing unity. When the full heart of Love is tranquillised by knowledge into a calm ecstasy and vibrates with strength, when the strong hands of Power labour for the world in a radiant fullness of joy and light, when the luminous brain of knowledge accepts and transforms the heart's obscure inspirations and lends itself to the workings of the high-seated Will, when all these gods are founded together on a soul of sacrifice that lives in unity with all the world and accepts all things to transmute them, then is the condition of man's integral self-transcendence. This and not a haughty, strong and brilliant egoistic self-culture enthroning itself upon an enslaved humanity is the divine way of supermanhood." (156-157)

*b. All-Will and Free-Will**

"Fate and free-will are only two movements of one indivisible energy. My will is the first instrument of my Fate,

Fate a Will that manifests itself in the irresistible subconscious intention of the world.

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

All times and nations have felt or played with the idea of Fate. The Greeks were pursued by the thought of a mysterious and ineffable Necessity presiding over the divine caprices of the gods. The Mahomedan sits calm and inert under the yoke of Kismet. The Hindu speaks of Karma and the writing on the forehead when he would console himself for calamity or failure or excuse himself from perseverance and masculine effort. And all these notions are akin in the general imprecision of the idea they shadow forth and the vague twilight in which they are content to leave its ulterior significance." (158-159)

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

On the other hand a great man of action will often seize on the idea of Fate to divinise to himself the mighty energy that he feels driving him on the path of world-altering deeds." (159-160)

"He expresses in the idea of Fate his living and constant sense of the energy which has cast him down here whether to break like some Vedic Marut the world's firm and established things or to cut through mountains a path down which new rivers of human destiny can pour. Like Indra or Bhagirath he precedes; the throng of the divine waters follow. His movement decides their course; here Indus shall flow, there Ganges pace yellow and leonine to the sea. Therefore we find that the greatest men of action the world has known were

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

believers in Fate or in a divine Will. Caesar, Mahomet, Napoleon, what more colossal workers has our past than these? The superman believes more readily in Destiny, feels more vitally conscious of God than the average human mind.

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

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

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

I may play entirely at cross-purposes with the All-Will in me. That is when I lend my will-power to be a servant of the nervous part of my mind which, ignorant and passionate, adores self, openly or under many pretences, as its own god. It is this in me, this egoist, this hungerer that feels upon it in the heavy hand of Fate the oppression of a tyrant or the resistance of a blind and unintelligent power. For always absorbed in its own need and view-point it helps the All by that friction and opposition which are so essential to the mechanism of the world. Therefore it misunderstands the firm Teacher and His stern, yet loving compulsion in things and must progress by self-will and struggle and suffering because it cannot yet learn to progress by obedience. But also I may, by an intuition in my nature, an aspiration in my heart and a reason in my mind, put myself at the service of some strong ideal, some intelligent Force that serves God with or without knowledge of Him. Then is my will a true will; it does its share, it leaves its quota, it returns to its Master with its talent used or increased. And to a certain extent it is free; for a great liberty is this, to be delivered from the Animal and the Rakshasa in ourselves, free to choose the right or be chosen by it.

But how different a thing would it be if I could persuade my ego to break and emerge from the mould in which it has taken refuge from its divine Pursuer! The great antinomy would then be abrogated and not simply mitigated. My free-will would become God-will and Fate put off her mask. By consenting to be the mere slave of God and consciously but one instrument of That which is not bound by its instruments, I should know a freedom which sings on the harps of heaven, but which no speech of man can utter; I should be washed and rolled in the waves of pure puissance and pure ecstasy, the immeasurable and unfathomable ecstasy of all-being and all-life and all-force. I should see Fate illumined melting into Will and Will glorified passing into God." (160-162)

*c. The Delight of Works**

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

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

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

Learn thou first absolutely to obey. The sword does not

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * *

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

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

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

Know therefore thy body to be a knot in Matter and thy

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

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

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

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

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

The instrument is finite in a personal image, the worker is universal with a personal trend, but neither of these is the

Master; for neither is the true Person.

* * *

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

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

Thou shalt contain in thy being thyself and all others and be that which is neither thyself nor all others. Of works this is the consummation and the summit." (163-166)

4. Evolution

a. The Principle and Scope of Force of Evolution

"The theory of evolution has been the key-note of the thought of the nineteenth century. It has not only affected all its science and its thought-attitude, but powerfully influenced its moral temperament, its politics and its society. Without it there could not have been that entire victory of the

materialistic notion of life and the universe which has been the general characteristic of the age that is now passing, – a victory which for a time even claimed to be definitive, – nor such important corollary effects of this great change as the failure of the religious spirit and the breaking-up of religious beliefs." (169)

"The materialistic view of the world is now rapidly collapsing and with it the materialistic statement of the evolution theory must disappear." (169)

"The general idea of evolution was the filiation of each successive form or state of things to that which preceded it, its appearance by a process of outbringing or deploying of some possibility prepared and even necessitated by previous states and previous tendencies." (170)

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

If this be the truth, then the action of evolution must be other than has been supposed. For example the evolution of Life in Matter must have been produced and governed not

by a material principle, but by a Life-Principle working in and upon the conditions of Matter and applying to it its own laws, impulses, necessities. This idea of a mighty Life, other than the material Principle, working in it and upon it has begun to dominate the advanced thought of Europe. The other idea of a still mightier Mind working in Life and upon it has not yet made sufficient way because the investigation of the laws of Mind is still in its groping infancy." (172)

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

Again we return towards an ancient truth already known to the Vedic sages, – the idea of an inconscient or subconscient ocean of being, the ocean of the heart of things out of which the worlds form themselves. But the Veda posits also a governing and originating Superconscient which accounts for the appearance of a hidden consciousness and knowledge pervading the operations of Evolution and which constitutes the self-acting Law and Truth behind them." (173)

"In the history of man everything seems now to point to alternations of a serious character, ages of progression, ages

of recoil, the whole constituting an evolution that is cyclic rather than in one straight line. A theory of cycles of human civilisation has been advanced, we may yet arrive at the theory of cycles of human evolution, the Kalpa and Manwantaras of the Hindu theory. If its affirmation of cycles of world-existence is farther off from affirmation, it is because they must be so vast in their periods as to escape not only all our means of observation, but all our means of deduction or definite inference.

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

And her material means? Not the struggle for life only. The real law, it is now suggested, is rather mutual help or at least mutual accommodation. Struggle exists, mutual

destruction exists, but as a subordinate movement, a red minor chord, and only becomes acute when the movement of mutual accommodation fails and elbow-room has to be made for a fresh attempt, a new combination.

The propagation of acquired characteristics by heredity was too hastily and completely asserted; it is now perhaps in danger of being too summarily denied. Not Matter alone, but Life and Mind working upon Matter help to determine evolution." (173-174)

"Thus the whole view of Evolution begins to change. Instead of a mechanical, gradual, rigid evolution out of indeterminate Matter by Nature-Force we move towards the perception of a conscious, supple, flexible, intensely surprising and constantly dramatic evolution by a superconscient Knowledge which reveals things in Matter, Life and Mind out of the unfathomable Inconscient from which they rise." (175)

*b. The Inconscient**

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

In the realm of physical science this is obvious enough and universally admitted. The earth is not flat but round, not

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

But only to a certain extent; for there are possibilities of a wider life, a more mastering action, a greater practicality which can only be achieved by going behind these surfaces and utilising a truer knowledge of objects and forces." (176)

"Because we do not know ourselves, therefore we are unable to ameliorate radically our subjective life or develop with mastery, with rapidity, with a sure science the hidden possibilities of our mental capacity and our moral nature." (177)

"Psychology is necessarily a subjective science and one must proceed in it from the knowledge of oneself to the knowledge of others.

