The Real Awakener

The Light of Lights

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Isha Upanishad – The Scripture of the Karmayogin

"To clothe all things with the Supreme, to be conscious of Him in all you say, do, think, feel or are sensible of, – this experience is the beginning of Karmayoga. The transformation of this experience into the habitual condition of the soul, is the consummation of Karmayoga; for it leads straight to the knowledge of Brahman and the ecstasy of union with Him, Karma melting into and becoming one with Jnana and Bhakti. Karma, Bhakti, Jnana, – Action, Love, Knowledge, are the three paths which lead out of phenomenal existence to the eternal reality, and where the three meet & become one, is the end of the great journey, that highest home of Vishnu towards which it is the one object of the Upanishad to turn and guide us. The Isha Upanishad is the Scripture of the Karmayogin; of the three paths it teaches the way of Action, and therefore begins with this first indispensable condition of all Godward action, to see all things, creatures, causes, effects, changes & evolutions as so many transitory phenomena enveloped with the presence of the Supreme Being and existing in Him and by Him only. Not I but He, for He is my real self and what I call I is only so much covering and semblance, – this is Vedanta; the first feeling of this truth is the beginning of Jnana, the beginning of Bhakti, the beginning of Karma. सोऽहं. He is the true & only I." (CWSA 17: 174)

Selections from the Isha Upanishad (CWSA 17)

1. The Upanishads

"The Upanishad sets forth by pronouncing as the indispensable basis of its revelations the universal nature of God. This universal nature of Brahman the Eternal is the beginning and end of the Vedanta and if it is not accepted, nothing the Vedanta says can have any value, as all its propositions either proceed from it or at least presuppose it; deprived of this central and highest truth, the Upanishads become what Mleccha scholars & philosophers think them to be, – a mass of incoherent though often sublime speculations; with this truth in your hand as a lamp to shed light on all the obscurest sayings of the Scriptures, you soon come to realise that the Upanishads are a grand harmonious and perfectly luminous whole, expressing in its various aspects the single and universal Truth; for under the myriad contradictions of phenomena (prapancha) there is one Truth and one only. All the Smritis, the Puranas, the Darshanas, the Dharmashastras, the writings of Shaktas, Shaivas, Vaishnavas, Sauras, as well as the whole of Buddhism and its Scriptures are merely so many explanations, comments and interpretations from different sides, of these various aspects of the one and only Truth. This Truth is the sole foundation on which all religions can rest as on a sure and impregnable rock; – and more than a rock, for a rock may perish but this endures for ever. Therefore is the religion of the Aryas called the Sanatana Dharma, the Law Sempiternal. Nor are the Hindus in error when they declare the Sruti to be eternal and without beginning and the Rishis who composed the hymns to be only the witnesses who saw the truth and put it in human language; for this seeing was not mental sight, but spiritual. Therefore the Vedas are justly called Sruti or revelation. Of these the Rig, Yajur, Sama & Atharvan are the fertilising rain which gave the plant of the Truth nourishment and made it grow, the Brahmanas are the

forest in which the plant is found, the Aranyakas are the soil in which it grows, the Upanishads are the plant itself, roots, stalk, leaves, calix and petals, and the flower which manifests itself once and for ever is the great saying SO AHAM – I AM HE which is the culmination of the Upanishads. Salutation to the SO AHAM. Salutation to the Eternal who is without place, time, cause or limit, Salutation to my Self who am the Eternal." (101-02)

2. The Ishavasyopanishad

a. The Nature of the Material World

"… *jagati*, she who moves, is an old name for Earth, Prithivi, and afterwards for the whole *wide* universe, of which the Earth with which alone we human beings are at present concerned, is the type. Why then is the universe called *jagati*, she that moveth? Because it is a form of Prakriti whose essential characteristic is motion; for by motion she creates this material world, and indeed all object-matter is only a form, that is to say a visible, audible or sensible result of motion; every material object is *jagat*, full of infinite motion, – even the stone, even the clod. This material world, our senses tell us, is the only existing reality; but the Upanishad warns us against the false evidence of our senses and bids us realise in our hearts and minds Brahman the Ocean of spiritual force, drawing him in our imaginations like a robe round each sensible thing." (105-06)

b. We Must Do Our Deeds in the World

"Verily we must *do* our deeds in the world and not avoid doing them; there is no need to flee to the mountains in order to find the Self, since He is here, in you and in all around you. And if you flee there, not to find Him, but to escape from the misery & misfortune of the world which you are too weak to face, then you lose the Self for this life and perhaps many to come. I repeat to you that it is not the weak and the coward

who can climb up to God, but the strong and brave alone. Every individual Jivatman must become the perfect Kshatriya before he can be the Brahmin." (110)

c. The True Sannyasins are the Most Mighty for the Works of God

"… sometimes when men have tried in ignorance for ignoble things and failed, not from weakness but because these things were beneath their true greatness and high destiny, then their eyes are opened and they seek meditation, solitude and samadhi not as a dram to drown their sorrow and still unsated longing, but to realise their divine strength and use it for divine purposes; sometimes great spirits seek the way of the Sannyasin, because in the solitude alone with God and the Guru, they can best develop Brahmatejah. Once attained they pour it in a stream over the world; such was Shankaracharya; and sometimes it is the sorrow of others or the misery of the world that finds them in ease & felicity & drives them out, as Buddha was driven out, to seek help for sufferers in the depths of their own being. True Sannyasins are the greatest of all men because they are the strongest unto work, the most mighty in God to do the works of God." (111-12)

d. The Brahman – The Mystery of the World

"… the One who, regarded in his creative activity through Purusha & Prakriti, is called the Lord. Therefore it now uses the neuter form of the pronoun, speaking of Him as That and This; because Brahman is above sex & distinction. He is One, yet he is at once unmoving & swifter than mind. He is both Purusha & Prakriti, and yet at the same time He is neither, but One and indivisible; Purusha & Prakriti being merely conceptions in His mind deliberately raised for the sake of creating multiplicity. As Prakriti, He is swifter than the mind; for Prakriti is His creative force making matter & its forms through motion. All creation is motion, all activity is motion. All this apparently stable universe is really in a state

of multifold motion, everything is whirling with inconceivable rapidity through motion, and even thought which is the swiftest thing we know, cannot keep pace with the velocity of the cosmic stir. And all this motion, all this ever evolving Cosmos & Universe is Brahman. The Gods in their swiftest movements, the lords of the senses, cannot reach him, for He rushes far in front. The eye, the ear, the mind, nothing material can reach or conceive the inconceivable creative activity of the Brahman. We try to follow Him pouring as light through the solar system and lo! while we are striving He is whirling universes into being far beyond the reach of eye or telescope, far beyond the farthest flights of thought itself. Material senses quail before the thought of the wondrous stir and stupendous unimaginable activity that the existence of the Universe implies. And yet all the time He who outstrips all others, is not running, but standing. While we are toiling after Him, He is all the time here, at our side, before, behind us, with us, *in* us. Really He does not move at all; all this motion is the result of our own Avidya which by persuading us to imagine ourselves as limited, subjects our thoughts to the conditions of Time & Space. Brahman in all his creative activity is really in one place; He is at the same time in the Sun & here; but we in order to realise Him have to follow Him from the Sun to the Earth; and this motion of our thoughts, this sensitory impression of a space covered & a time spent we attribute not to our thought, but to Brahman, just as a man in a railway-train has a sensitory impression that everything is rushing past, but that the train is still. Vidya, Knowledge tells him that this is not so. So that the stir of the Cosmos is really the stir of our own minds – and yet even our own mind does not really stir. What we call mind is simply the play of conception sporting with the idea of multiplicity which is in form the idea of motion. The Purusha is really unmoving; he is the motionless & silent spectator of a drama of which He himself is the stage, the theatre, the scenery, the actors and the acting. He is the poet Shakespeare watching Desdemona &

Othello, Hamlet & the murderous Uncle, Rosalind & Jacques & Viola and all the other hundred multiplicities of himself acting & talking & rejoicing & suffering, all Himself & yet not himself, who sits there a silent witness, their Creator who has no part in their actions and yet without Him not one of them could exist. This is the mystery of the world and its paradox, yet its one plain, simple & easy truth." (124-25)

e. Human Tyranny over Birds, Beasts and Insects

"… if an united humanity tyrannise over bird & beast & insect, the atmosphere of pain, hatred & fear breathing up from the lower creation will infect & soil the purity of the upper. The law of Karma is inexorable, and whatever you deal out to others, even such shall be the effect on yourself, in this life or in another." (143)

f. The Truth Behind Doing Good and the True Truth

"… the whole life of Srikrishna was a busy working for the good of others, of his friends, his country and the world, and Srikrishna never knew grief or pain. But there are three kinds of pleasure to be had from charity and beneficence; there is the satisfaction of vanity, the vanity of hearing oneself praised, the vanity of feeling "How very good I am." This, I think, is at the bottom of much charity in India and more in Europe, and it is here that hedonism comes most into play, but it is a poor spring and will break down under any strain; it may lead to charity but never to self-sacrifice. Then there is the joy of having done a good work and brought oneself nearer to heaven which used to be and perhaps still is the most common incentive to beneficence in Aryaland. That is a more powerful spring, but it is narrow and does not reach the true self; its best value is that it is helpful towards purification. Then there are the natures born for love & unselfishness who in the mere joy of helping others, of suffering for others, of seeing the joy return to tear-worn faces & paindimmed eyes, feel the bliss that comes from the upsurging of God within.

To these hedonism is as vanity and the babbling of children. The hedonistic element in utilitarianism is an imperfect & blundering effort to grope for a great truth which it has neither been able to grasp itself nor set forth with scientific accuracy. That truth is found only in the clear & luminous teaching of the Vedanta; it is this, that the compound result we call man is a compound result and not the single simple homogeneous being our senses would believe; he is composed of several elements, corporeal, vital, mental, intellectual and essential; and his true self is none of these heterogeneous factors of the element the Self lives in, but something beyond & transcendent." (149-50)

g. Utilitarianism

"Emotional pleasure is higher than corporeal, aesthetic than emotional, intellectual than aesthetic, ethical than intellectual, spiritual than ethical. This is the whole truth and the whole philosophy of ethics; all else is practical arrangement and balancing of forces, economising of energies for the purposes of social stability or some other important but impermanent end.

