The Real Awakener



The Light of lights

Words of Sri Aurobindo – 25

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"Our humanity is the conscious meeting place of the finite and the infinite and to grow more and more towards that Infinite even in this physical birth is our privilege. This Infinite, this Spirit who is housed within us but not bound or shut in by mind or body, is our own self and to find and be our self was, as the ancient sages knew, always the object of our human striving, for it is the object of the whole immense working of Nature."

– Sri Aurobindo

(13: 326)

Essays in Philosophy and Yoga (CWSA 13)

III. Writings from the Arya: 1914-1921*

Continued....

*f. The Ascending Unity**

(i) The Tendency of Mind to be Enamoured by Straight and Plain Thinking

"THE HUMAN mind loves a clear simplicity of view; the more trenchant a statement, the more violently it is caught by it and inclined to acceptance. This is not only natural to our first crudity of thinking, and the more attractive because it makes things delightfully easy to handle and saves an immense amount of worry of enquiry and labour of reflection, but, modified, it accompanies us to the higher levels of a more watchful mentality." (307)

"Our reason acts by divisions, even our ordinary illogical thought is a stumbling and bungling summary analysis and arrangement of the experience that offers itself to us with such unending complexity. But the cleanest and clearest division is that which sets us most at ease, because it impresses on our still childlike intelligence a sense of conclusive and luminous simplicity." (307)

"Even the philosopher, though he inclines to an intricate reasoning by the way, is best delighted when he can get by it to some magnificently conclusive conclusion, some clean-cutting distinction between Brahman and non-Brahman, Reality and unreality or any of the host of mental oppositions on which so many "isms" have been founded." (307)

"But after all perhaps when we come to think more at large about the matter, we may find that Nature and Existence are not of the same mind as man in this respect, that there is here a great complexity which we must follow with patience and that those ways of thinking have most chance of a fruitful truth-yielding, which like the inspired thinking of the Upanishads take in many sides at once and reconcile many conflicting conclusions. One can hew material for a hundred philosophies out of the Upanishads as if from some bottomless Titans' quarry and yet no more exhaust it than one can exhaust the opulent bosom of our mother Earth or the riches of our father Ether." (308)

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

interests, and cut off all other being as the not-I which was there for him to make the best use he could out of it for this little absorbing entity. When he looked beyond these natural sense-governed divisions, he still followed the same logical policy. Conceiving of spirit, he cut it off sharply as a thing by itself, the opposite of all that was not spirit; an antinomy between spirit and matter became the base of his self-conception, or else more amply between spirit on the one side and on the other mind, life and body. Then conceiving of self as a pure entity, all else being not-self was separated from it as of quite another character. Incidentally, with the eye of his inveterate dividing mind, he saw it as his own separate self and, just as before he had made the satisfaction of ego his whole business on earth, so he made the soul's own individual salvation its one all-important spiritual and heavenly transaction." (308-309)

"Our classifications set up too rigid walls; all borders are borders only and not impassable gulfs. The one infinitely variable Spirit in things carries over all of himself into each form of his omnipresence; the self, the Being is at once unique in each, common in our collectivities and one in all beings. God moves in many ways at once in his own indivisible unity." (309)

(ii) Man not a Solitary Separate Being in this Universe

"The conception of man as a separate and quite peculiar being in the universe has been rudely shaken down by a patient and disinterested examination of the process of nature. He is without equal or peer and occupies a privileged position on earth, but is not solitary in his being; all the evolution is there

to explain this seeker of spiritual greatness embodied in a fragile body and narrow life and bounded mind who in turn by his being and seeking explains to itself the evolution." (310)

"All the terrestrial past of the world is there summarised in man, and not only has Nature given as it were the physical sign that she has formed in him an epitome of her universal forces, but psychologically also he is one in his subconscient being with her obscurer subanimal life, contains in his mind and nature the animal and rises out of all this substratum into his conscious manhood." (310)

"Whatever soul there is in man is not a separate spiritual being which has no connection with all the rest of the terrestrial family, but seems to have grown out of it by a taking up of it all and an exceeding of its sense by a new power and meaning of the spirit. This is the universal nature of the type man on earth, and it is reasonable to suppose that whatever has been the past history of the individual soul, it must have followed the course of the universal nature and evolution. The separative pride which would break up the unity of Nature in order to make of ourselves another as well as a greater creation, has no physical warrant, but has been found on the contrary to be contradicted by all the evidence; and there is no reason to suppose that it has any spiritual justification. The physical history of humankind is the growth out of the subvital and the animal life into the greater power of manhood; our inner history as indicated by our present nature, which is the animal plus something that exceeds it, must have been a simultaneous and companion growing on the same curve into the soul of humanity. The ancient Indian idea which refused to separate nature of man from the universal Nature or self of man from

the one common self, accepted this consequence of its seeing. Thus the Tantra assigns eighty millions of plant and animal lives as the sum of the preparation for a human birth and, without binding ourselves to the figure, we can appreciate the force of its idea of the difficult soul evolution by which humanity has come or perhaps constantly comes into being. We can only get away from this necessity of an animal past by denying all soul to subhuman nature." (310-311)

"Because soul or spirit works in the animal on a lower scale, we are not warranted in thinking that there is no soul in him, any more than a divine or superhuman being would be justified in regarding us as soulless bodies or soulless minds because of the grovelling downward drawn inferiority of our half-animal nature. The figure which we use when sometimes we say of one of our own kind that he has no soul, is only a figure; it means only that the animal type of soul predominates in him over the more developed soul type which we expect in the finer spiritual figure of humanity." (311)

"Then it is the most reasonable and concordant conclusion that man has the animal nature, – and indeed if we consider well his psychology, we find that he houses many kinds of animal souls or rather an amalgam of animal natures, – because the developing self in him like the developed body has had a past subhuman evolution. This conclusion preserves the unity of Nature and its developing order; and it concurs with the persistent evidence of an interaction and parallelism which we perceive between the inward and the outward, the physical and the mental phenomenon, – a correspondence and companionship which some would explain by making mind a result and notation of the act of nerve and body, but

which can now be better accounted for by seeing in vital and physical phenomenon a consequence and minor notation of a soul-action which it at the same time hints and conceals from our sense-bound mentality." (312)

"But if it is difficult for us to concede a soul to the despised animal form and mind, it is still more difficult to concede it to the brute subconscience of the subanimal nature. Ancient belief made this concession with the happiest ease, saw a soul, a living godhead everywhere in the animate and in the inanimate and nothing was to its view void of a spiritual existence." (313)

(iii) An Unbroken Continuity in Nature with Nervous Life Enveloping All Forms Seen

"And it is now clear that the nervous life which is the basis of that physical mentality in man and animal, exists also in the plant with a fundamental identity; not only so, but it is akin to us by a sort of nervous psychology which amounts to the existence of a suppressed mind. A subconscient mind in the plant, it is now not unreasonable to suggest, – but is it not at the summits of plant experience only half subconscious? – becomes conscient in the animal body. When we go lower down, we find hints that there are involved in the subvital most brute material forms the rudiments of precisely the same energy of life and its responses.

And the question then arises whether there is not an unbroken continuity in Nature, no scissions and sections, no unbridgeable gulfs or impassable borders, but a complete unity, matter instinct with a suppressed life, life instinct with a suppressed mind, mind instinct with a suppressed energy of

a diviner intelligence, each new form or type of birth evolving a stage in the succession of suppressed powers, and there too the evolution not at an end, but this large and packed intelligence the means of liberating a greater and now suppressed self-power of the Spirit. A spiritual evolution thus meets our eye in the world which an inner force raises up a certain scale of gradations of its births in form by the unfolding of its own hidden powers to the greatness of its complete and highest reality." (313-314)

"But then soul is not to be conceived of as a growth or birth of which we can fix a date of its coming or a stage in the evolution which brings it to a first capacity of formation, but rather all here is assumption of form by a secret soul which becomes in the self-seeking of life increasingly manifest to a growing self-conscience. All assumption of form is a constant and yet progressive birth or becoming of the soul, *sambhava*, *sambhūti*, – the dumb and blind and brute is that and not only the finely, mentally conscious human or the animal existence. All this infinite becoming is a birth of the Spirit into form. This is the truth, obscure at first or vague to the intelligence, but very luminous to an inner experience, on which the ancient Indian idea of rebirth took its station." (314-315)

"But the repeated birth of the same individual does not at first sight seem to be indispensable in this overpowering universal unity. To the logical intellect it might appear to be a contradiction, since all here is the one self, spirit, existence born into nature, assuming a multitude of forms, ascending many gradations of its stages of self-revelation." (315)

"Individuality is as important a thing to the ways of the Spirit of existence as universality. The individual is that potent

secret of its being upon which the universal stresses and leans and makes the knot of power of all its workings: as the individual grows in consciousness and sight and knowledge and all divine power and quality, increasingly he becomes aware of the universal in himself, but aware of himself too in the universality, of his own past not begun and ended in the single transient body, but opening to future consummations. If the aim of the universal in our birth is to become self-conscient and possess and enjoy its being, still it is done through the individual's flowering and perfection; if to escape from its own workings be the last end, still it is the individual that escapes while the universal seems content to continue its multitudinous births to all eternity. Therefore the individual would appear to be a real power of the Spirit and not a simple illusion or device, except in so far as the universal too may be, as some would have it, an immense illusion or a grand imposed device. On this line of thinking we arrive at the idea of some great spiritual existence of which universal and individual are two companion powers, pole and pole of its manifestation, indefinite circumference and multiple centre of the activised realities of its being."(315-316)

"If human mind is the last word of its possibility on earth, then rebirth must end in man and proceed by some abrupt ceasing either to an existence on other planes or to an annulment of its spiritual circle. But if there are higher powers of the spirit which are attainable by birth, then the ascent is not finished, greater assumptions may lie before the soul which has now reached and is lifted to a perfecting of the high scale of humanity. It may even be that this ascending rebirth is not the long upward rocket shooting of a conscious being out of matter or its whirling motion in mind destined to break up

and dissolve in some high air of calm nothingness or of silent timeless infinity, but a progress to some great act and high display of the Divinity which shall give a wise and glorious significance to his persistent intention in an eternal creation. Or that at least may be one power of the Eternal's infinite potentiality." (316)

*g. Involution and Evolution**

(i) The Western and Ancient Idea of Evolution

"THE WESTERN idea of evolution is the statement of a process of formation, not an explanation of our being. Limited to the physical and biological data of Nature, it does not attempt except in a summary or a superficial fashion to discover its own meaning, but is content to announce itself as the general law of a quite mysterious and inexplicable energy." (317)

"The ancient idea of evolution was the fruit of a philosophical intuition, the modern is an effort of scientific observation. Each as enounced misses something, but the ancient got at the spirit of the movement where the modern is content with a form and the most external machinery. The Sankhya thinker gave us the psychological elements of the total evolutionary process, analysed mind and sense and the subtle basis of matter and divined some of the secrets of the executive energy, but had no eye for the detail of the physical labour of Nature. He saw in it too not only the covering active evident Force, but the concealed sustaining spiritual entity, though by an excess of the analytic intellect, obsessed with its love of trenchant scissions and symmetrical oppositions, he set between meeting Soul and Force an original and eternal

gulf or line of separation." (317)

"But always the marvel of the thing remains, one with the inexplicable wonder of all existence, – even as it is said in the ancient Scripture,

āścaryavat paśyati kaścid enam,
āścaryavad vadati tathaiva cānyaḥ;
āścaryavac cainam anyaḥ śṛṇoti,
śrutvāpyenaṁ veda na caiva kaścit.

