

VARIETIES
OF
YOGIC EXPERIENCE
AND
INTEGRAL REALISATION

KIREET JOSHI

THE MOTHER'S INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH

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of
Yogic Experience
and
Integral Realisation

This book is addressed to all young people who, I urge, will study and respond to the following message of Sri Aurobindo:

“It is the young who must be the builders of the new world, — not those who accept the competitive individualism, the capitalism or the materialistic communism of the West as India’s future ideal, nor those who are enslaved to old religious formulas and cannot believe in the acceptance and transformation of life by the spirit, but all those who are free in mind and heart to accept a completer truth and labour for a greater ideal. They must be men who will dedicate themselves not to the past or the present but to the future. They will need to consecrate their lives to an acceding of their lower self, to the realisation of God in themselves and in all human beings and to a whole-minded and indefatigable labour for the nation and for humanity.”

(Sri Aurobindo, ‘The Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth’ Vol. 16, SABCL, p.331)

Dedicated to

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

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Preface

If the Spirit is One, why do the reports of the experience of the Spirit differ so widely? The fact is that there is a variety of spiritual experience, and this phenomenon has to be understood and explained.

Spiritual experiences can be sporadic, or they can be attained by pursuing a methodised effort leading to the union of the individual with the universal and the transcendental spiritual reality. When the experience is attained by methodised effort, it can be called yogic experience. When we study the records of the experiences of those who have practised yoga, we find that they give different and even conflicting accounts of their experiences of the Spirit.

This book attempts at introducing a study of this phenomenon, in the light of the integral experience and realisations, which has been described in the Veda, Upanishads, Gita, and lastly, in Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, which reaffirms the integral experience as recorded in the texts of the Veda, Upanishads and the Gita as also those of Tantra, but which has affirmed the possibility and actualisation of the integration and synthesis of Matter and Spirit under the sovereignty of the Spirit.

According to Sri Aurobindo, — and all experiences and realisations of Sri Aurobindo have been confirmed by the Mother, — the Spirit is infinite, and there is a difference

between the essential cognition of the Infinite and mental, overmental, and supramental cognitions of that Infinite.

It is when the spiritual experience of the infinite is obtained in mental cognition that the aspect of the infinite which is experienced tends to be felt as though that aspect is the only truth of the infinite. As Sri Aurobindo points out, "If then we seek mentally to realise Sachchidananda, there is likely to be this first difficulty that we shall see it as something above, beyond, around even in a sense, but with a gulf between that being and our being, and unbridged and even an unbridgeable chasm. There is this infinite existence; but it is quite other than the mental being who becomes aware of it, and we cannot either raise ourselves to it and become it or bring it down to ourselves so that our own experience of our being and world-being shall be that of its blissful infinity. There is this great, boundless, unconditioned consciousness and force; but our consciousness and force stands apart from it, even if within it, limited, petty, discouraged, disgusted with itself and the world, but unable to participate in that higher thing which it has seen. There is this immeasurable and unstained bliss; but our own being remains the sport of a lower Nature of pleasure and pain and dull neutral sensation incapable of its divine delight. There is this perfect Knowledge and Will; but our own remains always the mental deformed knowledge and limping will incapable of sharing in or even being in tune with that nature of Godhead. Or else so long as we live purely in an ecstatic contemplation of that vision, we are delivered from ourselves; but the moment we again turn our consciousness upon our own being we fall away from it and it disappears

or becomes remote and intangible. The Divinity leaves us; the Vision vanishes; we are back again in the pettiness of our mortal existence.” (Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol. 20, SABCL, pp. 378-9)

According to Sri Aurobindo, this chasm has to be bridged, and it is by the process of Integral Yoga in which the Infinite is experienced not merely at the mental plane and even at the overmental plane, but at the supramental plane that all the varieties of yogic experiences, even their conflicts can be harmonised. For the mind, the process of integralisation is its supreme difficulty. The knowledge obtained at the level of the integral realisation reveals to us, in the words of Sri Aurobindo:

“... the Self-existent as the All-blissful who, as Sachchidananda manifesting the world, manifesting all beings, accepts their adoration, even as He accepts their works of aspiration and their seekings of knowledge, leans down to them and drawing them to Himself takes all into the joy of His divine being. Knowing Him as our divine Self, we become one with Him, as the lover and beloved become one, in the ecstasy of that embrace. Knowing Him too in all beings, perceiving the glory and beauty and joy of the Beloved everywhere, we transform our souls into a passion of universal delight and a wideness and joy of universal love.” (Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol. 20, SABCL, p.407)

In the integrality of knowledge that is stabilised in the status of integral realisation, all things are unified in the One. Sri Aurobindo states:

“Thus by the integral knowledge we unify all things in the One. We take up all the chords of the universal music, strains sweet or discordant, luminous in their suggestion or obscure, powerful or faint, heard or suppressed, and find them all changed and reconciled in the indivisible harmony of Sachchidananda. The Knowledge brings also the Power and the Joy. “How shall he be deluded, whence shall he have sorrow who sees everywhere the Oneness?”” (Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol. 20, SABCL, p.407)

In the history of Indian philosophy, there has arisen an impasse and a critical conflict between three schools of Vedantic philosophy, the Adwaita, Vishitadwaita and Dwaita. These three philosophies have also minor variations, but each of these philosophies has registered a quarrel with all the rest. Each one of them has developed a system of mental logic, and each one of them makes an appeal to a spiritual experience, which is declared to be final and ultimate.

Is it possible to resolve this conflict?

Sri Aurobindo has in his ‘*The Life Divine*’, in the chapter entitled, ‘*The Triple Status of Supermind*’, touched upon this problem. According to Sri Aurobindo, the supermind has three poises, and even beyond the first primary poise, there is the pure Unitarian consciousness, which is timeless and spaceless concentration of the supreme reality Sachchidananda. In the first poise, there is, however, self-extension of Sachchidananda all-comprehending, all-possessing, all-constituting, but there is no individualisation. Sri Aurobindo points out that when the reflection of this first poise of the

supermind falls upon our stilled and purified self that we lose all sense of individuality. This experience corresponds to the experience of the Advaita. Similarly, when the second poise of the supermind is reflected in our purified mind, where individuation has its origin, our soul would support and occupy its individual existence and yet even then realise itself as the One. That has become all, inhabits all, contains all, enjoying even in its particular modifications its unity with God and its fellows. This experience corresponds to the experience which is emphasised by the Vishistadvaita. When the third poise of the supermind, which is a further development of the second poise, is reflected in our purified mind, we have a sort of fundamental blissful dualism in unity. This experience corresponds to the experience that is referred to by the Dvaita philosophy.

But all the three experiences are valid and they are synthesised and integrated in the triple status of the supermind. It is under this integral experience and realisation that the conflict of the three Vedantic philosophies can come to be reconciled.

Here is the full quotation from Sri Aurobindo:

“We have seen what is the nature of this first and primary poise of the Supermind which founds the inalienable unity of things. It is not the pure unitarian consciousness; for that is a timeless and spaceless concentration of Sachchidananda in itself, in which Conscious Force does not cast itself out into any kind of extension and, if it contains the universe at all, contains it in eternal potentiality and not in temporal actuality. This, on the contrary, is an equal self-extension of

Sachchidananda all-comprehending, all-possessing, all-constituting. But this all is one, not many; there is no individualisation. It is when the reflection of this Supermind falls upon our stilled and purified self that we lose all sense of individuality; for there is no concentration of consciousness there to support an individual development. All is developed in unity and as one; all is held by this Divine Consciousness as forms of its existence, not as in any degree separate existences. Somewhat as the thoughts and images that occur in our mind are not separate existences to us, but forms taken by our consciousness, so are all names and forms to this primary Supermind. It is the pure divine ideation and formation in the Infinite, — only an ideation and formation that is organised not as an unreal play of mental thought, but as a real play of conscious being. The divine soul in this poise would make no difference between Conscious-Soul and Force-Soul, for all force would be action of consciousness, nor between Matter and Spirit since all mould would be simply form of Spirit.

“In the second poise of the Supermind the Divine Consciousness stands back in the idea from the movement which it contains, realising it by a sort of apprehending consciousness, following it, occupying and inhabiting its works, seeming to distribute itself in its forms. In each name and form it would realise itself as the stable Conscious-Self, the same in all; but also it would realise itself as a concentration of Conscious-Self following and supporting the individual play of movement and upholding its differentiation from other play of movement, — the same everywhere in soul-essence, but varying in soul-form. This

concentration supporting the soul-form would be the individual Divine or Jivatman as distinguished from the universal Divine or one all-constituting self. There would be no essential difference, but only a practical differentiation for the play which would not abrogate the real unity. The universal Divine would know all soul-forms as itself and yet establish a different relation with each separately and in each with all the others. The individual Divine would envisage its existence as a soul-form and soul-movement of the One and, while by the comprehending action of consciousness it would enjoy its unity with the One and with all soul-forms, it would also by a forward or frontal apprehending action support and enjoy its individual movement and its relations of a free difference in unity both with the One and with all its forms. If our purified mind were to reflect this secondary poise of Supermind, our soul could support and occupy its individual existence and yet even there realise itself as the One that has become all, inhabits all, contains all, enjoying even in its particular modification its unity with God and its fellows. In no other circumstance of the supramental existence would there be any characteristic change; the only change would be this play of the One that has manifested its multiplicity and of the Many that are still one, with all that is necessary to maintain and conduct the play.

“A third poise of the Supermind would be attained if the supporting concentration were no longer to stand at the back, as it were, of the movement, inhabiting it with a certain superiority to it and so following and enjoying, but were to project itself into the movement and to be in a way involved in it. Here, the character of the play would be altered, but

only in so far as the individual Divine would so predominantly make the play of relations with the universal and with its other forms the practical field of its conscious experience that the realisation of utter unity with them would be only a supreme accompaniment and constant culmination of all experience; but in the higher poise unity would be the dominant and fundamental experience and variation would be only a play of the unity. This tertiary poise would be therefore that of a sort of fundamental blissful dualism in unity — no longer unity qualified by a subordinate dualism — between the individual Divine and its universal source, with all the consequences that would accrue from the maintenance and operation of such a dualism....

“It is indeed only when our human mentality lays an exclusive emphasis on one side of spiritual experience, affirms that to be the sole eternal truth and states it in the terms of our all-dividing mental logic that the necessity for mutually destructive schools of philosophy arises. Thus, emphasising the sole truth of the unitarian consciousness, we observe the play of the divine unity, erroneously rendered by our mentality into the terms of real difference, but, not satisfied with correcting this error of the mind by the truth of a higher principle, we assert that the play itself is an illusion. Or, emphasising the play of the One in the Many, we declare a qualified unity and regard the individual soul as a soul-form of the Supreme, but would assert the eternity of this qualified existence and deny altogether the experience of a pure consciousness in an unqualified oneness. Or, again, emphasising the play of difference, we assert that the Supreme and the human soul are eternally different and

reject the validity of an experience which exceeds and seems to abolish that difference. But the position that we have now firmly taken absolves us from the necessity of these negations and exclusions: we see that there is a truth behind all these affirmations, but at the same time an excess which leads to an ill-founded negation. Affirming, as we have done, the absolute absoluteness of That, not limited by our ideas of unity, not limited by our ideas of multiplicity, affirming the unity as a basis for the manifestation of the multiplicity and the multiplicity as the basis for the return to oneness and the enjoyment of unity in the divine manifestation, we need not burden our present statement with these discussions or undertake the vain labour of enslaving to our mental distinctions and definitions the absolute freedom of the Divine Infinite.” (Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Vol.18, SABCL, pp.146-9)

This book may be regarded as an introduction to the theme of the infinity of the One, its varied experiences and the unity of these experiences in the supramental consciousness.

Kireet Joshi

A Preliminary Note

If experience is a means of knowledge, and even of higher and the highest degrees and kinds of knowledge by identity in which the subject and the object of knowledge are united, and if such experiences are a means of growth, of ennoblement of character and personality, of expansion, deepening and heightening of consciousness and will-force, then yoga stands out, — considering the methods that it has developed for attaining depths, heights and widenesses as also objectivity and certainty, — as a human endeavour of the highest value. For yoga is, at all levels of its stages, based on experience and it develops by accumulation of experience, and its highest peaks of knowledge, will-force and delight consist of experience. To understand yoga, therefore, we need to enter into the realm of yogic experiences.

Yoga is primarily and distinctly concerned with spiritual experience, and although in its integrality, it embraces all domains of knowledge, physical and supra-physical, its means are distinctively spiritual.

Distinguishing features of what we call spirituality are the following:

(a) Awakening to the inner reality of our being, to a spirit,

Self, Soul, which is other than our mind, life and body;

(b) An inner aspiration to know, to feel, to be that;

(c) A quest for entering into the greater Reality beyond and pervading the universe which inhabits also our being, to be in communion with It and union with It;

(d) A turning, a conversion, a transformation of our whole being into a new becoming, or a new being, a new Self, a new nature.

In the literature relating to the realm of spirituality and spiritual experience, one of the relevant works that stands out is William James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience* that was published in 1902. Another work which is even more relevant and supremely illuminating is Sri Aurobindo's *The Synthesis of Yoga*, which was written during 1914-21.

William James uses the phrase *Religious Experience*, but it is clear that most of the accounts of the experiences given in the book such as those of conversion, Presence of the Unseen, saintliness and mysticism, can be regarded as yogic, considering that (i) they are not related to institutional aspects of religion, (ii) they are related to individual's inner lives, and (iii) they mark important stages of the discipline of spiritual practices, even though most of them are tied to Christianity, a few to other religions, and a few that are independent of any religion. If we maintain that every religion has a spiritual core which is its most important component, and if yoga is primarily concerned with spirituality and with methodical and conscious effort directed towards spiritual development and realisation, then, a large number of experiences described in the book can be legitimately called yogic.

William James, in regard to the experiences that he has presented in his book, brings us certain vivid descriptions of certain stages and aspects of the inner yogic life and yogic state and succeeds in inviting us to some kind of proof of the spiritual reality, its mystery, its wonder, and the vividness of the reality of the Unseen. One relevant experience, which is very vivid, and describes the Presence of the Unseen, is from a Swiss writer, and its description is being appended at *Appendix I (p.111)*. There are three other important categories of experience which are indicated below:

Experience of Conversion

It is very well known that in every yogic practice that is to be found in religions as also in that which is independent of any religion, the experience of conversion marks a radical point of departure from ordinary life to a truly spiritual life. An important example of this experience of conversion, which William James has given, is that of Saint David Brainerd. The description of this experience is appended at *Appendix II (p.113)*.

Conversion is a movement as a result of which spiritual life becomes central to the seeker. But this centrality may be only ideative in character, in the sense that what becomes central is a cluster of ideas relating to spiritual life rather than the possession of the substance of the Spirit that makes spiritual life so very distinctive and beatific. Often conversions are temporary. At higher stages, not only the mind but also the very heart of the seeker is touched by the experience that leads to conversion, and it is then that the conversion tends to become permanent and to ripen itself into mature fruits of the spirituality of religious life or of yogic life. One of these fruits is that of saintliness.

Saintliness

William James has analysed the state of saintliness and pointed out that there are four main features:

- (i) A feeling of being in a wider life of the existence of an ideal power;
- (ii) A sense of the friendly continuity of the ideal power with our own life, and a willing self-surrender to its control;
- (iii) An immense elation and freedom, as the outlines of the confining selfhood melt down; and
- (iv) A shifting of the emotional centre towards loving and harmonious affections.

William James has also described the practical consequences of the development of saintliness as

- (a) Asceticism, (b) Strength of Soul, (c) Purity, (d) Charity.
See *Appendix III* (p.116)

He has also given some concrete illustrations of saintliness. One of them is that of Saint John of the Cross. Another is that of Suso, a German mystic. Another still is that of George Fox. See *Appendix IV* (p.120)

Mysticism

William James arrives at the summit of religious experiences in his chapter on Mysticism. He points out that there are basically two characteristics of Mysticism:

- (i) Mystic experience is marked by ineffability, and
- (ii) It has noetic quality and the mystic states are also states of knowledge. See *Appendix V* (p.128)

He also points out that there are two other qualities,

which are less sharply marked but are usually found. The first quality is that of transiency, since mystical states cannot be sustained for long. The second quality is that of passivity, since the mystic feels in his experience as if he were grasped and held by a superior power. He points out that this latter peculiarity connects mystical states with certain phenomena such as prophetic speech, automatic writing, or the mediumistic trance.

It may be remarked that in the strict path of yogic experience, a distinction is made between subliminal experience or experience proper to occultism, and spiritual experience, — a distinction, which William James does not offer in his book. Strictly speaking, experiences of automatic writing or mediumistic trance are experiences related to the subliminal consciousness consisting of the inner mind, inner vital force and subtle physical consciousness. Spiritual experiences relate to the realm of super-consciousness or of psychic consciousness which is the consciousness of the inmost being which governs body, life and mind and which has the power of integrating body, life and mind under its own integrating power. Super-consciousness refers to the realm of the transcendental Spirit which, in its universal aspect, provides an entry into cosmic consciousness and increasing unity of diversity which culminates in what is called in Yoga, supramental consciousness or consciousness of *vijñānamaya*.

Again, it is true, as William James points out, mystical states are transient. But in Yoga proper, this transiency can be gradually removed, and higher states of mysticism can be made permanent. In the yogic language, the state of permanency of the higher and higher states of Yoga is called realisation.

William James has provided in his book extremely illuminating examples of mysticism. These include those of Malwida von Meysenbug, Walt Whitman, Dr. J. Trevor, Dr. R.M. Bucke, of Raja Yoga as expounded by Swami Vivekananda, Al-Ghazzali, Saint John of the Cross, Saint Teresa, Saint Ignatius, and some others such as Sufi Gulshan-Raz and Plotinus. See *Appendix VI (p.131)*

Yoga: Its Distinguishing Features

Yoga as distinguished from religion is primarily a shastra and not system of beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and moral and spiritual disciplines related to the system of beliefs and prescriptions. As a shastra, it is a growing body of knowledge of truths, principles, powers and processes that govern the discipline of the body, life and mind and other higher faculties in search and realisation of psychic, spiritual and supramental reality or realities that lie beyond the body, life and mind, as also the consequences of that search and realisation for the individual and collective existence in the cosmos. Sri Aurobindo's book *The Synthesis of Yoga* is related to yogic experiences that can be attained by the application of yogic shastra, independent of any religion or any spiritual practice that is tied to any religion, even though spiritual disciplines of religions may coincide with or may adopt or recognise for their own aims some or other aspects of this shastra.

Yogic Experience of the Flame of Aspiration

In its inmost nature, yoga is, according to the yogic shastra, the expression of the flame of aspiration that rises upwards in order to burn and burn steadily, constantly and ever-increasingly, to grow in leaps of fire in order to burn away all that tends towards impurity, to build our inner being and all members of the being, — body, life, and mind and all our faculties, actual and latent, — so that all of them make an ascent in all-consuming zeal to unite with all that is or felt or conceived to be the highest, the best, the widest and intensest, the infinite, the limitless, all and beyond, — so that they can attain, consummation and ever-living sustenance of heat and light. This flame has, in its upward movement, — it is discovered, — an inherent sense of direction and discloses progressively the needed knowledge of the means and methods that are required for its constant movement and consummation; it has the Veda — not the text — but that which is recognised in the Indian tradition as the secret knowledge that is in the heart of every thinking and living being, but uncovered by the seeker through the process of the burning of aspiration itself, — and, therefore, in need of no indispensable external agencies of guidance, — teacher, book, ethics, aesthetics, philosophy, science, occultism or religion, — even though they may be utilised as and when indicated or offered on the way, but in the end transcended

by the inward force of the constant need to burn and burn luminously and immortally.