Utilitarianism gets a partial & confused view of the truth and being unable properly to correlate it, groping about for some law, some standard and principle of order, thinks it has found it in utility. But what utility? I, this perfected animal, with desires, thoughts, sensations and a pressing need for their gratification, can very well understand what is personal utility; utility for this vital, sensational, conceptual me. My utility is to get as much sensual, emotional & intellectual gratification as I may out of life consistent with my own ease & safety; if utility is to be my standard of ethics, that is my ethics. But when you ask me in the name of utility & rationalism to sacrifice these things for some higher or wider utility, for others, for the greater number, for society, I no longer follow you. So much as is necessary to keep up government, law & order and a good police, I can understand, for these things are necessary

to my safety & comfort; society has given me these & I must see to & pay for their maintenance by myself & others. That is businesslike, both utilitarian & rational. But beyond this society has not any claim on me; society exists for me, not I for society. If then I have to sacrifice what I perhaps most deeply cherish for society, my life, my goods, my domestic peace, my use for society ceases; I regard society then as a fraudulent depositor who wishes to draw from my ethical bank more than he has deposited. So might argue the average man who is neither immoral nor deeply moral but only respectable; and utilitarianism can give him no satisfactory answer." (151-52)

h. Why India Still Lives?

"All the old nations perished because in the pride of intellect they abandoned their *dharma*, their religion. India, China still live. What was the force that enabled India beaten down & trampled by mailed fist & iron hoof ever to survive immortally, ever to resist, ever to crush down the conqueror of the hour at last beneath her gigantic foot, ever to raise her mighty head again to the stars? It is because she never lost hold of religion, never gave up her faith in the spirit. Therefore the promise of Srikrishna ever holds good; therefore the Adyashakti, the mighty Chandi, ever descends when the people turn to her and tramples the Asura to pieces. Times change and a new kind of outer power rules over India in place of the Asuras of the East. But woe to India if she cast from her her eternal *dharma*. The fate of the old nations shall then overtake her, her name shall be cast out from the list of nations and her peoples become a memory and a legend upon the earth. Let her keep true to her Self, and the *Atmashakti*, the eternal Force of the Self shall again strengthen & raise her." (159)

i. The Two Cardinal Errors of Science

"Modern Science has engaged itself deeply in two cardinal errors; it has built out of the Law of Causation a new and more inexorable fate than Greek or Hindu or Arab ever

imagined. Engrossed with this predestination, Science has come to believe that the human will is a mere servant, nay, a mere creation of eternal inanimate forces. Science is mistaken & unless it widen its view it may easily be convinced of its mistake in a very ugly fashion before long. The Will is mightier than any law, fate or force. The Will is eternal, omnipotent, it has created the law of causation and governs it; it has made the laws of matter and it can override them; it is itself all the forces which seem to govern and bind it. There is no compulsion on the human will to evolve towards progression; if it chooses to regress, back it will go and all the world reeling and shrieking with it into barbarism and chaos; if it chooses to go forward, no force can stop it. The other mistake Science has made, it borrows from Christianity; it is that action and emotion can be directed towards beings distinct from oneself; all action and emotion are for the self, in the self. But if Science teaches men to regard themselves as distinct and purely corporeal beings, with no connection with others except such as may be created by physical contact and the communication of the senses, it is obvious that the human Will under the obsession of this belief, will inevitably shape its action & thought in accordance passing over the more shadowy moral generalities of evolutionary theorists or play with them only as intellectual marbles. And that spells in the end a colossal selfishness, an increasing sensuality, lust of power, riches, comfort & dominion, a monstrous & egoistic brutality like that of a hundred-armed Titan wielding all the arms of the Gods in those hundred hands. If man believes himself to be an animal he will act like an animal & exalt the animal impulse into his guide. That Europe does not approach more swiftly to this condition is due to the obstinate refusal of Jnana, Religion, true enlightenment, maimed & wounded tho' it be, to perish and make an end; it will not allow the human Will to believe that it is no more than nerve & flesh & body, animal & transitory. It persists & takes a hundred forms to elude the pursuit of materialistic Science, calling

upon the Eternal Mother to come down and save; and surely before long she shall come. All bases of morality which do not go back to the original divine and sempiternal nature of man, must be erroneous and fleeting. Not from the instincts & customs of the ape & savage did the glories of religion & virtue arise, – they are the perennial light of the concealed godhead revealing themselves ever with clearer lines, with floods of more beautiful rainbow lustre, to culminate at last in the pure white light of the supreme realisation, when all creatures have become our Self and our Self realises its own Unity." (159-61)

j. The Law and the Gospel

"Remember that, though you cry out to the Heavens for help in your misery, it is not the blue sky that hears, it is nothing outside you that comes to save, but He within you alone can protect. Art thou oppressed, O man, by ogre & giant, by fiend & foeman? Seek His mighty Shakti, Bhavani Mahishamardini, in yourself and She will externalize armed with sword & trident to crush the triumphing Asura. This is the law & the gospel. The Poet, the Thinker, the Pervading Presence, these three are the Swayambhu, the eternal Self-born who is born by HimSelf out of HimSelf into HimSelf." (164-65)

3. The Idolatry of the Hindus

"The Hindu is no idolater; he does not worship stocks or stones, the tree as tree or the stone as stone or the idol as a material thing, but he worships the presence of the Lord which fills & surrounds the tree, stone or idol, and of which the tree, stone or idol is merely a manifestation or seeming receptacle. We say for the convenience of language and mental realization that God is in His creature, but really it is the creature who is in God, न त्वहं तेषु ते मयि. "I am not in them, they are in Me." (178)

4. The Nature of the Universe

"Our senses tell us that the material world is the only

reality, the only steadfast thing of whose rule and order we can be sure and by which we can abide; but our senses are in error and the Upanishad warns us against their false evidence. The material world is a transitory and changing whirl of motion on the surface of Brahman, the great ocean of spiritual existence, who alone is, in His depths, eternal, real and steadfast. It is He who as the Lord gives order, rule and abidingness to the infinite motion we call the Universe; and if we wish to be in touch with reality, we must train our souls to become aware of His presence sustaining, pervading and surrounding this moving Prakriti and every objective form to which her varying rates of vibration have given rise. Thus placed in constant touch with reality, the Karmayogin will escape from the false shows and illusions of Prakriti; Karma or action which also is merely her motion, energy at work, will not master him and drive him as a storm drives a ship, but he will rather be the master of action, both his own and that of others. For it is only by understanding practically the reality of a thing and its law of working that one can become its master and make use of it for his own purposes." (180)

5. The Truths of the Vedanta

"The Self is in the microcosm what Sacchidananda is in the macrocosm; it is the great pure luminous existence, self-conscious and self-blissful, which acts not, neither desires, but watches the infinite play of Prakriti in the life of the creature It informs. And just as by the power of Avidya Sacchidananda takes the semblance of a mighty Will or Force, Isha, creating endless multiplicity and governing, guiding and rejoicing in the interplay of worlds, so by the same power this Self or Witness in Man takes the semblance of a sublime Will creating for itself action and inaction, pleasure & pain, joy & sorrow, victory & defeat, guiding, governing & rejoicing in the activity of the apparent creature it informs, but unaffected and unbound by his works. This Will, which the Vedanta calls Ananda or Bliss and not will, must not be confused with

mere volition or desire, for volition belongs to the outer & apparent man and not to the inner and real. This Self is in me, it is also in you and every other being and in all it is the same Self, only the Will or Shakti manifests in different degrees, with a different intensity and manner of working and so with different qualities & actions in each separate creature. Hence the appearance of diversity and divisibility in what is really One and indivisible.

This divisibility of the Indivisible is one of those profound paradoxes of Vedantic thought which increasing Knowledge will show to be deep and far-reaching truths. It used to be implicitly believed that human personality was a single and indivisible thing; yet recently a school of psychologists has grown up who consider man as a bundle of various personalities rather than a single, homogeneous and indivisible consciousness. For it has been found that a single man can divide himself or be divided into several personalities, each living its own life and unconscious of the other, while yet again another personality may emerge in him which is conscious of the others and yet separate from all of them. This is true; nevertheless, the *man* all through remains one and the same, not only in body but in his psychical existence; for there is a deeper substratum in him which underlies all these divided personalities and is wider than all of them put together. The truth is that the waking personality is only the apparent man, not the real. Personality is the creation of memory, for memory is its basis and pedestal. If the pedestal, then, be divided and put apart, the superstructure also must be in the same act divided and put apart. But the waking memory is only a part, a selection of a wider latent memory which has faithfully recorded all that happens not in the man's present life only, but in all his past. The personality which corresponds with this latent unerring memory is the true personality of the man; it is his soul, one infinite and indivisible, and its apparent divisions are merely the result of Avidya, false knowledge, due to defective action of the waking memory. So the apparent division of the divine

Self into many human selves, of the indivisible Paramatman into many Jivatmans, is simply the result of Avidya due to the action of the Maya or self-imposed illusion of Isha, the great Force who has willed that the One by this force of Maya should become phenomenally manifold. In reality, there is no division and the Self in me is the same as the Self in you and the same as the Self up yonder in the Sun. The unity of spiritual existence is the basis of all true religion and true morality. We know indeed that as God is not contained in His universe, but the universe is in Him, so also God is not contained within a man. When the Sruti says elsewhere that the Purusha lies hidden in the heart of our being and is no larger than the size of a man's thumb, it simply means that to the mind of man under the dominion of Avidya his body, vitality, mind, reason bulk so largely, the Spirit seems a small and indistinguishable thing indeed inside so many and bulky sheaths and coverings. But in reality, it is body, vitality, mind & reason forming the apparent man that are small and trifling and it is the Spirit or real man that is large, grandiose & mighty. The apparent man exists in & by the real, not the real in the apparent; the body is in the soul, not the soul in the body. Yet for the convenience of language and our finite understanding we are compelled to say that the soul is in the body and that God is within the man; for that is how it naturally presents itself to us who use the mental standpoint and the language of a finite intelligence. The Lord, from our standpoint, is within all His creatures and He is the real self of all His creatures. My self and yourself are not really two but one." (181-83)