"One looks on it and sees a miracle, another speaks of it as a miracle, as a miracle another hears of it, but what it is, for all the hearing, none knoweth." We know that an evolution there is, but not what evolution is; that remains still one of the initial mysteries of Nature." (318)

(ii) The Implication of Evolution in Its Most Intrinsic Sense

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

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

This spirit in things is not apparent from the beginning, but self-betrayed in an increasing light of manifestation. We see the compressed powers of Nature start released from their original involution, disclose in a passion of work the

secrets of their infinite capacity, press upon themselves and on the supporting inferior principle to subject its lower movement on which they are forced to depend into a higher working proper to their own type and feel their proper greatness in the greatness of their self-revealing effectuations. Life takes hold of matter and breathes into it the numberless figures of its abundant creative force, its subtle and variable patterns, its enthusiasm of birth and death and growth and act and response, its will of more and more complex organisation of experience, its quivering search and feeling out after a self-consciousness of its own pleasure and pain and understanding gust of action; mind seizes on life to make it an instrument for the wonders of will and intelligence; soul possesses and lifts mind through the attraction of beauty and good and wisdom and greatness towards the joy of some half-seen ideal highest existence; and in all this miraculous movement and these climbing greatnesses each step sets its foot on a higher rung and opens to a clearer, larger and fuller scope and view of the always secret and always self-manifesting spirit in things." (320-322)

"The spiritual process of evolution is then in some sense a creation, but a self-creation, not a making of what never was, but a bringing out of what was implicit in the Being. The Sanskrit word for creation signifies a loosing forth, a letting out into the workings of Nature. The Upanishad in a telling figure applies the image of the spider which brings its web out of itself and creates the structure in which it takes its station. That is applied in the ancient Scripture not to the evolution of things out of Matter, but to an original bringing of temporal becoming out of the eternal infinity; Matter itself

and this material universe are only such a web or indeed no more than a part of it brought out from the spiritual being of the Infinite. But the same truth, the same law holds good of all that we see of the emergence of things from involution in the material energy. We might almost speak here of a double evolution. A Force inherent in the Infinite brings out of it eternally the structure of its action in a universe of which the last descending scale is based upon an involution of all the powers of the spirit into an inconscient absorption in her self-oblivious passion of form and structural working. Thence comes an ascent and progressive liberation of power after power till the spirit self-disclosed and set free by knowledge and mastery of its works repossesses the eternal fullness of its being which envelops then and carries in its grasp the manifold and unified splendours of its nature." (322-323)

"There is a parallel in the Yogic experience of the Kundalini, eternal Force coiled up in the body in the bottom root vessel or chamber, *mūlādhāra*, pedestal, earth-centre of the physical nervous system. There she slumbers coiled up like a Python and filled full of all that she holds gathered in her being, but when she is struck by the freely coursing breath, by the current of Life which enters in to search for her, she awakes and rises flaming up the ladder of the spinal chord and forces open centre after centre of the involved dynamic secrets of consciousness till at the summit she finds, joins and becomes one with the spirit. Thus she passes from an involution in inconscience through a series of opening glories of her powers into the greatest eternal superconscience of the spirit. This mysterious evolving Nature in the world around us follows even such a course." (323)

"We must consider all the packed significance of this involution. The spirit involved in material energy is there with all its powers; life, mind and a greater supramental power are involved in Matter." (324)

"And this world is because the spirit has the delight of its own infinite existence and the delight of its own infinite self-variation; birth is because all consciousness carries with it power of its own being and all power of being is self-creative and must have the joy of its self-creation. For creation means nothing else than a self-expression; and the birth of the soul in the body is nothing but a mode of its own self-expression. Therefore all things here are expression, form, energy, action of the Spirit; matter itself is but form of spirit, life but power of being of the spirit, mind but working of consciousness of the spirit. All Nature is a display and a play of God, power and action and self-creation of the one spiritual Being. Nature presents to spirit at once the force, the instrument, the medium, the obstacle, the result of his powers, and all these things, obstacle as well as instrument, are the necessary elements for a gradual and developing creation." (325-326)

(iii) The Birth of Divine Humanity

"Our humanity is the conscious meeting place of the finite and the infinite and to grow more and more towards that Infinite even in this physical birth is our privilege. This Infinite, this Spirit who is housed within us but not bound or shut in by mind or body, is our own self and to find and be our self was, as the ancient sages knew, always the object of our human striving, for it is the object of the whole immense working of Nature. But it is by degrees of the self-finding

that Nature enlarges to her spiritual reality. Man himself is a doubly involved being; most of himself in mind and below is involved in a subliminal conscience or a subconscience; most of himself above mind is involved in a spiritual superconscience. When he becomes conscient in the superconscience, the heights and the depths of his being will be illumined by another light of knowledge than the flickering lamp of the reason can now cast into a few corners; for then the master of the field will enlighten this whole wonderful field of his being, as the sun illumines the whole system it has created out of its own glories. Then only he can know the reality even of his own mind and life and body. Mind will be changed into a greater consciousness, his life will be a direct power and action of the Divinity, his very body no longer this first gross lump of breathing clay, but a very image and body of spiritual being. That transfiguration on the summit of the mountain, divine birth, *divya janma*, is that to which all these births are a long series of laborious steps. An involution of spirit in matter is the beginning, but a spiritual assumption of divine birth is the fullness of the evolution.

East and West have two ways of looking at life which are opposite sides of one reality." (326-327)

"The truths of universal existence are of two kinds, truths of the spirit which are themselves eternal and immutable, and these are the great things that cast themselves out into becoming and there constantly realise their powers and significances, and the play of the consciousness with them, the discords, the musical variations, soundings of possibility, progressive notations, reversions, perversions, mounting conversions into a greater figure of harmony; and of all these

things the spirit has made, makes always his universe. But it is himself that he makes in it, himself that is the creator and the energy of creation and the cause and the method and the result of the working, the mechanist and the machine, the music and the musician, the poet and the poem, supermind, mind and life and matter, the soul and Nature." (327)

"..Soul and Nature, Purusha and Prakriti, are two eternal lovers who possess their perpetual unity and enjoy their constant difference, and in the unity abound in the passion of the multitudinous play of their difference, and in every step of the difference abound in the secret sense or the overt consciousness of unity. Nature takes the Soul into herself so that he falls asleep in a trance of union with her absorbed passion of creation and she too seems then to be asleep in the whirl of her own creative energy; and that is the involution in Matter. Above, it may be, the Soul takes Nature into himself so that she falls asleep in a trance of oneness with the absorbed self-possession of the spirit and he too seems to be asleep in the deep of his own self-locked immobile being. But still above and below and around and within all this beat and rhythm is the eternity of the spirit who has thus figured himself in soul and nature and enjoys with a perfect awareness all that he creates in himself by this involution and evolution." (328)

"Therefore all this evolution is a growing of the Self in material nature to the conscious possession of its own spiritual being." (328)

"All our births are the births of this spirit and self which has become or put forth a soul in Nature. To be is the object of our existence, – there is no other end or object, for the

consciousness and bliss of being is the whole beginning and middle and end, as it is that which is without beginning or end. But this means in the steps of the evolution to grow more and more until we grow into our own fullness of self; all birth is a progressive self-finding, a means of self-realisation. To grow in knowledge, in power, in delight, love and oneness, towards the infinite light, capacity and bliss of spiritual existence, to universalise ourselves till we are one with all being, and to exceed constantly our present limited self till it opens fully to the transcendence in which the universal lives and to base upon it all our becoming, that is the full evolution of what now lies darkly wrapped or works half evolved in Nature." (328-329)

*h. Karma**

(i) Essence of the Theory of Karma

"ONE FINDS an unanswerable truth in the theory of Karma, – not necessarily in the form the ancients gave to it, but in the idea at its centre, – which at once strikes the mind and commands the assent of the understanding." (330)

"This truth of Karma has been always recognised in the East in one form or else in another; but to the Buddhists belongs the credit of having given to it the clearest and fullest universal enunciation and the most insistent importance." (330)

"It may be as well then to start from the physical base in approaching this question of Karma, though we may find at last that it is from the other end of being, from its spiritual summit rather than its material support that we must look in

order to catch its whole significance – and to fix also the limits of its significance.

Fundamentally, the meaning of Karma is that all existence is the working of a universal Energy, a process and an action and a building of things by that action, – an unbuilding too, but as a step to farther building, – that all is a continuous chain in which every one link is bound indissolubly to the past infinity of numberless links, and the whole governed by fixed relations, by a fixed association of cause and effect, present action the result of past action as future action will be the result of present action, all cause a working of energy and all effect too a working of energy. The moral significance is that all our existence is a putting out of an energy which is in us and by which we are made and as is the nature of the energy which is put forth as cause, so shall be that of the energy which returns as effect, that this is the universal law and nothing in the world can, being of and in our world, escape from its governing incidence. That is the philosophical reality of the theory of Karma, and that too is the way of seeing which has been developed by physical Science. But its seeing has been handicapped in the progress to the full largeness of its own truth by two persistent errors, first, the strenuous paradoxical attempt – inevitable and useful no doubt as one experiment of the human reason which had to have its opportunity, but foredoomed to failure – to explain supraphysical things by a physical formula, and a darkening second error of setting behind the universal rule of law and as its cause and efficient the quite opposite idea of the cosmic reign of Chance. The old notion of an unintelligible supreme caprice, –

unintelligible it must naturally be since it is the working of an unintelligent Force, – thus prolonged its reign and got admission side by side with the scientific vision of the fixities and chained successions of the universe." (331-332)

(ii) The Concept of Chance

"Chance, that vague shadow of an infinite possibility, must be banished from the dictionary of our perceptions; for of chance we can make nothing, because it is nothing. Chance does not at all exist; it is only a word by which we cover and excuse our own ignorance. Science excludes it from the actual process of physical law; everything there is determined by fixed cause and relation. But when it comes to ask why these relations exist and not others, why a particular cause is allied to a particular effect, it finds that it knows nothing whatever about the matter; every actualised possibility supposes a number of other possibilities that have not actualised but conceivably might have, and it is convenient then to say that Chance or at most a dominant probability determines all actual happening, the chance of evolution, the stumblings of a groping inconscient energy which somehow finds out some good enough way and fixes itself into a repetition of the process. If Inconscience can do the works of intelligence, it may not be impossible that chaotic Chance should create a universe of l aw! But this is only a reading of our own ignorance into the workings of the universe,—just as prescientific man read into the workings of physical law the caprices of the gods or any other name for a sportive Chance whether undivine or dressed in divine glories, whether credited with a pliant flexibility to the prayers and bribes of

man or presented with an immutable Sphinx face of stone, – but names only in fact for his own ignorance.