Yoga is the journey of the yogic flame of aspiration, and this journey is, as reported by the seekers, difficult and even perilous, although when carried on by heroic concentration, it becomes more and more felicitous, and victories are won after victories, and even though it rises on peaks after peaks of accomplishment — yoga-siddhi, — there are still farther accomplishments that are made clearer. As an ancient record of Yoga states:

*brahmāṇastvā śatakrato
ud vamsām iva yemire.
yat sānoḥ sānum āruhad
bhūri aspaṣṭa kartvam.¹*

The seekers of the journey climb thee like a ladder, O hundred powered. As one ascends from peak to peak, there is made clear the much that has still to be done.

And yet in the ever-progressive movement, the individual seeker, the individual soul, discovers the stable source and foundation, the creative power of the world, and even while seated securely in that foundation, it sees luminously the progressive self-unfolding. Again, as it is stated:

*abhyavasthāḥ pra jāyante
pra vavrer vavriś ciketa.
upasthe māturvi caṣṭe.²*

States upon states are born; covering over covering

awakens to knowledge: in the lap of the Creative Power of the Worlds, the Mother of Creation, he wholly sees.

On account of this reason, Yoga is ever-expanding; the Book of Yoga, — shastra of yoga — is not a closed book.

Experience of the Ā Call for Yoga

At the outset, we need to underline a very important experience that precedes one's entry into the practice of the disciplines of yoga. Sometimes, there occurs a major upheaval in the life of the seeker, which is often decisive and which brings forth a call for the pursuit of yoga with such an overwhelming force that the seeker becomes a new person, and thereafter is called twice-born (*dwija*). We notice this kind of upheaval in the life of Prince Siddhartha when he saw the four great scenes of the sick, the dead, the old man and the hermit, and that sight caused what is called *mahābhiniṣkramaṇa*. We see a similar upheaval in the life of Arjuna when he underwent a sudden crisis where in search of the right action at the commencement of the great war of the Mahabharata, he found all standards of conduct which were so far his staff of the journey crashing down so as to cast him into a deep depression (*viśhāda*) from which he felt he could come out only by escaping from the very root of responsible action. The decisiveness by which he entered into his quest through his dialogue with Sri Krishna, and his pursuit of Karma yoga is another illustration in the same category.³ There are many other illustrations such as those of Tulsidasa and Surdasa and many others. A remarkable illustration is provided by William James where Tolstoy, at the height of the glory of his literary career, began to feel that

something had broken within him and that he had nothing left to hold on to, and that morally his life had stopped. The questions, Why? Wherefore? What for? could not be answered. See *Appendix VII* (p.152).

In many cases, this upheaval is resolved by what is called conversion in books on psychology of religion. But often this conversion is psychologically a shift of religious ideas and beliefs from the periphery of consciousness to the centre of consciousness, and although this shift brings about a remarkable departure of the seeker from his past mode of life to a new mode of life, still the new mode of life is governed by ideas and beliefs. In the conversion that is a prelude to the life of yoga, the centre of being is moved, not merely by ideas and beliefs, but by a thirst which can be quenched only by a process that leads to the transcendence of ideas and beliefs and by knowing and possessing in concrete experience of the delivering light.

In the following passage, Sri Aurobindo describes a number of circumstances under which the call to Yoga comes to the seeker:

“All Yoga is in its nature a new birth; it is a birth out of the ordinary, the mentalised material life of man into a higher spiritual consciousness and a greater and diviner being. No Yoga can be successfully undertaken and followed unless there is a strong awakening to the necessity of that larger spiritual existence. The soul that is called to this deep and vast change, may arrive in different ways to the initial departure. It may come to it by its own natural development which has been leading it unconsciously towards the awakening; it may reach it through the influence of a religion or the attraction of a philosophy; it may approach it by a slow

illumination or leap to it by a sudden touch or shock; it may be pushed or led to it by the pressure of outward circumstances or by an inward necessity, by a single word that breaks the seals of the mind or by long reflection, by the distant example of one who has trod the path or by contact and daily influence. According to the nature and the circumstances the call will come.

“But in whatever way it comes, there must be a decision of the mind and the will and, as its result, a complete and effective self-consecration.”⁴

Underlying Secrets of the Methods of Attainment of Yogic Experiences

The central question of Yoga is by what means can the seeker be enabled to know that which as yet the seeker does not know. Indeed, the means must have their root in our own instruments and their present functionings, and there are three instruments in our consciousness with which the yogic processes are connected. These three instruments are our cognitive faculties, affective faculties, and conative faculties. The processes of *jñāna yoga* are more easily woven into cognitive faculties, those of the yoga of *bhakti* or divine love are more easily woven into our affective faculties, and those of *karma yoga* or yoga of divine works are woven more easily into our conative faculties. This weaving is done, first, by some kind of strengthening of the concerned faculties, and secondly, by methodical efforts by which these faculties are turned with steady concentration on the highest that can be conceived by cognitive faculties, the highest that can be loved and admired and worshiped by our affective faculties and the highest from which all source of action can be seen to be proceeding. Every yoga, therefore, consists of the various processes of concentration. It may be said that in a certain sense, the entire process of yoga is fundamentally a process of concentration, the courses of which have been explored and affirmed in the yogic sciences.

The process of concentration is aided by the process of purification of all that is operating in the normal modes of the concerned faculty. This is, indeed, a long process, and a number of yogic experiences have been related to the processes of purification. Again, purification is greatly aided by a process of renunciation of all that tends to obstruct purification, tends to disturb or pollute or curb or refuse the process of purification.

These processes, — concentration, purification and renunciation — and their corresponding experiences constitute a large part of perfection in any system or path of yoga.

At a deeper level, the secret of yoga lies in fact that the limitations of our ordinary functioning of faculties and of our life are due to exclusive dwelling of our mind and heart, of our faculties of cognition, affection, and conation on the superficial layer or layers of our being of which alone we normally are aware. We are, as it were, caged into the prison of our outer being which constantly acts and reacts and which with difficulty happens to be pushed to be turned more and more inward. The more one turns inwards, the more one discovers potentialities and secrets of development. Yoga is nothing but a more radical shift from the outer to the inner, and the methods of yoga are primarily the methods by which our consciousness can be turned more and more inward. It is a reversal of our present exclusive concentration of consciousness which is normally centred on the outward; in yoga, the process is reversed, and we employ exclusive concentration of consciousness on the inward. A passage is then made in the inner realm of consciousness, and light that is inherent in consciousness discloses realities which lie hidden in our inner being. Inner realities are discovered, they

are visited repeatedly, and thus they become permanently disclosed; they are then said to be realised. The simple miracle of this discovery and realisation is that these inner realities are found to be luminous and vibrating energetically and they are capable of pouring into our outer layers of being their own light and powers and thus of transforming them.

In a more philosophical language, yoga is, first, the process to become conscious of the fact that there is in us a veil of ignorance; secondly, it is a process of the employment of methods by which this veil of ignorance can be torn and destroyed. And thirdly, yoga is a process by which one can be stabilised in the states of consciousness which have been unveiled, so that they radiate unobstructed permanently.

The distinctive methods of Yoga relate to the meticulous handling of customary psychological workings based upon a knowledge developed and confirmed by regular experiments, practical analysis and constant results so as to develop out of normal functions, powers and results which are always latent but which ordinary movements do not easily or do not often manifest. These methods are based on the perception and experience that our inner elements, combinations, functions, forces can be separated or dissolved, can be newly combined and set to novel and formerly impossible workings or can be transformed and resolved into a new general synthesis by fixed internal processes. They also depend on the perception and experience that the vital forces and functionings to which our life is normally subjected and whose ordinary operations seem to be set and indispensable, can be mastered and the operations changed or suspended with results that would otherwise be impossible and that seem miraculous to those who have not seized the rationale

of that process. These methods can some times be arranged in a certain order, in certain fixity of the developing process, and even in some mechanical procedure. But these methods tend to become less and less mechanical, less and less fixed in their order of procedure, and stages are reached where the required methodised effort is indicated by developing consciousness more and more spontaneously, more and more intuitively, more and more by psychic sense and tact and an inner spiritual guidance.

Yoga is, as stated by Sri Aurobindo, “a methodised effort towards self-perfection by the expression of the potentialities latent in the being and a union of the human individual with the universal and transcendent Existence we see partially expressed in man and in the Cosmos.”⁵

Yogic Experience

(a) Experiences in Hatha Yoga

Yoga has often come to be exclusively identified with physical exercises of Hatha Yoga. Actually, the entire system of Hatha Yoga is only one of the systems of yoga. It aims at a complete mastery of the body and the life and a free and effective use of them established upon purification of their workings. The methods of this yoga are those of *Āsana* (more than eighty in number) and *Prāṇāyāma*, — the methods of stabilising the bodily condition by stabilisation of various postures of the body and those of breathing and breath-control by which the movements pervading all the nervous system are controlled. The gross body begins to acquire something of the nature of the subtle body and possess something of its relations with the life-energy. Life ceases to be entirely dependent on the action of the physical organs and functionings, such as the heartbeats and breathing. Hatha Yoga is an attempt by fixed scientific processes to give to the soul in the physical body the power, the light, the purity, the freedom, the ascending scales of spiritual experience which would naturally be open to it, if it dwelt in the subtle and the developed causal vehicle.

(b) Experiences in Raja Yoga

Yoga is often identified exclusively with Raja Yoga, or

the Yoga, the aphoristic formulation of which has been attributed to Patanjali, although it is only one of the specialised methods of Yoga. Raja Yoga is independent of Hatha Yoga except that it admits in its method the Hatha Yogic *āsana* and *Prāṇāyāma* in their bare minimum and simple forms. On the other hand, Hatha Yoga joins up with the psychological methods of Raja Yoga, where it begins to ascend the scales of spiritual experience.

Raja Yoga insists on moral purification of the mentality, and five *yamās* and five *niyamās* are prescribed. *Yamās* are rules of moral control in conduct such as truth-speaking, abstinence from injury or killing, from theft, chastity, and cultivation of minimum wants leading to renunciation of all that is not needed. *Niyamās* constitute self-discipline by which the *rājasic* egoism and its passions and desires are conquered. The object is to create a *sāttwic* calm, purity and preparation for meditative or contemplative concentration.

Raja Yogic concentration is divided into four stages:

- (i) *Pratyāhāra* — drawing both the mind and the senses from outward things;
- (ii) Holding of the one object of concentration to the exclusion of other ideas and mental activities — *dhāranā*.
- (iii) Prolonged absorption of the mind in the object of concentration, — *dhyāna*.
- (iv) Loss of all outward mentality, cessation of all mental modifications, in the oneness of *Samādhi*.

Samādhi or Yogic trance retires to increasing depths as it draws farther and farther away from the normal or waking

state and enters into degrees of consciousness less and less communicable to waking mind, less and less ready to receive the summons from the waking world. Beyond a certain point, the trance becomes complete, and it is then almost quite impossible to awaken or call back the soul that has receded into those profounder depths of consciousness. It has been said that if one remains too long a time in those supreme states of trance, one cannot return. As a matter of fact, the yogin acquires at a certain stage of development the power of abandoning his body definitively without the ordinary phenomena of death, by an act of will — *icchā mr̥tyu* or by a process of withdrawing the *prāṇic* life-force through the gate of the upward life current — *udāna*, opening for it a way through the mystic centre in the head, *brahmarandhra*. By departing from life in the state of *Samādhi*, one attains directly to that higher status of being to which one aspires.

But even before one attains to the state of *Samādhi*, one is able to enter repeatedly into that state, and the Raja Yogic methods, during the processes of their repeated applications, lead to the attainment of all those higher states of consciousness and the powers by which the mental being rises towards superconscient as well as its ultimate and supreme possibility of union with the highest. Raja Yoga is psychic science, and it gives an account of the powers and states which are possible on the higher planes of the being. They can be acquired and fixed by certain processes and their use then becomes subject to the will; or they can be allowed to be developed of themselves and used only when they come or when the divine within moves one to use them.

Eight Accomplishments of Yogic Discipline

These powers are not peculiar to Raja Yoga alone; they

are attained even by other methods, methods of Hatha Yoga, methods of Tantra and even the methods of Karma Yoga, Jñāna Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and others. In the Indian yogic language, these powers or accomplishments are famous eight accomplishments, *aṣṭa siddhi*. These *siddhis* are, first of all, those of *mahimā* (including *garimā*), *laghimā* and *animā*. These three *siddhis* of being are distinguished from *siddhis* of knowledge and *siddhis* of power. *Mahimā* is an unhampered force in the mental being or in the physical power. In the physical, it shows itself by an abnormal strength which is not muscular and may even develop into the power of increasing the size and the weight of the body, etc. *Laghimā* is a similar power of lightness, that is to say, of freedom from all pressure or weighing down in the mental, vital, or physical being. *Laghimā* is the basis of the power to overcome gravitation and thus it is the basis of *utthāpana*. *Animā* is the power of freeing the atoms of subtle or gross matter from their ordinary limitations. It is by this power that yogins are supposed to make themselves invisible and invulnerable or to free the body from decay and death.

Apart from these three powers of being, there are three *siddhis* of power. These three are: *aishwarya*, *ishita* and *vashita*. *Aishwarya* is a power by which one is able by the use of the will to make people act or to make things happen according to what is willed. *Ishita* is an accomplishment where one does not even need to have a will but when one has a want or a need or a sense that something ought to be and that thing comes about or happens. *Vashita* is a power to concentrate one's will on a person or an object so as to control him or it.

There are two other *siddhis*, namely, *vyāpti* and

prākamyā. These are *siddhis* of knowledge. *Vyāpti* is obtained when the thoughts, feeling etc. of others or another kind of knowledge of things etc. are felt rising from those things or persons. *Vyāpti* can also be communicative when one can send or put one's own thoughts, feelings, etc. into someone else. *Prākamyā* is an accomplishment to look at somebody mentally or physically and perceive what is in that person. *Prākamyā* also relates to senses, where it is the power of perceiving smells, tastes, lights, colours and other objects of senses which are neither at all available to ordinary persons or beyond the range from one's own ordinary senses.

It is important to note that yogic science gives warning that these powers can only be entirely acquired or safely used when one has got rid of egoism and identified oneself with infinite will and infinite consciousness. It may also be mentioned that Yoga in its higher movement attains to levels of consciousness where these powers as also many others manifest spontaneously and work themselves out without the need of maintaining them by methodical processes of these *siddhis*.

(c) Yogic Experience of Tantra

There is a system of Yoga which is known as Tantra, which contains many elements which are founded on the knowledge relating to Kundalini. It takes into account the psychical or mental body of which the physical is a sort of reproduction in gross form and is able to discover thereby secrets of the physical body which do not appear to a purely physical inquiry. This mental or psychical body has also a subtle *prāṇic* force in it corresponding to its own subtle nature and substance, and this force is directed through a system of numerous channels, called *nādi*, — the subtle

nervous organisation of the psychic body, — which are gathered up into six or seven centres which are technically called lotuses or circles, *chakra*, and which rise in an ascending scale to the summit where there is thousand-petalled lotus from which all the mental and vital energy flows. Each of these lotuses is the centre and the storing house of its own particular system of psychological powers, energies and operations, — each system corresponding to a plane of our existence, — these flow out and return in the stream of the *prānic* energies as they cross through the *nādis*.

This arrangement of psychic body is reproduced in the physical body with the spinal column as a rod and the ganglionic centres as the *chakras* which rise up from the bottom of the column where the lowest is attached, to the brain and find their summit in the *brahmarandhra* at the top of the skull. These *chakras* or lotuses are in the physical man closed or only partly open, with the consequence that only such powers and only so much of them are active in him as is sufficient for his ordinary physical life, and so much mind and soul only is at play as will accord with its needs. This is the reason why the whole energy of the soul does not seem to be at play in the physical body and life, and the secret powers of the mind are not awake in it. But it is recognised that all the while supreme energy is there, but asleep; it is said to be coiled up like a snake, — therefore, it is called *Kundalini-shakti*, — in the lowest of the *chakras*, in the *mūlādhāra*. By various processes, including those of *prāṇāyāma*, this Kundalini can be awakened. It then uncoils itself and begins to rise upwards like a fiery serpent breaking up each lotus as it ascends until the *shakti* meets the Conscious Being (*Purusha*) in the *brahmarandhra* in a deep trance or *Samādhi* of union. Tantra has also discovered the

power of the *mantra*, sacred syllable, name or mystic-formula, and with the aid of mantra, *Kundalini-shakti* can be awakened and new states of consciousness which rise can be stabilised and strengthened so that they can effectuate important results which are considered to be miraculous.

Tantra as a Synthesis of Yoga

Tantra is, in fact, a synthesis of yoga, which has discovered the truth and power of the highest creative energy of which the physical world and other worlds which are behind it are expressions. Tantra aims at enabling the individual soul to unite with the supreme creative energy, the Supreme Mother, who is also in her depth one with the supreme Lord, Shiva or the highest Purusha.

The Tantric Yoga, as it rises from state to state, manifests not only *aṣṭa siddhis* but increases and manifests higher states of cosmic and transcendental consciousness. It manifests and stabilises states and powers which are obtained through the processes and methods of *karma yoga*, *jñāna yoga* and *bhakti yoga*. Various cosmic forces working in different levels of manifested world come to be contacted and known; multiplicities of gods and goddesses, — cosmic in character and fixed in various layers of cosmic manifestations, become active and their powers are utilised for the increase, stabilisation and transformation of human life, and life of the world. The entire human body and the powers which are latent in the body, life and mind and even the superconscient are realised, and as one ascends the steps of Tantra, as the knowledge of them increases, as the effective work begins to become more and more fruitful, the seeker learns more and more the secret of offering and

sacrificing oneself and effecting progressively more and more total surrender to the Supreme Mother, who is experienced as power of Grace that uplifts the seeker into the realms of *ananda*, of knowledge, of the Supreme Being.

(d) Yogic Experiences in Karma Yoga

Yoga of divine works or *karma yoga*, to which we can now turn our attention, is focussed on conative faculties. We notice, first, that all the ordinary principal conative activities are principally centred on a motive that is ruled by desire. Karma yoga is a process by which this motive force is eliminated from the threads of our action as a result of which highest levels of action and effectivity are attained. Karma yoga is based on the perception that desire is not a necessary element in action, that ego is not a necessary element in action, and that dualities need not encourage or disappoint us in the performance of action. It is further perceived that there is a difference between desire and will and that there can be desireless will, a will that does not seek what is already not possessed but that manifests effortlessly what is already possessed within itself. Karma yoga is, therefore, not a process of cessation of works, but utilisation of works themselves as a method, so that even while the works continue, in the very thread of works, desire is eliminated. Not renunciation of works but renunciation of desire, — this is the central principle of the method of *karma yoga*.

The first stage of the method of *karma yoga* consists of making a distinction between action, results of action, and enjoyment of the results of action or fruits of action, *karmaphala*. The strongest element of desire is normally centred on the enjoyment of the fruits of action. Hence, the

first stage of the method of *karma yoga* proposes the renunciation of the enjoyment of fruits for action. At this stage, guiding wisdom lies in perceiving that one has no right to the fruits of action, — *karmanyevādhikāraṣṭe mā phaleśu kadācana*.

In the second stage of *karma yoga*, a further discipline is added. This discipline consists of perceiving the entire mechanism of the action, and of discovering that the entire world is a network of interconnected movements of energy and no action is independent of any other action, and that the egoistic belief which is normally dominant in the psychology of the agent of action that he is the independent doer of action does not correspond to the truth of the world of action. The practice of this truth, according to the *karma yoga*, leads to the practice of repeated perception and experience that one is not the doer of action but that one's action is a part of the totality of world-action. At this stage, therefore, the method consists in the withdrawal or renunciation of the sense of egoistic doership of action.

The practice of the method of *karma yoga* at this stage can be greatly strengthened if the knowledge of the world-movement, of the place of ego in the world and of the real originator of action is sought to be attained. This is the point at which two important yogic experiences can be glimpsed and developed. The first is the experience, which can be summarised in the words of the famous Indian saint, Narsi Mehta:

It is an error born of ignorance to think that I am doer of action, similar to the error that a dog commits when it thinks while running under a moving cart, that because of its own movement the cart is moving and

that it is the carrier of the load of the cart.