6. The Nature of the True Unselfishness

"I have not yet ascended the ladder, but am still climbing. I have not yet acquired the habitual consciousness of the presence of the Lord surrounding all things as the only reality for whose sake alone transitory phenomena are precious or desirable. How in this imperfect stage of development can the Karmayogin escape from covetousness and the desire for other

men's possessions? By realising more & more the supreme bliss of a selfless habit of mind and selfless work. This is the way to his goal; this is his ladder. Unselfishness is usually imagined as the abnegation of self, a painful duty, a "mortification", something negative, irksome and arduous. That is a Western attitude, not Hindu; the European temperament is dominated by the body and the vital impulses; it undertakes altruism as a duty, a law imposed from outside, a standard of conduct and discipline; it is, in this light, something contrary to man's nature, something against which the whole man is disposed to rebel. That is not the right way to look at it. Unselfishness is not something outside the nature, but in the nature, not negative but positive, not a self-mortification and abnegation but a self-enlargement and self-fulfilment; not a law of duty but a law of self-development, not painful, but pleasurable. It is in the nature, only latent, and has to be evolved from inside, not tacked on from outside. The lion's whelp in the fable who was brought up among sheep, shrank from flesh when it was placed before him, but once he had eaten of it, the lion's instincts awoke and the habits of the sheep had no more delight for him. So it is with man. Selflessness is his true nature, but the gratification of the body and the vital impulses has become his habit, his second or false nature, because he has been accustomed to identify his body & vital impulses with himself. He, a lion, has been brought up to think himself a sheep; he, a god, has been trained to be an animal. But let him once get the taste of his true food, and the divinity in him awakes; the habits of the animal can please him no longer and he hungers after selflessness and selfless work as a lion hungers after his natural food. Only the feeling has to be evolved as a fulfilment of his nature, not painfully worked up to as a contravention of his nature. The man who regards selflessness as a duty, has not yet learned the alphabet of true altruism; it is the man who feels it as a delight and a natural craving, who has taken the right way to learn. The Hindu outlook here is the true outlook. The Hindu does not call the man who

has risen above the gratification of desire a selfless man; he calls him आत्मवान्, the self-ful man; that man is अनात्मवान्, that man has not found himself who still clings to the gratification of his body & vital impulses. Read that great drama of self-sacrifice, the Nagananda, and you will feel how different is the Hindu outlook from the Western; there self-sacrifice is not a painful and terrible struggle but a glorious outpouring of the nature, a passionate delight. "It is only human nature," we say indulgently of any act of selfishness. But that is an error and thrice an error. It is not human nature, but animal nature; human nature is divine & selfless and the average selfish man is selfish not because of his humanity, but because his humanity is as yet undeveloped & imperfect. Christ, Buddha, these are the perfect men; Tom, Dick & Harry are merely animals slowly shaping into men." (184-86)

7. The Law of Death

"When a man dies in great pain or in great grief or in fierce agitation of mind and his last thoughts are full of fear, rage, pain or horror, then the Jivatman in the Sukshmasharir is unable to shake off these impressions from his mind for years, perhaps for centuries. So it is with the suicide; he sinks into this condition because of the feelings of disgust, impatience and pain or rage & fear which govern his last moments; for suicide is not the passionless & divine departure at his appointed time of the Yogin centred in samadhi, but a passionate and disgustful departure; and where there is disturbance or bitterness of the soul in its departure, there can be no tranquillity & sweetness in the state to which it departs. This is the law of death; death is a moment of intense concentration when the departing spirit gathers up the impressions of its mortal life as a host gathers provender for its journey, and whatever impressions are dominant at the moment, govern its condition afterwards.

यं यं वापि स्मरन्भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेवरम् ।

तं तमेवैति कौन्तेय सदा तद्भावभावितः ॥

"Or indeed whatever (collective) impressions of mind one remembering leaveth his body at the last, to that state and no other it goeth, O son of Kunti, and is continually under the impress of those impressions." Hence the importance, even apart from Mukti, of living a clean and noble life and dying a calm and strong death. For if the ideas and impressions then uppermost are such as to associate the self with this gross body and the vital functions or the base, vile & low desires of the mind, then the soul remains long in a *tamasic* condition of darkness and suffering which we call Patala or in its acute forms Hell. If the ideas and impressions uppermost are such as to associate the self with the higher desires of the mind, then the soul passes quickly to a rajasic condition of light & pleasure which we call Swarga, Behesta or Paradise and from which it will return to the state of mortality in the body. If the ideas and impressions uppermost are such as to associate the self with the higher understanding and bliss of the Self, the soul passes quickly to a condition of highest bliss which we call variously Kailas, Vaikuntha, Goloka or Brahmaloka, from which it does not return in this aeon of the universe. But if we have learned to identify for ever the self with the Self, then before death we become the Eternal and after death we shall not be other. There are three states of Maya, tamasic illusion, rajasic illusion, sattwic illusion, and each in succession we must surmount before we reach utterly that which is no illusion but the one eternal truth and, leaving our body in the state of Samadhi, rise into the unrevealed & imperishable bliss of which the Lord has said, "That is my highest seat of all." (213-15)

8. The Root of Ethical Ideals

"Everything that has phenomenal existence, takes its stand on the Eternal and has reality only as a reflection in the pure mirror of His infinite existence. This is no less true of the affections of mind and heart and the formations of thought than of the affections of matter and the formations of the

physical ether-stuff out of which this material Universe is made. Every ethical ideal and every religious ideal must therefore depend for its truth and permanence on its philosophical foundation; in other words, on the closeness of its fundamental idea to the ultimate truth of the Eternal. If the ideal implies a reading of the Eternal which is only distantly true and confuses Him with His physical or psychical manifestations in this world, then it is a relatively false and impermanent ideal. Of all the ancient nations the Hindus, for this reason only, attained to the highest idea and noblest practice of morality. The Greeks confused the Eternal with His physical manifestations and realised Him in them on the side of beauty; beauty therefore was the only law of morality which governed their civilization. Ethics in their eyes was a matter of taste, balance and proportion; it hinged on the avoidance of excess in any direction, of excessive virtue no less than of excessive vice. The fine development of personality under the inspiration of music and through the graceful play of intellect was the essential characteristic of their education; justice, in the sense of a fine balance between one's obligations to oneself and one's obligations to others, the ideal of their polity; decorum, the basis of their public morality; the sense of proportion the one law of restraint in their private ethics. Their idea of deity was confined to the beautiful and brilliant rabble of their Olympus. Hence the charm and versatility of Greek civilisation; hence also its impermanence as a separate culture. The Romans also confused the Eternal with His manifestations in physical Nature, but they read Him on the side not of beauty but of force governed by law; the stern and orderly restraint which governs the Universe, was the feature in Nature's economy which ruled their thought. Jupiter was to them the Governor & great Legislator whose decrees were binding on all; the very meaning of the word religion which they have left to the European world was "binding back" and indicated as the essence of religion restraint and tying down to things fixed and decreed. Their ethics were full of a lofty

strength & sternness. Discipline stood as the keystone of their system; discipline of the actions created an inelastic faithfulness to domestic & public duties; discipline of the animal impulses an orderly courage and a cold, hard purity; discipline of the mind a conservative practical type of intellect very favourable to the creation of a powerful and well ordered State but not to the development of a manysided civilization. Their type too, though more long lived than the Greek, could not last, because of the imperfection of the ideal on which it was based.[1] The Chinese seem to have envisaged the Eternal in a higher aspect than these Mediterranean races; they found Him not in the manifested physical Universe itself, but in its origination and arrangement out of the primal material from which it arose. Heaven, Akasha or the Eternal in the element of Ether, creates in the womb of Earth or formal Matter which is the final element developed out of Ether, this arranged and orderly Universe, – He is therefore the Father, Originator, Disposer and Arranger. Veneration for parents and those who stand in the place of parents became the governing idea of their ethics; orderly disposition, the nice care of ceremony, manners, duties the law of their daily life; origination and organization the main characteristics of their intellectual activity. The permanence and unconquerable vitality of their civilization is due to their having seized on an interpretation of the Eternal which, though not His ultimate truth to humanity, is at least close to that truth and a large aspect of it. It is really Himself in his relation to the Universe, but not the whole of Himself. But the ancient Aryans of India raised the veil completely and saw Him as the Universal Transcendent Self of all things who is at the same time the particular present Self in each. They reached His singleness aloof from phenomena, they saw Him in every one of His million manifestations in phenomena. God in Himself, God in man, God in Nature were the "ideas" which their life expressed. Their civilisation was therefore more manysided and complete and their ethical and intellectual ideals more perfect and permanent than those of any other

nation. They had in full measure the sense of filial duty, the careful regulation of ceremony, manners and duties, the characteristics of origination and organization which distinguished the Chinese. They had in full measure the Roman discipline, courage, purity, faithfulness to duty, careful conservatism; but these elements of character & culture which in the Roman were hard, cold, narrow and without any touch of the spirit in man or the sense of his divine individuality, the Hindus warmed & softened with emotional & spiritual meaning and made broad and elastic by accepting the supreme importance of the soul's individual life as overriding and governing the firm organization of morals and society. They were not purely devoted to the worship and culture of beauty like the Greeks and their art was not perfect, yet they had the sense of beauty & art in a greater degree than any other ancient people; unlike the Greeks they had a perfect sense of spiritual beauty and were therefore able to realise the delight & glory of Nature hundreds of years before the sense of it developed in Europe. On the ethical side they had a finer justice than the Greeks, a more noble public decorum, a keener sense of ethical & social balance, but they would not limit the infinite capacities of the soul; they gave play therefore to personal individuality but restrained and ordered its merely lawless ebullitions by the law of the type (caste). In addition to these various elements which they shared with one civilization or another they possessed a higher spiritual ideal which governed & overrode the mere ethics (*mores* or customary morality) which the other nations had developed. Humanity, pity, chivalry, unselfishness, philanthropy, love of and self-sacrifice for all living things, the sense of the divinity in man, the Christian virtues, the modern virtues were fully developed in India at a time when in all the rest of the world they were either non-existent or existent only in the most feeble beginnings. And they were developed, because the Aryan Rishis had been able to discover the truth of the Eternal and give to the nation the vision of the Eternal in all things

and the feeling of His presence in themselves and in all around them. They had discovered the truth that morality is not for its own sake, nor for the sake of society, but a preparation and purification of the soul by which the limited human self must become fit to raise itself out of the dark pit of bodily, mental and emotional selfishness into the clear heaven of universal love and benevolence and enlarge itself until it came into conscious contact, entered into and became one with the Supreme and Sempiternal Self. Some hold the aim of morality to be a placing of oneself in harmony with the eternal laws that govern the Universe, others hold it to be the fulfilment under self-rule and guidance of man's nature, others a natural evolution of man in the direction of his highest faculties. The Hindus perceived that it was all these at once but they discovered that the law with which the soul must put itself in relation was the law of the Eternal Self, that man's nature must seek its fulfilment in that which is permanent & eternal in the Universe and that it is to which his evolution moves. They discovered that his higher self was the Self of his Universe and that by a certain manner of action, by a certain spirit in action, man escaped from his limitations and realised his higher Self. This way of Works is Karmayoga and Karmayoga therefore depends on the Hindu conception of Brahman, the Transcendent Self and its relations to the Universe. From this all Hindu ethics proceeds." (218-22)