But whatever the crudities of the new science, it has at least taken the first capital step without which there can be no true psychological knowledge; it has made the discovery which

is the beginning of self-knowledge and which all must make who deeply study the facts of consciousness, – that our waking and surface existence is only a small part of our being and does not yield to us the root and secret of our character, our mentality or our actions. The sources lie deeper." (177-178)

"But here the first difficulty confronts us, the problem whether this other and greater self of which our waking existence is only a surface and a phenomenon, is subconscient or inconscient. And thereon hinges the whole destiny of the human being. For if it is inconscient in its very nature, then we cannot hope to illuminate ourselves with the hidden light of these depths – for light there is none – or to find and to possess ourselves of the secret of its power. On the other hand if it is subconscient, that is to say a concealed consciousness deeper, greater, more powerful than our superficial self, an endless vista of self-enlargement opens out before us and the human race marches towards infinite possibilities." (178)

*c. Materialism**

"MANY hard things have been said about materialism by those who have preferred to look at life from above rather than below or who claim to live in the more luminous atmosphere of the idealistic mind or ether of the spiritual existence. Materialism has been credited with the creation of great evils, viewed even as the archimage of a detestable transformation or the misleader guiding mankind to an appalling catastrophe. Those whose temperament and imagination dally lovingly with an idealised past, accuse it for the cultural, social, political changes which they abhor,

regarding them as a disturbance, happily, they believe, temporary, of eternal moral values and divinely ordained hierarchies. Those, more numerous, who look beyond to the hope of a larger idealism and higher spirituality, proclaim in its decline and passing away a fortunate deliverance for the human spirit. World-wide strife and competition have been, it is said, its fruits, war and the holocaust of terrible sacrifice in which mankind has been squandering its strength, blood, treasure, – though these are no new calamities, nor would it be safe to hope that they are the last of their kind, – are pointed to as its nemesis or regarded as a funeral pyre it has lighted for itself in whose cruel flame the errors and impurities it brought into existence are being burned to ashes. Science has been declared suspect as a guide or instructor of mankind and bidden to remain parked within her proper limits, because she was for long the ally of the material view of existence, a suggester of atheism and agnosticism, a victory-bringer of materialism and scepticism, the throne of their reign or pillar of their stability. Reason has been challenged because rationalism and free-thought were appropriated as synonyms of materialistic thinking.

All this wealth of accusation may have and much of it has its truth. But most things that the human mind thus alternately trumpets and bans, are a double skein. They come to us with opposite faces, their good side and their bad, a dark aspect of error and a bright of truth; and it is as we look upon one or the other visage that we swing to our extremes of opinion or else oscillate between them. Materialism may not be quite as dead as most would declare it to be; still held by a considerable number of scientific workers, perhaps a

majority, – and scientific opinion is always a force both by its power of well-ascertained truth and its continued service to humanity, – it constitutes even now the larger part of the real temper of action and life even where it is rejected as a set opinion. The strong impressions of the past are not so easily erased out of our human mentality. But it is a fast receding force; other ideas and standpoints are crowding in and thrust it out from its remaining points of vantage. It will be useful before we say farewell to it, and can now be done with safety, to see what it was that gave to it its strength, what it has left permanently behind it, and to adjust our new viewpoints to whatever stuff of truth may have lain within it and lent it its force of applicability. Even we can look at it with an impartial sympathy, though only as a primary but lesser truth of our actual being, – for it is all that, but no more than that, – and try to admit and fix its just claims and values. We can now see too how it was bound to escape from itself by the widening of the very frame of knowledge it has itself constructed.

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

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

Reason is not the supreme light, but yet is it always a necessary light-bringer and until it has been given its rights and allowed to judge and purify our first infra-rational instincts, impulses, rash fervours, crude beliefs and blind prejudgments, we are not altogether ready for the full unveiling of a greater inner luminary. Science is a right knowledge, in the end only of processes, but still the knowledge of processes too is part of a total wisdom and essential to a wide and a clear approach

towards the deeper Truth behind. If it has laboured mainly in the physical field, if it has limited itself and bordered or overshadowed its light with a certain cloud of wilful ignorance, still one had to begin this method somewhere and the physical field is the first, the nearest, the easiest for the kind and manner of inquiry undertaken. Ignorance of one side of Truth or the choice of a partial ignorance or ignoring for better concentration on another side is often a necessity of our imperfect mental nature. It is unfortunate if ignorance becomes dogmatic and denies what it has refused to examine, but still no permanent harm need have been done if this willed self-limitation is compelled to disappear when the occasion of its utility is exhausted. Now that we have founded rigorously our knowledge of the physical, we can go forward with a much firmer step to a more open, secure and luminous repossession of mental and psychic knowledge. Even spiritual truths are likely to gain from it, not a loftier or more penetrating, – that is with difficulty possible, – but an ampler light and fuller self-expression.

Progress is the very heart of the significance of human life, for it means our evolution into greater and richer being; and these ages by insisting on it, by forcing us to recognise it as our aim and our necessity, by making impossible hereafter the attempt to subsist in the dullness or the gross beatitude of a stationary self-content, have done a priceless service to the earth life and cleared the ways of heaven. Outward progress was the greater part of its aim and the inward is the more essential? but the inward too is not complete if the outward is left out of account. Even if the insistence of our progress fall for a time too exclusively on growth in one field, still all movement forward is helpful and must end by giving a greater

force and a larger meaning to our need of growth in deeper and higher provinces of our being. Freedom is a godhead whose greatness only the narrowly limited mind, the State-worshipper or the crank of reaction can now deny. No doubt, again, the essential is an inner freedom; but if without the inner realisation the outer attempt at liberty may prove at last a vain thing, yet to pursue an inner liberty and perpetuate an outer slavery or to rejoice in an isolated release and leave mankind to its chains was also an anomaly that had to be exploded, a confined and too selfcentred ideal. Humanity is not the highest godhead; God is more than humanity; but in humanity too we have to find and to serve him. The cult of humanity means an increasing kindliness, tolerance, charity, helpfulness, solidarity, universality, unity, fullness of individual and collective growth, and towards these things we are advancing much more rapidly than was possible in any previous age, if still with sadly stumbling footsteps and some fierce relapses. The cult of our other human selves within the cult of the Divine comes closer to us as our large ideal. To have brought even one of these things a step nearer, to have helped to settle them with whatever imperfect expression and formula in our minds, to have accelerated our movement towards them are strong achievements, noble services.

Objection can at once be made that all these great things have no connection with materialism. The impulse towards them was of old standing and long active in the human mind; the very principle of the humanitarianism which has been one of the striking developments of modern sentiment, was first brought out from our nature and made prominent by religion, compassion and the love of man first intimately and powerfully enforced by Christianity and Buddhism; if they

have now a little developed, it is the natural expanding from seeds that had long been sown. Materialism was rather calculated to encourage opposite instincts; and the good it favoured it limited, made arid, mechanised. If all these nobler things have grown and are breaking the bounds set to them, it is because man is fortunately inconsistent and after a certain stage of our development cannot be really and wholly materialistic; he needs ideals, ethical expansion, a closer emotional fulfilment, and these needs he has tacked on to his development of materialistic opinion and corrected its natural results by them. But the ideals themselves were taken from an anterior opinion and culture.