The yogic experience one can attain is that of the vision of the vast universe and principles which are involved in the vast world movement. In Indian philosophy, this experience is recognised as that of *Prakriti*, the Force that can be propelled into action so as to evolve the world that surrounds us. In this vision, one notices that not only the senses, sense-mind, intellectual operations of analysis, synthesis and discrimination, but even the ego-sense are all products of the universal engine of *Prakriti*.

The second experience is that of the presence of a conscious being, which is in Indian philosophy called *Purusha*, who is other than *Prakriti*, but who by his cast of glance causes the propulsion of *Prakriti*. Even this yogic experience has several stages of development. In the first place, *Purusha* is seen as a mere presence or as a mere witness — *sāksin*; at a more developed stage, *Purusha* is experienced as the giver of sanction, such that *Prakriti* can function only if *Purusha* provides a sanction for its movement and that the movement of *Prakriti* can cease to function, if the *Purusha* withdraws its sanction. It is the experience of *Purusha* as a giver of sanction, *anumantā*, that provides the first authentic experience of the freedom of *Purusha*, as distinguished from the erroneous sense of freedom that the ego feels. For in reality ego is a product of the energies that impel it to determine its activities, and therefore, there is no real freedom in the actions that issue from the ego. At a still mature development of experience of the *Purusha*, a new yogic experience can be attained. This is the perception of *Purusha* as a poise of the individual, where the individual itself can be experienced as a portion — *anśa* and a portion derived from a higher creative force, *parā*

prakriti, from a transcendental origin, *Purushottama*. In the philosophical language of India, this experience of the individual is that of a *jīva*, which has been described as a formation of *Para Prakriti* (*parā prakritir jīvabhūtā*) and a portion of *Purushottama* (*mama eva anśah sanātānah*).

Again, there are here the experiences of the *jīva* that presides over individual evolution, and its delegate, *caitya purusha*, (psychic being described in the Katha Upanishad as the one not bigger than the thumb) which is directly related to and involved in the evolution and formations of the body, life and mind, which are all products of *Prakriti*. One gets contacts with the *caitya purusha*, as the dynamic evolving being and consciousness that is self-aware and that is the real controller of the development of the body, life and mind. It is the *caitya purusha*, which is realised more and more distinguished from *manomaya purusha*, *prāṇamaya purusha*, and *annamaya purusha* (mental being, vital being and physical being). The experience of the *caitya purusha* is a major experience of Karma yoga, since through that experience the entire process of Karma yoga begins to be guided by direct intuition that distinguishes not only between *Purusha* and *Prakriti* but also distinguishes between the good and the evil, in the sense that it distinguishes between that which is determined by the engine of lower *Prakriti* and that which is demanded by the higher *Prakriti* or *para prakriti* and by the *Purushottama*.

With this guidance, the process of Karma yoga enters into a major line of yogic experience which illumines the evolving consciousness and enables it to discover that there is in this world a law of interchange, — a law of the action of cosmic forces, which are interrelated through their mutual

interchange and the law of interchange between those cosmic forces and the individuals who are all involved in the cosmic network of energies, which have themselves two levels of operations, the level of *Apara Prakriti*, where actions are ruled by ignorance, and the level of *Para Prakriti* where actions are ruled by universal and transcendental knowledge. It is this knowledge issuing from *Para Prakriti* that provides to the method of *Karma yoga* that subtle process which is the heart of that sacred movement, which is called sacrifice or *yajña*. At this stage, the entire process of *Karma yoga* is elevated to a process of offering and sacrifice and surrender. All actions thenceforth are purified by the individual, by the psychic being, as an offering, as an offering to *Para Prakriti* and as an offering to the *Purushottama*. The more this process of sacrifice ripens, the more one feels that element of devotion, which can be strengthened by the practice of *Bhakti yoga*, and it is here that *Karma yoga* and *Bhakti yoga* converge upon each other.

At this level, the third stage of *Karma yoga* begins to develop, and as the individual continues to offer all actions as sacrifice, he begins to experience the secrets of worker as a servant, as a divine soldier, as a mere instrument in the hands of the Divine, who is the real and original Doer of Works. Even the instrumental consciousness begins to vanish until the individual attains such an intimate union with *Para Prakriti* and *Purushottama* that the divine worker⁶ is experienced as the enjoyer of the play of *Para Prakriti* and *Purushottama* in his entire passivity, and the works that pass through him are direct actions of *Para Prakriti* and *Purushottama*. Consequent upon this experience, the seeker is thenceforward moved to higher realms of what can be called supramental experiences of supramental action. That

is the stage where the entire processes of Karma yoga are fulfilled.

During the entire process of Karma yoga, there are two major developments that take place in the yogic development of the seeker. The first is the development of the state of equality or *samattvam*. This is the state where all circumstances, favourable or unfavourable, success or failure, gain or loss, pleasure or pain, — all received by the inner consciousness without like or dislike, unmoved and tranquil, seated high above all happenings, detached with impartial mastery. The second is the knowledge and growth of universal and transcendental consciousness as a result of which the will of the Supreme is disclosed, and adherence to that will is effected by progressive self-surrender in works. At the height of these developments, the culminating message of Karma yoga is realised, namely, “abandon all rules of conduct and take total refuge in the Supreme” — *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekam śarnam vraja*.

In the development of attitude and experience of equality, three stages can be discerned, at the end of which the truths of the great dictum of yoga is realised, namely, *samattvam yoga ucyate*, “it is equality that is yoga”.

The three stages of equality can be described in psychological terms, first, as the stage of Stoic equality, philosophic equality, and equality that comes by resignation to the Divine Will. It is here that we come to appreciate the rationale and usefulness of the Stoics, particularly, the Stoics of ancient Europe, such as Zeno, Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. The attitudes and experiences which they have described refer in varying degrees to these three stages of equality. In the first stage, Stoic equality is the equality that

comes by the discipline of endurance. At this stage, what is realised is that emotions manifest judgements and that these judgements are often erroneous and that consequently, they should be subordinated or eliminated by the attitude and practice of endurance. One is reminded of Epictetus who had been a slave and his leg broken. In a dialogue which he imagines, he states:

I must die. But must I die groaning? I must be imprisoned. But must I whine as well? I must suffer exile. Can any one then hinder me, from going with a smile, and good courage, and at peace? 'Tell the secret.' I refuse to tell, for this is in my power. 'But I will chain you.' What say you, fellow? Chain me? My leg you will chain — yes, but my will — no, not even Zeus can conquer that. 'I will behead you.' Why? When did I ever tell you that I was the only man in the world that could not be beheaded?⁷

An example of the second stage of equality, that of philosophical Stoicism, is to be found in a passage of Marcus Aurelius, which has been quoted by William James in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*:

Everything harmonises with me which is harmonious to thee, O Universe. Nothing for me is too early nor too late, which is in due time for thee. Everything is fruit to me which thy seasons bring, O Nature: from thee are all things, in thee are all things, to thee all things return.⁸

This philosophical Stoicism, in its psychological depth and fervour, stands at a lower level than the state in which equality arises through resignation or surrender of the will to

the Supreme. William James quotes a passage from the *Imitation of Christ* to describe the special fervour and intensity which are inherent in the attitude of surrender:

Lord , thou knowest what is best; let this or that be according as thou wilt. Give what thou wilt, so much as thou wilt, when thou wilt. Do with me as thou knowest best, and as shall be most to thine honour. Place me where thou wilt, and freely work thy will with me in all things. ... When could it be evil when thou wert near? I had rather be poor for thy sake than rich without thee. I choose rather to be a pilgrim upon the earth with thee, than without thee to possess heaven. Where thou art, there is heaven; and where thou art not, behold there death and hell.⁹

But apart from these states of equality, more and more elevating and more and more luminous experiences of equality are attained by the perception of the interplay of the transcendental consciousness, universal consciousness, individual consciousness and also the interplay of the action of Para Prakriti and Apra Prakriti. With these experiences, there comes about the annihilation of desire and also of ego. Sri Aurobindo in his *The Synthesis of Yoga*, has presented a brief but illuminating description of these higher levels of experience of equality. *Appendix IX (p.158)*

It may, however, be noted that equality does not make the seeker blind to differences that are all over the world. Equality is a far deeper state of consciousness. As Sri Aurobindo explains:

“Equality does not mean a fresh ignorance or blindness; it does not call for and need not initiate a greyness of vision

and a blotting out of all hues. Difference is there, variation of expression is there and this variation we shall appreciate, — far more justly than we could when the eye was clouded by a partial and erring love and hate, admiration and scorn, sympathy and antipathy, attraction and repulsion. But behind the variation we shall always see the Complete and Immutable who dwells within it and we shall feel, know or at least, if it is hidden from us, trust in the wise purpose and divine necessity of the particular manifestation, whether it appear to our human standards harmonious and perfect or crude and unfinished or even false and evil.”¹⁰

Indeed, as one ascends in the path of sacrifice, one need more and more imperatively the knowledge of the will that issues from the Supreme. This enhances the pressure of *karma yoga* towards the knowledge of the Divine Will. The pressure increases to such a degree that there bursts in the seeker a vision, even of time-vision and of the divine will and action at a given epoch of time. One such vision has been described in the *Bhagavad Gita* in a most powerful poetic passage. In his *Essays on the Gita*, Sri Aurobindo describes that vision in which the Supreme form of the World-Spirit is made visible to the inner divine eyes gifted temporarily to Arjuna, the hero of the Mahabharata, where he sees God, magnificent and beautiful and terrible, and in that vision the divine will is made manifest. *Appendix X (p.162)*

(e) Yogic Experiences in Jñāna Yoga

Jnana yoga is primarily centred on cognitive faculties, and its first concern is with the development of the intellect so that it can arrive at discrimination between reality and appearances. It relies, therefore, on the power of thought,

vicāra and on the power of discrimination, *viveka*. Four steps of the method of Jnana yoga are: (i) *śravaṇa*, — listening to the Word which symbolises or indicates the truth that has been discovered by those who have trodden the path, (ii) *manana*, — reflection, discriminative conceptualisation in which the concept of reality is clarified repeatedly, contemplatively and dwelt upon by increasing concentration, (iii) *nididhyāsana*, — long process of dwelling on the concepts of reality in a continuous attempt to transcend the process of conceptualisation so as to grasp intuitively the object of thought and thus to prepare the ground of experience in which the subject of knowledge and the object of knowledge can be united, and (iv) *sākṣātkāra*, state of realisation in which reality shines out self-luminously by sublation of all other lower experiences so as to attain permanent station in the Reality that is experienced.

The most important part of the process of Jnana yoga is to eliminate the error in consciousness that arises from the veil of ignorance that exists between the consciousness which is centred on shifting and confusing multiplicity, on the one hand, and the self-existent and self-luminous reality, on the other. The error consists of identification or the unreal or appearance of the phenomenal with the real. The process of Jnana yoga, therefore, proceeds to eliminate the erroneous or false identification. The process also involves a long effort of purification in which layers of confusions and impurities of the body, life, and mind are cleaned up by series of meditations, three of which are most important, namely, meditations on the formula: “I am not a body”, “I am not this life” and “I am not the mind”. These meditations are accompanied by the external and internal purification of the body, of the relationships with the environment and of non-

discriminative errors, confusions and falsehoods. With increasing effort of meditation and concentration, with increasing discrimination between the real and the unreal, with increasing purification and also with increasing renunciation of the unreal, of the erroneous, of the false, there occurs a gradual liberation and also the recovery of the vastness and even the transcendence of the Self. Often in this process, works are renounced, relationships are severed, and a complete renunciation of the worldly life is effected. The important point, however, is the development of inner detachment, *anāsakti*, from all that is not-Self. A positive series of meditations and concentrations accompany the entire procedure and become more and more dominant which have for their object, "I am the Transcendental Self". Three great declarations of the Upanishads are proposed as formulae of meditations, viz., "I am He", "Thou art That", "All this is the Brahman: this Self is the Brahman".

The secret of the effectivity of Jnana yoga is based on the discovery that thought has a power to open up a state of consciousness which is beyond thought, a consciousness where what is thought of is also experienced, provided that thought is made pure of any confusion or error, and if thought is fixed more and more steadily without any wavering even on the long stretch of time, and if the states of quiet, tranquillity, calm, silence and peace are maintained, and if no distraction is allowed to intervene.

Yogic experiences of quiet, tranquillity, calm, silence and peace are extremely important in the path of Jnana yoga. Quiet is a condition in which there is no restlessness or disturbance, — it is the state of *acanchalatā*. Calm is still an unmoved condition in which no disturbance can affect, — it

is a less negative condition than that of quiet. It is a condition of *sthiratā*. Quiet, calm and peace can all be described as tranquillity. Peace is the still more positive condition; it carries with it a sense of settled and harmonious rest and deliverance. It is a state of *sānti*. Silence is a state in which either there is no movement of the mind or vital or else a great stillness in which no-surface movement can pierce or enter. It is the state of *niścala nīravatā*.

There are, according to yogic experiences of Jnana yoga, four states of consciousness which come to be distinguished, and one has to rise from one that is lowest to the one that is the highest. The first is the state of wakefulness, *jāgrata*, which is turned outward, *bahisprajna*. The second is the state of dream, *swapna*, in which one is inward, *antahprajna*. The third is the state of sleep, *sushupti*, a state of perfect slumber where one returns to Oneness, where wisdom is gathered into itself, and where one enjoys unrelated delight. It is also the state of the Almighty, and the Omniscient, and it is also the Inner Soul and the Womb of the Universe. And there is beyond, the fourth state, *turīya*, which is described in the Māndukya Upanishad as follows:

He who is neither inward-wise, nor outward-wise, nor both inward and outward-wise, nor wisdom self-gathered, nor possessed of wisdom, nor unpossessed of wisdom, He who is unseen and incommunicable, unseizable, featureless, unthinkable, and unnameable, Whose essentiality is awareness of the Self in its single existence, in Whom all phenomena dissolve, Who is Calm, Who is Good, Who is the One than Whom there is no other, Him they deem the fourth: He is the Self, He is the object of Knowledge.¹¹

Jnana yoga leads to the attainment of the knowledge of the Self, which is manifested or reflected as the individual soul that is identified with body, life and mind and which is, therefore, to be liberated from that identification or bondage. In that state of liberation, true knowledge of the Self is attained. (See Sri Aurobindo's description of the state in his poem: 'Liberation' in *Appendix XI* (p.165))

This knowledge of the Self has been described variously. One of the most important descriptions is that of what is called the experience of *Adwaita*, the Self as the sole Reality, one without the second, luminous, pure sustaining the world but inactive in it, without sinews of energy, without flaw of duality, without scar of division, unique, identical, free from all appearances and relations and of multiplicity, — pure Self, Atman or Brahman. (See the description of the experience in Sri Aurobindo's poems: 'Adwaita' and 'Nirvana' in *Appendix XII* (p.166))

In fact, two most important experiences and realisations of Jnana yoga are those of cosmic consciousness and of the consciousness of Oneness. Sri Aurobindo has described these experiences, and we refer to them and give below the descriptions of these two yogic experiences and realisations in Sri Aurobindo's words.

Of the cosmic consciousness, Sri Aurobindo states:

“Entering into that Consciousness, we may continue to dwell, like It, upon universal existence. Then we become aware — for all our terms of consciousness and even our sensational experience begin to change, — of Matter as one existence and of bodies as its formations in which the one existence separates itself physically in the single body from

itself in all others and again by physical means establishes communication between these multitudinous points of its being. Mind we experience similarly, and Life also, as the same existence one in its multiplicity, separating and reuniting itself in each domain by means appropriate to that movement. And, if we choose, we can proceed farther and, after passing through many linking stages, become aware of a supermind whose universal operation is the key to all lesser activities. Nor do we become merely conscious of this cosmic existence, but likewise conscious in it, receiving it in sensation, but also entering into it in awareness. In it we live as we lived before in the ego-sense, active, more and more in contact, even unified more and more with other minds, other lives, other bodies than the organism we call ourselves, producing effects not only on our own moral and mental being and on the subjective being of others, but even on the physical world and its events by means nearer to the divine than those possible to our egoistic capacity.”¹²

Cosmic Consciousness¹³

I have wrapped the wide world in my wider self
 And Time and Space my spirit's seeing are.
 I am the god and demon, ghost and elf,
 I am the wind's speed and the blazing star.

All Nature is the nursling of my care,
 I am the struggle and the eternal rest;
 The world's joy thrilling runs through me, I bear
 The sorrow of millions in my lonely breast.

I have learned a close identity with all,
 Yet am by nothing bound that I become;
 Carrying in me the universe's call

I mount to my imperishable home.

I pass beyond Time and life on measureless wings,
Yet still am one with born and unborn things.

Of the experience and realisation of Oneness, Sri Aurobindo states:

“When, then, by the withdrawal of the centre of consciousness from identification with the mind, life and body, one has discovered one’s true self, discovered the oneness of that self with the pure, silent, immutable Brahman, discovered in the immutable, in the Akshara Brahman, that by which the individual being escapes from his own personality into the impersonal, the first movement of the Path of Knowledge has been completed. It is the sole that is absolutely necessary for the traditional aim of the Yoga of Knowledge, for immergence, for escape from cosmic existence, for release into the absolute and ineffable Parabrahman who is beyond all cosmic being. The seeker of this ultimate release may take other realisations on his way, may realise the Lord of the universe, the Purusha who manifests Himself in all creatures, may arrive at the cosmic consciousness, may know and feel his unity with all beings; but these are only stages or circumstances of his journey, results of the unfolding of his soul as it approaches nearer the ineffable goal. To pass beyond them all is his supreme object. When on the other hand, having attained to the freedom and the silence and the peace, we resume possession by the cosmic consciousness of the active as well as the silent Brahman and can securely live in the divine freedom as well as rest in it, we have completed the second movement of the Path by which the integrality of self-knowledge becomes the station of the liberated soul.

“The soul thus possesses itself in the unity of Sachchidananda upon all the manifest planes of its own being. This is the characteristic of the integral knowledge that it unifies all in Sachchidananda because not only is Being one in itself, but it is one everywhere, in all its poises and in every aspect, in its utmost appearance of multiplicity as in its utmost appearance of oneness. The traditional knowledge while it admits this truth in theory, yet reasons practically as if the oneness were not equal everywhere or could not be equally realised in all. It finds it in the unmanifest Absolute, but not so much in the manifestation, finds it purer in the Impersonal than in the Personal, complete in the Nirguna, not so complete in the Saguna, satisfyingly present in the silent and inactive Brahman, not so satisfyingly present in the active. Therefore it places all these other terms of the Absolute below their opposites in the scale of ascent and urges their final rejection as if it were indispensable to the utter realisation. The integral knowledge makes no such division; it arrives at a different kind of absoluteness in its vision of the unity. It finds the same oneness in the Unmanifest and the Manifest, in the Impersonal and the Personal, in Nirguna and Saguna, in the infinite depths of the universal silence and the infinite largeness of the universal action. It finds the same absolute oneness in the Purusha and the Prakriti; in the divine Presence and the works of the divine Power and Knowledge; in the eternal manifestness of the one Purusha and the constant manifestation of the many Purushas; in the inalienable unity of Sachchidananda keeping constantly real to itself its own manifold oneness and in the apparent divisions of mind, life and body in which oneness is constantly, if secretly real and constantly seeks to be realised.