And especially when we come to the pressing needs of our moral and spiritual being, no theory of chance or probability will serve at all. Here Science, physical in her basis, does not help except to point out to a certain degree the effects of my physicality on my moral being or of my moral action on my physicality: for anything else of just illumination or useful purpose, she stumbles and splashes about in the quagmire of her own nescience. Earthquake and eclipse she can interpret and predict, but not my moral and spiritual becoming, but only attempt to explain its phenomena when they have happened by imposing polysyllables and fearful and wonderful laws of pathology, morbid heredity, eugenics and what not of loose fumbling, which touch only the draggled skirts of the lowest psycho-physical being. But here I need guidance more than anywhere else and must have the recognition of a law, the high line of a guiding order. To know the law of my moral and spiritual being is at first and last more imperative for me than to learn the ways of steam and electricity, for without these outward advantages I can grow in my inner manhood, but not without some noti on of moral and spiritual law. Action is demanded of me and I need a rule for my action: something I am urged inwardly to become which I am not yet, and I would know what is the way and law, what the central power or many conflicting powers and what the height and possible range and perfection of my becoming. That surely much more than the rule of electrons or the possibilities of a more omnipotent physical machinery and more powerful explosives is the real human question." (333-335)

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

base but its own spontaneous power, none originating it, no knower, no Purusha and Lord, I may be only a form of the universal Idea and myself, my soul, may have no independent existence or initiation. But there is too this third step that I am a soul developing and persisting in the paths of the universal Energy and that in myself is the seed of all my creation. What I have become, I have made myself by the soul's past idea and action, its inner and outer karma; what I will to be, I can make myself by present and future idea and action. And finally, there is this last supreme liberating step that both the Idea and its Karma may have their origin in the free spirit and by arriving at myself by experience and self-finding I can exalt my state beyond all bondage of Karma to spiritual freedom." (336-337)

*i. Karma and Freedom**

(i) The Appearance of Universe as a Web of Contraries

"THE UNIVERSE in which we live presents itself to our mentality as a web of opposites and contraries, not to say contradictions, and yet it is a question whether there can be in the universe any such thing as an entire opposite or a real contradiction. Good and evil seem to be as opposite powers as well can be and we are apt by the nature of our ethical mind to see the world, at any rate in its moral aspect, as a struggle and tug of war between these eternal opposites, God and devil, Deva and Asura, Ahuramazda, Angrya Mainyu. We hope always that on some as yet hardly conceivable day the one will perish and the other triumph and be convinced of eternity; but actually they are so intertangled that some believe they are here always together like light and shadow

and, if at all, then only somewhere beyond this world of action, in some restful and silent eternity is there a release from the anguish of the knot of their intertwining, their bitter constant embrace and struggle." (338)

(ii) The First Idea of Karma and Aspiration to Real Liberty

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

Our mind is compelled to think always by oppositions, from the practical validity of which we cannot escape, but which yet seem always in some sort questionable. We get a perception of a law of Karma, the constant unavoidable successions of the acts of energy and its insistent stream of consequences and reactions, the chain of causality, the great

mass of past causes behind us from which all future consequence ought infallibly to unroll itself, and by this we try to explain the universe; but then immediately there arises the opposite idea and the challenging problem of liberty. Whence comes this notion of liberty, this divine or this Titanic thirst in man for freedom, born perhaps of something in him by which, however finite be his mind and life and body, he participates in the nature of infinity? For when we look round on the world as it is, everything seems to be by necessity and to move under a leaden constraint and compulsion. This is the aspect of the unthinking world of Force and Matter in which we live; and even in ourselves, in man the thinker, how little is free from some kind of present constraint and of compelling previous necessity! So much of what we are and do is determined by our environment, so much has been shaped by our education and upbringing, – we are made by life and by the hands of others, are clay for many potters: and, as for what is left, was it not determined, even that which is most ourselves, by our individual, our racial, our human heredity or in the last resort by universal Nature who has shaped man and each man to what he is for her blind or her conscient uses?

But we insist and say that we have a will which is aware of a however heavily burdened freedom and can shape to its own purpose and change by its effort environment and upbringing and the formations of heredity and even our apparently immutable common nature. But this will and its effort, is it not itself an instrument, even a mechanical engine of Nature, the active universal energy, and is not its freedom an arbitrary illusion of our mentality which lives in each

moment of the present and separates it by ignorance, by an abstraction of the mind from its determining past, so that I seem at every critical moment to exercise a free and virgin choice, while all the time my choice is dominated by its own previous formation and by all that obscure past which I ignore? Granted that Nature works through our will and can create and change, can, that is to say, produce a new formation out of the stuff she has provided for her workings, is it not by a past impulsion and a continuous energy from it that the thing is done? That is the first idea of Karma. Certainly, our present will must come in as one though not by any means the sole element of the act and formation, but in this view it is not a free ever-new will, but in the first place a child and birth of all the past nature, our action, our present karma the result of an already formed shape of the force of that nature, swabhava. And in the second place our will is an instrument constantly shaped and used by something greater than ourselves. Only if there is a soul or self which is not a creation, but a master of Nature, not a formation of the stream of universal energy, but itself the former and creator of its own Karma, are we justified in our claim of an actual freedom or at least in our aspiration to a real liberty. There is the whole heart of the debate, the nodus and escape of this perplexed issue." (339-340)

(iii) The Take of Buddhist, Illusionist and Modern Materialist

"But here the critical negative analytic thinker, ancient nihilistic Buddhist or modern materialist, comes in to take away the basis of any actual freedom in our earthly or in any possible heavenly existence." (341)

"In this mechanical existence there can be no freedom from Karma, no possible liberty; but there is yet a possible liberation, because that which exists by combination and bondage to its combinations can be liberated from itself by dissolution. The motive power which keeps Karma in motion is desire and attachment to its works, and by the conviction of impermanence and the cessation of desire there can come about an extinction of the continuity of the idea in the successions of Time.

But if this extinction may be called a liberation, it is yet not a status of freedom; for that can only repose upon an affirmation, a permanence, not upon a negative and extinction of all affirmations, and needs too, one would imagine, a someone or something that is free." (341)

"The Illusionist's Maya is a more mystic thing and more obscure to the intelligence; but we have at least here a Self, a positive Infinite which is capable therefore of an eternal freedom, but only in inaction, by cessation from Karma. For the self as the individual, the soul in action of Karma is bound always by ignorance, and only by rejection of individuality and of the cosmic illusion can we return to the liberty of the Absolute. What we see in both these systems is that spiritual freedom and the cosmic compulsion are equally admitted, but in a total separation and an exclusion from each other's own proper field, – still as absolute opposites and contraries." (341-342)

"But these trenchant systems, however satisfactory to the logical reason, are suspect to a synthetic intelligence; and at any rate, as we find that knowledge and ignorance are not in their essence absolute contraries but ignorance and

inconscience itself the veil of a secret knowledge, so it may be at least possible that liberty and the compulsion of Karma are not such unbridgeable opposites, but that behind and even in Karma itself there is all the time a secret liberty of the indwelling Spirit. Buddhism and Illusionism too do not assert any external or internal predestination, but only a self-imposed bondage. And very insistently they demand of man a choice between the right and the wrong way, between the will to an impermanent existence and the will to Nirvana, between a will to cosmic existence and the will to an absolute spiritual being." (342)

"Difficult also is it to understand how unsubstantial Impermanence can have such a giant hold or present this power of eternal continuity in Time, – there must surely, one thinks, be a Permanent which expresses itself in this continuity, *dhruvam adhruveṣu*; or how an Illusion, – for what is illusion but an inconsequent dream or unsubstantial hallucination? – can build up this mighty world of just sequence and firm law and linked Necessity; some secret self-knowledge and wisdom there must be which guides the Energy of Karma in its idea and has appointed for her the paths she must hew in Time. It is because of their persistence of principle in all the transiences of particular form that things have such a hold on our mind and will. It is because the world is so real that we feel so potently its grasp on us and our spirits turn on it with this grip of the wrestler. It is often indeed too fiercely real for us and we seek for liberty in the realm of dream or planes of the ideal and, not finding it sufficiently there, because we have not the freedom nor can develop the mastery to impose our ideal on this active reality, we seek it beyond in the remote

and infinite greatness of the Absolute." (342-343)

(iv) The Idea of Free and Infinite Will

"The world of Matter seems to know nothing about freedom; everything there appears as if written in sibyllic laws upon tablets of stone, laws which have a process, but no initial reason, serve a harmony of purposes or at least produce a cosmos of fixed results, but do not appear to be shaped with an eye to them by any discoverable Intelligence. We can think of no presence of soul in natural things, because we can see in them no conscious action of mind and a conscious active mental intelligence is to our notions the very basis and standing ground, if not the whole stuff of soul-existence. If Matter is all, then we may very easily conclude that all is a Karma of material energy which is governed by some inherent incomprehensible mechanically legislating Necessity. But then we see that Life seems to be made of a different stuff; here various possibility develops, here creation becomes eager, pressing, flexible, protean; here we are conscious of a searching and a selection, many potentialities and a choice of actualities, of a subconscient idea which is feeling around for its vital self-expression and shaping an instinctive action, – often, though in certain limits, with an unerring intuitive guidance of life to its immediate objective or to some yet distant purpose, – of a subconscient will too in the fibre of all this vast seeking and mutable impulsion. But yet this too works within limits, under fetters, in a given range of processes.

But when we get out into mind, Nature becomes there much more widely conscious of possibility and of choice; mind is aware of potentialities and of determinations in idea

which are other than those of the immediate actuality or of the fixedly necessary consequence of the sum of past and present actualities; it is aware of numberless "may-be"s and "might-have-been"s, and these last are not entirely dead rejected things, but can return through the power of the Idea and effect future determinations and can fulfil themselves at last in the inner reality of their idea though, it may well be, in other forms and circumstances. Moreover, mind can and does go still further; it can conceive of an infinite possibility behind the self-limitations of actual existence. And from this seeing there arises the idea of a free and infinite Will, a Will of illimitable potentiality which determines all these innumerable marvels of its own universal becoming or creation in Space and Time. That means the absolute freedom of a Spirit and Power which is not determined by Karma, but determines Karma. Apparent Necessity is the child of the spirit's free self-determination. What affects us as Necessity, is a Will which works in sequence and not a blind Force driven by its own mechanism." (343-345)

(v) Relation Between Man's Earthly Human Nature and Master Soul Behind that Supports

"The soul of man is a power of the self-existence which manifests the universe and not the creature and slave of a mechanical Nature; and it is only the natural instruments of his being, it is mind, life and body and their functions and members which are helpless apparatus and gear of the machinery. These things are subject to the action of Karma, but man in himself, the real man within is not its subject, *na karma lipyate nare*. Rather is Karma his instrument and its developments the material he uses, and he is using it always

from life to life for the shaping of a limited and individual, which may be one day a divine and cosmic personality. For the eternal spirit enjoys an absolute freedom." (346)

"Man, too, may well be capable of a release, *mokṣa*, into the unconditioned Infinite by cessation of all action, mind and personality. But that is not the whole of the spirit's absolute freedom; it is rather an incomplete liberty, since it endures only by its inaction. But the freedom of the Spirit is not so dependent; it can remain unimpaired in all this action of Karma and is not diminished or abrogated by the pouring of its energies into the whirl of the universe. And one may say that man cannot enjoy the double freedom because as man he is an individual being and therefore a thing in Nature, subject to Ignorance, to Karma." (347)