This is the truth, but not the whole truth. The old religious cultures were often admirable in the ensemble and always in some of their parts, but if they had not been defective, they could neither have been so easily breached, nor would there have been the need of a secularist age to bring out the results the religions had sown. Their faults were those of a certain narrowness and exclusive vision. Concentrated, intense in their ideal and intensive in their effect, their expansive influence on the human mind was small. They isolated too much their action in the individual, limited too narrowly the working of their ideals in the social order, tolerated for instance and even utilised for the ends of church and creed an immense amount of cruelty and barbarism which were contrary to the spirit and truth from which they had started. What they discouraged in the soul of the individual, they yet maintained in the action and the frame of society, seemed hardly to conceive of a human order delivered from these blots. The depth and fervour of their aspiration had for its shadow a want of intellectual clarity, an obscurity which

confused their working and baulked the expansion of their spiritual elements. They nourished too a core of asceticism and hardly cared to believe in the definite amelioration of the earth life, despised by them as a downfall or a dolorous descent or imperfection of the human spirit, or whatever earthly hope they admitted saw itself postponed to the millennial end of things. A belief in the vanity of human life or of existence itself suited better the preoccupation with an aim beyond earth. Perfection, ethical growth, liberation became individual ideals and figured too much as an isolated preparation of the soul for the beyond. The social effect of the religious temperament, however potentially considerable, was cramped by excessive other-worldliness and distrust in the intellect accentuated to obscurantism.

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

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

But the intellectual force of materialism comes from its response to a universal truth of existence. Our dominant opinions have always two forces behind them, a need of our nature and a truth of universal existence from which the need arises. We have the material and vital need because life in

Matter is our actual basis, the earthward turn of our minds because earth is and was intended to be the foundation here for the workings of the Spirit. When indeed we scan with a scrupulous intelligence the face that universal existence presents to us or study where we are one with it or what in it all seems most universal and permanent, the first answer we get is not spiritual but material. The seers of the Upanishads saw this with their penetrating vision and when they gave this expression of our first apparently complete, eventually insufficient view of Being, "Matter is the Brahman, from Matter all things are born, by Matter they exist, to Matter they return," they fixed the formula of universal truth of which all materialistic thought and physical science are a recognition, an investigation, a filling in of its significant details, elucidations, justifying phenomena and revelatory processes, the large universal comment of Nature upon a single text.

Mark that it is the first fact of experience from which we start and up to a certain point an undeniable universal truth of being. Matter surely is here our basis, the one thing that is and persists, while life, mind, soul and all else appear in it as a secondary phenomenon, seem somehow to arise out of it, subsist by feeding upon it, – therefore the word used in the Upanishads for Matter is *annam*, food, – and collapse from our view when it disappears. Apparently the existence of Matter is necessary to them, their existence does not appear to be one whit necessary to Matter. The Being does present himself at first with this face, inexorably, as if claiming to be that and nothing else, insisting that his material base and its need shall first be satisfied and, until that is done, grimly persistent with little or with no regard for our idealistic susceptibilities and caring nothing if he breaks through the delicate net of our

moral, our aesthetic and our other finer perceptions. They have the hope of their reign, but meanwhile this is the first visage of universal existence and we have not to hide our face from it any more than could Arjuna from the terrible figure of the Divine on the battle-field of Kurukshetra, or attempt to escape and evade it as Shiva, when there rose around him the many stupendous forms of the original Energy, fled from the vision of it to this and that quarter, forgetful of his own godhead. We must look existence in the face in whatever aspect it confronts us and be strong to find within as well as behind it the Divine.

Materialistic science had the courage to look at this universal truth with level eyes, to accept it calmly as a starting-point and to inquire whether it was not after all the whole formula of universal being. Physical science must necessarily to its own first view be materialistic, because so long as it deals with the physical, it has for its own truth's sake to be physical both in its standpoint and method; it must interpret the material universe first in the language and tokens of the material Brahman, because these are its primary and its general terms and all others come second, subsequently, are a special syllabary. To follow a self-indulgent course from the beginning would lead at once towards fancies and falsities. Initially, science is justified in resenting any call on it to indulge in another kind of imagination and intuition. Anything that draws it out of the circle of the phenomena of objects, as they are represented to the senses and their instrumental prolongations, and away from the dealings of the reason with them by a rigorous testing of experience and experimentation, must distract it from its task and is inadmissible. It cannot allow the bringing in of the human view of things; it has to interpret

man in the terms of the cosmos, not the cosmos in the terms of man. The too facile conclusion of the idealist that since things only exist as known to consciousness, they can exist only by consciousness and must be creations of the mind, has no meaning for it; it first has to inquire what consciousness is, whether it is not a result rather than a cause of Matter, coming into being, as it seems to do, only in the frame of a material inconscient universe and apparently able to exist only on the condition that that has been previously established. Starting from Matter, science has to be at least hypothetically materialistic.

When the action of the material principle, the first to organise itself, has been to some extent well understood, then can this science go on to consider what claim to be quite other terms of our being, – life and mind. But first it is forced to ask itself whether both mind and life are not, as they seem to be, special consequences of the material evolution, themselves powers and movements of Matter. After and if this explanation has failed to cover and to elucidate the facts, it can be more freely investigated whether they are not quite other principles of being. Many philosophical questions arise, as, whether they have entered into Matter and whence or were always in it, and if so, whether they are for ever less and subordinate in action or are in their essential power greater, whether they are contained in it only or really contain it, whether they are subsequent and dependent on its previous appearance or only that in their apparent organisation here but in real being and power anterior to it and Matter itself dependent on the essential pre-existence of life and mind. A greater question comes, whether mind itself is the last term or there is something beyond, whether soul is only an apparent

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

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

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

elucidation another, a mental, a psychic science.

Having examined and explained Matter by physical methods and in the language of the material Brahman, – it is not really explained, but let that pass, – having failed to carry that way of knowledge into other fields beyond a narrow limit, we must then at least consent to scrutinise life and mind by methods appropriate to them and explain their facts in the language and tokens of the vital and mental Brahman. We may discover then where and how these tongues of the one existence render the same truth and throw light on each other's phrases, and discover too perhaps another, high, brilliant and revealing speech which may shine out as the definitive all-explaining word. That can only be if we pursue these other sciences too in the same spirit as the physical, with a scrutiny, not only of their obvious and first actual phenomena, but of all the countless untested potentialities of mental and psychic energy, and with a free unlimited experimentation. We shall find out that their ranges of the unknown are immense. We shall perceive that until the possibilities of mind and spirit are better explored and their truths better known, we cannot yet pronounce the last all-ensphering formula of universal existence. Very early in this process the materialistic circle will be seen opening up on all its sides until it rapidly breaks up and disappears. Adhering still to the essential rigorous method of science, though not to its purely physical instrumentation, scrutinising, experimenting, holding nothing for established which cannot be scrupulously and universally verified, we shall still arrive at supraphysical certitudes. There are other means, there are greater approaches, but this line of access too can lead to the one universal truth.