All unity is to it an intense, pure and infinite realisation, all difference an abundant, rich and boundless realisation of the same divine and eternal Being.”¹⁴

Nature of *Jñāna* in *Jñāna* Yoga

Knowledge that is sought to be attained through Jnana yoga has certain special characteristics; it is the light by which one grows into one's true being, not the knowledge by which one increases information and intellectual riches. It is true that scientific or psychological or philosophical or ethical or aesthetic or practical knowledge help us to grow but only in the becoming, not in the being, — even though they can enter into the definition of Yogic knowledge when they are used as aids to know the highest Being. Thus scientific knowledge can get us through the veil of processes and phenomena and enable us to see one reality behind which explains them all. Psychological knowledge can be used to know ourselves and to distinguish the lower self from the higher self in order that we may renounce the lower and grow into the higher. Philosophical knowledge can be termed as a light upon the essential principles of existence so as to enable ourselves to discover and live in that which is eternal. Ethical knowledge can aid us when having distinguished the wrong from the right, we put away the one and rise above the other into the pure innocence of the divine Nature, — Para Prakriti. Aesthetic knowledge, too, can be a part of Yogic knowledge when we discover by it the beauty of the Divine. Even knowledge of the world can be a part of Yogic knowledge when we see through it the way of the transcendent with his creatures and use it for the service of the Divine. Even then they are only aids; the real knowledge, — Jnana is that which is a secret to the mind, of which the

mind only gets by reflection, but which lives in the spirit. The object distinctive of the Yogic knowledge is the union with what can be perceived, felt or conceived to be the highest truth of the being, and as the Upanishad states, when that object is attained, all becomes known, even what science as we practise it aims to know:

*yasmin vijñate sarvam
vijñātam bhavati*

Knowing it is That knowing which everything becomes known.

Records of Yoga have described three movements leading up to the yogic states of knowledge or realisation. These are three successive movements, — internal vision, complete internal experience and identity.

- (i) Internal vision or drishti is the direct perception of psychical things and of the Self. To begin with, we may hold firmly the conception of the Self derived from our inmost aspirations or from teachers or from luminous teachings. We may fix it by an entire and exclusive concentration; we may thus use the triple operation of *Jñāna yoga*, *shravana*, *manana*, *nidhidhyāsana*, It is only when after long and persistent concentration that the veil of the mind is rent or swept aside, and a flood of light breaks over the awakened mentality, and conception gives place to a knowledge — vision in which the Self is as present, real, concrete, as physical object to physical eye that we possess in knowledge.

This experience must become more frequent till it is constant.

- (ii) In due course, there are other internal experiences so

that the vision of the Self is completed by experiences of it in all our members. All this knowledge and experience are primary means of arriving at and of possessing identity.

- (iii) One not only sees the Self or God, one even embraces Him and become that Reality. The Ishopanishad describes the great experience culminating in identity in the following terms:

*yas tu sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmanievānupaśyati
sarvabhūteṣu cātmānam tato na vijiugupsate.
yasmin sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmaivābhūd vijānataḥ
tatra ko mohaḥ kaḥ śoka ekatvam anupaśyataḥ.*¹⁵

But he who sees everywhere the Self in all existences and all existences in the Self, shrinks not thereafter from anything. He in whom it is the Self-being that has become all existences that are Becomings, for he has the perfect knowledge, how shall he be deluded, whence shall he have grief who sees everywhere oneness?

(f) Experiences in Bhakti Yoga

We may now turn to yogic experiences in Bhakti yoga. This Yoga is as simple and straightforward as love moves straight towards its object. It cannot, therefore, be fixed down to any systematic methods. Bhakti yoga may employ various means of support, but since there is a human tendency towards order, process, and system, there have been attempts to methodise the movement of Bhakti or Divine love.

In a sense, numberless religions in their inmost core,

have provided numberless means and methods to approach the Reality which has been viewed as worthy of worship and devotion.

There are various ways in which the path of Bhakti yoga is divided into stages of its development. There are, according to one classification, six stages of Bhakti:

- (i) The first stage is known as *bhaktasthala*. This stage is marked by devotion inspired by faith.
- (ii) The next stage is called *maheshwarasthala*, where the state of consciousness is that of *nisthā bhakti*, the state of *bhakti* where the seeker decides that he would be worshipping the Divine and the Divine alone.
- (iii) The next stage is known as *prasādashthala*, where the seeker begins to feel that everything that he attains in life and every experience that he enjoys or suffers is given to him through the grace of the Divine.
- (iv) The next stage is known as *prāṇalingasthala*, where the devotee begins to worship the Divine in any form whatsoever. At this stage, the yogic practice reaches a remarkable stage which is called *anubhava bhakti*, and this stage is marked with numerous mystic experiences.
- (v) The next stage is known as *samarpana* stage, where one is able to surrender oneself totally to the Divine and the Bhakti of this stage is known as *ananda bhakti*.
- (vi) Finally, one arrives at the *aikya* stage which leads to union and even identity. This stage of Bhakti is known as *samarasa bhakti*, where one leaves behind all ideas of differences and merges with the Supreme consciousness.

However, if we study the Yoga of Bhakti as an intimate process of the heart-yearning of the soul for the Divine, this Yoga resorts itself into four stages:

1. There is the desire of the soul when it turns to God and the straining its emotions towards Him;
2. The pain of love and the Divine return of love;
3. The delight of love possessed and the play of that delight; and
4. The eternal enjoyment of the Divine Lover which is the heart of celestial bliss.

The Yoga of devotion concentrates on the affective aspects of human psychology. It recognises that emotions constitute a great force for the growth of human personality, and the more are the emotions refined, the more does the human personality get elevated into the scale of inner culture. Love, joy and beauty, — when they are refined and purified from their inner contradictions and from their gross seekings of satisfaction in terms of physical enjoyment, and vital play of unending demands in human relationships, there arise in human nature higher levels of sensitivity and subtlety and joy that prohibit the exploitation of the objects of love and beauty for any gross satisfaction or crude mishandling or unjust profit. The natural consequence of this purification results in the sentiments of reverence, admiration, worship, service, obedience, holiness, joy of companionship and love that does not demand but is earnest to offer, to sacrifice and even to be melted in the object of love. Based on this psychological movement of human nature, Yoga of devotion aims at refining all emotions and proposes the various methods by which emotions can be turned and concentrated

on the Divine Being.

Human life is marked by pain and wants, and in search of alleviation and cure of pain and wants, a point is reached where one is drawn more and more imperatively to a Power or Being, even though they may be supraphysical, and one may have to cultivate faith. This is how many turn to God for the removal of pain and wants. But these are not the only two motives for turning towards the Divine Being. A higher motive is to be found, when the seeker, in search of the highest knowledge, discovers philosophically or spiritually, that there is in the universe and above the universe a Reality, who deserves to be known more and more perfectly and that the perfect knowledge of the Reality is accessible only when one opens one's heart and cognitive faculties to the Divine Reality. Aspiration to know the Supreme has thus been considered to be a higher motive of Devotion and for entry into the path of Bhakti yoga.

But even higher than this motive is the motive of the seeker who has reached the stage in the development of Karma yoga or Jnana yoga, or even in the pursuit of the Divine merely for the cure of pain or fulfilment of wants, where there bursts in the heart that motiveless love for the Divine which irresistibly wants to be consumed in that love. This *ahaituki bhakti*, the highest form of bhakti, bhakti for the sake of bhakti, the beginning of which is bhakti, the middle of which is bhakti and the end of which is also bhakti.

Even here there are two types of seekers. There are those who love the Divine and seek the Divine out of the irresistible attraction because they have heard the enchanting flute of the Divine call or have on some occasions seen with the inner eye the irresistible Form of the Divine and have

fallen in the love of the Divine. But there are those who have known the Divine and known the Divine as the One Wonderful and who with this knowledge seek nothing but the Divine love for its own sake and who want to be with the Divine where he is to be found, whether in hell or heaven or on the earth, and who want to offer themselves absolutely, undeservedly and to offer every drop of blood of the body as an offering to the Divine Lover, — those seekers are of the highest category in the path of Bhakti yoga. As Sri Krishna points out in the *Bhagavad Gita*, all devotees are dear to the Divine, but devotees who also possess the knowledge of the Divine are dearer to the Divine.

In view of this nature of Bhakti yoga, there is one emotion which is inconsistent and which is to be dropped altogether in the path of Bhakti yoga. This is the emotion of fear. It is true that the sentiment of fear is perfectly consistent with devotion of a certain kind and up to a certain point. In the path of Karma yoga, the seeker seeks to regard God as the King and does not approach too near the glory of his throne, unless justified by righteousness or led there by a mediator who will turn away the divine wrath for sin. Even when he draws nearest, he keeps an awed distance between himself and his high object of worship. But he cannot embrace the Divine with all the fearless confidence of the child in his mother or of the lover in his beloved or with that intimate sense of oneness which perfect love brings with it. Therefore, the Yoga of Divine love has for its object not merely the God of purity and truth and wisdom but also God as the father of all who extends his wings of benignant protection and love over all his creatures, and from that concept of the object, the relation that is indispensable for the Yoga of the Divine love emerges, namely, the relation of

father and child, a relation of love, and as a result, the relation of brotherhood with our fellow beings. Love is the real key, and perfect love is inconsistent with the admission of the motive of fear. Closeness of the human soul to the Divine is the object, and gradually all other emotions disappear in the intimacy of the union of love.

It may even be said that even prayer, which is an extremely important part of the methods and experiences of Bhakti yoga, is ultimately justified not as a process by which what is asked for is granted but because prayer is an intimate expression of the relationship that the seeker seeks to build with God. In the end, prayer either ceases or remains only for the joy of the relation.

Love is a passion and it seeks for two things, eternity and intensity, and it is through Bhakti yoga that the seeker arrives at the discovery and the possession of the Divine Being in whom alone eternity and intensity of love are fulfilled. In the following passage, Sri Aurobindo describes that love for the Divine which suffuses the steps of Bhakti yoga and leads the seeker to inexpressible fulfilment, not only in knowing and possessing the Divine but also in divinising totality of our entire being and nature:

“Love is a passion and it seeks for two things, eternity and intensity, and in the relation of the Lover and Beloved the seeking for eternity and for intensity is instinctive and self-born. Love is a seeking for mutual possession, and it is here that the demand for mutual possession becomes absolute. Passing beyond desire of possession which means a difference, it is a seeking for oneness, and it is here that the idea of oneness, of two souls merging into each other and becoming one finds the acme of its longing and the utterness

of its satisfaction. Love, too, is a yearning for beauty, and it is here that the yearning is eternally satisfied in the vision and the touch and the joy of the All-beautiful. Love is a child and a seeker of Delight, and it is here that it finds the highest possible ecstasy both of the heart-consciousness and of every fibre of the being. Moreover, this relation is that which as between human being and human being demands the most and, even while reaching the greatest intensities, is still the least-satisfied, because only in the Divine can it find its real and its utter satisfaction. Therefore it is here most that the turning of human emotion Godwards finds its full meaning and discovers all the truth of which love is the human symbol, all its essential instincts divinised, raised, satisfied in the bliss from which our life was born and towards which by oneness it returns in the Ananda of the divine existence where love is absolute, eternal and unalloyed.”¹⁶

At the highest stage of Bhakti yoga, one becomes universalised and the way of the Divine love and delight is raised to its intensities, and it gives the supreme liberation. Its highest crest is a supra-cosmic union. But for love, complete union is *mukti*: it includes all kinds of *mukti* together. In the end, these different kinds of *mukti* are not successive to each other or mutually exclusive. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

“We have the absolute union of the divine with the human spirit, *sāyujya*; in that reveals itself a content of all that depends here upon difference, — but there the difference is only a form of oneness, — Ananda too of nearness and contact and mutual presence, *sāmīpya*, *sālōkya*, Ananda of mutual reflection, the thing that we call likeness, *sādrśya*, and other wonderful things too for which language has as

yet no name. There is nothing which is beyond the reach of the God-lover or denied to him; for he is the favourite of the divine Lover and the self of the Beloved.”¹⁷

A Note

Literature of Bhakti yoga, Eastern and Western, literature pertaining to religions, and literature pertaining to yogic path of Divine love, has provided voluminous descriptions of yogic experiences relating to the path of Divine love. In India, there has been a long line of saints who have described their yearnings for the Divine, their struggle with the lower nature so as to surmount it and to devote themselves exclusively to union with the Divine. Thousands of poems and songs describe their *sādhana*, their prayers, their glimpses of the Divine Presence and their experiences of the pain of separation from the Divine, even their ecstasy in union with the Divine, and indeed it can be said that it is not possible for the tongue of human speech to tell of the utter unity and all the eternal varieties of the *ānanda* of Divine love.

We have appended in the *Appendix XIII* (p.168) a few poems which relate to different stages of the yogic experiences of the Bhakti yoga.

One of the Tamil Alwars describes the condition of the mother of a love-stricken girl (symbolising the human soul yearning to merge into the Godhead). She complains to her friend of the sad plight of her child whom love for Krishna has rendered “mad”, the ultimate spirit of the universe. (See the poem entitled, ‘Love-mad’ composed by Nammalwar)

Two poems are from the famous saint-poetess, Andal. They are entitled, ‘I dreamed a dream’ and ‘Ye Others’.

Another poem is from Horu Thakur, a Bengali saint where he describes the longing of the soul for reunion with God, without whom the sweetnesses of love and life are vain. Another poem is from Vidyapati where he describes the beauty of the God whom he has seen. Another poem is from Jnanadas which describes the condition of the soul as yet divided from the Eternal, yet having caught a glimpse of his intoxicating beauty grows passionate in his remembrance and swoons with the sensuous expectation of union. Another poem, again, from Jnanadas which describes the human soul, in a moment of rapt excitement when robe of sense has fallen from it, is surprised and seized by the vision of the Eternal. A poem of Chandidas describes ocean-deep yearning of the soul for the Divine.

All the poems presented in this *Appendix* are translations from the original in Tamil or Bengali by Sri Aurobindo.

Recapitulation: Some Questions and Answers

What has been stated so far is only a glimpse of the varieties of yogic experience, and what is stated is far too inadequate even to serve as a preface to the descriptions of yogic experiences available in the history of relevant literature. A few broad rough strokes have been cast, and many important systems of yoga such as those of the Veda and the Upanishads, and many traditions of the East and the West have been either just mentioned or altogether unpardonably ignored.

(a) From what has been indicated here and what can be gathered, — if we make a studious and critical study of the important literature on yogic experiences, we can formulate some important general statements, and formulate also some questions which would necessitate further research, and which would also involve discussions of important issues in science, philosophy, ethics, religion and even occultism. For yoga aims at knowledge and claims validity for the knowledge acquired through yogic methods, and if this claim is sustained, it will have far-reaching consequences not only for the domains that aim at the knowledge of the truth, but also for a possible change in the climate of the contemporary civilisation which suffers from various forms of crisis, some of which are related to conflicts of culture, conflicts of religions and conflicts relating to claims regarding truth. It is in this context that the subject of varieties of yogic

experiences deserves to be brought forth as one of the central subjects that must be pursued by all sincere seekers of truth and of the highest welfare of civilisation.

1. One general statement that can be made is that yogic experience runs everywhere on the same lines, even though it should be admitted that there are, not one line, but many. Still the broad lines are the same everywhere and the intuitions, revelations, inspirations, and mystic phenomena are the same in ages and countries far apart from each other and even though systems were practised quite independently from each other. The experiences of Saint Teresa, those of Andal or of Mirabai are precisely the same in substance, however, differing in names, forms, or cultural colouring. It is a fact that they were not corresponding with one another or aware of each other's experiences and results as are modern scientists in different parts of the world. This would seem to show that there is something there identical, universal, and presumably truth — however, the colour of the translation may differ because of the differences of mental language.
2. As in science, so here in this field, we are required to accumulate experience on experience, following faithfully the methods laid down by the teacher or by the systems of the past. As in science, so here, we are required to develop intuitive discrimination which compares the experiences, see what they mean, how far and in what field each is valid, what is the place of each in the whole, how it can be reconciled or related with each other, even though at the first sight might seem to contradict each other. As in science, so here, we need to continue to conduct many related inquiries until we can

move with some secure knowledge in the vast field of yogic phenomena, — and to permit even further development of fresh knowledge.

3. It is extremely important to underline the fact that yoga does not admit dogma, either in its own method of inquiry or even in the philosophical systems which can be built up on the basis of the data of yogic experiences. Yoga may not combat dogmatic assertions when they are put forward as dogmatic assertions which cannot be questioned, but if the contents of dogmatic assertions are to be admitted in the field of yoga, yoga has to test them on the anvil of the criteria of repeatable and verifiable experiences.
4. It is also to be noted that yoga has developed a number of methods which have been tested, and which have been found justified on the ground of the knowledge gained of the truths, principles, powers and processes that govern the realisation. These methods have something of the same relation to the cognitive, affective and conative and other psychological workings of the human apparatus as has the scientific handling of the natural force of electricity or of steam to the normal operations of steam and of electricity. These methods have been developed over thousands of years and have been formulated by regular experiments, practical analyses and constant results.
5. It is true that yogic experiences have so far remained accessible to a small minority of human race, but still there has been a host of independent witnesses to them in all times, climes and conditions, and many of them are the greatest intelligences of the past, and some of them

world's most remarkable figures. These experiences must, therefore, be taken into account seriously and honestly and must not be immediately dismissed simply because they are not only beyond the average man in the street but also not easily seizable even by many cultivated intellects or because their methods are more difficult than those of ordinary sense or reason.

6. It is true that the field of yogic experience, if it is seized on by unripened minds, it lends itself to the most perilous distortions and misleading imaginations. In the past these distortions and misleading imaginations have encrusted a real nucleus of truth with such an accretion of perverting superstitions and irrationalising dogmas, that they thwarted all advance in true knowledge.
7. It is also true that during serious debates, arguments have been advanced which rely only on sporadic intuitions or revelations or inspirations, instead of those which have been tested on the anvil of scrupulous methods of verification which are available in the vast body of knowledge that yoga possesses. Arguments based upon yogic experiences have great relevance to the search for the truth, but all seekers must examine all aspects of evidence impartially and in the pure spirit of the search of truth and truth alone.

(b) In this context, it is necessary to distinguish between occultism and yoga. It is true that occultism is concerned with occult phenomena and the laws governing those phenomena; occultism is the science of secrets that govern the phenomena that we normally experience but the underlying roots of which we do not normally experience. In a sense, even physical sciences can be regarded as occult

sciences and can be grouped under occultism, considering that these sciences have also revealed and demonstrated the secrets which lie behind the truths of quantities and qualities, of the speeds and measures, of the real nature of elements, compounds and various kinds of combinations which are found in nature or which can be found by laborious effort or which can even be fabricated by the operations of the human intelligence. But what is distinctly called occultism, in the present stage of development of knowledge, is related to the phenomena and realities of supra-physical ranges of the subtle-physical, subliminal vital and subliminal mental, as they are found in human psychology or in worlds that are supra-physical but which have their own organisations and complex formations of existence and movement. These supra-physical domains are distinct from the domains of the psychic consciousness, spiritual consciousness and of supramental consciousness, — all of which are above the physical, subtle-physical, vital and mental domains of existence. In strict terms, the field which makes yoga distinctive is its field of psychic consciousness, spiritual consciousness and supramental consciousness. It is true, however, that yogic quest is often prefaced by an entry into the fields of subtle-physical, inner vital and inner mental, — even as yogic quest is often prefaced by a serious quest in philosophy, science, religion, ethics or aesthetics. But even if this prefatory quest in these fields happens to be necessary in most cases, it has to be underlined that the central field, — the distinctive field, — of yogic experiences is that of the psychic, spiritual and supramental. It is for this reason that many yogins, in order to keep their quest absolutely direct and unmixed, discourage occultism and even *aṣṭa siddhis*, many aspects of which are limited to attainments of

occultism. At the same time, there are yogins, and even accomplished yogins who, in a more comprehensive search of knowledge do not lay down any limitations in regard to the field of their quest, but with due discrimination, and without diluting their rigour of quest of their own specialised field, they explore occultism, even as they do explore many fields of inquiry such as those of science, philosophy, art and others. Nonetheless, many of the adverse judgements against yoga issue from indiscriminate clubbing of the occult and yogic experiences, and many of the infirmities which are found in the claims of occultists tend to be held also against the claims of yogic experiences.