9. Evolution through Buddhi

"Will, through Buddhi, creating and operating on phenomena in subtle matter evolves Mind, which by reception of external impacts & impressions evolves sensation; by reaction to impressions received, evolves desire and activity; by retention of impressions with their reactions, evolves memory; by coordination of impressions & reactions memorized, evolves the sense of individuality; by individual arrangement of impressions and reactions with the aid of memory evolves understanding; and by the action of supra-intelligence on

developed mind evolves reason. Mind & Supra-intelligence with reason as an intermediate link are, spiritually, the Dream-State and operate absolutely and directly in the subtle body but indirectly, under limitations and as a governing and directing force in the gross body." (235)

10. Elemental Evolution

"When we speak of elements in English in a scientific sense, we always imply elemental *substances*, those substances which when analysed by chemical processes, cannot be resolved into substances simpler than themselves. But when Hindu philosophy speaks of the five elements, it is not dealing with substances at all but with elemental states or conditions of matter, which are not perceptible or analysable by chemical inquiry but underlie substances and forms as basic principles of material formation. The old thinkers accepted the atomic theory of the formation of objects and substances but they did not care to carry the theory farther and inquire by what particular combinations of atoms this or that substance came into being or by what variations and developments in detail bodies animate or inanimate came to be what they are. This did not seem to them to be an inquiry of the first importance; they were content with laying down some main principles of material evolution and there they left the matter. But they were anxious to resolve not substances into their original atoms but matter into its original condition and so discover its ultimate relations to the psychical and spiritual life of man. They saw that perpetual motion involving perpetual change was the fundamental characteristic of matter and that each new motion was attended by a new condition which stood to the immediately preceding condition in the relation of effect to cause or at least of a new birth to the matrix in which it had been enembryoed. Behind the solid condition of matter, they found a condition less dense which was at the basis of all fluid forms; behind the fluid condition, another still less dense which was at the basis of all igneous or luminous

forms; behind the igneous, yet another and finer which was at the basis of all aerial or gaseous forms; and last of all one finest and most pervasive condition of all which they called Akash or Ether. Ether was, they found, the primary substance out of which all this visible Universe is evolved and beyond ether they were unable to go without matter losing all the characteristics associated with it in the physical world and lapsing into a quite different substance of which the forms and motions were much more vague, subtle, elastic and volatile than any of which the physical world is aware. This new world of matter they called subtle matter and analysed the subtle as they had analysed the gross until by a similar procession from denser to subtler they came to a finest condition of all which they described as subtle ether. Out of this subtle ether a whole world of subtle forms and energies are evolved which constitute psychical existence. Beyond subtle ether matter lost its subtle characteristics and lapsed into a new kind which they could not analyse but which seemed to be the matrix out of which all material evolution proceeded. This they termed causal matter.

In the course of this analysis they could not help perceiving that consciousness in each world of matter assumed a different form and acted in a different way corresponding to the characteristics of the matter in which it moved. In its operations in gross matter the forms it assumed were more firm, solid and durable but at the same time more slow, difficult and hampered, just as are the motions and acts of a man in his waking state as compared with what he does in his dreams. In its operations in subtle matter the forms consciousness assumed were freer and more rapid, but more volatile, elastic & swiftly mutable, as are the motions and acts of a man in a dreaming state compared to the activities of his waking condition. To consciousness acting on gross matter they gave therefore the name of the Waking State, to consciousness acting on subtle matter the name of the Dream State. In causal matter they found that consciousness took the

shape merely of the pure sense of blissful existence; they could discover no other distinguishing sensation. This therefore they called the Sleep State. They farther discovered that the various faculties and functions of man belonged properly some to one, some to another of the three states of consciousness and its corresponding state of matter. His vital and physical functions operated only in gross matter, and they determined accordingly that his physical life was the result of consciousness working in the Waking State on gross matter. His mental and intuitional processes were found to operate freely and perfectly in subtle matter, but in gross matter with a hampered and imperfect activity; they considered therefore that man's mental life belonged properly to the Dream State and only worked indirectly and under serious limitations in the Waking State. They determined accordingly that mental life must be the result of Consciousness working in the Dream State on subtle matter. There remained the fundamental energy of consciousness, Will-to-be or shaping Delight of existence: this, they perceived, was free and pure in causal matter, but worked if consciously, yet through a medium and under limitations in subtle matter, in hampered & half effectual fashion when the subtle self acted through the gross and sub-consciously only in gross matter. They considered therefore that man's causal faculty or spiritual life belonged properly to the Sleep State and worked indirectly and through less & less easy mediums in the Dream and Waking States; and accordingly determined that it must be the result of Consciousness working in the Sleep State on causal matter. The whole of creation amounted therefore to a natural outcome from the mutual relations of Spirit and Matter; these two they regarded as two terms – call them forces, energies, substances, or what you will, – of phenomenal existence; and psychical life only as one result of their interaction. They refused however to accept any dualism in their cosmogony and, as has been pointed out, regarded Spirit and Matter as essentially one and their difference as no more than an apparent duality in one real entity. This one

entity is not analysable or intellectually knowable, yet it is alone the real, immutable and sempiternal Self of things.

It will be clear even from this brief and condensed statement of the Vedic analysis of existence that the elements of the Upanishad are not the elementary substances of modern chemistry but five general states of matter to which all its actual or substantial manifestations belong. It will also be clear that the names of the five elements have a conventional, not a literal value, but it may be as well to indicate why these particular names have been chosen. The first and original state of subtle matter is the pure ethereal of which the main characteristics are extreme tenuity and pervasiveness and the one sensible property, sound. Sound, according to the Vedic inquirers, is the first evolved property of material substance; it precedes form and has the power both to create it and to destroy it. Looking around them in the physical universe for a substance with these characteristics they found it in Akash or Vyom (sky), implying not our terrestrial atmosphere but that which is both beyond it and pervades it, – the fine pervasive connecting substance in which, as it were, the whole universe floats. They therefore gave this name, Akash, to the ethereal condition of matter.

The next matter-condition evolved from Ether and moving in it, was the pure aerial or gaseous. Here to pervasiveness was added a new potency of sensible and varied motion bringing with it, as increased complexity of motion necessarily must do, increased differentiation and complexity of substance. All the variety and evolutions of gaseous matter with their peculiar activities, functions and combinations have this second state or power of matter as their substratum; it is the basis also of that universal Prana or vital energy, starting from action, retention and reaction and culminating in organized consciousness, which we have seen to be so all-important an agent in the Vedic theory of the Cosmos. In this second power of matter a new property of material substance is evolved, touch or contact, which was not fully developed in pure ether owing

to its extreme tenuity and primary simplicity of substance. Seeking for a physical substance gaseous in nature, sensible by sound and contact, but without form and characterized chiefly by varied motion and an imperfect pervasiveness, the Rishis found it in Vayu, Wind or Air. Vayu, therefore, is the conventional term for the second condition of matter.

Evolved out of the pure gaseous state and moving in it is the third or pure igneous condition of matter, which is also called Tejah, light and heat energy. In the igneous stage pervasiveness becomes still less subtle, sensible motion no longer the paramount characteristic, but energy, especially formative energy, attains full development and creation and destruction, formation and new-formation are at last in readiness. In addition to sound and contact matter has now evolved a third property, form, which could not be developed in pure Air owing to its insufficient density and the elusive vagueness and volatility of gaseous manifestations. The third power of matter is at the basis of all phenomena of light and heat and Prana by its aid so develops that birth and growth now become possible; for light and heat are the necessary condition of animate life-development and in their absence we have the phenomenon of death or inert and inanimate existence: when the energy of light and heat departs from a man, says the Upanishad, then it is that Prana, the vital energy, retires into mind, his subtle or psychical part, and withdraws from the physical frame. The physical substance which seemed to the Rishis to typify the igneous state was fire; for it is sensible by sound, contact and form and, less pervasive than air, is distinguished by the utmost energy of light and heat. Fire therefore is the conventional or symbolic name of the third power of matter.

Next upon the igneous state follows the liquid or fluid, less pervasive, less freely motional or energetic, and distinguishingly marked by a kind of compromise between fixity and volatility. In this state matter evolves a fourth property, taste. The liquid state is the substratum of all fluid forms and activities, and in

its comparative fixity life-development finds its first possibility of a sufficiently stable medium. All life is gathered out of "the waters" and depends on the fluid principle within it for its very sustenance. Water as the most typical fluid, half-volatile, half-fixed, perceptible by sound, contact, form and taste, has given a symbolical name to the fourth condition of matter.

The solid state is the last to develop in this progression from tenuity to density, for in this state pervasiveness reaches its lowest expression and fixity predominates. It is the substratum of all solid forms and bodies and the last necessity for the development of life; for it provides life with a fixed form or body in which it can endure and work itself out and which it can develop into organism. The last new property of matter evolved in the solid state is odour; and since earth is the typical solid substance, containing all the five properties sound, contact, form, taste and smell, Earth is the conventional name selected for the fifth and final power of matter.

These five elemental states are only to be found in their purity and with their characteristic qualities distinct and unblended in the world of subtle matter. The five elemental states of gross matter are impure; they are formed out of subtle matter by the combination of the five subtle elements in certain fixed proportions, that one being given the characteristic name of ether, air, fire, water or earth in which the subtle ethereal, gaseous, igneous, fluid or solid element prevails overwhelmingly over the others. Even the last and subtlest condition to which gross matter can be reduced is not a final term; when realised into its constituents, the last term of gross matter disintegrates and matter reaches a stage at which many of the most urgent and inexorable laws of physics no longer operate. It is at this point where chemical analysis and reasoning can no longer follow Nature into her recesses that the Hindu system of Yoga by getting behind the five Pranas or gross vital breaths through which Life manifests in gross physical matter, is able to take up the pursuit and investigate the secrets of psychic existence in a subtler and freer world." (246-52)

11. Some Outstanding Facts of Yoga

"The intimate connection between Prana and vital activity may be best illustrated in its most obvious and fundamental function in the living organism, the regulation of breathing. So important is this function that Breath and Prana are generally identified; the usual signification of the word Prana is, indeed, breath and the five differentiated vital energies supporting the human frame are called the five breaths. So important is it, that even the searching analysis of modern science has not been able to get behind it, and it is held as an incontrovertible fact that the maintenance of respiration is necessary to the maintenance of life. In reality, this is not so. Ordinarily, of course, the regular inhalation of oxygen into the system and exhalation of corrupted breath out of it, is so necessary to the body that an abrupt interruption of the process, if continued for two minutes will result in death by suffocation. But this is merely due to a persistent vital habit of the body. It needs only a careful training in the regulation of the breath to master this habit and make respiration subservient to the will. Anyone who has for a long time practised this art of breath-regulation or Pranayam can suspend inhalation and exhalation for many minutes and some not only for minutes but for hours together without injury to the system or the suspension of bodily life; for internal respiration and the continuance of the vital activities within the body still maintain the functions necessary to life. Even the internal respiration may be stopped and the vital activities entirely suspended without subjecting the body to the process of death and disintegration. The body may be kept intact for days, months and years while all the functions of breath and vitality are suspended, until the Will in its psychical sheaths chooses to resume its interrupted communications with the world of gross matter and recommence physical life at the precise point at which it was discontinued. And this is possible because Prana, the vital energy, instead of being allowed to circulate through the system under the necessary conditions of organic physical activity, can be gathered up into

the mind-organ and from there in its simple undifferentiated form support and hold together the physical case.