Three things will remain from the labour of the secularist centuries; truth of the physical world and its importance, the scientific method of knowledge, – which is to induce Nature and Being to reveal their own way of being and proceeding, not hastening to put upon them our own impositions of idea and imagination, *adhyāropa*, – and last, though very far from least, the truth and importance of the earth life and the human endeavour, its evolutionary meaning. They will remain, but will turn to another sense and disclose greater issues. Surer of our hope and our labour, we shall see them all transformed into light of a vaster and more intimate world-knowledge and self-knowledge." (184-195)

5. Thoughts and Glimpses*

*a. Aphorisms**

(i) The Goal*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * *

What I cannot do now is the sign of what I shall do hereafter. The sense of impossibility is the beginning of all possibilities. Because this temporal universe was a paradox and an impossibility, therefore the Eternal created it out of His being." (199-200)

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

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

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

prompters, will and thought and labour are our all-effective instruments.

What is there new that we have yet to accomplish? Love, for as yet we have only accomplished hatred and self-pleasing; Knowledge, for as yet we have only accomplished error and perception and conceiving; Bliss, for as yet we have only accomplished pleasure and pain and indifference; Power, for as yet we have only accomplished weakness and effort and a defeated victory; Life, for as yet we have only accomplished birth and growth and dying; Unity, for as yet we have only accomplished war and association.

In a word, godhead; to remake ourselves in the divine image." (200-201)

(ii) The Delight of Being*

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

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

We may speak of the Supreme as if He were a mathematician working out a cosmic sum in numbers or a thinker resolving by experiment a problem in relations of principles and the

balance of forces: but also we should speak of Him as if He were a lover, a musician of universal and particular harmonies, a child, a poet. The side of thought is not enough; the side of delight too must be entirely grasped: Ideas, Forces, Existences, Principles are hollow moulds unless they are filled with the breath of God's delight.

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

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

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

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

What is God after all? An eternal child playing an eternal game in an eternal garden." (201-202)

(iii) Man, The Purusha*

"God cannot cease from leaning down towards Nature, nor man from aspiring towards the Godhead. It is the eternal relation of the finite to the infinite. When they seem to turn

from each other, it is to recoil for a more intimate meeting.

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

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

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

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

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

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

For what do we mean by Man? An uncreated and

indestructible soul that has housed itself in a mind and body made of its own elements." (202-203)

(iv) The End

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

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

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

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

And what is the middle? Division that strives towards a multiple unity, ignorance that labours towards a flood of varied light, pain that travails towards the touch of an unimaginable ecstasy. For all these things are dark figures and perverse vibrations.

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

Love is the keynote, Joy is the music, Power is the strain, Knowledge is the performer, the infinite All is the composer

and audience. We know only the preliminary discords which are as fierce as the harmony shall be great; but we shall arrive surely at the fugue of the divine Beatitudes." (203-204)

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

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

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

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

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

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

And in these contrasts something in him finds a curious attraction; they constitute for his mental being the artistry of life. It is not only the nectar but the poison also that attracts his taste and his curiosity." (204-205)

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

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

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

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

The restlessness and early exhaustion of our active being and its instruments are Nature's sign that calm is our true foundation and excitement a disease of the soul; the sterility and monotony of mere calm is her hint that play of the activities on that firm foundation is what she requires of us. God plays for ever and is not troubled.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Infinite, we are free from death; for life then becomes a play of our immortal existence. We are free from weakness; for we are the whole sea enjoying the myriad shock of its waves. We are free from grief and pain; for we learn how to harmonise our being with all that touches it and to find in all things action and reaction of the delight of existence. We are

free from limitation; for the body becomes a plaything of the infinite mind and learns to obey the will of the immortal soul. We are free from the fever of the nervous mind and the heart, yet are not bound to immobility.

Immortality, unity and freedom are in ourselves and await there our discovery; but for the joy of love God in us will still remain the Many." (205-207)

*b. Thoughts and Glimpses**

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

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

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

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

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

Help men, but do not pauperise them of their energy; lead and instruct men, but see that their initiative and originality

remain intact; take others into thyself, but give them in return the full godhead of their nature. He who can do this is the leader and the guru.

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

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

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

* * *

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

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

The hand of the divine Artist works often as if it were unsure of its genius and its material. It seems to touch and test and leave, to pick up and throw away and pick up again, to labour

and fail and botch and repiece together. Surprises and disappointments are the order of his work before all things are ready. What was selected, is cast away into the abyss of reprobation; what was rejected, becomes the corner-stone of a mighty edifice. But behind all this is the sure eye of a knowledge which surpasses our reason and the slow smile of an infinite ability.

God has all time before him and does not need to be always in a hurry. He is sure of his aim and success and cares not if he break his work a hundred times to bring it nearer perfection. Patience is our first great necessary lesson, but not the dull slowness to move of the timid, the sceptical, the weary, the slothful, the unambitious or the weakling; a patience full of a calm and gathering strength which watches and prepares itself for the hour of swift great strokes, few but enough to change destiny.

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

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

in it of the stuff of the hero and even of the Titan. But the greatest force is born out of the greatest difficulty.

* * *

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

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

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

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

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

God-visions could embrace and cast themselves into each other; but intellectual dogma and cult egoism stand in the way.

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

The changes we see in the world today are intellectual, moral, physical in their ideal and intention: the spiritual revolution waits for its hour and throws up meanwhile its waves here and there. Until it comes the sense of the others cannot be understood and till then all interpretation of present happening and forecast of man's future are vain things. For its nature, power, event are that which will determine the next cycle of our humanity." (208-211)

6. Heraclitus*

"THE PHILOSOPHY and thought of the Greeks is perhaps the most intellectually stimulating, the most fruitful of clarities the world has yet had. Indian philosophy was intuitive in its beginnings, stimulative rather to the deeper vision of things, – nothing more exalted and profound, more revelatory of the depths and the heights, more powerful to open unending vistas has ever been conceived than the divine and inspired Word, the *mantra* of Veda and Vedanta. When that philosophy became intellectual, precise, founded on the human reason, it became also rigidly logical, enamoured of fixity and system, desirous of a sort of geometry of thought. The ancient Greek mind had instead a kind of fluid precision, a flexibly inquiring logic; acuteness and the wide-open eye of

the intellect were its leading characteristics and by this power in it it determined the whole character and field of subsequent European thinking. Nor is any Greek thinker more directly stimulating than the aphoristic philosopher Heraclitus; and yet he keeps and adds to this more modern intellectual stimulativeness something of the antique psychic and intuitive vision and word of the older Mystics." (215)