There is, however, one argument which is advanced against both occultism and yoga, and that argument is levelled against all that is supra-physical. This argument makes, first of all, a demand for physical valid proof of all that is claimed to be supra-physical. But an impartial inquiry, even at the first sight, will show that the demand for physical proof of a supra-physical fact is irrational and illogical. One may concede that what is spoken of as supra-physical may be adjudged to be unintelligible, but that does not constitute the disproof of what is unintelligible. It is only a proof of incommunicability but, if it is considered useful and important to concentrate on what is sought to be communicated through what is unintelligible, there is a good ground to investigate, and to enter into the field which is sought to be referred to in what seems to be unintelligible. A purely scientific attitude will concede this need and move forward in instituting the required inquiry.

On the other hand, it may be suggested that a supra-physical fact may impinge on the physical world and produce physical results; it may even produce an effect on our

physical senses and become manifest to them, but that cannot be its invariable action and character and process. Ordinarily, supra-physical in fact must produce a direct effect on what is supra-physical in our consciousness, — on our mind, our life-being, our spiritual being, or other parts of us that are of the same order as itself, and can only indirectly and through them, if at all, influence the physical world and physical life.

Even if the concerned supra-physical object objectivises itself, it must be to a subtler sense in us and only derivatively to the outward physical senses. It is true that sometimes, this derivative objectivisation happens to occur, and if there is an association of action of the material body and its physical organs, then the supra-physical can become outwardly sensible to us. This is what happens, for example, in regard to the phenomena which have been studied in regard to the workings of faculties such as those of second sight. In certain occult phenomena, we seem to see and hear by the outer senses but which are not sensed inwardly through representation or interpretation of symbolical images which bear the stamp of an inner experience or an evident character of formations in a subtle substance. In the field of yoga and in the field of occultism, there are various kinds of evidences of the existence of other planes of being and communication with them. These include objectivisation to the outer sense, subtle-sense contacts, mind-contacts, life-contacts, and contacts through the subliminal in special states of consciousness existing in our ordinary range.

It is argued that the entire field of the supra-physical experience is a field of subjective experience or of subtle-sense images, and these can be easily deceptive. In regard to this argument, it may be admitted that there is a too great a tendency to grant credibility to the extraordinary and

miraculous or supernatural at its face-value. Hence, it is necessary to apply greater rigour in scrutinising these phenomena and finding out strict standards and characteristic appropriate and valid means of verification. But mere liability to error cannot be a reason for shutting out a large and important domain of experience, since error is not a prerogative of the subjective experience alone; error is also an appanage of ordinary instruments of sense-organs and of the mind which relies on the evidence of the sense-organs. Error is also to be found in the domain where objective methods and standards have been erected. It may, therefore, be reasonably acknowledged that there can be and there are in the yogic field standards of judgement and criteria of verification which are appropriate to the supra-physical fields. The basic point that we need to underline is that the physical or supra-physical truths must be founded not on mental belief alone but on experience, — but in each case, experience must be of the kind, physical, subliminal or spiritual, which is appropriate to the order of the truths into which we are empowered to enter. Their validity and significance, as Sri Aurobindo points out, “must be scrutinised, but according to their own law and by a consciousness which can enter into them and not according to the law of another domain or by a consciousness which is capable only of truths of another order; so alone can we be sure of our steps and enlarge firmly our sphere of knowledge.”¹⁸

Phenomena of Varieties of Spiritual Experience: Synthesis in Integral Realisation

There is, however, an important problem which arises from the phenomena of the varieties of spiritual experience. In the course of the history of yoga, there have been detailed investigations of the object of knowledge, status of yogic knowledge that has been obtained through yogic processes, and the results of yogic experiences for the highest well-being of the individual and the world at all levels of existence, spiritual, mental, vital, and physical. In this course of development, the field of inquiry would have been much easier and much simpler if methods were uniform and if the knowledge of the object inquired into were also uniform. This would have rendered unanimity in this field of inquiry more easily. But the yogic field is marked by varieties of lines of development, varieties of methods and varieties of reports in regard to the truth or reality of the objects that have been pursued by yogic processes and methods. Again, the difficulty would have been not very serious, if there would have been some kind of understanding and agreement, based on verifiable truth, that all experiences in yoga are valid, even when they are varied. But when we examine the history of yoga, we find differing claims, even conflicting claims, and even denials in regard to the veracity of the rival claims.

It is this situation which necessitates the study of varieties

of yogic experience with a more searching and critical sense. And even though this subject is very vast and very difficult, we need to bring forth although briefly, certain facts in regard to the varieties of yogic experience.

Let us, first of all, admit that when we attempt to put ourselves into conscious relations with whatever supreme or universal Being there exists concealed or manifest in the world, we arrive at a very various experience and one or other variant term of this experience is turned by different intellectual conceptions into their fundamental idea of existence.

There is, for example, the crude experience of the Divine who is claimed to be seen quite different from and greater than ourselves, quite different from and greater than the universe in which we live; in this experience, all that is phenomenal seems a thing other than the infinity of the self-conscious spirit and all that is phenomenal seems an image of a lesser truth, if not an illusion. The question is whether this crude experience is scrutinised by yogic methods and whether this experience is the final experience of the Divine. It is true that if one dwells in this experience, we arrive at an intellectual conception, when we try to philosophise on the basis of that experience, of the divine as extra-cosmic. But we find that in the yogic field, there are other experiences also, and one of them is that in which it is found that all phenomena are contained in the Divine, and that no phenomenon is outside the Divine. Another yogic experience affirms one self of all and of all that we have consciousness and the vision. In the light of that experience, we can no longer say or think that we are entirely different from him, but that there is self and there is a phenomenon of self-

existence. There is also an experience that all is one self, but all is variation in the phenomenon. There are reports of yogic experiences in which one can dwell in exclusive intensity of a union with the self as a result of which one may even come to experience the phenomenal existence as a thing dreamlike and unreal. But, again, there is a report of the yogic experience of a double intensity in which one may have the double experience of a supreme self-existent oneness with the self or the Divine and yet of oneself as living with that self or the Divine and in many relations to him in a persistent form, an actual derivation of his being. In that experience, the phenomenal universe, as also our existence in the universe, become to us constant and real forms of the self-aware existence of the Divine.

In another yogic experience there are relations of differences between individual souls and the Divine, and there are also relations of differences between the Divine and all the other living or inanimate powers of the Eternal, and there are also relations in the dealings of the individual with the cosmic self in the nature of the universe. In philosophical terms, these relations are other than those of the supra-cosmic truth; they are derivative creations of a certain power of consciousness of the spirit. If one dwells in the yogic experience of the difference between the self and the forms of self, one may come to regard the Self as a containing an immanent reality, and one may admit the truth of omnipresent spirit, and yet the forms of the spirit, the moulds of its presence may affect us not only as something other than it, not only as transient, but as unreal images.

There is also the yogic experience of the Spirit as the divine being immutable and ever-containing in his vision the

multiplicity of the universe; there is also the yogic experience of the separate, of the simultaneous or the coincident experience of the divine immanent in our selves and in all creatures. There is also another yogic experience in which one sees all things as the very Divine, not only that Spirit which dwells immutable in the universe and its countless creatures, but all this inward and outward becomings are seen as divine Reality manifesting Himself in us and in the cosmos. If one dwells on this experience, one gets the pantheistic identity, the One that is all.

At first sight, these spiritual experiences seem vastly different from each other or even opposed to each other. Records of yogic experience show us that this situation of the variety of yogic experiences has been acknowledged, and they are also shown to be reconcilable in some yogic experiences of synthesis of integrality. This synthesis is strikingly present in the synthesis of yoga as we find in the Veda, Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita, and this synthesis is reflected even in short phrases as *ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti*,¹⁹ that reality is one but the knowers of that reality speak of it in different ways, *tad ejati tannaijati*,²⁰ that moves, and that moves not; *dvāvimau puruṣau loke kṣaraś ca akṣara eva ca*²¹, *uttamaḥ puruṣastvanyaḥ paramātmetyudāhṛtaḥ*²² — there are two *purusas*, one perishable and the other imperishable, but other than these two is the *purushottama*, called the highest self. The condition of this reconciliation or synthesis is to cease to press on one or the other exclusively, and if it is seen, as it is seen in an integral yogic experience, that the divine Reality is something greater than the universal existence, but yet that all universal and particular things are that Divine and nothing else, — significative of him, and not entirely That in part or some of their appearances but still they

could not be significative of him if they were something else and not term and stuff of the divine existence. That is the Real; but they are its expressive reality.

This means that in the yogic *sāstra*, there is recognition not only of variety of yogic experience but also of a hierarchy of yogic experience. Indeed, the experiences from the commencement of any process of yoga and experiences related to gradual advancement in the development of yogic accomplishment, there can be understandably a hierarchy of experiences, and degrees of approximation leading up to the culminating experience in any lines of development. But if all the culminating experiences of all lines of development speak of the union with the highest, and if all the yogic experiences speak of the highest as indivisible, then there should be unanimity among these experiences. This argument is admitted in the yogic *sāstra*, but it is pointed out that there are certain culminating experiences. Which when they touch that mental substance in its state of utter silence or love or utter passivity overwhelms that substance with such intensity and perfection that that aspect or quality of the indivisible infinite that is in the forefront in the experience is felt to be final or ultimate. But, if the mental substance is further deepened or widened or heightened, new experiences revealing other aspects of the Infinite join the previous states of realisation, and this process can continue and the mind gives place to the supermind, where integrality of the Supreme becomes ever-manifest. It is in connection with this integral experience that the Upanishad gives us the famous description:

That is perfect, this is perfect, from the Perfect rises the perfect, if the perfect is subtracted from the perfect, the perfect is the remainder.²³

In the light of this integral experience, the other culminating experience or realisations are seen as penultimate realisations and that even if these penultimate realisations sublate the other lower experiences belonging to their own lines of development as also of those belonging to others, even then differences among them continue, and differences are reconciled only in an integral experience in which all the penultimate realisations are integrated in a vast integrating experience.

But even then, the question is as to why the indivisible integral reality is not experienced integrally at the level of the penultimate realisation.

The answer lies in the psychology of yogic experience where the mind as a principle plays an important role. It is admitted that since the object of yogic quest is in its reality indivisible, the experience of that object should be experienced as indivisible and integral reality. However, the object of yogic quest is not only indivisible but also infinite. And the infinite cannot be experienced as a finite form or fixed form uniform for all approaches. Moreover, the experiencing substance in the human psychology is the mind, the nature of which is to reflect, not the indivisibility and infinity but some reflection of the same, which takes the form of an aspect of the infinite and indivisible reality. Which aspect of Infinite will be reflected in the mind will depend upon the line of training that the mind receives during the course of pursuit of yogic endeavour. Hence, at the level of mind, at the level of the pure rational mind some pure concept of an aspect of reality is reflected. But if the mind is quieted by a yogic process, then what is reflected is not a concept of an aspect, but some concrete experience of an aspect. If, therefore, the indivisible infinite reality is to be

reflected indivisibly and infinitely, the reflecting medium has to rise to levels higher than that of mind, such as the levels of higher mind, illumined mind, intuitive mind, overmind and supermind. It is only at the level of the supermind that the integral experience of the infinite and the indivisible is obtained in its full infinity and indivisibility. It is claimed that the Rishis of the Veda, Upanishads and of some other records of yoga, which describe the integral reality in which different aspects of the reality are experienced in an integral cognition, had attained to the level of the supermind. Sri Aurobindo has described this entire process of the experience of the indivisible and infinite reality at the level of mind, overmind and supermind, and since the subject is extremely important, it is best to present the description of the entire process in Sri Aurobindo's own words. See *Appendix XVI (p.182)*

Our account of the varieties of yogic experience can not be complete without referring to the two movements of yoga which have been found in some ancient records of yoga as also in those of Sri Aurobindo. These two movements are, first, the movement of the ascent of yoga so as to rise up to the supramental consciousness and secondly, the movement of the descent in yoga by which the supramental consciousness can be brought down so as to transform lower levels of consciousness, including the physical consciousness. In fact, in pursuance of these double processes; Sri Aurobindo has spoken of a new integral yoga of three transformations, psychic transformation, spiritual transformation, and supramental transformation.

In the literature relating to the integral yoga, Sri Aurobindo has presented the yoga of self-perfection and described in detail the psychology of what he calls, the

Gnostic Being, a being that is thoroughly supramentalised by the consciousness and force of the supermind.

It is impossible to include in the scope of this book even an indication of this vast literature concerning the yogic experiences concerning the ascent to and the descent of the supramental consciousness into the human instrument that can enable the evolutionary nature in the human instrument so that the supramental being could be created as a first unveiled manifestation of the truth of the Self and Spirit in the material universe.

All this could be a part of another book in the future.

See also a Synoptic Note at the end of the book.

Notes and References

- ¹ *Rig Veda*, 1.10.1,2
- ² *Rig Veda*, V.19.1
- ³ The nature of the crisis that Arjuna underwent is described vividly in Chapters I & II of the Bhagavad Gita, and the relevant portions are appended in *Appendix XV* (p.192)
- ⁴ Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library (SABCL), 1971, Pondicherry, Vol.20, p.63
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p.2
- ⁶ Sri Aurobindo's poem "Divine Worker" that describes the state of consciousness of the divine worker is appended at *Appendix VIII* (p.157)
- ⁷ Quoted by Bertrand Russell in his *History of Western Philosophy*, paperback edition, 1996, p.270
- ⁸ William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, Barnes & Noble Books, New York, paperback edition, 2004, p.49
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p.50
- ¹⁰ Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, SABCL, 1971, Pondicherry, Vol.20, p.212
- ¹¹ Mandukya Upanishad, 7
- ¹² Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, SABCL, 1971, Pondicherry, Vol.18, pp.21-22
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, *Collected Poems*, Vol.5, 1971, p.134
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol.20, pp.401-2
- ¹⁵ Isha Upamshad, 6,7.
- ¹⁶ Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, SABCL, 1971, Pondicherry, Vol.21, p.545
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.579
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, *The Life Divine*, Vol.19, p.774
- ¹⁹ *Rig Veda*, I.164.46

²⁰ Ishopanishad, 5

²¹ Bhagavad Gita, XV.16.

²² Ibid., XV. 17

²³ Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad, V.1

A
Synoptic
Note

A Synoptic Note

Quest of Yoga

Yoga is the expression of the flame of aspiration that rises upwards in order to burn and burn steadily, constantly and ever-increasingly, to grow in leaps of fire in order to burn away all that tends towards extinction, to build our inner being and all members of the being, — body, life, and mind and all our faculties, actual and latent, — so that all of them make an ascent in all consuming zeal to unite with all that is or felt or conceived to be the highest, the best, the widest and intensest, the infinite, the limitless, all and beyond, — so that they can attain consummation and ever-living sustenance of heat and light. This flame has, in its upward movement, — it is discovered, — an inherent sense of direction and discloses progressively the needed knowledge of the means and methods that are required for its constant movement and consummation; it has the Veda — not the text — but that which is recognised in the Indian tradition as the secret knowledge that is in the heart of every thinking and living being, but uncovered by the seeker through the process of the burning of aspiration itself, — and, therefore, in need of no indispensable external agencies of guidance, — teacher, book, ethics, aesthetics, philosophy, science, occultism or religion, — even though they may be utilised as and when indicated or offered on the way, but in the end transcended by the inward force of the constant need to burn and burn luminously and immortally.

Yoga is the journey of the yogic flame of aspiration, and this journey is, as reported by the seekers, difficult and even

perilous, although when carried on by heroic concentration, it becomes more and more felicitous, and victories are won after victories, and even though it rises on peaks after peaks of accomplishment — yoga-siddhi, — there are still farther accomplishments that are made clearer. As an ancient record of Yoga states:

*brahmāṇastvā śatakrato
ud vamsam iva yemire.
yat sānoḥ sānum āruhad
bhūri aspaṣṭa kartvam.¹*

The seekers of the journey climb thee like a ladder, O hundred powered. As one ascends from peak to peak, there is made clear the much that has still to be done. .

And yet in the ever-progressive movement, the individual seeker, the individual soul, discovers the stable source and foundation, the creative power of the world, and even while seated securely in that foundation, it sees luminously the progressive self-unfolding. Again, as it is stated:

*abhyavasthāḥ pra jāyante
pra vavrer vavriś ciketa.
upasthe māturvi caṣṭe.²*

States upon states are born; covering over covering awakens to knowledge: in the lap of the Creative Power of the Worlds, the Mother of Creation, he wholly sees.

Yoga is a quest, with its own distinctiveness of object and method, even though this distinctiveness has characters that are, in some measure or the other, shared by all the great

quests of science, philosophy, ethics, aesthetics and religion. The yogic quest transcends all other quests by its insistence on attaining answers to the deepest questions that all other quests raise in some way or in some degree, and attempt to answer but remain unanswered but which at the same time must be answered. The central questions that impel yogic quest are: (i) if human life has any meaning, and if so, (ii) if that meaning can be consciously seized, (iii) if the relevant knowledge can be possessed with certainty, and (iv) if that knowledge can be applied in regard to the highest possible fulfilment of the individual in the cosmos. In the pursuit of these questions, Yoga aims at cultivating all human faculties, at purifying them and perfecting them so as to utilise them methodically. And taking advantage of the experiments that have been conducted over millennia in developing Yogic methods and Yogic knowledge, Yoga continues to discover and apply more and more refined means and instruments, not only to arrive at the union of the individual consciousness with the universal consciousness and transcendental consciousness, but also to manifest the consequences of this union for arriving at ever increasing perfection of the individual and collective life in the physical world and even to transform earthly life into what can be called divine life.

The distinctive methods of Yoga relate to the meticulous handling of customary psychological workings based upon a knowledge developed and confirmed by regular experiments, practical analysis and constant results so as to develop out of normal functions, powers and results which are always latent but which ordinary movements do not easily or do not often manifest. These methods are based on the perception and experience that our inner elements, combinations, functions, forces can be separated or

dissolved, can be newly combined and set to novel and formerly impossible workings or can be transformed and resolved into a new general synthesis by fixed internal processes. They also depend on the perception and experience that the vital forces and functionings to which our life is normally subjected and whose ordinary operations seem to be set and indispensable, can be mastered and the operations changed or suspended with results that would otherwise be impossible and that seem miraculous to those who have not seized the rationale of that process. These methods can some times be arranged in a certain order, in certain fixity of the developing process, and even in some mechanical procedure. But these methods tend to become less and less mechanical, less and less fixed in their order of procedure, and stages are reached where the required methodised effort is indicated by developing consciousness more and more spontaneously, more and more intuitively, more and more by psychic sense and tact and an inner spiritual guidance.

Yoga is, as stated by Sri Aurobindo, “a methodised effort towards self-perfection by the expression of the potentialities latent in the being and a union of the human individual with the universal and transcendent Existence we see partially expressed in man and in the Cosmos.”³

Object and States of Yogic Knowledge

Swami Vivekananda has stated:

“Yoga is really one of the grandest of sciences ... take up the study of this science as you would any other science of a material nature and remember there is no mystery and no danger in it.”

Science is a quest of knowledge, but modern science has so far tended to concentrate on the knowledge of Matter or of life and mind as embodied in Matter. It has also tended to develop those methods, which have been successful in studies where empirical observations and measurements are feasible. Yoga goes farther in its scope and investigates also the domains which are supra-physical in character. It has, indeed, been asked as to whether there can be a science of supra-physical data, the scientific character of which can be as great as that of sciences of the physical data. The difficulties lie in the long-established habit of physical sciences to apply their established methods on all processes of scientific investigation, even when the subject matter is not physical in character. A demand is, therefore, made to provide physical proof of supra-physical facts. But it is evident that the demand for physical proof of supra-physical facts is irrational and illogical. For the method of knowledge should be proper to the object of knowledge. And we have to note that yoga has developed various kinds of evidence of supra-physical facts and of the existence of other planes of beings and communication with them. They include objectivisation of the outer sense, subtle contact, mind-contact, life-contact, and contact through the subliminal consciousness exceeding our ordinary range. It is argued that these methods are liable to error. But it can be replied that error is not the prerogative of investigations into the supra-physical. Even when the physical methods are employed, there is room for error. A mere liability to error cannot be a reason for shutting out a large and important domain of experience which is explored in Yoga. As in physical sciences, so in Yoga, it is a reason for scrutinising it and finding out in it true standards and valid means of verification. The Yogic science confirms that the supra-

physical consciousness including the subliminal consciousness, psychic consciousness, spiritual consciousness and higher domains of super consciousness, — when rightly investigated, is confirmed again and again in the physical and objective field.