But if respiration is not necessary to the maintenance of life, it certainly is necessary to the maintenance of activity. The first condition of Pranayam is the suspension of conscious physical activity and the perfect stillness of the body, which is the primary object of the various *asans* or rigidly set positions of the body assumed by the Yogin as a necessary preliminary in the practice of his science. In the first stages of Yoga the sub-conscious activity of the body due to the life of the cells, continues; in the later stages when internal respiration and vital activities are suspended, even this ceases, and the life of the body becomes like that of the stone or any other inert object. It is held together and exists by the presence of Prana in its primary state, the only connection of Will with the physical frame being the will to subsist physically. This is the first outstanding fact of Yoga which proves that Prana is the basis of all physical activity; the partial or complete quiescence of Prana brings with it the partial or complete quiescence of physical activity, the resumption of its functions by Prana is inevitably attended by the resumption of physical activity. The second outstanding fact is the peculiar effect of Pranayam and Yoga on mental activity. The first condition of Yogic exercises is, as has been said, the stillness of the body, which implies the suspension of the five *indriyas* or potencies of action, grasp, locomotion, utterance, emission and physical ecstasy. It is a significant fact that the habit of suspending these *indriyas* is attended by an extraordinary activity of the five *indriyas* of knowledge, sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste, and an immense heightening of mental power and energy. In its higher stages this increase of power intensifies into clairvoyance, clairaudience, the power of reading other minds and knowing actions distant in space and time, conscious telepathy and other psychical powers. The reason for this development is to be found in the habit of gathering Prana or vitality into the mind-organ. Ordinarily the psychical life is overlaid and hampered

by the physical life, the activity of Prana in the physical body. As soon as this activity becomes even partially quiescent, the gross physical obstruction of Anna and Prana is rarefied and mind becomes more self-luminous, shining out through the clouds that concealed it; vital energy is not only placed mainly at the service of the mind as in the concentration of the poet and the thinker, but is so much subtilised by the effect of Pranayam that the mind can operate far more vigorously and rapidly than in ordinary conditions. For mind operates freely and naturally in subtle matter only and the subtler the matter, the freer the workings of the mind. At an intenser stage of Yogic exercise all the vital functions are stilled and Prana entirely withdrawn from bodily functions into mind which can then retire into the subtle world and operate with perfect freedom and detachment from physical matter. Here again we see that just as Prana, differentiated and working physically, was the basis of all physical activity, so Prana, intermediate and working psycho-physically, is at the basis of all mental activity, and Prana, pure and working psychically is at the basis of all psychical activity.

The third outstanding fact of Yoga is that while in its earlier processes it stimulates mental activity, in its later stages it overpasses mental activity. At first the mind drawn inward from active reactions to external impacts, is able to perfect its passive reactions or powers of reception and its internal reactions or powers of retention and combination. Next it is drawn inward from external phenomena altogether and becomes aware of the internal processes and finally succeeds in concentrating entirely within itself. This is followed by the entire quieting of the subtle or psychical *indriyas* or sense-potencies followed by the entire quiescence of the mind itself. The reception of psychical impacts and the vibrations of subtle thought-matter are suspended; mind concentrates on a single thought and finally thought itself is surmounted and the Supra-Intelligence is potent, free and active. It is at this stage that Yoga develops powers which are so unlimited as

to appear like omnipotence. The true Yogin, however, does not linger in this stage which is still within the confines of psychical existence, but withdraws the Will beyond Supra-Intelligence entirely into itself." (252-55)

12. The Workings of the Supreme Will

"This Supreme Entity which, as Self or Spirit, is immobile and one, is yet, without moving, swifter than thought. Swiftness implies motion; but the motion of Spirit in Cosmos is the illusory motion we see in the landscape as it whirls swiftly past the quiet watcher in the railway-carriage. The individual Self in Man is the watcher in the train, the train is Prakriti, the landscape the Universal Self in the Cosmos. The watcher is not moving, the landscape is not moving; it is the train which is moving and carries the sitter with it. In this second phrase of the verse the Parabrahman is identified with the Supreme Will in the Cosmos which without lifting a finger or stirring a foot creates and encompasses the Universe. This Supreme Will is simply Self or Spirit envisaging itself as the immanent Cause and Director of cosmical evolution in matter. The Will does not move but causes and conditions the infinitely complex cosmic motions; the Will does not act, but causes and determines actions; the Will does not divide or multiply itself, but plays with the multiplicity of cosmic forms and energies and impresses or mirrors itself in each. Being essentially the Self, it is, like the Self, One and Immobile, but as seen in the moving Cosmos, pervading, informing and governing it, It is, even in its motionlessness, swifter than thought.

The Gods could not reach It going in front. In the terminology of the Upanishads the Gods are the Potencies of the Universe which govern the Mind and the Senses in the microcosm Man and the Elements and their manifestations in the macrocosm Universe. Brahman, the One, precedes all these multiple potencies. It existed before they came into being and is therefore beyond their grasp. The rapid and

stupendous effects of Will, omnipotent and omniscient, are such that the Mind, Sight, Hearing, all the senses together cannot comprehend their origination; limited and finite, they cannot grasp that which transcends limit. To the finite intelligence reasoning within prescribed limits it appears that there is no Will in action; all that happens and becomes is the inevitable working of material cause and effect, or of the Elements combining and working on each other. But Will is the cause of Causation and the disposer of Effect; Will preceded and dictated the workings of the Elements and arranged their combinations beforehand. This is He that from years sempiternal hath ordered perfectly all things. But the mind and senses cannot come near to and apprehend the nature of the Will or realize the how of its workings, because the mind and the senses can only understand what is done through their instrumentality or within the elemental medium to which they are limited and confined. They can analyse the physical forces of Nature and formulate the laws under which they work; they can dissect thought and sentiment and classify the mental functions and the laws of reasoning. But Brahman, the Will, they cannot reach and analyse; for He does not work through them, nor does He act in phenomena. He has arranged the motions of Prakriti beforehand, from years sempiternal; He has mapped out the law of those motions before ever they began to stir; and He now abides concealed in them, not acting but simply by His presence necessitating that the Law shall be observed and His dispositions followed. Will creates effects, outside Time, Space and Condition in a way the Mind cannot comprehend, by *Iccha* or Wish, in other words, by Itself. Will by Will necessitates phenomena in Itself, atmanyatmana. But when Prakriti translates Will into phenomena in the terms of Time, Space, Causality, she does it under limitations and by limited instruments. The preordainment was immediate, unhindered and perfect, but the carrying out seems to be slow, imperfect and the result of ceaseless effort and struggle, a web of failures, incomplete realizations and transient successes, a maze of forces acting and reacting on each other, helping,

hindering and repulsing and always with a partial and mechanical or only half-intelligent action. Somehow a result is worked out, progress is made, but nowhere is there any finality or completeness, nowhere the repose of consummation. This incompleteness is an illusion created by the nature of finite Consciousness. The Mind and the Senses, through whom we become aware of the workings of the Universe, are themselves limited and imperfect; functioning only under limits and with effort they cannot envisage the work accomplished except in parts and with a restricted, disturbed and broken vision. To see life steadily and see it whole is only permitted to a Perfect and Infinite Consciousness standing outside Time, Space and Conditions. To such a divine Vision the working out of preordainment may present itself as a perfect, immediate and unhindered consummation. God said, "Let there be Light" and, straightway, there was Light; and when the Light came into being, God saw that it was good. But to the imperfect finite consciousness, Light seems in its inception to have come into being by a slow material evolution completed by a fortuitous shock of forces; in its operation to be lavished with a prodigal wastefulness since only a small part is used for the purposes of life; in its presentation to be conveyed to a blinking and limited vision, hampered by obstacles and chequered with darkness. Limitation, imperfection, progression and retrogression are inseparable from phenomenal work, phenomenal intelligence, phenomenal pleasure and satisfaction. To Brahman the Will who measures all Time in a moment, covers all Space with one stride, embraces the whole chain of causation in one glance, there is no limitation, imperfection, progression or retrogression. He looks upon his work as a whole and sees that it is good. But the Gods cannot reach to His completeness, even though they toil after it; for ever He outruns their pursuit, moving far in front.

Brahman, standing still, overtakes and passes the others as they run. While the Mind and Senses pressing onward through Time, look before and after and see sections of the

past and dim apparitions of the future from the standpoint of their moment in the present, the Will from its position beyond the beginning of the past speeds beyond them into the future and to the end of things. It has in that moment apprehended, decided and accomplished in Itself all that is to be and leaves the mind and senses to toil after It and work out the preordained ideas and forms left impressed on the mould of that future which to It already exists. It does this standing still, because to the Will Past, Present and Future are but one moment and It lives in all of them simultaneously; they do not contain Brahman but are contained in Him. The Mind and senses hasten through Space, measuring the distance between star and star; but the Will passes them, traverses Space from one end to the other, knows it as a Whole and creates in Itself all its forms present, past and future; it leaves the Mind and senses to gather slowly, toilfully and by parts the single comprehensive knowledge It acquired without any process and to experience under the law of Time the immediately complete Universe It has perfected without any labour. It does this also standing still, for to Brahman here and there do not exist; all is here, since He is not in Space, but Space is in Him. While the Mind and senses run in the winding & twisted line of causation, the Will from the beginning of the chain passes them and has in a moment formed and surveyed it to its very end; It leaves them to count out the chain link by link by the imperfect aid of reason, piecing what is past to what is to come, and to trace out by the slow and endless process of work generating work and life generating life the complete and single Evolution which is already a predestined and therefore an accomplished fact. This too It does standing still; for to Brahman there is no succession of cause and effect, since cause and effect exist simultaneously in the Will; cause does not precede Him nor effect follow, but are both embraced in the single and mere existence of Himself as Will.