"To ignore the influence of the mystic thought and its methods of self-expression on the intellectual thinking of the Greeks from Pythagoras to Plato is to falsify the historical procession of the human mind. It was enveloped at first in the symbolic, intuitive, esoteric style and discipline of the Mystics, – Vedic and Vedantic seers, Orphic secret teachers, Egyptian priests. From that veil it emerged along the path of a metaphysical philosophy still related to the Mystics by the source of its fundamental ideas, its first aphoristic and cryptic style, its attempt to seize directly upon truth by intellectual vision rather than arrive at it by careful ratiocination, but nevertheless intellectual in its method and aim. This is the first period of the Darshanas in India, in Greece of the early intellectual thinkers. Afterwards came the full tide of philosophic rationalism, Buddha or the Buddhists and the logical philosophers in India, in Greece the Sophists and Socrates with all their splendid progeny; with them the intellectual method did not indeed begin, but came to its own and grew to its fullness. Heraclitus belongs to the transition, not to the noontide of the reason; he is even its most characteristic representative. Hence his cryptic style, hence his brief and burdened thought and the difficulty we feel when we try to clarify and entirely rationalise his significances. The ignoring of the Mystics, our pristine fathers, *pūrve pitaraḥ* , is

the great defect of the modern account of our thought-evolution." (219-220)

"Indian philosophy has always understood its double function; it has sought the Truth not only as an intellectual pleasure or the natural dharma of the reason, but in order to know how man may live by the Truth or strive after it; hence its intimate influence on the religion, the social ideas, the daily life of the people, its immense dynamic* power on the mind and actions of Indian humanity. The Greek thinkers, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, the Stoics and Epicureans, had also this practical aim and dynamic force, but it acted only on the cultured few. That was because Greek philosophy, losing its ancient affiliation to the Mystics, separated itself from the popular religion; but as ordinarily Philosophy alone can give light to Religion and save it from crudeness, ignorance and superstition, so Religion alone can give, except for a few, spiritual passion and effective power to Philosophy and save it from becoming unsubstantial, abstract and sterile. It is a misfortune for both when the divine sisters part company.

But when we seek among Heraclitus' sayings for the human application of his great fundamental thoughts, we are disappointed. He gives us little direct guidance and on the whole leaves us to draw our own profit from the packed opulence of his first ideas. What may be called his aristocratic view of life, we might regard possibly as a moral result of his philosophical conception of Power as the nature of the original principle. He tells us that the many are bad, the few good and that one is to him equal to thousands, if he be the

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* *The first laws of working of the Gods.*

best. Power of knowledge, power of character, – character, he says, is man's divine force, – power and excellence generally are the things that prevail in human life and are supremely valuable, and these things in their high and pure degree are rare among men, they are the difficult attainment of the few. From that, true enough so far as it goes, we might deduce a social and political philosophy. But the democrat might well answer that if there is an eminent and concentrated virtue, knowledge and force in the one or the few, so too there is a diffused virtue, knowledge and force in the many which acting collectively may outweigh and exceed isolated or rare excellences. If the king, the sage, the best are Vishnu himself, as old Indian thought also affirmed, to a degree to which the ordinary man, *prākṛto janaḥ* , cannot pretend, so also are "the five", the group, the people. The Divine is *samaṣṭi* as well as *vyaṣṭi*, manifested in the collectivity as well as in the individual, and the justice on which Heraclitus insists demands that both should have their effect and their value; they depend indeed and draw on each other for the effectuation of their excellences." (244-246)

"It is a sign that the lore of the early Mystics had been lost, the spiritual sense had departed out of their symbols, even as in Vedic India; but there took place in Greece no new and powerful movement which could, as in India, replace them by new symbols, new and more philosophic restatements of their hidden truths, new disciplines, schools of Yoga. Attempts, such as that of Pythagoras, were made; but Greece at large followed the turn given by Heraclitus, developed the cult of the reason and left the remnants of the old occult religion to become a solemn superstition and a conventional pomp." (246)

"But the language of Heraclitus shows us that the ancient system of sacrifice in Greece and in India was not a mere barbaric propitiation of savage deities, as modern inquiry has falsely concluded; it had a psychological significance, purification of the soul as well as propitiation of higher and helpful powers, and was therefore in all probability mystic and symbolical; for purification was, as we know, one of the master ideas of the ancient Mysteries. In India of the Gita, in the development of Judaism by the prophets and by Jesus, while the old physical symbols were discouraged and especially the blood-rite, the psychological idea of sacrifice was saved, emphasised and equipped with subtler symbols, such as the Christian Eucharist and the offerings of the devout in the Shaiva or Vaishnava temples. But Greece with its rational bent and its insufficient religious sense was unable to save its religion; it tended towards that sharp division between philosophy and science on one side and religion on the other which has been so peculiar a characteristic of the European mind. Here too Heraclitus was, as in so many other directions, a forerunner, an indicator of the natural bent of occidental thought.

Equally striking is his condemnation of idol-worship, one of the earliest in human history, – "he who prays to an image is chattering to a stone wall." The intolerant violence of this protestant rationalism and positivism makes Heraclitus again a precursor of a whole movement of the human mind. It is not indeed a religious protest such as that of Mahomed against the naturalistic, Pagan and idolatrous polytheism of the Arabs or of the Protestants against the aesthetic and emotional saint-worship of the Catholic Church, its Mariolatry and use of images and elaborate ritual; its motive is philosophic, rational,

psychological. Heraclitus was not indeed a pure rationalist. He believes in the Gods, but as psychological presences, cosmic powers, and he is too impatient of the grossness of the physical image, its hold on the senses, its obscuration of the psychological significance of the godheads to see that it is not to the stone, but to the divine person figured in the stone that the prayer is offered. It is noticeable that in his conception of the gods he is kin to the old Vedic seers, though not at all a religious mystic in his temperament. The Vedic religion seems to have excluded physical images and it was the protestant movements of Jainism and Buddhism which either introduced or at least popularised and made general the worship of images in India." (246-247)

7. Rebirth and Karma*

*a. Rebirth**

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

In former times the doctrine used to pass in Europe under the grotesque name of transmigration which brought with it to the Western mind the humorous image of the soul of Pythagoras migrating, a haphazard bird of passage, from

the human form divine into the body of a guinea-pig or an ass. The philosophical appreciation of the theory expressed itself in the admirable but rather unmanageable Greek word, metempsychosis, which means the insouling of a new body by the same psychic individual. The Greek tongue is always happy in its marriage of thought and word and a better expression could not be found…" (259)

"Rebirth is for the modern mind no more than a speculation and a theory; it has never been proved by the methods of modern science or to the satisfaction of the new critical mind formed by a scientific culture. Neither has it been disproved; for modern science knows nothing about a before-life or an after-life for the human soul, knows nothing indeed about a soul at all, nor can know; its province stops with the flesh and brain and nerve, the embryo and its formation and development. Neither has modern criticism any apparatus by which the truth or untruth of rebirth can be established." (259-260)

"It has no means of finding out with surety the truth or untruth of a doubtful historical assertion; after a century of dispute it has not even been able to tell us yes or no, whether Jesus Christ ever existed. How then shall it deal with such a matter as this of rebirth which is stuff of psychology and must be settled rather by psychological than physical evidence?" (260)

"The arguments which are usually put forward by supporters and opponents, are often weak or futile and even at their best insufficient either to prove or to disprove anything in the world." (260)

"How much do we remember of our actual lives which we are undoubtedly living at the present moment? Our memory is normally good for what is near, becomes vaguer or less comprehensive as its objects recede into the distance, farther off seizes only some salient points and, finally, for the beginning of our lives falls into a mere blankness. Do we remember even the mere fact, the simple state of being an infant on the mother's breast? and yet that state of infancy was, on any but a Buddhist theory, part of the same life and belonged to the same individual, – the very one who cannot remember it just as he cannot remember his past lives. Yet we demand that this physical memory, this memory of the brute brain of man which cannot remember our infancy and has lost so much of our later years, shall recall that which was before infancy, before birth, before itself was formed." (260-261)