Knowledge that is sought to be attained through Yoga has certain special characteristics; it is the light by which one grows into one's true being, not the knowledge by which one increases information and intellectual riches. It is true that scientific or psychological or philosophical or ethical or aesthetic or practical knowledge help us to grow, but only in the becoming, not in the being, — even though they can enter into the definition of Yogic knowledge when they are used as aids to know the highest Being. Thus scientific knowledge can get us through the veil of processes and phenomena and enable us to see one reality behind which explains them all. Psychological knowledge can be used to know ourselves and to distinguish the lower self from the higher self in order that we may renounce the lower and grow into the higher. Philosophical knowledge can be termed as a light upon the essential principles of existence so as to enable ourselves to discover and live in that which is eternal. Ethical knowledge can aid us when having distinguished the wrong from the right, we put away the one and rise above the other into the pure innocence of the divine Nature, — *parā prakṛiti*. Aesthetic knowledge, too, can be a part of Yogic knowledge when we discover by it the beauty of the Divine. Even knowledge of the world can be a part of Yogic knowledge when we see through it the way of the transcendent with his creatures and use it for the service of the Divine. Even then they are only aids; the real knowledge, — *jñāna* is that which is a secret to the mind, of which the mind only gets by

reflection, but which lives in the spirit. The object distinctive of the Yogic knowledge is the union with what can be perceived, felt or conceived to be the highest truth of the being, and as the Upanishad states, when that object is attained, all becomes known, even what science as we practise it aims to know:

*yasmin vijñate sarvam
vijñātam bhavati*

Records of Yoga have described three movements leading up to the yogic states of knowledge or realisation. These are three successive movements, — internal vision, complete internal experience and identity.

- * Internal vision or *drishti* is the direct perception of psychical things and of the Self. To begin with, we may hold firmly the conception of the Self derived from our inmost aspirations or from teachers or from luminous teachings. We may fix it by an entire and exclusive concentration; we may thus use the triple operation of Jnana yoga, *shravana, manana, nidhidhyāsana*. It is only when after long and persistent concentration that the veil of the mind is rent or swept aside, and a flood of light breaks over the awakened mentality, and conception gives place to a knowledge — vision in which the Self is as present, real, concrete, as physical object to physical eye that we possess in knowledge.

This experience must become more frequent till it is constant.

- * In due course, there are other internal experiences so that the vision of the Self is completed by experiences of it in all our members. All this knowledge and experience are

primary means of arriving at and of possessing identity.

- * One not only sees the Self or God, one even embraces Him and become that Reality. The Ishopanishad describes the great experience culminating in identity in the following terms:

*yas tu sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmanievānupaśyati
sarvabhūteṣu cātmānam tato na vijigupsate.
yasmin sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmaivābhūd vijānataḥ
tatra ko mohaḥ kaḥ śoka ekatvam anupaśyataḥ.*⁴

But he who sees everywhere the Self in all existences and all existences in the Self, shrinks not thereafter from anything. He in whom it is the Self-being that has become all existences that are Becomings, for he has the perfect knowledge, how shall he be deluded, whence shall he have grief who sees everywhere oneness?

Such is the foundational knowledge that Yoga promises, and from this foundational knowledge, several practical capacities of knowledge and will can be developed which should lift us from what Sri Aurobindo calls sevenfold ignorance to sevenfold integral knowledge.

Such is the object and status of the knowledge that Yoga promises, and the result for practical life that is promised is elimination of ignorance in our thought, will, sensations, actions, and prevention from returning wrong or imperfect responses to the questionings of the world, liberation from wandering in a maze of errors and desires, strivings and failures, pain and pleasure, sin and stumbling. Our crooked road of blind groping and changing goal is turned into a sunlit path.

Religion and Yoga

In many respects Yoga may appear to be identical with religion, and yet the distinction is very vast. If Yoga is a quest, religion, too, is a quest; if yoga aims at the practice of a discipline which aims at uniting the individual and his faculties with the operation of the universal and transcendental consciousness and being, religion, too, has a similar discipline. Where then is the difference? The answer lies in the fact that although religion at its core and at its highest aspiration aims at spiritual experience and, although great religions have their origin in discipline and experience, they tend to develop systems of dogma and to prescribe belief in the dogma. Whatever spiritual discipline is proposed, it becomes encrusted and overlaid with ceremonies, rituals, and institutional prescriptions regarding conduct, both individual and collective. In this situation, religion may be seen as a first approach to yoga, but even then it may not be an indispensable gate of yoga. Yoga proceeds directly by a change of consciousness, a change from the ordinary consciousness, ignorant of true self, to a greater consciousness in which one finds one's true being and into a direct and living contact by experience and then a union with the Divine. For the yogic seeker, this change of consciousness is the one thing that matters and nothing else — belief, dogma, rituals, and ceremonies. Yoga not only aims at the total change of consciousness, but even its methods are derived from gradual increasing entry into a domain higher than body, life, and mind. In other words, Yoga is an exploration of consciousness through consciousness.

Religion is seen to be a source of moral values, and the

absoluteness of the moral values is sought to be derived from some religious sanction. Thus religions have attempted to erect systems and declared God's commands through Avatar or the Prophet. Such systems have proved more dynamic and more powerful than the dry ethical idea. But quite often these systems conflict with what reason supports or else they are so ingrained in certain religious dogmas that they do not have an appeal to those who do not accept those dogmas. Besides, there is, too, a conflict among the dogmas. These systems are often framed that they prove unworkable and are, therefore, rejected by Nature. Or, sometimes, they are turned into a series of compromises and become obsolete in the march of Time. In the Yogic consciousness and in the knowledge and the effectivity that it produces the highest elements that morality in the deepest core seeks are fulfilled. But Yoga replaces the moral law by a progressive law of self-perfection, spontaneously expressing itself through individual nature. The spiritual law that yoga presents respects the individual nature, modifies and perfects it. And in this sense, it is flexible for each individual and can be known and made operative only by a gradual progression of consciousness and, more and more, by an entry into the real self. In its progressive movement, it may, if necessary, permit a short or a long period of governance by a moral law but always as a provisional device. It always looks forward to a time when one can arrive at a higher plane of consciousness in which the Right and the Good can find spontaneous expression. To the yogic consciousness, moral virtue is valuable as an expression of certain qualities which are for the time being necessary and useful for a given individual in an upward journey. Again, these qualities become modified and enriched as the higher consciousness develops higher

levels of attitudes and stabilises higher states of consciousness in which the divine qualities manifest more and more spontaneously.

Yoga is not confined merely to the aspect of conduct; the conduct dealt with by ethics is only a minor aspect of the totality of works, inner no less than the external. Yogic consciousness includes all these works and strives by the method of a progressive change in consciousness in the perfect expression of all aspects of works, and in these strivings it realises also the unity of works with the highest knowledge and profoundest love.

It is true that religion too is an attempt to include all aspects of works and to arrive at some sort of unity of works with knowledge and love; but once again, its methods are largely mechanical and dogmatic, and it is only at the highest level of religion that the methods of spiritual disciplines that are prescribed are found suitable to some of the adherents, while to most adherents they remain more less mechanical. The progressive law of yogic development may approve, if necessary, a short or a long period of governance of the individual or of the race by a religion, but only as a provisional device; it always makes room for a passage beyond into the plane of a larger consciousness where distinctive religious methods melt into higher and spontaneous methods appropriate to larger consciousness. To the yogic consciousness religion is not valuable as a form, but only in so far as it may aid the ordinary consciousness of man to turn towards something that is deeper and higher and, even there, it stresses the necessity for every man to have his own distinctive spiritual discipline.

It may also be mentioned that yogic consciousness

welcomes agnosticism, scepticism, atheism, positivism or free thinking and sees behind them a concern and a demand for authentic knowledge. It recognises that if these are rightly understood, respected and fulfilled, they would become a powerful complement to what lies in consciousness behind the commonly accepted religious qualities of faith and unquestioning acceptance of dogmatic teachings and injunctions.

Yoga always looks behind the form to the essence and to the living consciousness; and in doing so, it brings to the surface that which lies behind in its ultimate truth. Yoga transcends the forms and the methods of morality and religion and creates and recreates its own living and progressive forms.

Yogic methods are distinctive and must not be confused with either morality or religion. A mere learning about Yoga is not Yoga, and even the most catholic book cannot be a substitute for the direct yogic practice of an inner change of consciousness by which one can perceive and realise the inner and higher self and transform the workings of the outer instruments of Nature. Nor can Yoga be practised in a casual way or only as a part-time preoccupation. Yoga, to be properly practised, must be taken as a sovereign and central occupation and must govern and permeate every aspect of life and every pursuit.

Varieties of Yogic Experience

If experience is a means of knowledge, of growth, of ennoblement of character and personality, of expansion, deepening and heightening of consciousness and will-force, then yoga stands out, — considering the methods that it has

developed for attaining objectivity and certainty, — as a human endeavour of the highest value. For, yoga is at all levels of its stages, based on experience and it develops by accumulation of experience, and its highest peaks consist of experience. To understand yoga, therefore, we need to enter into the realm of yogic experiences.

In the literature relating to this realm, two works stand out, and we may turn to them to derive from them some insights relevant to our purpose here. The first book that was published in 1902 is William James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, and the second book, that was written during 1914-21, is Sri Aurobindo's *The Synthesis of Yoga*. William James uses the phrase Religious Experience, but it is clear that most of the accounts of the experiences given in the book such as those of conversion, Presence of the Unseen, saintliness and mysticism, can be regarded as yogic, considering that (i) they are not related to institutional aspects of religion, (ii) they are related to individual's inner lives, and (iii) they mark important stages of the discipline of spiritual⁵ practice, even though most of them are tied to Christianity, a few to other religions, and others that are independent of any religion. If we maintain that every religion has a spiritual core which is its most important component, and if yoga is primarily concerned with spirituality and with methodical and conscious effort directed towards spiritual development and realisation, then, a large number of experiences described in the book can be legitimately called yogic.

One of the major experiences that is common at a certain stage of yogic development is that of Ineffable Presence, whether we may call it God's Presence or the Presence that

seems vibrating in Nature. If we read the poems in which Wordsworth expressed his realisation of Nature, you may acquire some distant idea of what yogic realisation is. First of all, we see that Wordsworth had the vision of something in the world which is the very Self of all things that it contains, a conscious force and presence other than its forms, yet cause of its forms and manifested in them. We perceive that he had not only the vision of this and the joy and peace and universality which its Presence brings but the very sense of it, mental, aesthetic, vital, physical; not only this sense and vision of it in its own being but in the nearest flower and simplest man and the immobile rock; and, finally, that he even occasionally attained to that unity, that becoming the object of his dedication, one phase of which is powerfully and profoundly expressed in the poem, "*A slumber did my spirit seal*" where he described himself as become one in his being with earth, "*rolled round in its diurnal course with rocks and stones and trees.*" If we exalt this realisation to a profounder Self than physical Nature, we shall have the elements of the yogic knowledge. It is true that a mere sense of the Presence can only be a beginning, but by entering into the superconscious and by merging all other experience into a supernal unity with the Ineffable Yoga promises that suprasensuous, supramental realisation of the Transcendent who is beyond all its aspects and the final summit of yogic knowledge which is also the source of all Divine delight and Divine living.

William James, in the experiences that he has presented in his book, bring us certain vivid descriptions of certain stages and aspects of the inner yogic life and yogic state and succeeds in inviting us to some kind of proof of the spiritual reality, its mystery, its wonder, and its vividness of the reality

of the Unseen. One experience, which is very vivid, and describes the Presence of the Unseen, is from a Swiss writer, and it is being appended at *Appendix I (p.111)*

It is very well known that in every yogic practice that is to be found in religions and in that which is independent of any religion, the experience of conversion marks a radical point of departure from ordinary life to a truly spiritual life. An important example of this experience of conversion, which William James has given, is that of Saint David Brainerd. The description of this experience is appended at *Appendix II (p.113)*

Conversion may very often be a movement as a result of which spiritual life becomes central to the seeker. But this centrality may be only ideative in character, in the sense that what becomes central is a cluster of ideas relating to spiritual life rather than the possession of the substance of the Spirit that makes spiritual life so very distinctive and beatific. Often conversions are temporary. At higher stages, not only the mind but also the very heart of the seeker is touched by the experience that leads to conversion, and it is then that the conversion tends to become permanent and to ripen itself into mature fruits of the spirituality of religious life or of yogic life. One of these fruits is that of saintliness. William James has analysed the state of saintliness and pointed out that there are four main features:

1. A feeling of being in a wider life of the existence of an ideal power;
2. A sense of the friendly continuity of the ideal power with our own life, and a willing self-surrender to its control;
3. An immense elation and freedom, as the outlines of the confining selfhood melt down; and

4. A shifting of the emotional centre towards loving and harmonious affections.

William James has also described the following practical consequences of the development of saintliness:

- (a) Asceticism
- (b) Strength of Soul
- (c) Purity
- (d) Charity See *Appendix III (p.116)*

He has also given some concrete illustrations of saintliness. One of them is that of Saint John of the Cross. Another is that of Suso, a German mystic.

Another still is that of George Fox. See *Appendix IV (p.120)*

William James arrives at the summit of religious experiences in his chapter on Mysticism. He points out (See *Appendix V. p.128*) that there are basically two characteristics of Mysticism, — (i) mystic experience is marked by ineffability, and (ii) it has noetic quality and the mystic states are also states of knowledge. He also points out that there are two other qualities, which are less sharply marked but are usually found. The first quality is that of transiency, since mystical states cannot be sustained for long. The second quality is that of passivity, since the mystic feels in his experience as if he were grasped and held by a superior power. He points out that this latter peculiarity connects mystical states with certain phenomena such as prophetic speech, automatic writing, or the mediumistic trance.⁶

William James has provided in his book extremely

illuminating examples of mysticism. These include those of Malwida von Meysenbug, Walt Whitman, Dr. J. Trevor, Dr. R.M. Bucke, of Raja Yoga as expounded by Swami Vivekananda, Al-Ghazzali, Saint John of the Cross, Saint Teresa, Saint Ignatius, and some others such as Sufi Gulshan-Raz and Plotinus. See *Appendix VI* (p.131)

But Yoga, as distinguished from religion, is primarily a *śāstra* and not a system of beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and a moral and spiritual discipline related to the system of beliefs and prescriptions. As a shastra, it is a growing body of knowledge of truths, principles, powers and processes that govern the discipline of the body, life and mind and other higher faculties in search and realisation of psychic, spiritual and supramental reality or realities that lie beyond the body, life and mind, and the consequences of that search and realisation for the individual and collective existence in the 'cosmos. Sri Aurobindo's book *The Synthesis of Yoga* is related to yogic experiences that can be attained by the application of yogic shastra, independent of any religion or any spiritual practice that is tied to any religion, even though spiritual disciplines of religions may coincide with or may adopt or recognise for their own aims some or other aspects of this shastra. It is these yogic experiences which are central to our purpose here.

Yoga has often come to be exclusively identified with physical exercises of Hatha Yoga. Actually, the entire system of Hatha Yoga, which is only one of the systems of yoga, aims at a complete mastery of the body and the life and a free and effective use of them established upon purification of their workings. The methods of this yoga are those of *āsana* (more than eighty in number) and *prāṇāyāma*, — the methods of stabilising the bodily condition by stabilisation

of various postures of the body and those of breathing and breath-control by which the movements pervading all the nervous system are controlled. The gross body begins to acquire something of the nature of the subtle body and possess something of its relations with the life-energy. Life ceases to be entirely dependent on the action of the physical organs and functionings, such as the heart-beats and breathing. Hatha Yoga is an attempt by fixed scientific processes to give to the soul in the physical body the power, the light, the purity, the freedom, the ascending scales of spiritual experience which would naturally be open to it, if it dwelt in the subtle and the developed causal vehicle.

Yoga is often identified exclusively with Raja Yoga, or the Yoga, the aphoristic formulation of which has been attributed to Patanjali, although it is only one of the specialised methods of Yoga. Raja Yoga is independent of Hatha Yoga except that it admits in its method the Hatha Yogic *āsana* and *prānāyāma* in their bare minimum and simple forms. On the other hand, Hatha Yoga joins up with the psychological methods of Raja Yoga, where it begins to ascend the scales of spiritual experience.

Raja Yoga insists on moral purification of the mentality, and five *yamās* and five *niyamās* are prescribed. Yamas are rules of moral control in conduct such as truth-speaking, abstinence from injury or killing, from theft, chastity, and cultivation of minimum wants leading to renunciation of all that is not needed. Niyamas constitute self-discipline by which the rajasic egoism and its passions and desires are conquered. The object is to create a sattwic calm, purity and preparation for meditative or contemplative concentration.

Raja Yogic concentration is divided into four stages:

- (i) *Pratyāhāra* — drawing both the mind and the senses from outward things;
- (ii) *Dhāraṇā* — Holding of the one object of concentration to the exclusion of other ideas and mental activities.
- (iii) *Dhyāna* — Prolonged absorption of the mind in the object of concentration.
- (iv) Loss of all outward mentality, cessation of all mental modifications, in the oneness of *Samādhi*.

Samadhi or Yogic trance retires to increasing depths as it draws farther and farther away from the normal or waking state and enters into degrees of consciousness less and less communicable to waking mind, less and less ready to receive the summons from the waking world. Beyond a certain point, the trance becomes complete, and it is then almost quite impossible to awaken or call back the soul that has receded into those profounder depths of consciousness. It has been said that if one remains too long a time in those supreme states of trance, one cannot return. As a matter of fact, the yogin acquires at a certain stage of development the power of abandoning his body definitively without the ordinary phenomena of death, by an act of will *icchā mr̥tyū* or by a process of withdrawing the *prāṇic* life-force through the gate of the upward life current — *udāna*, opening for it a way through the mystic centre in the head, *brahmarandhra*. By departing from life in the state of Samadhi, one attains directly to that higher status of being to which one aspires.

But even before one attains to the state of Samadhi, one is able to enter repeatedly into that state, and the Raja Yogic methods, during the processes of their repeated applications, lead to the attainment of all those higher states of con-

sciousness and the powers by which the mental being rises towards superconscious as well as its ultimate and supreme possibility of union with the highest. Raja Yoga is psychic science, and it gives an account of the powers and states which are possible on the higher planes of the being. They can be acquired and fixed by certain processes and their use then becomes subject to the will; or they can be allowed to be developed of themselves and use only when they come or when the divine within moves one to use them.

These powers are not peculiar to Raja Yoga alone; they are attained even by other methods, methods of Hatha Yoga, methods of Tantra, and even the methods of Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and others. In the Indian yogic language, these powers or accomplishments are famous eight accomplishments, *aṣṭa siddhi*. These siddhis are, first of all, those of *mahimā* (including *garimā*), *laghimā* and *animā*. These three siddhis of being are distinguished from siddhis of knowledge and siddhis of power. *Mahimā* is an unhampered force in the mental being or in the physical power. In the physical, it shows itself by an abnormal strength which is not muscular and may even develop into the power of increasing the size and the weight of the body, etc. *Laghimā* is a similar power of lightness, that is to say, of freedom from all pressure or weighing down in the mental, body, or physical being. *Laghimā* is the basis of the power to overcome gravitation and thus it is the basis of *utthāpana*. *Animā* is the power of freeing the atoms of subtle or gross matter from their ordinary limitations. It is by this power that yogins are supposed to make themselves invisible and invulnerable or to free the body from decay and death.