"Freedom somewhere there is in our being and action, and we have only to see how and why it is limited in our outward nature, why here I am at all under any dominion of Karma. I appear to be bound by the law of an outward and imposed energy only because there is separation between my outward nature and my inmost spiritual self and I do not live in that outwardness with my whole being, but with a shape, turn and mental formation of myself which I call my ego or my personality. The cosmic spirit in matter seems itself to be so bound, for the same reason." (347)

"I have to note that even in mind and even in its phenomenon of a conscious will Karma is the first law and there cannot be for me there a complete freedom; there is no such thing as a mental will which is absolutely free. And this is because mind is part of the action of the outward Ignorance, an action which seeks for knowledge but does not possess its

full light and power, which can conceive of self and spirit and infinity and reflect them, but not altogether live in them, which can quiver with infinite possibility, but can only deal in a limited half-effective fashion with restricted possibilities. An Ignorance cannot be permitted to have, even if in its nature it could have, free mastery. It would never do for an ignorant mind and will to be given a wide and real freedom; for it would upset the right order of the energy which the Spirit has set at work and produce a most unholy confusion." (348)

"But still there is here something which we may call a relative freedom. It does not really belong to our outward mind and will or that shadow of myself which I have put forth in my mental ego; for these things are instruments and they work in the roads of the successions of Karma. But they still feel a power constantly coming forth and either assenting to or intervening in the action of the nature, and that power they attribute to themselves. They are aware of a relative freedom in their disposition of action and of at least a potential absolute freedom behind it, and mixing these two things confusedly together mind, will and ego cry out in unison "I am free." But this freedom and power are influences from the soul. To use a familiar metaphysical language, they type the assent and will of the Purusha without which the Prakriti cannot move on her way. The first and the greater part of this soul-influence is in the form of an assent to Nature, an acquiescence; and for good reason." (348-349)

"This obedience is forcibly imposed on the lower ignorant creation. But thinking man who experiences increasingly from generation to generation and from life to life the nature of things and develops reflective knowledge

and the sense of his soul in Nature, delivers in her a power of initiating will. He is not bound to her set actualities; he can refuse assent, and the thing in Nature to which it is refused goes on indeed for a time and produces its results by impetus of Karma, but as it runs, it loses power and falls into impotence and desuetude. He can do more, he can command a new action and orientation of his nature. The assent was a manifestation of the power of the soul as giver of the sanction, *anumantā*, but this is a power of the soul as active lord of the nature, *īśvara*. Then Nature still insists more or less on her old habitual way by reason of her past impetus or the right of previous sanctions and may even, in proportion as she is unaccustomed to control, resist and call in hostile powers, our own creations, the children of our past willings; then is there a battle in the house of our being between the lord and his spouse or between old and new nature and a defeat of the soul or its victory. And this is certainly a freedom, but only a relative freedom, and even the greatest mental self-mastery a relative and precarious thing at the best. This liberty when we look down at it from a higher station, is not well distinguishable from a lightened bondage.

The mental being in us can be a learner in the school of freedom, not a perfect adept. A real freedom comes when we get away from the mind into the life of the spirit, from personality to the Person, from Nature to the lord of Nature." (349)

"When the soul is one with the Supreme and with the universal not only in essence of consciousness and spiritual truth of being, but in expressive act too of consciousness and being, when it enjoys an initiating and relating truth of

spiritual will and knowledge and the soul's overflowing delight in God and existence, when it is admitted to the spirit's fullness of assent to self and its creative liberty, its strain of an eternal joy in self-existence and self-manifestation, Karma itself becomes a rhythm of freedom and birth a strain of immortality.*" (350)

*j. Karma, Will and Consequence**

(i) Spirit and Consciousness and its Power and Ananda – the Meaning of Existence

"The thing we first see or imagine we see, when we look at the outward mechanism of the universe, is energy and its works, action and consequence. But by itself and without the light of an inhabiting will this working is only a huge soulless mechanism, a loud rattling of crank and pulley, a monstrous pounding of spring and piston. It is the presence of the spirit and its will that gives a meaning to the action and it is the value of the result to the soul that gives its profound importance to all great or little consequence. It would not matter to anyone or anything, not even to the cosmos itself, though this universal stir came to an end tomorrow or had never been created, if these suns and systems were not the field of a consciousness which there rolls out its powers, evolves its works, enjoys its creations, plans and exults in its immense aims and sequences. Spirit and consciousness and power of the spirit and Ananda are the meaning of existence. Take away this spiritual significance and this world of energy becomes a mechanical fortuity or a blind and rigid Maya.

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* Sambhūtyā amṛtam aśnute, "*by birth he enjoys immortality.*"

The life of man is a portion of this vast significance, and since it is in him that on this material plane it comes out in its full capacity of meaning, a very important and central portion. The Will in the universe works up to him in the creative steps of its energy and makes of his nature a chariot of the gods on which it stands within the action, looks out on its works from the very front and no longer only from behind or above Nature's doings and moves on to the ultimate consequences and the complete evolution of its purpose. The will of man is the agent of the Eternal for the unveiling of his secret meaning in the material creation. Man's mind takes up all the knots of the problem and works them out by the power of the spirit within him and brings them nearer to the full force and degree of their individual and cosmic solutions. This is his dignity and his greatness and he needs no other to justify and give a perfect value to his birth and his acts and his passing and his return to birth, a return which must be – and what is there in it to grieve at or shun? – until the work of the Eternal in him is perfected or the cycles rest from the glory of their labour.

This view of the world is the standpoint from which we must regard the question of man's conscious will and its dealings with life, because then all things fall into their natural place and we escape from exaggerated and depreciated estimates. Man is a conscious soul of the Eternal, one with the Infinite in his inmost being, and the spirit within him is master of his acts and his fate." (351-352)

"But also he is one in God and one in Nature with all beings in the cosmos, touches and includes all other souls, is linked to all powers of the Being that are manifest in this

cosmic working. His soul, thought, will, action are intimate with the universal soul, thought, will and action. All acts on and through him and mixes with him and he acts too on all and his thought and will and life mix in and become a power of the one common life. His mind is a form and action of the universal mind. His call is not to be busy and concerned only with his own growth and perfection and natural destiny or spiritual freedom. A larger action too claims him. He is a worker in a universal work; the life of others is his life; world-consequence and the world-evolution are also his business. For he is one self with the selves of all other beings.

The dealings of our will with Karma and consequence have to be envisaged in the light of this double truth of man's individuality and man's universality. And seen in this light the question of the freedom of our individual will takes on another appearance. It becomes clear enough that our ego, our outward personality can be only a minor, a temporal, an instrumental form of our being. The will of the ego, the outward, the mentally personal will which acts in the movement cannot be free in any complete or separate sense of freedom. It cannot so be free because it is bound by its partial and limited nature and it is shaped by the mechanism of its ignorance, and again because it is an individualised form and working of the universal energy and at every moment impinged upon and modified and largely shaped by environing wills and powers and forces. But also it cannot so be free because of the greater Soul in us behind the mind which determines works and consequence according to the will in its being and the nature, its power of being, not in the moment but in the long continuities of Time, not solely by the

immediate adaptation to the environment, but by its own previous intention which has shaped the environment and already predetermined in great part the present act and consequence. The inward will in the being which is in intimacy with that Power is the real will and this outward thing only an instrumentation for a working out from moment to moment, a spring of the karmic mechanism. That inward will we find when we get back to it, to be a free will, not armoured in a separate liberty, but free in harmony with the freedom of the Spirit guiding and compelling Nature in all souls and in all happenings." (353-354)

(ii) The Movement of Soul towards the Perfection of its Manifested Nature

"To understand one must cease to dwell exclusively on the act and will of the moment and its immediate consequences. Our present will and personality are bound by many things, by our physical and vital heredity, by a past creation of our mental nature, by environmental forces, by limitation, by ignorance. But our soul behind is greater and older than our present personality. The soul is not the result of our heredity, but has prepared by its own action and affinities this heredity. It has drawn around it these environmental forces by past karma and consequence. It has created in other lives the mental nature of which now it makes use. That ancient soul of long standing, sempiternal in being, *puruṣaḥ purāṇaḥ sanātanaḥ*, has accepted the outward limitation, the outward ignorance as a means of figuring out in a restriction of action from moment to moment the significance of its infinity and the sequence of its works of power. To live in this knowledge is not to take away the value and potency of the moment's will and act, but

to give it an immensely increased meaning and importance. Then each moment becomes full of things infinite and can be seen taking up the work of a past eternity and shaping the work of a future eternity. Our every thought, will, action carries with it its power of future self-determination and is too a help or a hindrance for the spiritual evolution of those around us and a force in the universal working. For the soul in us takes in the influences it receives from others for its own self-determination and gives out influences which the soul in them uses for their growth and experience. Our individual life becomes an immensely greater thing in itself and is convinced too of an abiding unity with the march of the universe.

And karma and consequence also get a wider meaning. At present we fix too much on the particular will and act of the moment and a particular consequence in a given time. But the particular only receives its value by all of which it is a part, all from which it comes, all to which it moves. We fix too much also on the externalities of karma and consequence, this good or that bad action and result of action. But the real consequence which the soul is after is a growth in the manifestation of its being, an enlarging of its range and action of power, its comprehension of delight of being, its delight of creation and self-creation, and not only its own but the same things in others with which its greater becoming and joy are one. Karma and consequence draw their meaning from their value to the soul; they are steps by which it moves towards the perfection of its manifested nature." (354-355)

"The births of the soul are the series of a constant spiritual evolution, and it might well seem that when the

evolution is finished, and that must be, it might at first appear, when the soul involved in ignorance returns to self-knowledge, the series of our births too ought to come to a termination. But that is only one side of the matter, one long act here of the eternal drama, doing, karma. The spirit we are is not only an eternal consciousness and eternal being; its characters are an eternal power of being and an eternal Ananda. Creation is not to the spirit a trouble and an anguish, but a delight expressed, even though in the entirety of its depths inexpressible, fathomless, endless, inexhaustible. It is only the limited action of mind in the ignorance straining after possession and discovery and unable to find the concealed power of the spirit that makes of the delight of action and creation a passion or suffering: for, limited in capacity and embarrassed by life and body, it has yet desires beyond its capacity, because it is the instrument of a growth and the seed of an illimitable self-expression and it has the pain of the growth and the pain of the obstacle and the pain of the insufficiency of its action and delight. But let this struggling self-creator and doer of works once grow into the consciousness and power of the secret infinite spirit within it and all this passion and suffering passes away into an immeasurable delight of liberated being and its liberated action." (355-356)

"Karma is nothing but the will of the Spirit in action, consequence nothing but the creation of will. What is in the will of being, expresses itself in karma and consequence. When the will is limited in mind, karma appears as a bondage and a limitation, consequence as a reaction or an imposition. But when the will of the being is infinite in the spirit, karma

and consequence become instead the joy of the creative spirit, the construction of the eternal mechanist, the word and drama of the eternal poet, the harmony of the eternal musician, the play of the eternal child. This lesser, bound, seemingly separate evolution is only a step in the free self-creation of the Spirit from its own illimitable Ananda. That is behind all we are and do; to hide it from mind and bring it slowly forward into the front of existence and action is the present play of Self with Nature." (356-357)