"I doubt whether, even if we could have evidence of the physical memory of past lives or of such a psychical awakening, the theory would be considered any better proved than before." (261)

"The true foundation of the theory of rebirth is the evolution of the soul, or rather its efflorescence out of the veil of Matter and its gradual self-finding. Buddhism contained this truth involved in its theory of Karma and emergence out of Karma but failed to bring it to light; Hinduism knew it of old, but afterwards missed the right balance of its expression. Now we are again able to restate the ancient truth in a new language and this is already being done by certain schools of thought, though still the old incrustations tend to tack themselves on to the deeper wisdom. And if this gradual

efflorescence be true, then the theory of rebirth is an intellectual necessity, a logically unavoidable corollary. But what is the aim of that evolution? Not conventional or interested virtue and the faultless counting out of the small coin of good in the hope of an apportioned material reward, but the continual growth towards a divine knowledge, strength, love and purity. These things alone are real virtue and this virtue is its own reward. The one true reward of the works of love is to grow ever in capacity and delight of love up to the ecstasy of the spirit's all-seizing embrace and universal passion; the one reward of the works of right Knowledge is to grow perpetually into the infinite Light; the one reward of the works of right Power is to harbour more and more of the Force Divine, and of the works of purity to be freed more and more from egoism into that immaculate wideness where all things are transformed and reconciled into the divine equality. To seek other reward is to bind oneself to a foolishness and a childish ignorance; and to regard even these things as a reward is an unripeness and an imperfection.

And what of suffering and happiness, misfortune and prosperity? These are experiences of the soul in its training, helps, props, means, disciplines, tests, ordeals, – and prosperity often a worse ordeal than suffering. Indeed, adversity, suffering may often be regarded rather as a reward to virtue than as a punishment for sin, since it turns out to be the greatest help and purifier of the soul struggling to unfold itself. To regard it merely as the stern award of a Judge, the anger of an irritated Ruler or even the mechanical recoil of result of evil upon cause of evil is to take the most superficial view possible of God's dealings with the soul and the law of the world's

evolution. And what of worldly prosperity, wealth, progeny, the outward enjoyment of art, beauty, power? Good, if they be achieved without loss to the soul and enjoyed only as the outflowing of the divine Joy and Grace upon our material existence. But let us seek them first for others or rather for all, and for ourselves only as a part of the universal condition or as one means of bringing perfection nearer.

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

still have some play. And here the more one thinks and experiences, the more the ordinary, simple, cut-and-dried account of reincarnation seems to be of doubtful validity. There is surely here a greater complexity, a law evolved with a more difficult movement and a more intricate harmony out of the possibilities of the Infinite." (267-269)

b. The Reincarnating Soul

(i) Human Thoughts and Ordinary Conception of Rebirth

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

It is not surprising then that men should be content to think crudely about such a matter as rebirth. Those who accept it, take it usually ready-made, either as a cut-and-dried theory or a crude dogma. The soul is reborn in a new body, – that vague and almost meaningless assertion is for them sufficient." (270)

(ii) The Buddhist and Vedantist Viewpoint

"The old Indian thinkers, – I am not speaking of the popular belief which was crude enough and thought not at all about the matter, – the old Buddhistic and Vedantist thinkers surveyed the whole field from a very different standpoint. They were not attached to the survival of the personality; they did not give to that survival the high name of immortality; they saw that personality being what it is, a constantly changing composite, the survival of an identical personality was a non-sense, a contradiction in terms. They perceived indeed that there is a continuity and they sought to discover what determines this continuity and whether the sense of identity which enters into it is an illusion or the representation of a fact, of a real truth, and, if the latter, then what that truth may be. The Buddhist denied any real identity. There is, he said, no self, no person; there is simply a continuous stream of energy in action like the continuous flowing of a river or the continuous burning of a flame. It is this continuity which creates in the mind the false sense of identity. I am not now the same person that I was a year ago, not even the same person that I was a moment ago, any more than the water flowing past yonder ghaut is the same water that flowed past it a few seconds ago; it is the persistence of

the flow in the same channel that preserves the false appearance of identity. Obviously, then, there is no soul that reincarnates, but only Karma that persists in flowing continuously down an apparently uninterrupted channel. It is Karma that incarnates; Karma creates the form of a constantly changing mentality and physical bodies that are, we may presume, the result of that changing composite of ideas and sensations which I call myself." (271-272)

"The Vedantist comes to a different conclusion; he admits an identical, a self, a persistent immutable reality, – but other than my personality, other than this composite which I call myself. In the Katha Upanishad the question is raised in a very instructive fashion quite apposite to the subject we have in hand. Nachiketas, sent by his father to the world of Death, thus questions Yama, the lord of that world: Of the man who has gone forward, who has passed away from us, some say that he is and others "this he is not"; which then is right? what is the truth of the great passage? Such is the form of the question and at first sight it seems simply to raise the problem of immortality in the European sense of the word, the survival of the identical personality. But that is not what Nachiketas asks. He has already taken as the second of three boons offered to him by Yama the knowledge of the sacred Flame by which man crosses over hunger and thirst, leaves sorrow and fear far behind him and dwells in heaven securely rejoicing. Immortality in that sense he takes for granted as, already standing in that farther world, he must surely do. The knowledge he asks for involves the deeper, finer problem, of which Yama affirms that even the gods debated this of old and it is not easy to know, for subtle is the law of it; something

survives that appears to be the same person, that descends into hell, that ascends into heaven, that returns upon the earth with a new body, but is it really the same person that thus survives? Can we really say of the man "*He* still is," or must we not rather say "This *he* no longer is"? Yama too in his answer speaks not at all of the survival of death, and he only gives a verse or two to a bare description of that constant rebirth which all serious thinkers admitted as a universally acknowledged truth. What he speaks of is the Self, the real Man, the Lord of all these changing appearances; without the knowledge of that Self the survival of the personality is not immortal life but a constant passing from death to death; he only who goes beyond personality to the real Person becomes the Immortal. Till then a man seems indeed to be born again and again by the force of his knowledge and works, name succeeds to name, form gives place to form, but there is no immortality.

Such then is the real question put and answered so divergently by the Buddhist and the Vedantin." (272-273)

(iii) The Self

"Is it then the Self that incarnates and reincarnates? But the Self is imperishable, immutable, unborn, undying. The Self is not born and does not exist in the body; rather the body is born and exists in the Self. For the Self is one everywhere, – *in* all bodies, we say, but really it is not confined and parcelled out in different bodies except as the all-constituting ether seems to be formed into different objects and is in a sense in them." (274)

"What then is it that we feel to inhabit the physical frame?