Apart from these three powers of being, there are three

siddhis of power. These three are: *aishwarya*, *ishita* and *vashista*. *Aishwarya* is a power by which one is able by the use of the will to make people act or to make things happen according to what is willed. *Ishita* is an accomplishment where one does not even need to have a will but when one has a want or a need or a sense that something ought to be and that thing comes about or happens. *Vashita* is a power to concentrate one's will on a person or an object so as to control him or it.

There are two other siddhis, namely, *vyāpti* and *prākāmya*. These are siddhis of knowledge. *Vyāpti* is obtained when the thoughts, feeling, etc., of others or another kind of knowledge of things etc., are felt rising from those things or persons. *Vyāpti* can also be communicative when one can send or put one's own thought, feelings, etc. into someone else's. *Prākāmya* is an accomplishment to look at somebody mentally or physically and perceive what is in that person. *Prākāmya* also relates to senses, where it is the power of perceiving smells, tastes, lights, colours and other objects of senses which are neither at all available to ordinary persons or beyond the range from one's own ordinary senses.

It is important to note that yogic science gives warning that these powers can only be entirely acquired or safely used when one has got rid of egoism and identified oneself with infinite will and infinite consciousness. It may also be mentioned that Yoga in its higher movement attains to levels of consciousness where these powers as also many others manifest spontaneously and work themselves out without the need of maintaining by methodical processes of these siddhis.

There is a system of Yoga which is known as Tantra,

which contains many elements which are founded on the knowledge relating to Kundalini. It takes into account the psychical or mental body of which the physical is a sort of reproduction in gross form and is able to discover thereby secrets of the physical body which do not appear to a purely physical inquiry. This mental or psychical body has also a subtle *prānic* force in it corresponding to its own subtle nature and substance, and this force is directed through a system of numerous channels, called *nadi*, — the subtle nervous organisation of the psychic body, — which are gathered up into six or seven centers which are technically called lotuses or circles, *chakras*, and which rise in an ascending scale to the summit where there is thousand-petalled lotus from which all the mental and vital energy flows. Each of these lotuses is the centre and the storing house of its own particular system of psychological powers, energies and operations, — each system corresponding to a plane of our existence, — these flow out and return in the stream of the pranic energies as they cross through the nadis.

This arrangement of psychic body is reproduced in the physical body with the spinal column as a rod and the ganglionic centers as the charkas which rise up from the bottom of the column where the lowest is attached, to the brain and find their summit in the *brahmarandhra* at the top of the skull. These chakras or lotuses are in the physical man closed or only partly open, with the consequence that only such powers and only so much of them are active in him as is sufficient for his ordinary physical life, and so much mind and soul only is at play as will accord with its needs. This is the reason why the whole energy of the soul does not seem to be at play in the physical body and life, and the secret powers of the mind are not awake in it. But it is recognised

that all the while supreme energy is there, but asleep; it is said to be coiled up like a snake, — therefore, it is called Kundalini-shakti, — in the lowest of the chakras, in the *mūlādhāra*. By various processes, including those of *prāṇāyāma*, this Kundalini can be awakened. It then uncoils itself and begins to rise upwards like a fiery serpent breaking up each lotus as it ascends until the shakti meets the Conscious Being (Purusha) in the *brahmarandhra* in a deep trance or Samadhi of union. Tantra also has discovered the power of the mantra, sacred syllable, name or mystic-formula, and with the aid of mantra, Kundalini-shakti can be awakened and new states of consciousness which rise can be stabilised and strengthened so that they can effectuate important results which are considered to be miraculous.

Tantra is, in fact, a synthesis of yoga, which has discovered the truth and power of the highest creative energy of which the physical world and other worlds which are behind it are expressions. Tantra aims at enabling the individual soul to unite with the supreme creative energy, the Supreme Mother, who is also in her depth one with the supreme Lord, Shiva or the highest Purusha.

The Tantric Yoga, as it rises from state to state, manifests not only *aṣṭa siddhis* but increases and manifests higher states of cosmic and transcendental consciousness. It manifests and stabilises states and powers which are obtained through the processes and methods of Karma yoga, Jnana yoga and Bhakti yoga. Various cosmic forces working in different levels of manifested world come to be contacted and known; multiplicities of gods and goddesses, — cosmic in character and fixed in various layers of cosmic manifestations, become active and their powers are utilised

for the increase, stabilisation and transformation of human life, and life of the world. The entire human body and the powers which are latent in the body, life and mind and even the superconscient are realised, and as one ascends the steps of Tantra, as the knowledge of them increases, as the effective works begins to become more and more fruitful, the seeker learns more and more the secret of offering and sacrificing oneself and effecting progressively more and more total surrender to the Supreme Mother, who is experienced as power of Grace that uplifts the seeker into the realms of *ananda*, of knowledge, of the Supreme Being.

As we turn to three major systems of yoga and yogic experiences that attend upon these systems of yoga, namely, Karma yoga, Jnana yoga and Bhakti yoga we need to underline a very important experience that normally precedes one's entry into the practice of the disciplines of these systems of yoga. This kind of precedent experience may also be precedent to the entry of other systems of yoga. There occurs major upheaval in the life of the seeker, which is often decisive and which brings forth a call for the pursuit of yoga with such an overwhelming force that the seeker becomes a new person, and thereafter is called twice-born (*dwija*). We notice this kind of upheaval in the life of Prince Siddhartha when he saw the four great scenes of the sick, dead, the old man and the hermit, and this sight caused what is called *mahābhiniṣkramana*. We see a similar upheaval in the life of Arjuna when he underwent a sudden crisis where in search of the right at the commencement of the great war of the Mahabharata, he found all standards of conduct which were so far his staff of the journey crashing down so as to cast him into a deep depression (*viśhāda*) from which he felt he could come out only by escaping from the very root of

responsible action. The decisiveness by which he entered into his quest through his dialogue with Sri Krishna, and his pursuit of Karma yoga is another illumination in the same category. There are many other illustrations such as those of Tulasidasa and Surdasa and many others. A remarkable illustration is provided by William James where Tolstoy, at the height of the glory of his literary career, began to feel that something had broken within him and that he had nothing left to hold on to, and that morally his life had stopped. The questions, *Why? Wherefore? What for?* could not be answered. See *Appendix VII* (p.152)

In many cases, this upheaval is resolved by what is called conversion in books on psychology of religion. But often this conversion is psychologically a shift of religious ideas and beliefs from the periphery of consciousness to the centre of consciousness, and although this shift brings about a remarkable departure of the seeker from his past mode of life to a new mode of life, still the new mode of life is governed by ideas and beliefs. In the conversion that is a prelude to the life of yoga, the centre of being is moved, not merely by ideas and beliefs, but by a thirst which can be quenched only by a process that leads to the transcendence of ideas and beliefs and by knowing, and possessing in concrete experience of the delivering light.

In the following passage, Sri Aurobindo describes a number of circumstances under which the call to Yoga comes to the seeker:

“All Yoga is in its nature a new birth; it is a birth out of the ordinary, the mentalised material life of man into a higher spiritual consciousness and a greater and diviner being. No yoga can be successfully undertaken and followed unless

there is a strong awakening to the necessity of that larger spiritual existence. The soul that is called to this deep and vast change, may arrive in different ways to the initial departure. It may come to it by its own natural development which has been leading it unconsciously towards the awakening; it may reach it through the influence of a religion or the attraction of a philosophy; it may approach it by a slow illumination or leap to it by a sudden touch or shock; it may be pushed or led to it by the pressure of outward circumstances or by an inward necessity, by a single word that breaks the seals of the mind or by long reflection, by the distant example of one who has trod the path or by contact and daily influence. According to the nature and the circumstances the call will come.

“But in whatever way it comes, there must be a decision of the mind and the will and, as its result, a complete and effective self-consecration.”⁷

The central question of Yoga is by what means can the seeker be enabled to know that which as yet the seeker does not know. Indeed, the means must have their root in our own instruments and their present functionings, and there are three instruments in our consciousness with which the yogic processes are connected. These three instruments are our cognitive faculties, affective faculties, and conative faculties. The processes of Jnana yoga are more easily woven into cognitive faculties, those of the yoga of Bhakti or divine love are more easily woven into our affective faculties, and those of Karma yoga or yoga of divine works are woven more easily into our conative faculties. This weaving is done, first, by some kind of strengthening of the concerned faculties, and secondly, by methodical efforts by which these

faculties are turned with steady concentration on the highest that can be conceived by cognitive faculties, the highest that can be loved and admired and worshiped by our affective faculties and the highest from which all source of action can be seen to be proceeding. Every yoga, therefore, consists of the various processes of concentration. It may be said that in a certain sense, the entire process of yoga is fundamentally a process of concentration, the courses of which have been explored and affirmed in the yogic sciences.

The process of concentration is aided by the process of purification of all that is operating in the normal modes of the concerned faculty. This is, indeed, a long process, and a number of yogic experiences have been related to the processes of the purification. Again, purification is greatly aided by a process of renunciation of all that tends to obstruct purification, tends to disturb or pollute or curb or refuse the process of purification.

These processes, — concentration, purification and renunciation, — and their corresponding experiences constitute a larger part of perfection in any system or path of yoga.

At a deeper level, the secret of yoga lies in fact that the limitations of our ordinary functioning of faculties and of our life are due to exclusive dwelling of our mind and heart, of our faculties of cognition, affectation, and conation on the superficial layer or layers of our being of which alone we normally are aware. We are as it were caged into the prison of our outer being which constantly acts and reacts and which with difficulty happens to be pushed to be turned more and more inward. The more one turns inwards, the more one discovers potentialities and secrets of development. Yoga is nothing but a more radical shift from the outer to the inner,

and the methods of yoga are primarily the methods by which our consciousness can be turned more and more inward. It is a reversal of our present exclusive concentration of consciousness which is normally centered on the outward; in yoga, the process is reversed, and we employ exclusive concentration of consciousness on the inward. A passage is then made in the inner realm of consciousness, and light that is inherent in consciousness discloses realities which lie hidden in our inner being. Inner realities are to be discovered, they are visited repeatedly, and thus they become permanently disclosed; they are then said to be realised. The simple miracle of this discovery and realisation is that these inner realities are found to be luminous and vibrating energetically and they are capable of pouring into our layers of being their own light and powers and thus transforming them.

In a more philosophical language, yoga is, first, the process to become conscious of the fact that there is in us a veil of ignorance; secondly, it is a process of the employment of methods by which this veil of ignorance can be torn and destroyed. And thirdly, yoga is a process by which one can be stabilised in the states of consciousness which have been unveiled, so that they radiate unobstructed permanently.

The important event in the Yoga is the awakening that comes by the removal of the veil of ignorance. A consequence of this major event is the dissolution of the consciousness which kept one within the boundaries of a small unifying centre that we call the ego. And with the removal of the ego comes about the liberation from dualities of pain and pleasure, honour and dishonour, success and failure and host of other dualities.

We can see this secret truth in all the yogic processes. Yoga of divine works or Karma yoga to which we can now turn our attention, is focused on conative faculties. We notice first that all principal conative activities are principally centered on a motive that is ruled by desire. Karma yoga is a process by which this motive force is eliminated from the threads of our action. Karma yoga is based on the perception that desire is not necessary element in action, that ego is not a necessary element in action, and that dualities need not encourage or disappoint us in the performance of action. It is further perceived that there is a difference between desire and will and that there can be desireless will, a will that does not seek what is already not possessed but that manifests effortlessly what is already possessed within itself. Karma yoga is, therefore, not a process of cessation of works, but utilisation of works themselves as a method, so that even while the works continue, in the very threads of works, desire is eliminated. Not renunciation of works but renunciation of desire, — this is the central principle of the method of Karma yoga.

The first stage of the method of Karma yoga consists of making a distinction between action, results of action, and enjoyment of the results of action or fruits of action, *karmaphala*. The strongest element of desire is normally centered on the enjoyment of the fruits of action. Hence, the first stage of the method of Karma yoga proposes the renunciation of the enjoyment of fruits of action. At this stage, guiding wisdom lies in perceiving that one has no right to the fruits of action.

In the second stage of Karma yoga, a further discipline is added. This discipline consists of perceiving the entire mechanism of the action and of discovering that the entire

world is a network of interconnected movements of energy and no action is independent of any other action, and that the egoistic belief which is normally dominant in the psychology of the agent of action that he is the doer of action does not correspond to the truth of the world of action. The practice of this truth, according to the Kārma yoga leads to the practice of repeated perception and experience that one is not the doer of action but that one's action is a part of the totality of world action. At this stage, therefore, the method consists in the withdrawal or renunciation of the sense of egoistic doership of action.

The practice of the method of Karma yoga at this stage can be greatly strengthened if the knowledge of the world movement, of the place of ego in the world and of the real originator of action is sought to be attained. This is the point at which two important yogic experiences can be glimpsed and developed. The first is the experience, which can be summarised in the words of the famous Indian saint, Narsi Mehta:

It is ignorance to think or to feel that I am doer of action, similar to the ignorance that a dog has when it moves under a moving cart, that cart is moving because of its own movement (dog's movement).

The yogic experience one can attain is that of the vision of the vast universe and principles which are involved in the vast world movement. In Indian philosophy, this experience is that of the vast and universal movement of Prakriti, a force that can be propelled into action. In this vision, one notices that not only the senses, sense-mind, intellectual operations of analysis, synthesis and discrimination, but even the ego-sense are all products of the engine of Prakriti.

The second experience is that of the presence of a conscious being, which is in Indian philosophy called Purusha, is at the root of the propulsion of Prakriti. Even this yogic experience has several stages of development. In the first place, Purusha is seen as a mere presence or as a mere witness — *sākṣin*; at a more developed stage, Purusha is experienced as the giver of sanction, such that Prakriti can function only if Purusha provides a sanction for its movement and that the movement of Prakriti can cease to function, if the Purusha withdraws its sanction. It is the experience of Purusha as a giver of sanction, *anumantah*, that provides the first authentic experience of the freedom of Purusha, as distinguished from the erroneous sense of freedom that the ego feels in regard to the energies that impel it to determine its activities. At a still more mature development of experience of the Purusha, a new yogic experience can be attained. This is the perception of Purusha as a poise of the individual, where the individual itself can be experienced as a portion - *aṁśa* and a formation derived from a higher engine of action and of a transcendental source of that higher knowledge of action. In the philosophical language of India, this experience of the individual is that of a *jīva*, which has been described as a formation of Para Prakriti and a portion of Purushottama. Again, the experience of Jīva is preceded by the experience of its delegate, which is directly related to the formations of the body, life and mind, which are all products of Prakriti, and which the dynamic evolving consciousness that is self-aware and that is the real controller of the development of the body, life and mind. It is *chaitya purusha*, as distinguished from *manomaya purusha*, *prāṇamaya purusha*, and *annamaya purusha*. The experience of the *chaitya purusha* or what has been called the

psychic being is a major experience of Karma yoga, since through that experience the entire process of Karma yoga begins to be guided by direct intuition that distinguishes not only between Purusha and Prakriti but also distinguishes between the good and the evil, in the sense that it distinguishes between that which is determined by the engine of lower Prakriti and that which is demanded by the higher Prakriti or Para Prakriti. With this guidance, the process of Karma yoga enters into a major line of yogic experience which illumines the consciousness and enables it to discover that there is in this world a law of interchange, a law of the action of cosmic forces, which are interrelated through their mutual interchange and the law of interchange between those cosmic forces and the individuals which are all involved in the cosmic network of energies, which has itself two levels of operations, the level of Apra Prakriti, where actions are ruled by ignorance and the level of Para Prakriti where actions are ruled by universal transcendental knowledge. It is this knowledge that provides to the method of Karma yoga that subtle process which is the heart of that sacred movement, which is called sacrifice or *yajña*. At this stage, the entire process of karma yoga is elevated to a process of offering and sacrifice and surrender. All actions thenceforth is purified by the individual, by the psychic being, as an offering, as an offering to Para Prakriti and as an offering to the Purushottama. The more this process of sacrifice ripens, the more one feels that element of division, which can be strengthened by the practice of Bhakti yoga, and it is here that Karma yoga and Bhakti yoga converge upon each other.

At this level, the third stage of Karma yoga begins to develop, and that psychology of the individual, continues to offer all actions as sacrifice, begins to experience himself the

secrets of a worker who is a servant, of a worker who is a divine soldier, and of a worker who is a mere instrument in the hands of the divine. Even the instrumentality begins to vanish until the individual attains such a intimate union with Para Prakriti and Purushottama that a divine worker is a mere enjoyer of the play of Para Prakriti and Purushottama in its entire passivity, and that passes through him is the action of Para Prakriti and Purushottama. Consequent upon this experience, the seeker thenceforward is moved to higher realms of what can be called supramental experiences of supramental action. That is the stage where the entire process of Karma yoga is fulfilled.

During the entire process of Karma yoga, there are two major developments that take place in the yogic development of the seeker. The first is the development of the state of equality or *samattvam*. The second is the knowledge and growth of universal and transcendental consciousness in heart of which the will of the Supreme is disclosed and adherence to that will is effected by progressive self-surrendering in works, in which the culminating message of Karma yoga is realised, namely, “abandon all rules of conduct and take total refuge in the supreme” — *sarva dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*.

In the development of attitude and experience of equality, three stages can be discerned, at the end of which the truths of the great dictum of yoga is realised, namely, *samattvam yoga ucyate*, “it is equality that is yoga”.

The three stages of equality can be described in psychological terms, first, as the stage of Stoic equality, philosophic equality, and equality that comes with resignation. It is here that we come to appreciate the rationale

and usefulness of the stoics, particularly the Stoics of ancient philosophers of Greece and Rome, such as Zeno, Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. The attitudes and experiences which they have described refer in varying degrees to these three stages. In the first stage, Stoic equality is the equality of that comes by the discipline of endurance. At this stage, what is realised is that emotions manifest judgements and that these judgements are often erroneous and that consequently, they should be subordinated or eliminated by the attitude and practice of endurance. One is reminded of Epictetus who had been a slave and his leg broken. In a dialogue which he imagines, he states:

“I will fetter you?”

“What did you say man?”

“Fetter me?”

“You fetter my leg, but my will not even Zeus can conquer.”⁸

This sense of endurance is expressed even more explicitly in one writings of the Stoics:

I must die. But must I die groaning? I must be imprisoned. But must I whine as well? I must suffer exile. Can anyone then hinder me, from going with a smile, and good courage, and at peace? ‘Tell the secret.’ I refuse to tell, for this is in my power. ‘But I will chain you.’ What say you, fellow? Chain me? My leg you will chain - yes, but my will - no, not even Zeus can conquer that. ‘I will behead you.’ Why? When did I ever tell you that I was the only man in the world that could not be beheaded?⁹

A similar philosophical Stoicism is to be found in a passage of Marcus Aurelius, which has been quoted by William James in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*:

“Everything harmonizes wit me which is harmonious to thee, O Universe. Nothing for me is too early nor too late, which is in due time for thee. Everything is fruit to me which thy seasons bring, O Nature: from thee are all things, in thee are all things, to thee all things return. The poet says, Dear City of Cecrops; and wilt thou not say, Dear City of Zeus?” ¹⁰

This philosophical Stoicism, in its psychological depth and fervour, stands at a lower level than the state in which equality arises through resignation or surrender of the will to the Supreme. William James quotes a passage from the *Imitation of Christ* to describe their special fervour and intensity which are inherent in the attitude of surrender:

“Lord, thou knowest what is best; let this or that be according as thou wilt. Give what thou wilt, so much as thou wilt, when thou wilt. Do with me as thou knowest best, and as shall be most to thine honour. Place me where thou wilt, and freely work thy will with me in all things. ...When could it be evil when thou wert near? I had rather be poor for thy sake than rich without thee. I choose rather to be a pilgrim upon the earth with thee, than without thee to possess heaven. Where thou art, there is heaven; and where thou art not, behold there death and hell.” ¹¹

But apart from these states of equality, more and more elevating and more and more luminous experiences of equality is attained by the perception of the interplay of the

transcendental consciousness, universal consciousness, individual consciousness and also the interplay of the action of Para Prakriti and Apra Prakriti. With the increasing experience of Karma yoga, there comes about the annihilation of desire and also of ego. Sri Aurobindo in his *The Synthesis of Yoga*, has presented a brief but illuminating description of these higher levels of experience of equality. *Appendix IX (p.158)*

Indeed, as one ascends in the path of sacrifice, and as one needs more and more imperatively the knowledge of the will that issues from the Supreme, the pressure of Karma yoga towards the divine knowledge increases to such a degree that one bursts into a vision, even of time-vision and of the divine action at a given epoch of time. One such vision has been described in the *Bhagavad Gita* in one of its most powerful poetic passages, in his *Essays on the Gita*, Sri Aurobindo describes the Supreme form of the world spirit in which Arjuna, the hero of the Mahabharata sees God magnificence and beautiful and terrible, and in that vision the divine will is made manifest. *Appendix X (p.162)*

¹ *Rig Veda*, 1.10.1,2

² *Rig Veda*, V.15

³ Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library (SABCL), 1971, Pondicherry, Vol.20, p.2

⁴ *Isha Upanishad*, 6,7

⁵ Distinguishing features of spirituality are the following:

(a) awakening to the inner reality of our being, to a spirit, Self, Soul, which is other than our mind, life and body; (b) an inner aspiration to know, to feel, to be that, (c) a quest for entering into the greater Reality beyond and pervading the universe which inhabits also our being, to be in communion with It and union with It, (d) a turning, a conversion,

a transformation of our whole being into a new becoming, or a new being, a new Self, a new nature.