In It Matariswan ordereth the waters. We have here Brahman in a third relation to Cosmos. Brahman is the

stable and immutable Unity which is immanent in the Cosmos as its real self of existence, awareness and bliss and which supports all phenomenal objects and forces as their omnipresent substratum of reality. Secondly, Brahman, this immobile Unity, is also, as Will, that which stands still and is yet swifter than mind and the potencies of mind; for Will, the Ordainer, Disposer and Cause, traverses all Time, Space and Causation, without motion, by the mere fact of being. Lastly, Brahman, this Self and Omnipresent Lord of things, is also that which contains all evolution and determines every object and force evolved by Prana out of original matter. Brahman is Vaisvanor, the Waking Self, in whom is contained and by whom exists all this evolution of physical world; Brahman is Taijasa, the Dream Self, in whom is contained and by whom exists all the psychical evolution from which the physical draws its material; Brahman is Prajna, the Sleep Self, in whom all evolution psychical & physical is for ever self-existent and preordained; Brahman is the Turiya Atman in whom and by whom Prajna-Taijasa-Vaisvanor are. He pervades the Cosmos and contains the Cosmos, as ether pervades the earth and contains the earth, and not only the Cosmos as a whole but every particular object and force in the Cosmos. This tree is pervaded and surrounded by the Divine Presence, – not, be it clearly understood, by a part of It but by Brahman one and indivisible. The presence of God is as complete in one small flower as in the whole measureless Universe. So also the Spirit in man is not a fragment of Deity, but the Eternal Himself in His imminuable majesty. The Self in me is not merely a brother to the Self in you or of one kind with it but is completely and utterly yourself; for there is no you or I, but One Eternal Immutable in many names and forms, One Reality in many transient and perishable frames." (271-75)

13. The Vedantic Teaching – The Root of the Ethical Ideals of Buddhism and Christianity

"But he who sees all creatures in his very Self and the Self

in all creatures, thereafter shrinketh not away in loathing. He who discerneth, in whom all creatures have become Himself, how shall he be deluded, whence shall he have sorrow in whose eyes all are one?"

In these two stanzas the Upanishad formulates the ethical ideal of the Karmayogin. It has set forth as its interpretation of life the universality of the Brahman as the sole reality and true self of things; all things exist only in Him and He abides in all as the Self. Every creature is His eidolon or manifestation and every body His temple and dwelling-place. From Him all things began, in Him they develop and mature themselves, to Him they must in their nature strive to return. The mutual relations of all beings to each other may be summed up in the single phrase, "One Self in all creatures, all creatures in one Self"; for He is both within all and contains all. But this Self exists in each creature not partially or fragmentarily but in Its indivisible completeness. Therefore the Self in one creature is precisely the same as the Self in another, not merely kin by origin as in the Christian theology, not merely of the same kind and nature as in the Sankhya teaching, but absolutely identical. The sense of personal separation in space and substance and difference in nature has been illusorily brought about by the play of Prakriti, the noumenon of false self, on the one eternal Reality, creating an illusion of multiplicity and mutability. Self identifies itself with the phenomena of the evolved universe; habitually feeling the play of the three gunas, the principles of material reception, reaction and retention, on the body, the vital impulses, the mind, the intellect, the supra-intelligence it mistakes the continuity of conscious impressions for the real self, forgetting that these are merely aspects of consciousness in relation to matter and not the true and eternal reality of consciousness. But the end of evolution is to liberate the permanent from the impermanent, the spiritual from the material, the Self from its bondage to the three gunas and the false conceptions which that bondage creates. This liberation or release must therefore be the final aim of religion and ethics,

otherwise religion and ethics will be out of harmony with the truth of things and therefore false or imperfect. Religion and ethics must train the individual self in a man to discover its universality, to see himself in all creatures and all creatures in himself, and the ideal or ethically perfect man is the one who has attained to this vision and observes it habitually in his thoughts and actions as the one law of his life.

In order to realize this vision, it has been found by experience that a man must attain freedom from the lower impulses which identify the body and the vital impulses with self; he must practise cleanliness and purity in mind, body and speech, – abstinence from gross gratifications and freedom from the domination of passions and desires; indifference to cold, heat, hunger, thirst, fatigue and other affections from external influences. In other words he must be completely master of his own body. The Christian virtue of purity, the Pagan virtue of endurance, lie therefore at the very root of Vedantic morality.

To see oneself in others is impossible without completely identifying oneself with others; a perfect sympathy is essential and perfect sympathy brings with it perfect love, perfect charity and forgiveness, perfect pity for sin and suffering, perfect tolerance, a universal benevolence with its counterpart in action universal beneficence. The Jivanmukta, the Rishi, the sage must be, by their very nature, sarvabhutahitarata; men who make it their business and pleasure to do good to all creatures, not only all men, but all creatures, – the widest possible ideal of universal charity and beneficence. To do as one would be done by, to love your enemies and those who hate you, to return good for evil are the first ethical inferences from the Vedantic teaching; they were fully expressed in their highest and noblest form by Buddhism five hundred years before they received a passionately emotional and lyrical phrasing in Judaea and were put widely into practice in India more than two thousand years before Christian Europe took even slightly to heart what it had so long been professing with

its lips. And not only perfect love and beneficence, but perfect justice with its necessary counterpart in action, honest dealing and faithful discharge of duty are the natural outcome of the Vedantic teaching. For if we see ourself in others, we shall not only be willing but delighted to yield them all that is due to them and must shrink from wronging or doing hurt to them as naturally as we would shrink from doing hurt to ourselves. The debts we owe to parents, family, friends, the caste, the community, the nation we shall discharge not as an irksome obligation, but as a personal pleasure. The Christian virtue of charity, the Pagan virtue of justice are the very sap and life of Vedantic morality.

Seeing the Self in all creatures, implies seeing the Lord everywhere. The ideal man of Vedanta will accept pain as readily as pleasure, hatred, wrong, insult and injustice as composedly as love, honour and kindness, death as courageously as life. For in all things he will see the mighty Will which governs the Universe and which wills not only his own good and pleasure and success, but the good and pleasure and success of others equally with his own; which decrees that his own good and the good of others shall be worked out not only by his victories and joys, but by his defeats and sufferings. He will not be terrified by the menace of misfortune or the blows dealt him by man or nature, nor even by his own sins and failures, but walk straight forward in the implicit faith that the Supreme Will is guiding his steps aright and that even his stumblings are necessary in order to reach the goal. If his Yoga is perfect, his faith and resignation will also be perfectly calm and strong; for he will then fully realize that the Supreme Will is his own Will. Whatever happens to me, it is I that am its cause and true doer and not my friend or enemy who is merely the agent of my own Karma. But the faith and resignation of the Karmayogin will not be a passive and weak submission. If he sees God in his sufferings and overthrow, he will also see God in his resistance to injustice and evil, a resistance dictated not by selfishness and passion, but undertaken for the sake of right

and truth and the maintenance of that moral order on which the stability of life and the happiness of the peoples depend. And his resistance like all his actions will be marked by a perfect fearlessness, a godlike courage. For when a man sees God in all things and himself in all beings, it is impossible for him to fear. What is it that can cause him terror? Not danger or defeat, not death or torture, not hatred or ingratitude, not the worse death of humiliation and the fiercer torture of shame and disgrace. Not the apparent wrath of God Himself; for what is God but his own self in the Cosmos? There is nothing that he can fear. The Christian virtue of faith and resignation, the Pagan virtue of courage are the strong stem and support of Vedic morality.

The ignorant censure of Vedanta as an immoral doctrine because it confuses the limits between good and evil or rejects the one necessary motive to action and virtue, proceeds from unwillingness or inability to understand the fine truth and harmony of its teachings. Vedanta does indeed teach that virtue and vice, good and evil are relative terms, things phenomenal and not real; it does ask the seeker to recognize the Supreme Will in what is evil no less than in what is good; but it also shows how the progression of the soul rises out of the evil into the good and out of the good into that which is higher than good and evil. Vedanta does reject the lower self of desire as a motive to action and virtue, but it replaces it by the far more powerful stimulus of selflessness which is only the rising to our higher and truer Self. It does declare phenomenal life to be an illusion and a bondage, but it lays down the practice of courage, strength, purity, truth and beneficence as the first step towards liberation from that bondage, and it demands a far higher standard of perfection in these qualities than any other creed or system of ethics. What to many moralists is the highest effort of feeble human nature is to Vedanta only the first imperfect manifestation of the divine self in humanity. Vedanta embraces, harmonizes and yet overtops and exceeds all other moralities; as Vedic religion is the eternal and

universal religion, so is Vedic ethics the eternal and universal morality. Esha dharmah sanâtanah." (281-84)

14. Ethics in Primitive Society

"Man is not a purely ethical being; he has immoral and nonmoral impulses which are primarily stronger than his ethical tendencies. To check the former, to liberate, strengthen and train the latter is the first object of all practical ethics religious or non-religious. The first requisite to this end is a true knowledge of human nature and its psychology; for if an ethical system is psychologically untrue, if it is seriously mistaken in its view of human nature or fails to discern and reach his highest and noblest instincts, it will either be ineffective or possibly even do as much harm as good to the moral growth of humanity. But even a psychologically sound morality will not command general assent in practice unless there is a sanction behind it which the reason or the prejudices of mankind will accept as sufficiently strong to make a necessity of obedience. Armed with such a sanction it will influence the thoughts and the thoughts the actions of the race, but even then it will be only a repressive and disciplinary influence; to be an active stimulus or powerful moral lever it must be able to set in our front an aim which will enlist strong natural forces on the side of virtue or an ideal which will appeal to instincts deepseated and persistent in universal humanity.

In its origin it is more than probable that morality was a social growth and limited to communal habits and communal necessities. The aim set before the individual was the continued privilege of abiding in the community and enjoying all-important advantages of security, assistance and social life which membership of the community could alone provide. The sanction was again a communal sanction; the custom-code of the tribe or community commanded assent and obedience precisely because it was the tribe and community that commanded and could enforce them with severe social

punishments, death, ostracism, excommunication. This origin of ethics from the customs of the tribe, themselves originating from the fundamental necessities of self-preservation, is warranted by the facts of sociology as rendered by modern investigation. It agrees also with the view of nature and evolution held by the Vedic inquirers. For if we consider the history of communities and nations so far as we know them, we shall find that it consists so far in a progression from the society to the individual in society, from a basis of tamas to an outgrowth of rajas in the tamasic basis; while sattwa perfected in a few individuals, is, as a social force, not yet emancipated.