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

Let us then change the form of the question and ask rather what it is that reflects and accepts the mutable personality, since the Self is immutable?" (274-275)

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

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

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

This is the starting-point from which we have to proceed in considering the problem of rebirth. To view ourselves as such and such a personality getting into a new case of flesh is to stumble about in the ignorance, to confirm the error of the material mind and the senses. The body is a convenience,

the personality is a constant formation for whose development action and experience are the instruments; but the Self by whose will and for whose delight all this is, is other than the body, other than the action and experience, other than the personality which they develop. To ignore it is to ignore the whole secret of our being." (275-276)

*c. Rebirth, Evolution, Heredity**

"Science is in her own way a great seer and magician; she has both the microscopic and the macroscopic, the closely gazing and the telescopic view, a dissolving power of searching analytic resolution, a creative power of revealing synthetic effectuation. She has hunted to their lair many of the intermediate secret processes of the great creatrix, and even she has been able, by the inventive faculty given to us, to go and do one better. Man, this midget in infinity, locomotive yet nailed to the contiguity of a petty crust of soil by the force of gravitation, has certainly scored by her a goodly number of points against the mother of the universe. But all this has been done in some perfection only in the limits of her lowest obtrusive physical field.

Face to face with psychic and spiritual secrecies, as in the open elementary world even of mind, Science has still the uninformed gaze and the groping hands of the infant." (277)

*d. Rebirth and Soul Evolution**

(i) The Pragmatic Constructions that Reason Gives About Life and Things.

"THE IDEAS that men currently form about life and

things are for the most part pragmatic constructions. They are forms of a reason which is concerned with giving only such a serviceable account to itself of its surroundings as shall make a sufficient clue to our immediate business of the growth, action, satisfaction of the personality, something feasible, livable, effective for our journeying in Time, something viable in the twofold French sense of the word. Whether it corresponds to or is directly in touch with any real reality of things seems to be very much a matter of accident. It seems to be sufficient if we can persuade our facile and complaisant reason of its truth and find it serviceable and fruitful in consequences for thought, action and life-experience. It is true that there is another unpragmatic reason in us which labours to get rid of this demand of the intellectual and vital personality; it wants to look at the real truth of things without veils and without any object, to mirror the very image of Truth in the still waters of a dispassionate, clear and pure mentality. But the workings of this calmer greater reason are hampered by two tremendous difficulties. First, it seems next to impossible to disengage it entirely from the rest of ourselves, from the normal intellectuality, from the will to believe, from that instinct of the intelligence which helps the survival, by a sort of subtle principle of preference and selection, of the way of thinking that suits our personal bent or the accomplished frame of our nature. And again, what is the Truth that our reason mirrors? It is after all some indirect image of Truth, not her very self and body seen face to face; it is an image moulded from such data, symbol, process of Reality, – if any real Reality there is, – as we can gather from the very limited experience of self and existing things open to human mind." (285)

"Now here are these disabilities more embarrassing than in those fundamental questions of the nature of the world and of our own existence which yet most passionately interest thinking humanity because this is in the end the thing of utmost importance to us, since everything else, except some rough immediate practicality of the moment, depends on its solution. And even that, until this great question is settled, is only a stumbling forward upon a journey of which we know not the goal or the purpose, the meaning or the necessity." (286)

(ii) The Three Methods by Which Mind Proceeds

"We have to recognise that human reason, moving as it does from a starting-point of ignorance and in a great environing circle of ignorance, must proceed by hypothesis, assumption and theory subject to verification of some kind convincing to our reason and experience. But there is this difference that the religious mind accepts the theory or assumption, – to which it does not at all give these names, for they are to it things felt, – with faith, with a will of belief, with an emotional certainty, and finds its verification in an increasing spiritual intuition and experience. The philosophic mind accepts it calmly and discerningly for its coherent agreement with the facts and necessities of being; it verifies by a pervading and unfailing harmony with all the demands of reason and intellectualised intuition. But the sceptical mind – not the mind of mere doubt or dogmatic denial which usually arrogates that name, but the open and balanced mind of careful, impartial and reserved inquiry, – gives a certain provisional character to its hypotheses, and it verifies by the

justification of whatever order or category of ascertainable facts it takes for its standard of proof and invests with a character of decisive authority or reality. There is room enough for all three methods and there is no reason why our complex modern mind should not proceed simultaneously by all of them at once. For if the sceptical or provisional attitude makes us more ready to modify our image of Truth in the light of new material of thought and knowledge, the religious mind also, provided it keeps a certain firm and profound openness to new spiritual experience, can proceed faster to a larger and larger light, and meanwhile we can walk by it with an assured step and go securely about our principal business of the growth and perfection of our being. The philosophic mind has the use of giving a needed largeness and openness to our mentality, – if it too does not narrow itself by a closed circle of metaphysical dogma, – and supports besides the harmony of our other action by the orderly assent of the higher reason.

In this matter of the soul and rebirth the initial hypothesis now lies quite open to us; the barrier has fallen. For if there is one thing now certain it is that physical science may give clues of process, but cannot lay hold on the reality of things. That means that the physical is not the whole secret of world and existence, and that in ourselves too the body is not the whole of our being. It is then through something supraphysical in Nature and ourselves which we may call the soul, whatever the exact substance of soul may be, that we are likely to get that greater truth and subtler experience which will enlarge the narrow rigid circle traced by physical science and bring us nearer to the Reality." (287-288)

*e. The Significance of Rebirth**

(i) The Pertinent Question to Which All Human Enquiry Arrives at and the Real Issue Behind the Burden of Death

"THE ONE question which through all its complexities is the sum of philosophy and to which all human enquiry comes round in the end, is the problem of ourselves, – why we are here and what we are, and what is behind and before and around us, and what we are to do with ourselves, our inner significances and our outer environment. In the idea of evolutionary rebirth, if we can once find it to be a truth and recognise its antecedents and consequences, we have a very sufficient clue for an answer to all these connected sides of the one perpetual question. A spiritual evolution of which our universe is the scene and earth its ground and stage, though its plan is still kept back above from our yet limited knowledge, – this way of seeing existence is a luminous key which we can fit into many doors of obscurity. But we have to look at it in the right focus, to get its true proportions and, especially, to see it in its spiritual significance more than in its mechanical process." (295)

"..the burden of death to man the thinking, willing, feeling creature is not the loss of this poor case or chariot of body, but it is the blind psychical finality death suggests, the stupid material end of our will and thought and aspiration and endeavour, the brute breaking off of the heart's kind and sweet relations and affections, the futile convicting discontinuity of that marvellous and all-supporting soul-sense which gives us our radiant glimpses of the glory and delight of existence, – that is the discord and harsh inconsequence

against which the thinking living creature revolts as incredible and inadmissible. The fiery straining to immortality of our life, mind, psyche, which can assent to cessation only by turning in enmity upon their own flame of nature, and the denial of it which the dull acquiescence of a body consenting inertly to death as to life brings in on us, is the whole painful irreconcilable contradiction of our double nature. Rebirth takes the difficulty and solves it in the sense of a soul continuity with a beat of physical repetition. Like other non-materialistic solutions it gives the right to the soul's suggestion as against the body's and sanctions the demand for survival, but unlike some others it justifies the bodily life by its utility to the soul's continued self-experience; our too swift act in the body ceases to be an isolated accident or an abrupt interlude, it gets the justification of a fulfilling future as well as a creating past for its otherwise haphazard actions and relations." (296)