*k. Rebirth and Karma**

(i) Rebirth and Evolution

"THE ANCIENT idea of Karma was inseparably connected with a belief in the soul's continual rebirth in new bodies. And this close association was not a mere accident, but a perfectly intelligible and indeed inevitable union of two related truths which are needed for each other's completeness and can with difficulty exist in separation. These two things are the soul side and the nature side of one and the same cosmic sequence. Rebirth is meaningless without karma, and karma has no fount of inevitable origin and no rational and no moral justification if it is not an instrumentality for the sequences of the soul's continuous experience. If we believe that the soul is repeatedly reborn in the body, we must believe also that there is some link between the lives that preceded and the lives that follow and that the past of the soul has an effect on its future; and that is the spiritual essence of the law of Karma. To deny it would be to establish a reign of the most chaotic incoherence, such as we find only in the leaps

and turns of the mind in dream or in the thoughts of madness, and hardly even there." (358)

"The continuous existence of the soul in rebirth must signify an evolution if not of the self, for that is said to be immutable, yet of its more outward active soul or self of experience. This evolution is not possible if there is not a connected sequence from life to life, a result of action and experience, an evolutionary consequence to the soul, a law of Karma." (358-359)

(ii) The Uniqueness of the Individual

"The necessity of rebirth, if we look at it from the outward side, from the side of energy and process, stands upon a persistent and insistent fact which supervenes always upon the generality of common law and kind and constitutes the most intimate secret of the wonder of existence, the uniqueness of the individual. And this uniqueness is everywhere, but appears as a subordinate factor only in the lower ranges of existence. It becomes more and more important and pronounced as we rise in the scale, enlarges in mind, gets to enormous proportions when we come to the things of the spirit. That would seem to indicate that the cause of this significant uniqueness is something bound up with the very nature of spirit; it is something it held in itself and is bringing out more and more as it emerges out of material Nature into self-conscience. The laws of being are at bottom one for all of us, because all existence is one existence; one spirit, one self, one mind, one life, one energy of process is at work; one will and wisdom has planned or has evolved from itself the whole business of creation. And yet in this oneness

there is a persistent variety, which we see first in the form of a communal variation." (362)

"And the individual is there; you cannot reduce him to a nullity or an illusion; he is real, alive, unique. The communal soul-variation mounts up from the rest, exceeds, brings in or brings out something more, something new, adds novel powers in the evolution. The individual mounts and exceeds in the same way from the community. It is in him, on his highest heights that we get the flame-crest of self-manifestation by which the One finds himself in Nature.

And the question is how does that come about at all? I enter into birth, not in a separate being, but in the life of the whole, and therefore I inherit the life of the whole. I am born physically by a generation which is a carrying on of its unbroken history; the body, life, physical mentality of all past being prolongs itself in me and I must therefore undergo the law of heredity; the parent, says the Upanishad, recreates himself by the energy in his seed and is reborn in the child. But as soon as I begin to develop, a new, an independent and overbearing factor comes in, which is not my parents nor my ancestry, nor past mankind, but I, my own self. And this is the really important, crowning, central factor. What matters most in my life, is not my heredity; that only gives me my opportunity or my obstacle, my good or my bad material, and it has not by any means been shown that I draw all from that source. What matters supremely is what I make of my heredity and not what my heredity makes of me. The past of the world, bygone humanity, my ancestors are there in me; but still I myself am the artist of my self, my life, my actions. And there is the present of the world, of humanity,

there are my contemporaries as well as my ancestors; the life of my environment too enters into me, offers me a new material, shapes me by its influence, lays its direct or its indirect touch on my being. I am invaded, changed, partly recreated by the environing being and action in which I am and act." (363-364)

"What then is this all-important and independent power in me and what is the beginning and the end of its self-creation?" (364)

"It is reasonable to suppose that this powerful independent element which supervenes and works upon the physical and vital evolution, was in the past and will be in the future. It is reasonable also to suppose that it did not come in suddenly from some unconnected existence and does not pass out after one brief intervention; its close connection with the life of the world is rather a continuation of a long past connection. And this brings in at once the whole necessity of past birth and karma. I am a persistent being who pursue my evolution within the persistent being of the world. I have evolved my human birth and I help constantly in the human evolution. I have created by my past karma my own conditions and my relations with the life of others and the general karma. That shapes my heredity, my environment, my affinities, my connections, my material, my opportunities and obstacles, a part of my predestined powers and results, not arbitrarily predestined but predetermined by my own stage of nature and past action, and on this groundwork I build new karma and farther strengthen or subtilise my power of natural being, enlarge experience, go on with my soul evolution. This process is woven in with the universal evolution and all its lines are

included in the web of being, but it is not merely a jutting point or moment of it or a brief tag shot into the tissue. That is what rebirth means in the history of my manifested self and of universal being.

The old idea of rebirth errs on the contrary by an excessive individualism. Too self-concentrated, it treated one's rebirth and karma as too much one's own single affair, a sharply separate movement in the whole, leaned too much on one's own concern with one's self and even while it admitted universal relations and a unity with the whole, yet taught the human being to see in life principally a condition and means of his own spiritual benefit and separate salvation." (364-365)

"Certain it is that while we are here, our rebirth or karma, even while it runs on its own lines, is intimately one with the same lines in the universal existence. But my self-knowledge and self-finding too do not abolish my oneness with other life and other beings. An intimate universality is part of the glory of spiritual perfection. This idea of universality, of oneness not only with God or the eternal Self in me, but with all humanity and other beings, is growing to be the most prominent strain in our minds and it has to be taken more largely into account in any future idea or computation of the significance of rebirth and karma." (365-356)

(iii) Rebirth and Self-effectuation of the Spirit

"The self-effectuation of the Spirit in the world is the truth on which we take our foundation, a great, a long self-weaving in time. Rebirth is the continuity of that self-effectuation in the individual, the persistence of the thread; Karma is the process, a force, a work of energy and

consequence in the material world, an inner and an outer will, an action and mental, moral, dynamic consequence in the soul evolution of which the material world is a constant scene. That is the conception; the rest is a question of the general and particular laws, the way in which karma works out and helps the purpose of the spirit in birth and life." (366)

*l. Karma and Justice**

(i) Karmic Idea of the Law of Karma

"The law of Karma can be no rigid and mechanical canon or rough practical rule of thumb, but rather its guiding principle should be as supple a harmonist as the Spirit itself whose will of self-knowledge it embodies and should adapt itself to the need of self-development of the variable individual souls who are feeling their way along its lines towards the right balance, synthesis, harmonies of their action. The karmic idea cannot be – for spirit and not mind is its cause – a cosmic reflection of our limited average human intelligence, but rather the law of a greater spiritual wisdom, a means which behind all its dumb occult appearances embodies an understanding lead and a subtle management towards our total perfection.

The ordinary current conception of law of Karma is dominantly ethical, but ethical in no very exalted kind. Its idea of karma is a mechanical and materialistic ethics, a crudely exact legal judgment and administration of reward and punishment, an external sanction to virtue and prohibition of sin, a code, a balance. The idea is that there must be a justice governing the award of happiness and misery on the earth, a humanly intelligible equity and that the law of Karma

represents it and gives us its formula. I have done so much good, *puṇya*. It is my capital, my accumulation and balance. I must have it paid out to me in so much coin of prosperity, the legal currency of this sovereign and divine Themis, or why on earth should I at all do good? I have done so much evil. That too must come back to me in so much exact and accurate punishment and misfortune." (367-368)

"This commercial and mathematical accountant is sometimes supposed to act with a startling precision." (368)

"I am rewarded for my good deeds in heaven after death until the dynamic value of my virtue is exhausted and I am then reborn and rewarded again materially on earth. I am punished in hell to the equivalence of my sins and again punished for them in another life in the body. This looks a little superfluous and a rather redundant justice, and, even, the precise accountant becomes very like an unconscionable hundred per cent usurer. Perhaps it may be said that beyond earth it is the soul that suffers – for purification, and here the physical being – as a concession to the forces of life and the symmetry of things: but still it is the soul that thus pays double in its subtle experience and in its physical incarnation." (368-369)

"But what is the necessary connection between this good and evil on the one hand and on the other pleasure and pain? Must the ethical power always turn perfectly into some term of kindred hedonistic result? Not entirely; for love is a joy in itself, but also love suffers; hatred is a troubled and self-afflicting thing, but has too its own perverse delight of itself and its gratifications; but in the end we may say that love, because it is born of the universal Delight, triumphs in its

own nature and hatred because it is its denial or perversion, leads to a greater sum of misery to myself as to others. And of all true moral good and real evil this may be said that the one tends towards some supreme Right, the *ṛtam* of the Vedic Rishis, the highest law of a highest Truth of our being and that Truth is the door of the spirit's Ananda, its beatific nature, the other is a missing or perversion of the Right and the Truth and exposes us to its opposite, to false delight or suffering. And even in the perplexed steps of life some reflection of this identity must emerge.

This correspondence is, still, more essentially true in the inner field, in the spiritual, mental and emotional result and reaction of the good or the evil or of the effects of its outgoing action. But where is the firm link of correspondence between the ethical and the more vital and physical hedonistic powers of life?" (371-372)

(ii) The Connexus of Our Consciousness and Will to Karma

"The relation of our consciousness and will to Karma is the thing upon which all the subtler lines of action and consequence must depend; that connexus must be the hinge of the whole significance. The dependence of the pursuit of ethical values on a sanction by the inferior hedonistic values, material, vital and lower mental pleasure, pain and suffering, appeals strongly to our normal consciousness and will; but it ceases to have more than a subordinate force and finally loses all force as we grow towards greater heights of our being. That dependence cannot then be the whole or the final power or guiding norm of Karma. The relation of will to action and consequence must be cast on more subtle and liberal lines.

The universal Spirit in the law of Karma must deal with man in the lower scale of values only as a part of the transaction and as a concession to man's own present motives. Man himself puts these values, makes that demand for pleasure and prosperity and dreads their opposites, desires heaven more than he loves virtue, fears hell more than he abhors sin, and while he does so, the world-dispensation wears to him that meaning and colour. But the spirit of existence is not merely a legislator and judge concerned to maintain a standard of legal justice, to dole out deterrents and sanctions, rewards and penalties, ferocious pains of hell, indulgent joys of paradise. He is the Divine in the world, the Master of a spiritual evolution and the growing godhead in humanity. That godhead grows however slowly beyond the dependence on the sanctions of pleasure and pain. Pain and pleasure govern our primary being and in that primary scale pain is Nature's advertisement of things we should avoid, pleasure her lure to things she would tempt us to pursue. These devices are first empirical tests for limited objects; but as I grow, I pass beyond their narrower uses. I have continually to disregard Nature's original warnings and lures in order to get to a higher nature. I have to develop a nobler spiritual law of Karma.