We have seen that Prakriti or nature in all its operations works through three inherent *gunas* or qualities which repeat themselves in all stages and forms of her multifold activity; they are present as much in psychic and spiritual evolution as in the physical; and so all-important are they that all activity of any kind whatsoever, all life mental, vital, physical are said to be merely the natural operation of the three *gunas* interacting upon each other. These three *gunas* are called in the Sankhya terminology *sattwa, rajas, tamas*; comprehension, activity, passivity, or as they manifest in physical substance, retention, active reaction and passive reception. None of these *gunas* can exist or act by themselves; the activity of each involves the activity of the other two; but according as one or the other predominates, an action, a state of things, a substance, a character, is called tamasic, rajasic, or sattwic. In the early stages of upward evolution tamas predominates, in the medial rajas, in the final sattwa. In the early evolution of man it is inevitable, therefore, that the obscuration of tamas should be very heavy and that the characteristic of passive receptivity to outside surroundings should be markedly predominant. Early man is active only under the pressure of hunger, or when moved by the primitive impulses of sense and vitality and the needs of self-preservation. His senses are keen and his power of activity great because keen senses and a strong, hardy, agile body are necessary to self-preservation; but in the

absence of necessity or stimulus he is profoundly indolent, even inert. His sensibility, physical or mental, is small, for sensibility depends on and increases with rajas, the power of reaction and this power is in the savage comparatively undeveloped. His emotional reactions are also weak and primitive; in their predominantly physical character and in the helpless spontaneousness of their response to impressions they reveal the domination of tamasic passivity. The centres of individuality, a characteristically sattwo-rajasic function, are too weak as yet to control, regulate and rationalize the response. Hence the emotional nature shows itself on one side in a childishly unruly gratification of the pleasure of pleasant impressions, – the savage is easily mastered by gluttony and drunkenness but also capable of childlike worship and doglike fidelity when brought into close contact with a higher nature; on the other it is manifested in a brutally violent response to unpleasant impressions. Anger is the primitive reaction to an unpleasant impact which is not unfamiliar, fear the primitive reaction to an unpleasant impact which is new and surprising. The savage is therefore prone to childish terror in presence of the unknown, to ferocious anger and vindictive cruelty when his hatred is aroused by injury or the presence of what, though not unfamiliar in form, is alien and therefore hateful in its features. The habit of self-indulgence in anger by an organization of great passivity and low physical and mental sensibility creates the characteristic of a quiet unimpassioned cruelty, – the savage is, as a rule, calmly cruel. The Red-Indian's stoicism, impassivity, immobility, quiet endurance of pain are merely the inertia of the tamasic mind and body systematized and become part of his tribal morality. But the height of passivity is reached in his intellectual organization of which the only strong reaction is the primitive mental response to outside impressions, curiosity. This curiosity is different from the desire to know, for it consists in a childish amused wonder and a desire merely to repeat the experience, not to learn from it. Such curiosity is at the root of the practice of torture; for

the primitive mind finds a neverfailing delight in the physical response evoked by intense and violent pain. This pleasure in crude physical, moral, aesthetic or intellectual reactions because of their raw intensity and violence is a sure sign of the undeveloped tamasic mind and is still common enough in the most civilized communities. Originality and independence of mind and character spring from a strong rajasic development and are therefore unknown to the savage who is the creature and slave of his environments. By far the most powerful and insistent of these environments is the community in which he lives and which is necessary to him at every turn for his security and his self-gratification. His passive mentality therefore not only accepts but welcomes rigid control by the community; it receives the hereditary custom-law of the tribe as an inviolable natural law, and has too weak an individuality to react against it or to desire change and progress. The primitive community is therefore stationary; the individual exists in it not as an individual, but as an undetachable fragment of the whole. The social organization, even at its best, is in type and level on a par with that of the beehive and the ant-hill.

The tamasic state of society reaches its highest development when the community, entirely outgrowing the attractions of the nomadic instinct, settles down to a fixed habitation for centuries and adds to its original reason for existence, – communal self-preservation, – the more fruitful impulse towards communal accumulation. It has then the necessary condition for progress from the tamasic stage to the sub-tamasic in which the individual first begins to emerge although he is still subordinated to the community and lives chiefly for the general advantage, not for his own. The settled state of society and the expansion of the community which a more prosperous and stable life brings with it, involve an increasing complexity of the social organization. Specialization of function becomes pronounced, for the larger needs of the community demand an increasing division of labour. Rank and private property begin to emerge; inequality has begun. The more various activities,

the more varied experience, the less primitive range of desires and the need of a wider knowledge of things and men create a greater mental alertness and increased mental differentiation. This in its turn means the growth of individuality. Personality, we have seen, has memory for its basis and is determined by memory; individuality or difference of personality is originally created by difference in the nature and range of the impressions experienced and retained by the mind, which naturally results in different habits of emotional and mental reaction. The fundamental self in all men is the same, the action of external Prakriti in its broad masses is the same all over the world; therefore human personality is necessarily the same in its general nature wherever we meet it. Difference in personality arises purely from difference in the range of mental and emotional experience; from the different distribution of various kinds of experience, and from differently developed habits or ways of reaction to impressions received. For character is nothing but habit; and habit is nothing but an operation of memory. The mind remembers that it received this particular impact before and reacted on it in this particular way and it repeats the familiar experience. The repetition becomes a habit of the mind ingrained in the personality and so a permanent characteristic. Difference of experience thus creates difference of personality, and difference of experience depends on difference in life, pursuits, occupations. So long as life is bounded by the desires of alimentation, self-preservation and self-reproduction, there can be no real individuality within the species, for the processes required and the experiences involved in these functions are practically the same for each member of the species. Even the gratification of primitive sensuous desires does not involve anything more than minute and unnoticeable differences. Hence one savage very much resembles any other savage just as one animal of a species very much resembles another of the same species, and one savage community differs from another only as one animal sub-species differs from a kindred sub-species. It is

only when desires and needs multiply, that difference of life and occupation can bring difference of experience and develop individuality. The increasing complexity of the community means the growth of individuality and the liberation of rajas in the human psychology." (285-89)

15. Social Evolution

"In the early stages of the sub-tamasic state the question was not so acute, for differentiation in the society was not at first very complex; it proceeded upon broad lines, and as soon as it took definite form, usually as a result of intermixture with alien elements, it developed classes or castes, the priest, the warrior, the people, – merchant, tiller or artisan – and the thrall or servant. Character developed at first more on these broad lines than by individual irregularities, in types rather than in persons; for each kind of life, each broad line of pursuits and occupations would naturally mean the same general range of experience and the same habits of reaction to external impressions and so evolve broad developments of character falling into caste-types, within whose general predominance personal idiosyncrasy would be at first comparatively ill-developed and of minor importance. The priest-type would develop favourably in the direction of purity, learning, intellectual ability and acuteness, unfavourably in the direction of jealous exclusiveness, spiritual and intellectual pride, a tendency to trade on the general ignorance. The warrior type would evolve courage, honour, governing power as its qualities, arrogance, violence and ruthless ambition as its defects. The earning class would develop on the one side honesty, industry and enterprise, on the other desire of gain. Obedience and fidelity would be the virtues of the thrall. Society accommodating itself to the altered circumstances modified its single and rigid social morality and admitted the validity of the newly-formed habits of mind and action as within the caste to which it properly belonged. Thus arose the ethical phenomenon of caste morality. Outside the limits of

the caste ethics the general social code remained in full force. As the life of the individual in the community expanded in extent and became more varied and complex in content, the social custom-code also became more complex in its details and wider in its comprehensiveness, in its attempt to pursue him into every detail of his life and control not only his broad lines of life but his particular actions, allowing no distinction between private and public life. Its nature had not changed; it was as rigid and inexorable in its demands, as intolerant of individual originality and independence; its sanctions were unaltered, the ancestral tradition of the community and the fear of social punishments, death, ostracism, excommunication or other penalties which if less drastic were yet sufficiently formidable. The object to be fulfilled was still predominantly the same, the satisfaction of communal demands as the price of communal privileges.

In this attempt society could not permanently succeed and had either to abandon it or to call in the aid of other forces and stronger sanctions. The community grew into the nation; social divisions became more intricately complex, the priest-class breaking up into schools, the warriors into clans, the people into guilds and professions; the organization was growing too vast in size, too intricate in detail. Class began to push its individual claims against class, individuals began to question the old sanctions or doubt the sacredness of tradition. In small villages the old tyranny of society might be possible, in great towns it must necessarily become increasingly lax and ineffective. Above all, as the individual's mental life became enriched and vigorous, society found itself baffled by an insurmountable difficulty; it could control his outward acts by its rigour, but it could not ultimately control his mental and spiritual life, yet this inner life psychical and spiritual tended irresistibly to master and mould outer physical actions. No sanction by which society could enforce its decrees, is of any ultimate utility against the victorious advance of the individual life pressing forward in its irresistible demand for progress and

freedom. Society may command the homage of conformance in speech and act to its fixed and conventional ideals; it may control a man's bodily organs; it has no jurisdiction over his heart and mind or only so much as he chooses to allow it. But speech and act cannot long remain divorced from the heart and mind without affecting the soundness of society itself by a dry rot of hypocrisy and falseness; the end of which is either the decay and death of the community or a purifying revolt. Society can save itself only by conceding within limits the claim for individual freedom; outside those limits it must persuade or compel him to conformity by influencing his mind and heart, not by direct coercion of his words and acts.

In the later stages of the subtamasic social period we find that society has to a less or greater extent contracted its demands on the individual. Over his inner life and a certain part of his conduct, it exercises no other coercive influence than that of social disapproval expressed but not enacted; over another part of his conduct it exercises the right of enacting that disapproval in the shape of ostracism or excommunication; but that part of his life which most strongly concerns the community, it still insists on regulating by the infliction or menace of social penalties more or less severe. Social disapproval unenacted is, however, an ineffective control over mind and spirit. Society therefore, by no means content to leave the inner life of the individual free from the demands of its moral code, since any such abdication of its rule would lead, it instinctively felt, to moral anarchy, sought to dominate the individual intellect and imagination by the more radical process of education. Its view of life and its unwritten code of customs, manners, traditions had always been naturally accepted as sacrosanct, now the individual was consciously habituated and trained from his childhood to retain this impression of venerable and inviolable sanctity. Social morality was no longer unwritten but gathered into codes and systems of life associated either with the names of the primitive makers of the nation or with the deified or half-deified historic individuals who first

harmonised and perfected its traditionary ideals and routine of life and expressed the consciousness of the race in their political or ethico-legal systems. Such were Lycurgus, Confucius, Menes, Manu. For in those days individual greatness and perfection commanded a sacred reverence from the individual consciousness, because in each man it was to this greatness and perfection that individuality impelled to achieve its complete emancipation was painfully striving forward. Thus in the subtamasic state even at its highest development the social code retained its sacrosanct character in the new form of a consciously cherished and worshipped national tradition; and the repositories of that tradition became the dominant class of the community, whether an oligarchy as in Sparta and early republican Rome or a theocracy as in Egypt. For in order to control not only the heart and imagination but the deepest self in the individual society called in the aid of a spiritual force rapidly growing in its midst, the power of religion. In some communities, it strove even to give the religious sanction to all its own ideas, traditions, demands, sanctions.