(ii) Rebirth, a Perception – an Occasion and Means for Spiritual Evolution

"Rebirth tells us that what we are is a soul performing constantly the miracle of self-embodiment; but why this embodiment, what this soul has to do here with itself and what use it is to make of this world which is given to it for its grandiose scene, its difficult, plastic material and its besieging battery of multiform stimulus and suggestions, is hardly at all clearer than before. But the perception of rebirth as an occasion and means for a spiritual evolution fills in every hiatus. It makes life a significant ascension and not a mechanical recurrence; it opens to us the divine vistas of a growing soul; it makes the worlds a nexus of spiritual self-expansion; it sets

us seeking, and with a sure promise to all of a great finding now or hereafter, for the self-knowledge of our spirit and the self-fulfilment of a wise and divine intention in our existence." (297)

"What we see in the material universe is a stupendous system of mechanical recurrences. A huge mechanical recurrence rules that which is long-enduring and vast; a similar but frailer mechanical recurrence sways all that is ephemeral and small. The suns leap up into being, flame wheeling in space, squander force by motion and fade and are extinct, again perhaps to blaze into being and repeat their course, or else other suns take their place and fulfil their round. The seasons of Time repeat their unending and unchanging cycle. Always the tree of life puts forth its various flowers and sheds them and breaks into the same flowers in their recurring season. The body of man is born and grows and decays and perishes, but it gives birth to other bodies which maintain the one same futile cycle. What baffles the intelligence in all this intent and persistent process is that it seems to have in it no soul of meaning, no significance except the simple fact of causeless and purposeless existence dogged or relieved by the annulling or the compensating fact of individual cessation. And this is because we perceive the mechanism, but do not see the Power that uses the mechanism and the intention in its use. But the moment we know that there is a conscious Spirit self-wise and infinite brooding upon the universe and a secret slowly self-finding soul in things, we get to the necessity of an idea in its consciousness, a thing conceived, willed, set in motion and securely to be done, progressively to be fulfilled by these great deliberate workings." (298-299)

(iii) The Buddhist, Vaishnava, Tantric View.

"The Buddhistic theory adds nothing to the first obvious significance of life except an indefinite prolongation by rebirth which is a burden, not a gain, and the spiritual greatness of the discipline of self-extinction, – the latter, no doubt, a thing of great value. The illusionist solution adds something, but does not differ very greatly in its motive from the Buddhistic. It sets against the futile cosmic repetition an eternity of our own absolute being; from the ignorance which creates the illusory mechanism of a recurrence of rebirth, it escapes into the self-knowledge of our ineffable existence." (300)

"But the challenge of God's universe to the knowledge and strength of the human spirit cannot in the end be met by man with a refusal or solved by an evasion, even though an individual soul may take refuge from the demand, as a man may from the burden of action and pain in unconsciousness, in spiritual trance or sleep or escape through its blank doors into the Absolute. Something the Spirit of the universe means by our labour in existence, some sense it has in these grandiose rhythms, and it has not undertaken them in an eternally enduring error or made them in a jest.* To know that and possess it, to find and fulfil consciously the universal being's hidden significances is the task given to the human spirit." (301)

"The Vaishnava idea of the play of God, striking as it does into the secret of the hidden delight at the core of things, is a luminous ray shot into the very heart of the mystery; but isolated it cannot solve all its enigma. There is more here in

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

the world than a play of secret delight; there is knowledge, there is power, there is a will and a mighty labour. Rebirth so looked at becomes too much of a divine caprice with no object but its playing, and ours is too great and strenuous a world to be so accounted for." (301-302)

"The Tantric solution shows us a supreme superconscient Energy which casts itself out here into teeming worlds and multitudinous beings and in its order the soul rises from birth to birth and follows its million forms, till in a last human series it opens to the consciousness and powers of its own divinity and returns through them by a rapid illumination to the eternal superconscience. We find at last the commencement of a satisfying synthesis, some justification of existence, a meaningful consequence in rebirth, a use and a sufficient though only temporary significance for the great motion of the cosmos. On lines very like these the modern mind, when it is disposed to accept rebirth, is inclined to view it. But there is a too minor stress on the soul's divine potentialities, a haste of insistence on the escape into superconscience; the supreme Energy constructs too long and stupendous a preparation for so brief and so insufficient a flowering. There is a lacuna here, some secret is still missing." (302)

"There are certain limitations of our own thought over which all these solutions stumble, and the chief of these obstacles are our sense of the mechanical nature of the universe and our inability to see forward to a greater than our present type of humanity. We see the superconscient Spirit in its effulgence and freedom and we see the universe in its inconscient bondage to the cycle of its mechanical recurrences, or we see existence as an abstract entity and Nature as a

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

the sum of works of a large spiritual Will and Wisdom: the human soul and the cosmic spirit look into each other's eyes with a noble and divine meaning.

The questions which surround our existence elucidate themselves at once with a certain satisfactory fullness. What we are is a soul of the transcendent Spirit and Self unfolding itself in the cosmos in a constant evolutionary embodiment of which the physical side is only a pedestal of form corresponding in its evolution to the ascending degrees of the spirit, but the spiritual growth is the real sense and motive. What is behind us is the past terms of the spiritual evolution, the upward gradations of the spirit already climbed, by which through constant rebirth we have developed what we are, and are still developing this present and middle human term of the ascension. What is around us is the constant process of the unfolding in its universal aspect: the past terms are there contained in it, fulfilled, overpassed by us, but in general and various type still repeated as a support and background; the present terms are there not as an unprofitable recurrence, but in active pregnant gestation of all that is yet to be unfolded by the spirit, no irrational decimal recurrence helplessly repeating for ever its figures, but an expanding series of powers of the Infinite. What is in front of us is the greater potentialities, the steps yet unclimbed, the intended mightier manifestations. Why we are here is to be this means of the spirit's upward self-unfolding. What we have to do with ourselves and our significances is to grow and open them to greater significances of divine being, divine consciousness, divine power, divine delight and multiplied unity, and what we have to do with our environment is to use it consciously

for increasing spiritual purposes and make it more and more a mould for the ideal unfolding of the perfect nature and self-conception of the Divine in the cosmos. This is surely the Will in things which moves, great and deliberate, unhasting, unresting, through whatever cycles, towards a greater and greater informing of its own finite figures with its own infinite Reality." (302-304)

"We see a Power at work and seek whether in that power there is a conscious Will, an ordered development and have first to discover whether it is the blind result of an organised Chance or inconscient self-compelled Law or the plan of a universal Intelligence or Wisdom. Once we find that there is a conscious Spirit of which this movement is one expression, or even admit that as our working hypothesis, we are bound to go on and ask whether this developing order ceases with what man now is or is laden with something more towards which it and he have to grow, an unfinished expression, a greater unfound term, and in that case it is evidently towards that greater thing that man must be growing; to prepare it and to realise it must be the stage beyond in his destiny. Towards that new step in the evolution his history as a race must be subconsciently tending and the powers of the highest individuals half consciently striving to be delivered of this greater birth; and since the ascending order of rebirth follows always the degrees of the evolution, that too cannot be meant to stop short or shoot off abruptly into the superconscient without any regard to the intended step. The relation of our birth to life on other levels of consciousness and to whatever transcendent Superconscience there may be, are important problems, but their solution must be something in harmony with the intention

of the Spirit in the universe; all must be part of a unity, and not an imbroglio of spiritual incoherences and contradictions. Our first bridge from the known to the unknown on this line of thought must be to discover how far the yet unfinished ladder of evolution can mount in the earth series. The whole processional significance of rebirth may be wrapped up in that one yet unattempted discovery." (305-306)

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