This will be evident if we consider our own greater motives of action. The pursuit of Truth may entail on me penalties and sufferings; the service of my country or the world may demand from me loss of my outward happiness and good fortune or the destruction of my body; the increase of my strength of will and greatness of spirit may be only possible by the ardours of suffering and the firm renunciation of joys and pleasures. I must still follow after Truth, I must do the

service to my race my soul demands from me; I must increase my strength and inner greatness and must not ask for a quite irrelevant reward, shun penalty or make a bargain for the exact fruits of my labour. And that which is true of my action in the present life, must be equally true of my connected action and self-development through many births. Happiness and sorrow, good fortune and ill-fortune are not my main concern whether in this birth or in future lives, but my perfection and the higher good of mankind purchased by whatever suffering and tribulation." (373-374)

"The law of Karma is therefore not simply an extension of the human idea of practical justice into future births and a rectification there of the apparent injustice of life. A justice or rather a justness there must be in all the workings of the world energy; Nature certainly seems to be scrupulous in her measures. But in the life of man there are many factors to be taken into the reckoning; there are too stages, grades, degrees. And on a higher step of our being things do not look the same nor are quite the same as on a lower grade. And even in the first normal scale there are many factors and not only the ethical-hedonistic standard. If it is just that the virtuous man should be rewarded with success and happiness and the wicked man punished with downfall and pain at some time, in some life, on earth or in heaven or in hell, it is also just that the strong man should have the reward of his cultivated strength, the intellectual man the prize of his cultivated skill, the will that labours in whatever field the fruit of its effort and its works. But it does not work rightly, you say, not morally, not according to the ethical law? But what is right working in this connection of will and action and consequence? I may be

religious and honest, but if I am dull, weak and incompetent? And I may be selfish and impious, but if I have the swift flame of intellect, the understanding brain, the skill to adapt means to ends, the firm courageous will fixed on its end? I have then an imperfection which must impose its consequences, but also I have powers which must make their way. The truth is that there are several orders of energy and their separate characteristic working must be seen, before their relations can be rightly discovered in the harmonies of Nature. A complex web is what we have to unravel. When we have seen the parts in the whole, the elements and their affinities in the mass, then only can we know the lines of Karma." (374-375)

8. The Lines of Karma*

*a. The Foundation**

"THE IDEA of Karma has behind it two ideas that are its constituent factors, a law of Nature, of the energy or action of Nature, and a soul that lives under that law, puts out action into that energy and gets from it a return in accordance and measure with the character of its own activities." (379)

"But if that were all the truth, then there would be no real individual and no responsibility of any kind except the responsibility of universal Nature to carry out the idea or to execute the force put forth in the individual as in the universal by the All-Soul, the cosmic Spirit. But there is also this soul of the individual, and that is a being of the Infinite and a conscious and efficient portion of the All-Soul, a deputy or representative, and puts forth the energy given to it according to its own potentiality, type, limits with a will that is in some sense its own. The Spirit in the cosmos is the lord, the Ishwara

of all Nature, but the individual soul is likewise a representative, a delegate Ishwara, the under lord at least if not the overlord of his nature, – the recipient, agent and overseer, let us say, of his own form and use of the universal energy of Nature.

And next we see that each being is actually in life, in the world an individual in a species and each species has a nature of its own, a Swabhava or way of the self-being, and each individual too a nature of his own, an individual way of his self-being within that of the species. The law of the action is determined generally by this swabhava of the species and individually by the swabhava of the individual but within that larger circle. Man is at once himself, in a certain way peculiar and unique, and a depressed portion of God and a natural portion of mankind." (379-380)

(i) What is the Fundamental Meaning of Karma

"But again, if that were all, if each man came into life with his present nature ready determined for him and irrevocable and had to act according to it, there would be no real responsibility; for he would do good according to the good and evil according to the evil in his nature, he would be imperfect according to its imperfection or perfect according to its perfection; and he might have to suffer the return of his good or evil, bear exactly the just consequences of his perfection or his imperfection, but mechanically and not by his choice: for his apparent choice would be the compulsion of the nature in him and could not be in any way, directly or indirectly, the result of his spirit's will. But in fact there is within his being a power of development, a power of change, or in the language of our modern conceptions an evolutionary

power. His nature is what it is because he has so made it by his past; he has induced this present formulation by a precedent will in his spirit. He has risen to humanity by the force of his spirit and by the power of the All-Soul out of the vast possibilities of universal Nature. He has developed by his own long evolution of that humanity the character and law of action of his present individual being; he has built his own height and form of human nature. He may change what he has made, he may rise even, if that be within the possibilities of the universe, beyond human and to or towards superhuman nature. It is the possibility of the universal Nature and her law that determines his natural being and action, but it is part of her law to be subject to the spirit, and she will develop in reply to an insistent call; for then she must respond, she must supply the needed energy, she must determine the acts in that direction, she must assure its issue. His past and his present nature and the environment he has secured may present constant obstacles, but they must still yield in the end to the evolutionary will in him in proportion to its sincerity, wholeness and insistence. All the possibility of the All-being is in him, all the power of the All- Will is behind him. This evolution and all its circumstances, his life, its form, its events, its values arise out of that urge and are shaped according to the past, present or future active will of his spirit. As is his use of the energy, so was and will be the return of the universal energy to him now and hereafter. This is the fundamental meaning of Karma.

At the same time this action and evolution of the spirit taking birth in a body are not an easy and simple thing, as it would or might be if Nature were all of one piece and evolution were only a raising of the degrees of a single power.

For there are many strands, many degrees, many forms of energy of Nature. There is in the world of birth an energy of physical being and nature, arising out of the physical an energy of vital being and nature, arising out of the vital an energy of mental being and nature, arising out of the mental an energy of spiritual or supramental being and nature." (380-381)

(ii) Understanding the Secret of Integral Meaning and Law of Karma

"The way and the movement of the world action are indeed a difficult and entangled process, *gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ*, and therefore too the way and movement of our own action which we cannot separate in its law, however much the mere mind in us might like to have it so, from the law of the world action. And if all these energies are forms of energy of the nature of the Spirit, then it is likely that only when we rise into the consciousness of the supreme spiritual being can we hope wholly to understand all the integral secret and harmony of the world action and therefore the integral meaning and law of Karma.

It may therefore serve a partial purpose but can be of little eventual advantage to try to cut the knot of the riddle by reducing to the law of one form of energy alone all the apparent tangle of the cosmic action." (382)

"The law of the world is not this alone that our good brings good to us and our evil brings evil, nor is its sufficient key the ethical-hedonistic rule that our moral good brings to us happiness and success and our moral evil brings to us sorrow and misfortune. There is a rule of right in the world, but it is the right of the truth of Nature and of the truth of

the spirit, and that is a vast and various rule and takes many forms that have to be understood and accepted before we can reach either its highest or its integral principle.' (382-383)

"The whole law of the cosmic action or even the one law governing all the others cannot well be the measure of a physical, mechanical and chemical energy, nor the law of a life force, nor a moral law or law of mind or of idea forces; for it is evident that none of these things by its single self covers or accounts for all the fundamental powers. There is likely to be something else of which all these are the means and energies." (383)

"The practical and the efficient base of Karma is all the relation of the soul to the energies of Nature, the use by Purusha of Prakriti. It is the soul's demand on, consent to or use of the energies of Nature and the return and reflex of her energies on the soul that must determine the steps of our progress in our births, whether that progress be in a given direction or a long up and down or in a perpetual circle. There is another, a circumstantial aspect of the law of Karma and that hinges on the turn of our action not only to our self, but to others. The nature of the energies we put forth and even the return and reflex of their consequence upon us affects not only ourselves but all around us and we must account too for the direction of our acts upon others, its effect upon them and the return of the direction and rebound of consequence of the effect upon our own life and being. But the energy we put forth on others is ordinarily of a mixed character, physical, vital, moral, mental and spiritual, and the return and consequence too are of a mixed character. A physical action, a vital pressure thrown forth from ourselves carries in it a

mental or moral as well as a physical and vital power and issues often quite beyond our conscious will and knowledge and the consequence to ourselves and to others is found to be different enough in character and measure from anything we intended or could have calculated and foreseen. The calculation escapes us because too complex by far is the universal energy acting through us and our conscious will intervenes in it simply as an instrument; our real acceptance is that of a more fundamental power within, a secret, a subliminal assent of our subconscient and superconscient spirit. And the return too, whatever the agents, is of the same complex universal energy and determined by some difficult correlation of the force acting and the force acted upon in her.

But there is another, an ultimate and essential sense of Karma, a relation in it between the soul in us and the Supreme or the All-Self; on that all is founded and to that all leads and must refer to it at every step. That relation too is not so simple a thing as is imagined by the religions. For it must answer to a very vast spiritual sense underlying the whole process of Karma and there must be a connection of each of our workings in the use of the universal energy to that fundamental and perhaps infinite significance. These three things, the will of the soul in Nature and the action of Nature in and on the soul and through it and back to it, the effect of the intercrossing between the action of the soul on others and the return to it of the force of its action complicated by theirs, and the meaning of the soul's action in relation to its own highest Self and the All-Self, to God, make up between them all the bearings of Karma." (383-385)

*b. The Terrestrial Law**

(i) The Study of Terrestrial law

"A CONSIDERATION of the lines of Karma ought certainly to begin with a study of the action of the world as it is, as a whole, however contrary it may be to the rule or to the desire of our moral or our intellectual reason, and to see if we cannot find in its own facts its own explanation." (386)

"Any shifting of the base of the problem by which we get out of the difficulty, impose our limits on what overpasses us and compel God to be even as ourselves, may very well be an evasion and an intellectual device and not the way of truth. The problem of knowledge is after all this, to reflect the movements of the Infinite and see, and not to force it into a mould prepared for it by our intelligence.