In the older races and nations Mongolian, Dravidic, Mediterranean the subtamasic stage of social culture was of long duration and has left its impress in the only civilizations which have survived unbroken from that period, the Indian and Chinese. In the younger races, Aryan and Semitic, the development of the individual was far more rapid and urgent and left no time for the peculiarities of the later subtamasic period to crystallize and endure. Their evolution passed quickly into the rajaso-tamasic or even into the rajasic stage. In the rajasic state the individual forces himself into predominance and gets that emancipation and free play for his personality which his evolution demands, while the society degenerates into a mere frame for a mass of individuals. Social morality, once so rigid and compelling, dissolves into a loose bundle of superstitions and prejudices; tradition is broken into pieces by the desire for progress & novelty and free play of mind. The individual is governed in his conduct not by

social sanctions or religious obligations and ideals, but by his personal idiosyncrasy and the stress of his own ideas, desires, passions, capacities and ambitions, which clamantly demand satisfaction. Individual originality being given free rein, there is an immense outburst of genius, talent, origination, invention or of splendid personal force and activity. Periods such as the revolutionary epoch in France when the rajasic element gets free play and communities like the Ionian democracies of which Athens was the head and type, are not only the most interesting from their fascinating abundance of stir, passion, incident, brilliance of varied personality, but also among the most fruitful and useful to humanity. In such periods, in the brief history of such communities the work of centuries is done in a few years or in a few decades and future ages are fertilized from the seeds of a single epoch. But the history of rajasic communities is necessarily brief, the course of rajasic periods is soon run. Rajas has in itself no principle of endurance; if it is to work steadily and enduringly, it must either be weighted down by a heavy load of tamas or sustained and uplifted by a great strength of sattwa. But sattwa as a social force has not yet liberated itself; it operates on society through a chosen and select few and is only rudimentary as yet in the many. For the preservation of a people tamas is absolutely necessary; a mass of blind conservatism, intolerance of innovations, prejudice, superstition, even gross stupidity are elements essential to the safety of society. The Athenian thinkers themselves dimly realized this, hence their dislike to the mobile spirit of old democracy and their instinctive preference for the Spartan constitution in spite of its rigid, unprogressive and unintellectual character. They felt the transience and insecurity of the splendid and brilliant life of Athens. Politically the predominance of the individual was dangerous to the state and the evil might be checked but could not be mended by occasional resort to ostracism; the excessively free and varied play of intellect turned out a corrodent which too rapidly ate away the old beliefs and left

the people without any fixed beliefs at all; the old prejudices, predilections, superstitions were exposed to too rapid a tide of progress: for a time they acted as some feeble check on the individual, but when the merciless questioning of Socrates and his followers crumbled them to pieces, nothing was left for society to live by. Reason, justice and enlightened virtue which Socrates and his successors offered as a substitute, could not take their place because the world was not, nor is it yet sattwic enough for society to subsist entirely or mainly by the strength of reason, justice and enlightenment. The history of Athens may be summed up from the Vedic standpoint as rajas too rapidly developed destroying tamas and in its turn leading to a too rapid development of sattwa; till by an excess of the critical and judging faculty of sattwa, the creative activity of rajas was decomposed and came to an end. As a result the Athenian social organism lost its vitality, fell a prey to stronger organisms and perished.

Those communities have a better chance of survival which linger in the rajaso-tamasic stage. For that is a social period when the claims of the individual are being constantly balanced and adjusted in a manner which strongly resembles the replacement in the physical organism of waste tissue by sound, bad blood by good, corrupted breath by fresh inhalations; the individual is given legitimate scope, but those irreducible demands of society which are necessary to its conservation, are thoroughly enforced; progress is constantly made, but the past and its traditions are, as far as is consistent with progress, jealously preserved and cherished. England with its rapid alternations of progress safeguarded by conservatism and conservatism vivified by progress is an excellent example of the rajaso-tamasic community. The English race is preeminently rajaso-tamasic; tamasic by its irrational clinging to what it possesses not because it is inherently good or satisfying but simply because it is there, because it is part of its past and its national traditions; tamasic by its habit of changing not in obedience to any inner voice of

ethical aspiration or sense of intellectual fitness but in answer to the pressure of environment; but rajasic by the open field it gives to individual character and energy, rajasic by its reliance on the conflicts and final balance of passions and interests as the main agents of progress and conservation political and social. Japan with her periods of splendid and magnificently fruitful progress and activity when she is absorbing new thoughts and new knowledge, followed by periods of calm and beautiful conservation in which she thoroughly assimilates what she has absorbed and suits it to her system, – Japan with the unlimited energy and personality of her individuals finely subservient to the life of the nation is an instance of a fundamentally rajaso-tamasic nation which has acquired by its assimilation of Indian and Chinese civilisation the immortalizing strength of sattwa.

Sattwa is present indeed in all communities as a natural force, for without it nothing could exist; but as a conscious governing strength, it exists only in India and China. Sattwa is physically the principle of retention which instead of merely reacting to impressions retains them as part of its inner life; it is therefore the natural force which most helps consciousness to develop. As rajogune is the basic principle of desire, so sattwagune is the basic principle of knowledge. It is sattwa that forms memory and evolves judgment. Morally it shows itself as selfless sympathy, intellectually as disinterested enlightenment and dispassionate wisdom, spiritually as a calm self-possessing peacefulness as far removed from the dull tamasic inertia as from the restless turbidity of rajas. The growth of sattwa in a community will show itself by the growing predominance of these characteristics. The community will be more peaceful and unaggressive than the ordinary rajasic race or nation, it will present a more calm and unbroken record of culture and enlightenment, it will record its life-history not in wars and invasions, not in conquests and defeats, not by the measure of the births and deaths of kings and the downfall of dynasties but by spiritual and

intellectual evolutions and revolutions. The history of tamasic nations is a record of material impacts thrown out from the organism or suffered by it; its life is measured by the duration of dynasties or outward forms of government. The history of rajasic nations is a bundle of biographies; the individual predominates. The history of sattwic nations would be the story of the universal human self in its advance to knowledge and godhead. Most of all, the sattwic leaven will show itself in an attempt to order society not to suit material requirements or in obedience to outward environments or under the pressure of inward passions and interests, but in accordance with a high spiritual and intellectual ideal applied to life. And until *sattwa* is fully evolved, the community will try to preserve all the useful forces and institutions gathered by the past social evolution, neither destroying them nor leaving them intact, but harmonising and humanising them by the infusion of a higher ideal and vivifying them from time to time by a fresh review in the light of new experience and wider knowledge. The sattwic nation will avoid the dead conservatism of tamasic communities, it will avoid the restless progress of rajasic nations; it will endeavour to arrive at a living and healthy stability, high, calm and peaceful, in which man may pursue undisturbed his nobler destiny.

The true sattwic community in which life shall be naturally regulated by calm wisdom, enlightenment and universal sympathy, exists only as an Utopia or in the Aryan tradition of the Sattwayuga, the Golden Age. We have not evolved even the rajaso-sattwic community in which the licentious play of individual activity and originality will be restrained not by the heavy brake of tamasic indolence, ignorance and prejudice, but by the patient and tolerant control and guidance of the spirit of true science, sympathy and wisdom. The farthest advance made by human evolution is the sub-rajaso-tamasic stage in which sattwa partially evolved tries to dominate its companions. Of this kind of community China, India and more recently Japan are the only known instances.

In China the tamasic element is very strong; the passionate conservatism of the race, the aggregativeness of the Chinese character which seems unable to live to itself and needs a guild, an organization or some sort of collective existence to support it, the low physical and emotional sensibility which permits the survival of a barbarous and senselessly cruel system of punishment, are striking evidences of prevalent tamas. The rajasic element is weaker but evident enough in the religious, intellectual and, in one sense, political liberty allowed to the individual and in the union of Mongolian industry and inventiveness with the democratic individualism which allows every man the chance his individual capacity and energy deserve. Sattwa finds its place in the high place immemorially assigned to wisdom, learning and culture and in the noble and perfect Buddhist-Confucian system of ethics and ideal of life which regulates Chinese politics, society and individual life. In India on the other hand, as we shall perceive, we have an unique and remarkable instance of sattwic, rajasic, tamasic influences acting upon the community in almost equal degrees and working at high pressure side by side; tamasic constraint and conservatism governs the arrangement of daily life, rajasic liberty, progress and originality brilliantly abound in the affairs of the mind and spirit, a high sattwic ideal and spirit dominate the national temperament, humanise and vivify all its life, social polity, institutions and return almost periodically, a fresh wave of life and strength, to save the community when it appears doomed to decay and oblivion.

From sattwa springs the characteristic indestructibility which Chinese and Indian society, alone of historic civilizations, have evinced under the pressure of the ages and the shocks of repeated, even incessant national disaster. Sattwa is the principle of conservation. The passive tamasic organism perishes by decay of its unrepaired tissues or disintegrates under the shock of outward forces against which it has not sufficient elasticity to react. The restless rajasic organism dies by exhaustion of its too rapidly expended vitality and

vigour. But sattwic spirit in the rajaso-tamasic body is the nectar of the gods which makes for immortality. China and India have suffered much for their premature evolution of the sattwic element; they have repeatedly undergone defeat and subjugation by the more restless and aggressive communities of the world, while Japan by keeping its rajasic energy intact has victoriously repelled the aggressor. At present both these great countries are under temporary obscuration, they seem to be overweighted with tamas and passing through a process of disintegration and decay. In India especially long continuation of foreign subjection, a condition abhorred by Nature and accursed by Heaven, has brought about disastrous deterioration. Conquering Europe on the other hand, for the first time flooded with sattwa as a distinct social influence by the liberating outburst of the French Revolution, has moved forward. The sattwic impulse of the 18th century, though sorely abused and pressed into the service of rajasic selfishness and tamasic materialism, has yet been so powerful an agent to humanize and illuminate that it has given the world's lead to the European. But these two great Oriental civilizations are not likely to perish; always they have conquered their conquerors, asserted their free individuality and resumed their just place in the forefront of the nations, nor is the future likely to differ materially from the past. So long as the sattwic ideal is not renounced, it is always there to renew itself in extremity and to save. Preeminently sattwic is the Universal Self in man which if realized and held fast to, answers unfailingly the call for help and incarnating in its full season brings with it light, strength and healing. "For the deliverance of the good and the destruction of evil doers, for the restoration of righteousness I am born from age to age." (290-99)