The ordinary idea of Karma follows this latter unsound method. The world we see is to our notions, if not immoral, yet non-moral and contradictory to our idea of what it should be. Therefore we go behind it, discover that this earth life is not all, erect anew there our moral rule and rejoice to find that after all the universe does obey our human conceptions and therefore all is well. The mysterious conflict, the Manichean struggle, the inextricable tangle here of good and evil is not cured or accounted for, but we say that at least the good and the evil are justly dealt with according to their kind, this duly rewarded and that duly punished in other worlds or other births, there is therefore a dominant moral law and we may cherish a faith that the good will prevail, Ahuramazda conquer and not Ahriman, and on the whole all is as it should be."(386-387)

"Let us grant that a dominant moral law governs, not action, – for that is either free or, if not free, compelled to be of all kinds, – but the result of action in the world and that a supreme good will work itself out in the end. The difficulty remains why that good should use evil as one and almost the chief of its means or the dominant moral law, sovereign, unescapable, categorical, imperative, the practical governor, if not the reason of our existence, should be compelled to fulfil itself through so much that is immoral and by the agency of a non-moral force, through hell on earth and hell beyond, through petty cruelty of punishment and huge fury of avenging calamity, through an immeasurable and, as it seems, never ending sequence of pain and suffering and torture. It must surely be because there are other things in the Infinite and therefore other laws and forces here and of these the moral law, however great and sovereign to itself, has to take account and is compelled to accommodate its own lines to their curve of movement." (387)

"But on earth the first energy is the physical; the lines of the physical energy creating the forms, deploying the forces of the material universe are the first apparent conditions of our birth and create the practical basis and the original mould of our earthly existence. And what is the law of this first energy, its self-nature, swabhava and swadharma? It is evidently not moral in the human sense of the word: the elemental gods of the physical universe know nothing about ethical distinctions, but only the bare literal rule of energy, the right track and circuit of the movement of a force, its right action and reaction, the just result of its operation. There is no morality, no hesitation of conscience in our or the world's elements. The fire is no respecter of persons and if the saint

or the thinker is cast into it, it will not spare his body. The sea, the stormwind, the rock on which the ship drives do not ask whether the just man drowned in the waters deserved his fate. If there is a divine or a cosmic justice that works in these cruelties, if the lightning that strikes impartially tree or beast or man, is – but it would appear in the case of the man alone, for the rest is accident, – the sword of God or the instrument of Karma, if the destruction wrought by the volcano, the typhoon or the earthquake is a punishment for the sins of the community or individually of the sins in a past life of each man there that suffers or perishes, at least the natural forces know it not and care nothing about it and rather they conceal from us in the blind impartiality of their rage all evidence of any such intention. The sun shines and the rain falls on the just and the unjust alike; the beneficence and the maleficence of Nature, the gracious and dreadful Mother, her beauty and terror, her utility and her danger are bestowed and inflicted without favour or disfavour on all her children and the good man is no more her favourite than the sinner. If a law of moral punishment is imposed through the action of her physical forces, it must be by a Will from above her or a Force acting unknown to her in her inconscient bosom." (387-388)

(ii) The Relation of Man to the Physical Nature

"Now, that a conscious Infinite is there in physical Nature, we are assured by every sign, though it is a consciousness not made or limited like ours. All her constructions and motions are those of an illimitable intuitive wisdom too great and spontaneous and mysteriously self-effective to be described as an intelligence, of a Power and Will working for Time in eternity with an inevitable and forecasting movement in each

of its steps, even in those steps that in their outward or superficial impetus seem to us inconscient." (389)

"What then is the relation of man to this physical Nature, man this soul intervening in and physically born of her in a body subjected to her law of action? what his function as something that is yet more than her, a life and a mind and a spirit? what his swabhava, his swadharma? First, he owes to her a mechanical obedience of which she herself working in his body takes care: but also, as a soul evolving the power of consciousness secret in her, his business is to know and to use her law and even in knowing and using it to transcend her more material limit, habit, purpose and formula. Observance of Nature but also transcendence of first nature is continually the purpose of the Spirit within him. A continuous series of transcendences is the most significant thing in the world action and evolution itself is only Nature's constant impulse and effort of self-exceeding, of a greater self-becoming, her way of expressing more and more, getting out a greater form of birth and awakened power of presence of the self that is in her. Life brings in a whole range of these transcendences, mind another and greater range, and since mind is so evidently imperfect and incomplete, a thing of seeking in its very nature, there must surely be a range or many ranges of transcendence above mind. Man meets with the powers of his mind the rule of the physical action and the law of vital Karma, brings in a law of mental and moral Karma and lifts along the ladder of these scales to something more, to a potency of spiritual action which may even lead him to an exceeding of Karma itself, a freedom from or of birth and becoming, a perfecting transcendence.

Man's exceeding of the physical law does not come solely by his evolution of a moral sense in a non-moral world of Nature. Its essential rule is rather a turning of a conscious intelligence and will on life and matter, morality itself only this knowledge and will seeking for a rule of truth and right of action, *satyam ṛtam*, in his relation to his inner self and to his fellow-beings." (390-391)

"But in fact all that the godhead of physical Nature is concerned with in man's dealings with her is to observe a just law of return of her energies to his effort. Wherever his knowledge and will can harmonise itself with the lines of her energies, she makes a return according to its action on her: where it works on her with insufficiency, ignorance, carelessness, error, she overwhelms his effort or injures; as he wills more and discovers more, she returns to him a greater utility and fruit of her powers, consents to his masteries and favours his violences." (392)

"There are indications that by a more direct pressure of a mental and psychical energy on the physical, the response can be made more variable, the physical depart from what seem to be fixed limits and habits, and it is conceivable that as knowledge and will entered into the region of higher and yet higher powers, the action of physical energy might grow entirely responsive, giving whatever return is seemingly demanded from her, and its lines perfectly flexible. But even this transcendence would have to regard the great original measures fixed by the All-Will: there could be a free use, perhaps a large transformation of the physical energy, but not a departure from its fundamental law and purpose." (392)

"All this founds a reign of law, a principle of the just

return of energy that is the neutral essence of Karma, but it has no eye of regard for ethical measures and no moral significance. Man may and does invent cruel and immoral means of getting at physical knowledge and its powers or turn to unethical ends the energies she places at his service, but that is a matter between his will and his own soul and of his relation with other living beings, his and their concern and not hers. Physical Nature gives impartially her results and rewards and demands from man observance not of the moral but the physical law: she asks for a just knowledge and a scrupulous practice of her physical lines and nothing else. There is no karmic retort from her on the many cruelties of science, no revolt against an unethical use of her facilities, much punishment of ignorance but none of wickedness." (392-393)

(iii) Vital Nature

"If there is something in the lower rounds of Nature which reacts against certain transgressions of the moral law, it begins obscurely on a higher scale, with life. A vital reaction of the kind there is and it produces physico-vital effects, but mark that in this kind of reaction there is no observance of our limits and measures, but rather the same promiscuous impartiality as in the acts of physical Nature. In this field we have to admit a law of vicarious punishment, a constant smiting of the innocent for the sins of the guilty which would seem shocking and brutally unethical and unjust to us if inflicted by a human being. Life seems to punish itself for its errors and excesses without any care to limit the reaction to the agent of the excess or the error. There is here an order of the lines of energy that is not at least primarily or in intention

ethical, but rather concerned with a system of returns not governed by our moral ideas.

The movements of life seem indeed to be as little as the physical laid on ethical lines." (393)

"Vital nature works out her ends faultlessly enough, but not by any means blamelessly in the ethical sense. Death is her second means of self-preservation, destruction her constant instrument for change and renovation and progress, suffering inflicted on oneself or on others oftenest her price for victory and pleasure. All life lives upon other life, makes a place for itself by encroachment and exploitation, possesses by association but even more by struggle. Life acts by mutual shock and mutual use of creatures by each other; but it works only partly by mutual help and very much by a mutual assault and devouring. And its reproduction is bound to a means that the ethical sense even when most tolerant feels to be animal and inferior, is inclined to regard as immoral in itself and, when raised to its ascetic or puritan acuities, rejects as vile." (393-394)

(iv) The First Things for Man to do

"Man's first business is to bring his conscious intelligence and will to enlarge the lines of life of the individual and the race. Here again it is to these two powers primarily and only secondarily and partially to any moral force that the life energy gives its returns. The battle in life's primitive values is to the strong and the race to the swift, and the weak and the torpid cannot claim the goal and the crown on the strength of their greater virtue; and there is in this a justice, while the moral principle of reward would be here an injustice, for it would

be a denial of the principle of the right returns of energy which is fundamental to any possible law of Karma. Raise the action by the powers of the mind and still the greater successes, the glory and the victory, fall to the men of great intelligence and the men of great will and not necessarily to the more ethical intelligence or to the more moralised will. Morality counts in this dynamic aspect of life only as a prudential check or a concentrating tapasya. Life helps those who most wisely and faithfully follow her impulses while observing her limits and restraints or those who most powerfully aid her greater impulses of expansion. It is those that get the most prudential profit out of her and these the most of her power and movement and joy." (395-396)

"The greater movement at the same time brings in a power of greater suffering as well as joy, the greater sins of life and its greater virtues. Man as he dares the perils of physical nature, dares too the perils of the vital energy by transgressing her safe rules and limits which she imposes automatically on the animal." (396)

"He must sound all life's possibilities, test the wrong as well as the right use of her energies, pay his toll of suffering and get his prize of more splendid victories. As far as mind working in life's ways can do it, he has to enlarge the lines of life and to make a transformation of its action and its possibilities. This has hitherto been a greatening of forms and never gone so far as to make a radical change and override its first nature. It is only by a transformation of our inner life that we can get beyond the magnified, mentalised, reasoning and consciously willing animal that for the most part the greater number of us are and only by raising it up to unity with some

spiritual power we have not yet reached that we can hope to transform vital nature and make her a free instrument of the higher spirit. Then man may be really what he strives to be, master of his life, in control of vital and physical Nature.

Meanwhile it is through an inward turn of his mind that he gets to something like a transcendence, a living not for life but for truth, for beauty, for power of the soul, for good and right, love, justice. It is this endeavour that brings down into the lower rounds of energy the powers of a higher circle, something of a mental and a truly moral tending at its end to become a spiritual law of action and the fruits of action of Karma." (396-397)

*c. Mind Nature and Law of Karma**

(i) The Higher System of the Lines of Karma

"MAN IS not after all in the essence of his manhood or in the inner reality of his soul a vital and physical being raised to a certain power of mental will and intelligence. If that were so, the creed that makes our existence a manifestation of a Will to life, a Life Force moved by no other object than its own play, heightening, efficient power, expansion, might have a good chance of being the sufficient theory of our universe, and the law of our Karma, the rule of our activities would be in entire consonance with that one purpose and ordered by that dominant principle. Certainly in a great part of this world's outer activities, – or if we, fixing our eye mainly on the vital play of the spirit of the universe, consider them as man's chief business and the main thing that matters, – there is a colourable justification for this limited view of the human being. But the

more he looks into himself and the more he goes inward and lives intimately and pre-eminently in his mind and soul, the more he discovers that he is in his essential nature a mental being encased in body and emmeshed in the life activities, *manu*, *manomaya puruṣa*. He is more than a thinking, willing and feeling result of the mechanism of the physical or an understanding nexus of the vital forces. There is a mental energy of his being that overtops, pervades and utilises the terrestrial action and his own terrestrial nature." (398)

"The apparent inconscience of physical Nature, the beautiful and terrible, kindly and cruel conscious but amoral Life Force that is the first thing we see before us, are not the whole self-expression of the universal Being here and therefore not the whole of Nature. Man comes into it to express and realise a higher law of Nature and therefore a higher system of the lines of Karma." (399)

"Man, then, since he is a mental being, a means of the evolution of the mental self-expression of the spirit, cannot confine the rule of his action and nature to an obedience to the vital and physical law and an intelligent utilisation of it for the greater, more ordered, more perfect enjoyment of his vital and physical existence, perpetuation, reproduction, possession, enjoyment, expansion. There is a higher law of mental being and nature of which he is bound to become aware and to seek to impose it on his life and his action." (399)

(ii) The Lines of Transitional Law of Karma

"Man is a mental being seeking to establish a control over the life forces he embodies or uses, and one condition of that mastery is a necessary self-control, a restraint, an order,

a discipline imposed on his mental, vital and physical being." (405)

"And there are cosmic as well as human forces that respond to this balance of the mental and moral and the vital order." (406)

"The egoistic force in man may proceed far in its victory and triumph, but it has to be wary or it will find this power there on the watch for any flaw in his strength or action, any sufficient opportunity for his defeat and downfall. It dogs his endeavour with obstacle and reverse and takes advantage of his imperfections, often dallying with him, giving him long rope, delaying and abiding its time, – and not only of his moral shortcomings but of his errors of will and intelligence, his excesses and deficiencies of strength and prudence, all defects of his nature. It seems overcome by his energies of Tapasya, but it waits its season. It overshadows unbroken or extreme prosperity and often surprises it with a sudden turn to ruin. It induces a security, a self-forgetfulness, a pride and insolence of success and victory and leads on its victim to dash himself against the hidden seat of justice or the wall of an invisible measure." (406)

"This is really a resistance of the Infinite acting through life against the claim of the imperfect ego of man to enlarge itself, possess, enjoy and have, while remaining imperfect, a perfect and enduring happiness and complete felicity of its world-experience. The claim is, we may say, immoral, and the Force that resists it and returns, however uncertainly and late to our eyes, suffering and failure as a reply to our imperfections, may be considered a moral Force, an agent of a just Karma, though not solely in the narrowly ethical sense

of Karma. The law it represents is that our imperfections shall have their passing or their fatal consequences, that a flaw in our output of energy may be mended or counterbalanced and reduced in consequence, but if persisted in shall react even in excess of its apparent merits, that an error may seem to destroy all the result of the Tapasya, because it springs from a radical unsoundness in the intention of the will, the heart, the ethical sense or the reason. This is the first line of the transitional law of Karma." (407)

"A second line of Karmic response of the cosmic forces to our action puts on also an appearance which tempts us to give it a moral character. For there can be distinguished in Nature a certain element of the law of the talion or – perhaps a more appropriate figure, since this action seems rather mechanical than rational and deliberate – a boomerang movement of energy returning upon its transmitter. The stone we throw is flung back by some hidden force in the world life upon ourselves, the action we put out upon others recoils, not always by a direct reaction, but often by devious and unconnected routes, on our own lives and sometimes, though that is by no means a common rule, in its own exact figure or measure." (407)

"But the careful thinker will pause long before he hastens to subscribe to any such conclusion, for there is much that militates against it and this kind of definite reaction is rather exceptional than an ordinary rule of human life. If it were a regular feature, men would soon learn the code of the draconic impersonal legislator and know what to avoid and the list of life's prohibitions and vetoes. But there is no such clear penal legislation of Nature. The mathematical precision

of physical Nature's action and reaction cannot indeed be expected from mental and vital Nature.

For not only does everything become infinitely more subtle, complex and variable as we rise in the scale so that in our life action there is an extraordinary intertwining of forces and mixture of many values, but, even, the psychological and moral value of the same action differs in different cases, according to the circumstance, the conditions, the motive and mind of the doer." (407-408)

"It is evident that we cannot make much of a force that works out in so strange a fashion, however occasionally striking and dramatic its pointing at cause and consequence. It is too uncertain in its infliction of penalty to serve the end which the human mind expects from a system of penal justice, too inscrutably variable in its incidence to act as an indicator to that element in the human temperament which waits upon expediency and regulates its steps by a prudential eye to consequence. Men and nations continue to act always in the same fashion regardless of this occasional breaking out of the lightnings of a retaliatory doom, these occasional precisions of Karmic justice amidst the uncertainties of the complex measures of the universe. It works really not on the mind and will of man – except to some degree in a subtle and imperfect fashion on the subconscient mind – but outside him as a partial check and regulator helping to maintain the balance of the returns of energy and the life purposes of the world-spirit. Its action is like that of the first line of transitional Karma intended to prevent the success of the vital egoism of man and serves as an interim compression and compulsion until he can discover and succeed in spite of his vital self in

obeying a higher law of his being and a purer dynamism of motive in his directing mind and governing spirit." (409)

"A third possible and less outwardly mechanical line of Karma is suggested by the dictum that like creates like and in accordance with that law good must create good and evil must create evil." (410)

"Do unto others as you would be done by, because then they will indeed so do to you, seems to be the formula of this moral device. If this were true, human life might indeed settle down into a very symmetrical system of a harmoniously moral egoism and a mercantile traffic in goodness that might seem fair and beautiful enough to those who are afflicted with that kind of moral aesthesis. Happily for the upward progress of the human soul, the rule breaks down in practice, the world-spirit having greater ends before it and a greater law to realise." (410)

"Actually in the cosmic dispensation evil comes out of good and good out of evil and there seems to be no exact correspondence between the moral and the vital measures. All that we can say is that good done tends to increase the sum and total power of good in the world and the greater this grows the greater is likely to be the sum of human happiness and that evil done tends to increase the sum and total power of evil in the world and the greater this grows, the greater is likely to be the sum of human suffering and, eventually, man or nation doing evil has in some way to pay for it, but not often in any intelligibly graded or apportioned measure and not always in clearly translating terms of vital good fortune and ill fortune.

In short, what we may call the transitional lines of Karma

exist and have to be taken into account in our view of the action of the world forces. But they are not and cannot be the whole law of Karma. And they cannot be that because they are transitional, because good and evil are moral and not vital values and have a clear right only to a moral and not a vital return, because reward and punishment put forward as the conditions of good doing and evil doing do not constitute and cannot create a really moral order, the principle itself, whatever temporary end it serves, being fundamentally immoral from the higher point of view of a true and pure ethics, and because there are other forces that count and have their right, – knowledge, power and many others." (411-412)

*d. The Higher Lines of Karma**

(i) The Unveiling of the Higher Law of Karma in the Movement of Energy

"…all law of Karma, really and ultimately, if at first covertly, is for man, a law of his spiritual evolution. The true return to the act of virtue, to the ethically right output of his energy – his reward, if you will, and the sole recompense on which he has a right to insist, – is its return upon him in a growth of the moral strength within him, an upbuilding of his ethical being, a flowering of the soul of right, justice, love, compassion, purity, truth, strength, courage, self-giving that he seeks to be. The true return to the act of evil, to the ethically wrong output of energy – his punishment, if you will, and the sole penalty he has any need or right to fear, – is its return upon him in a retardation of the growth, a demolition of the upbuilding, an obscuration, tarnishing, impoverishing of the soul, of the pure, strong and luminous being that he is striving

to be. An inner happiness he may gain by his act, the calm, peace, satisfaction of the soul fulfilled in right, or an inner calamity, the suffering, disturbance, unease and malady of its descent or failure, but he can demand from God or moral Law no other. The ethical soul, – not the counterfeit but the real, – accepts the pains and sufferings and difficulties and fierce intimidations of life, not as a punishment for its sins, but as an opportunity and trial, an opportunity for its growth, a trial of its built or native strength, and good fortune and all outer success not as a coveted reward of virtue, but as an opportunity also and an even greater more difficult trial. What to this high seeker of Right can mean the vital law of Karma or what can its gods do to him that he can fear or long for? The ethical-vitalistic explanation of the world and its meaning and measures has for such a soul, for man at this height of his evolution no significance. He has travelled beyond the jurisdiction of the Powers of the middle air, the head of his spirit's endeavour is lifted above the dull grey-white belt that is their empire." (418-419)

"There can be no greater error than to suppose, misled by this absolute insistence of the ethical being, that the ethical is the single or the supreme demand of the Infinite upon us or the one law and line of the higher Karma, and that in comparison with it nothing else matters." (419)

"The Indian thinkers had a wiser sight who while conceding right ethical being and conduct as a first need, still considered knowledge to be the greater ultimate demand, the indispensable condition, and much nearer to a full seeing came that larger experience of theirs that either through an urge towards absolute knowledge or a pure impersonality of the

will or an ecstasy of divine love and absolute delight, – and even through an absorbing concentration of the psychical and the vital and physical being, – the soul turns towards the Supreme and that on each part of our self and nature and consciousness there can come a call and irresistible attraction of the Divine." (419-420)

(ii) The Highest Law of Our Nature

"The higher mind of man seeks not only after good, but after truth, after knowledge." (421)

"Action is a means, but knowledge is the sign and the growth of the conscious soul is the purpose. Man's use of the intelligence for the pursuit of knowledge is therefore that which distinguishes him most from other beings and gives him his high peculiar place in the scale of existence. His passion for knowledge, first world-knowledge, but afterwards self-knowledge and that in which both meet and find their common secret, God-knowledge, is the central drift of his ideal mind and a greater imperative of his being than that of action, though later in laying its complete hold on him, greater in the wideness of its reach and greater too in its effectiveness upon action, in the returns of the world energy to his power of the truth within him." (423)

e. Appendix: The Tangle of Karma*

"OBVIOUSLY we must leave far behind us the current theory of Karma and its shallow attempt to justify the ways of the Cosmic Spirit by forcing on them a crude identity with the summary notions of law and justice, the crude and often savagely primitive methods of reward and punishment, lure and deterrent dear to the surface human mind. There is here a

more authentic and spiritual truth at the base of Nature's action and a far less mechanically calculable movement. Here is no rigid and narrow ethical law bound down to a petty human significance, no teaching of a child soul by a mixed system of blows and lollipops, no unprofitable wheel of a brutal cosmic justice automatically moved in the traces of man's ignorant judgments and earthy desires and instincts. Life and rebirth do not follow these artificial constructions, but a movement spiritual and intimate to the deepest intention of Nature. A cosmic Will and Wisdom observant of the ascending march of the soul's consciousness and experience as it emerges out of subconscient Matter and climbs to its own luminous divinity fixes the norm and constantly enlarges the lines of the law – or, let us say, since law is a too mechanical conception, – the truth of Karma." (427)

"..this force we call Karma turns out to be no such precise and invariable mechanism as we hoped; it is rather a thing of many planes that changes its face and walk and very substance as it mounts from level to higher level, and on each plane even it is not one movement but an indefinite complex of many spiral movements hard enough for us to harmonise together or to find out whatever secret harmony unknown to us and incalculable these complexities are weaving out in this mighty field of the dealings of the soul with Nature.

Let us then call Karma no longer a Law, but rather them any sided dynamic truth of all action and life, the organic movement here of the Infinite. That was what the ancient thinkers saw in it before it was cut and shredded by lesser minds and turned into an easy and misleading popular formula." (428)

"The secret reason of man's failure to rise truly beyond himself is a fundamental incapacity in the mind, the life and the body to organise the highest integral truth and power of the spirit. And this incapacity exists because mind and life and matter are in their nature depressed and imperfect powers of the Infinite that need to be transformed into something greater than themselves before they can escape from their depression and imperfection; in their very nature they are a system of partial and separated values and cannot adequately express or embody the integral and the one, a movement of many divergent and mutually non-understanding or misunderstanding lines they cannot arrive of themselves at any but a provisional, limited and imperfect harmony and order. There is no doubt a material Infinite, a vital Infinite, a mental Infinite in which we feel a perfection, a delight, an essential harmony, an inexpressible completeness which, when we experience it, makes us disregard the discords and imperfections and obscurities we see and even perceive them as elements of the infinite perfection. In other words the Spirit, the Infinite supports these depressed values and elicits from them a certain joy of his manifestation that is complete and illimitable enough in its own manner. But there is more behind and above, there are greater more unmistakably harmonious values, greater truly perfect powers of the Spirit than mind, life and matter and these wait for their expression and only when they are expressed can we escape from this system of harmony through discords and of a perfection on the whole that subsists by imperfection in the detail." (431-432)

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