- ⁶ In the strict path of yogic experience, a distinction is made between subliminal experience and spiritual experience, — a distinction, which William James does not offer in his book. Strictly speaking, experiences of automatic writing, or mediunistic trance are experiences related to the subliminal consciousness consisting of the inner mind, inner vital force and certain physical consciousness. Spiritual experiences relate to the realm of super-consciousness or of psychic consciousness which is the consciousness of the inmost being which governs body, life and mind and which has the power of integrating body, life and mind under its own integrating power. Superconsciousness refers to the realm of the transcendental Spirits which, in its universal aspects, provides an entry into cosmic consciousness and increasing unity of diversity which culminates in what is called in Yoga, supramental consciousness or consciousness of Vijnānamaya. Again, it is true, as William James points out, mystical states are transient. But in Yoga proper, this transiency can be gradually removed, and higher states of mysticism can be made permanent. In the yogic language, the state of permanency of the higher and higher states of Yoga is called realisation.
- ⁷ Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, SABCL, 1971, Pondicherry, Vol.20, pp.63
- ⁸ Epictetus 1.1.23
- ⁹ Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, paperback edition, 1996, p.270
- ¹⁰ William James: *Varieties of Religious Experience*, Barnes & Noble Books, New York, paperback edition, 2004, p.49
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.50



Appendices

Appendix I

Here is another document, even more definite in character, which, the writer being a Swiss, I translate from the French original.¹

“I was in perfect health: we were on our sixth day of tramping, and in good training. We had come the day before from Sixt to Trient by Buet. I felt neither fatigue, hunger, nor thirst, and my state of mind was equally healthy. I had had at Forlaz good news from home; I was subject to no anxiety, either near or remote, for we had a good guide, and there was not a shadow of uncertainty about the road we should follow. I can best describe the condition in which I was by calling it a state of equilibrium. When all at once I experienced a feeling of being raised above myself, I felt the presence of God – I tell of the thing just as I was conscious of it – as if his goodness and his power were penetrating me altogether. The throb of emotion was so violent that I could barely tell the boys to pass on and not wait for me. I then sat down on a stone, unable to stand any longer, and my eyes overflowed with tears. I thanked God that in the course of my life he had taught me to know him, that he sustained my life and took pity both on the insignificant creature and on the sinner that I was. I begged him ardently that my life might be consecrated to the doing of his will. I felt his reply, which was that I should do his will from day to day, in humility and poverty, leaving him, the Almighty God, to be judged of whether I should sometime be called to bear witness more conspicuously. Then, slowly, the ecstasy left my heart; that is, I felt that God had withdrawn the communion

which he had granted, and I was able to walk on, but very slowly, so strongly was I still possessed by the interior emotion. Besides, I had wept uninterruptedly for several minutes, my eyes were swollen, and I did not wish my companions to see me. The state of ecstasy may have lasted four or five minutes, although it seemed at the time to last much longer. My comrades waited for me ten minutes at the cross of Barine, but I took about twenty-five or thirty minutes to join them, for as well as I can remember, they said that I had kept them back for about half an hour. The impression had been so profound that in climbing slowly the slope I asked myself if it were possible that Moses on Sinai could have had a more intimate communication with God. I think it well to add that in this ecstasy of mine God had neither form, color, odor, nor taste; moreover, that the feeling of his presence was accompanied with no determinate localization. It was rather as if my personality had been transformed by the presence of a *spiritual spirit*. But the more I seek words to express this intimate intercourse, the more I feel the impossibility of describing the thing by any of our usual images. At bottom the expression most apt to render what I felt is this: God was present, though invisible; he fell under no one of my senses, yet my consciousness perceived him.”

(William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Barnes & Noble Classics, NY, 2004, pp. 69-70)

¹ I borrow it, with Professor Flournoy's permission, from his rich collection of psychological documents.

Appendix II

Let me give you a good illustration of this feature in the conversion process. That genuine saint, David Brainerd, describes his own crisis in the following words: —

“One morning, while I was walking in a solitary place as usual, I at once saw that all my contrivances and projects to effect or procure deliverance and salvation for myself were utterly in vain; I was brought quite to a stand, as finding myself totally lost. I saw that it was forever impossible for me to do anything towards helping or delivering myself, that I had made all the pleas I ever could have made to all eternity; and that all my pleas were vain, for I saw that self-interest had led me to pray, and that I had never once prayed from any respect to the glory of God. I saw that there was no necessary connection between my prayers and the bestowment of divine mercy; that they laid not the least obligation upon God to bestow his grace upon me; and that there was no more virtue or goodness in them than there would be in my paddling with my hand in the water. I saw that I had been heaping up my devotions before God, fasting, praying, etc., pretending, and indeed really thinking sometimes that I was aiming at the glory of God; whereas I never once truly intended it, but only my own happiness. I saw that as I had never done anything for God, I had no claim on anything from him but perdition, on account of my hypocrisy and mockery. When I saw evidently that I had regard to nothing but self-interest, then my duties appeared a vile mockery and a continual course of lies, for the whole was nothing but self-worship, and an horrid abuse of God.

“I continued, as remember, in this state of mind, from Friday morning till the Sabbath evening following (July 12, 1739), when I was walking again in the same solitary place. Here, in a mournful melancholy state *I was attempting to pray; but found no heart to engage in that or any other duty; my former concern, exercise, and religious affections were now gone. I thought that the Spirit of God had quite left me; but still was not distressed; yet disconsolate, as if there was nothing in heaven or earth could make me happy. Having been thus endeavoring to pray — though, as I thought, very stupid and senseless —* for near half an hour; then, as I was walking in a thick grove, unspeakable glory seemed to open to the apprehension of my soul. I do not mean any external brightness, nor any imagination of a body of light, but it was a new inward apprehension or view that I had of God, such as I never had before, nor anything which had the least resemblance to it. I had no particular apprehension of any one person in the Trinity, either the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost; but it appeared to be Divine glory. My soul rejoiced with joy unspeakable, to see such a God, such a glorious Divine Being; and I was inwardly pleased and satisfied that he should be God over all for ever and ever. My soul was so captivated and delighted with the excellency of God that I was even swallowed up in him; at least to that degree that I had no thought about my own salvation, and scarce reflected that there was such a creature as myself. I continued in this state of inward joy, peace, and astonishing, till near dark without any sensible abatement; and then began to think and examine what I had seen; and felt sweetly composed in my mind all the evening following. I felt myself in a new world, and everything about me appeared with a different aspect from what it was wont to do. At this time, the way of salvation opened to me with such infinite wisdom, suitableness, and

excellency, that I wondered I should ever think of any other way of salvation; was amazed that I had not dropped my own contrivances, and complied with this lovely, blessed, and excellent way before. If I could have been saved by my own duties or any other way that I had formerly contrived, my whole soul would now have refused it. I wondered that all the world did not see and comply with this way of salvation, entirely by the righteousness of Christ.¹

(William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Barnes & Noble Classics, NY, 2004, pp. 190-191)

¹ EDWARD'S and DWIGHT'S *Life of Brainerd*, New Haven, 1822, pp.45-47, abridged.

Appendix III

The collective name for the ripe fruits of religion in a character is Saintliness. The saintly character is the character for which spiritual emotions are the habitual centre of the personal energy; and there is a certain composite photograph of universal saintliness, the same in all religions, of which the features can easily be traced.

They are these: —

1. A feeling of being in a wider life than that of this world's selfish little interests; and a conviction, not merely intellectual, but as it were sensible, of the existence of an Ideal Power. In Christian saintliness this power is always personified utopias, or inner visions of holiness or right may also be felt as the true lords and enlargers of our life, in ways which I described in the lecture on the Reality of the Unseen.¹
2. A sense of the friendly continuity of the ideal power with our own life, and a willing self-surrender to its control.
3. An immense elation and freedom, as the outlines of the confining selfhood melt down.
4. A shifting of the emotional centre towards loving and harmonious affections towards 'yes, yes,' and away from 'no,' where the claims of the non-ego are concerned.

These fundamental inner conditions have characteristic practical consequences, as follows: —

- a. Asceticism.* — The self-surrender may become so passionate as to turn into self-immolation. It may then so

overrule the ordinary inhibitions of the flesh that the saint finds positive pleasure in sacrifice and asceticism, measuring and expressing as they do the degree of his loyalty to the higher power.

- b. Strength of Soul.* — The sense of enlargement of life may be so uplifting that personal motives and inhibitions, commonly omnipotent, become too insignificant for notice, and new reaches of patience and fortitude open out. Fears and anxieties go, and blissful equanimity takes their place. Come heaven, come hell, it makes no difference now!
- c. Purity.* — The shifting of the emotional centre brings with it, first, increase of purity. The sensitiveness to spiritual discords is enhanced, and the cleansing of existence from brutal and sensual elements becomes imperative. Occasions of contact with such elements are avoided: the saintly life must deepen its spiritual consistency and keep unspotted from the world. In some temperaments this need of purity of spirit takes an ascetic turn, and weaknesses of the flesh are treated with relentless severity.
- d. Charity.* — The shifting of the emotional centre brings, secondly, increase of charity, tenderness for fellow-creatures. The ordinary motives to antipathy, which usually set such close bounds to tenderness among human beings, are inhibited. The saint loves his enemies, and treats loathsome beggars as his brothers.

(William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Barnes & Noble Classics, NY, 2004, pp. 239-242)

¹ The 'enthusiasm of humanity' may lead to a life which coalesces in many respects with that of Christian saintliness. Take the following

rules proposed to members of the Union pour l'Action morale, in the Bulletin de l'Union, April 1-15, 1894. See, also, Revue Bleue, August 13, 1892.

"We would make known in our own persons the usefulness of rule, of discipline, of resignation and renunciation; we would teach the necessary perpetuity of suffering, and explain the creative part which it plays. We would wage war upon false optimism; on the base hope of happiness coming to us ready made; on the notion of a salvation by knowledge alone, or by material civilization alone, vain symbol as this is of civilization, precarious external arrangement, ill-fitted to replace the intimate union and consent of souls. We would wage war also on bad morals, whether in public or in private life; on luxury, fastidiousness, and over-refinement; on all that tends to increase the painful, immoral, and anti-social multiplication of our wants; on all that excites envy and dislike in the soul of the common people, and confirms the notion that the chief end of life is freedom to enjoy. We would preach by our example the respect of superiors and equals, the respect of all men; affectionate simplicity in our relations with inferiors and insignificant persons; indulgence where our own claims only are concerned, but firmness in our demands where they relate to duties towards others or towards the public.

"For the common people are what we help them to become; their vices are our vices, gazed upon, envied, and imitated; and if they come back with all their weight upon us, it is but just.

"We forbid ourselves all seeking after popularity, all ambition to appear important. We pledge ourselves to abstain from falsehood, in all its degrees. We promise not to create or encourage illusions as to what is possible, by what we say or write. We promise to one another active sincerity which strives to see truth clearly, and which never fears to declare what it sees.

"We promise deliberate resistance to the tidal waves of fashion, to the 'booms' and panics of the public mind, to all the forms of weakness and of fear.

"We forbid ourselves the use of sarcasm. Of serious things we will speak seriously and unsmilingly, without banter and without the appearance of banter; — and even so of all things, for there are serious

ways of being light of heart.

“We will put ourselves forward always for what we are, simply and without false humility, as well as without pedantry, affectation, or pride.”

Appendix IV

Saint John of the Cross, a Spanish mystic who flourished — or rather who existed, for there was little that suggested flourishing about him — in the sixteenth century, will supply a passage suitable for our purpose.

“First of all, carefully excite in yourself an habitual affectionate will in all things to imitate Jesus Christ. If anything agreeable offers itself to your senses, yet does not at the same time tend purely to the honour and glory of God, renounce it and separate yourself from it for the love of Christ, who all his life long had no other wish than to do the will of his Father whom he called his meat and nourishment. For example, you take satisfaction in *hearing* of things in which the glory of God bears no part. Deny yourself this satisfaction, mortify your wish to listen. You take pleasure in *seeing* objects which do raise your mind to God: refuse yourself this pleasure, and turn away your eyes. The same with conversations and all other things. Act similarly, so far as you are able, with all the operations of the senses, striving to make yourself free from their yokes.

“The radical remedy lies in the mortification of the four great natural passions, joy, hope, fear, and grief. You must seek to deprive these of every satisfaction and leave them as it were in darkness and the void. Let your soul therefore turn always:

“Not to what is most easy, but o what is hardest;

“Not to what tastes best, but to what is most distasteful;

“Not to what most pleases, but to what disgusts;

“Not to matter of consolation, but to matter for desolation

rather;

“Not to rest, but to labor,

“Not to desire the more, but the less;

“Not to aspire to what is highest and most precious, but to what is lowest and most contemptible;

“Not to will anything, but to will nothing;

“Not to seek the best in everything, but to seek the worst, so that you may enter for the love of Christ into a complete destitution, a perfect poverty of spirit, and an absolute renunciation of everything in this world.

“Embrace these practices with all the energy of your soul and you will find in a short time great delights and unspeakable consolations.

“Despise yourself, and wish that others should despise you.

“Speak to your own disadvantage, and desire others to do the same;

“Conceive a low opinion of yourself, and find it good when others hold the same;

“To enjoy the taste of all things, have no taste for anything.

“To know all things, to learning to know nothing.

“To possess all things, resolve to possess nothing.

“To be all things, be willing to be nothing.

“To get to where you have no taste for anything, go through whatever experiences you have no taste for.

“To learn to know nothing, go whither you are ignorant.

“To reach what you possess not, go whithersoever you own nothing.

“To be what you are not, experience what you are not.”

These later verses play with that vertigo of self-contradiction which is so dear to mysticism. Those that come next are completely mystical, for in them Saint John passes from God to the more metaphysical notion of All.

“When you stop at one thing, you cease to open yourself to the All.

“For to come to the All you must give up the All.

“And if you should attain to owning the All, you must own it, desiring Nothing.

“In this spoliation, the soul finds its tranquillity and rest. Profoundly established in the centre of its own nothingness, it can be assailed by naught that comes from below; and since it no longer desires anything, what comes from above cannot depress it; for its desires alone are the causes of its woes.”¹

And now, as a more concrete example.... of the irrational extreme to which a psychopathic individual may go in the line of bodily austerity, I will quote the sincere Suso account of his own self-tortures. Suso, you will remember, was one of the fourteenth century German mystics; his autobiography, written in the third person, is a classic religious document.

“He was in his youth of a temperament full of fire and life, and when this began to make itself felt, it was very grievous to him; and he sought by many devices how he might bring his body into subjection. He wore for a long time a hair shirt and an iron chain, until the blood ran from him, so that he was obliged to leave them off. He secretly caused an undergarment to be made for him; and in the undergarment he had strips of leather fixed into which a hundred and fifty brass nails, pointed and filed sharp, were driven, and the points of the nails were always turned towards the flesh. He had this garment made very tight, and so arranged as to go round him and fasten in front, in order that it might fit the closer to his body, and the pointed nails might be driven into his flesh; and it was high enough to reach upwards to his navel. In this he used to sleep at night. Now in summer, when it was hot, and he was very tired and ill from his journeyings, or when he held the office of lecturer, he would sometime, as he lay thus in

bonds, and. oppressed with toil, and tormented also by noxious insects, cry aloud and give way to fretfulness, and twist round and round in agony, as a worm does when run through with a pointed needle. It often seemed to him as if he were lying upon an ant hill, from the torture caused by the insects; for if he wished to sleep, or when he had fallen asleep, they vied with one another.² Sometimes he cried to Almighty God in the fullness of his heart: Alas! Gentle God, what a dying is this! When a man is killed by murderers or strong beasts of prey it is soon over; but I lie dying here under the cruel insects, and yet cannot die. The nights in winter were never so long, nor was the summer so hot, as to make him leave off this exercise. On the contrary, he devised something farther — two leathern loops into which he put his hands, and fastened one on each side his throat, and made the fastenings so secure that even if his cell had been on fire about him, he could not have helped himself. This he continued until his hands and arms had become almost tremulous with strain, and then devised something else: two leather gloves; and he caused a brazier to fit them all over with sharp-pointed brass tacks, and he used to put them on at night, in order that if he should try while asleep to throw off the hair undergarment, or relieve himself from the gnawings of the vile insects, the tacks might then stick into his body. And so it came to pass. If ever he sought to help himself with his hands in his sleep, he drove the sharp tacks into his breast, and tore himself, so that his flesh festered. When after many weeks the wounds had healed, he tore himself again and made fresh wounds.

“He continued this tormenting exercise for about sixteen years. At the end of this time, when his blood was now chilled, and the fire of his temperament destroyed, there appeared to him in a vision on Whitsunday, a messenger from heaven, who told him that God required this of him

no longer. Whereupon he discontinued it, and threw all these things away into a running stream."

Suso then tells how, to emulate the sorrows of his crucified Lord, he made himself a cross with thirty protruding iron needles and nails. This he bore on his bare back between his shoulders day and night. "The first time that he stretched out this cross upon his back his tender frame was struck with terror at it, and blunted the sharp nails slightly against a stone. But soon, repenting of this womanly cowardice, he pointed them all again with a file, and placed once more the cross upon him. It made his back, where the bones are, bloody and seared. Whenever he sat down or stood up, it was as if a hedgehog-skin were on him. If any one touched him unawares, or pushed against his clothes, it tore him."

Suso next tells of his penitences by means of striking this cross and forcing the nails deeper into the flesh, and likewise of his self-scourgings, — dreadful story, — and then goes on as follows: "At this same period the Servitor procured an old castaway door, and he used to lie upon it at night without any bedclothes to make him comfortable, except that he took off his shoes and wrapped a thick cloak round him. He thus secured for himself a most miserable bed; for hard pea-stalks lay in humps under his head, the cross with sharp nails stuck into his back, his arms were locked fast in bonds, the horsehair undergarment was round his loins, and the cloak too was heavy and the door hard. Thus he lay in wretchedness, afraid to stir, just like a log, and he would send up many a sigh to God.

"In winter he suffered very much from the frost. If he stretched out his feet they lay bare on the floor and froze, if he gathered them up the blood became all on fire in his legs, and this was great pain. His feet were full of sores, his legs dropsical, his knees bloody and seared, his loins

covered with scars from the horsehair, his body wasted, his mouth parched with intense thirst, and his hands tremulous from weakness. Amid these torments he spent his nights and days; and he endured them all out of the greatness of love which he bore in his heart to the Divine and Eternal Wisdom, our Lord Jesus Christ, whose agonizing sufferings he sought to imitate. After a time he gave up this penitential exercise of the door, and instead of it he took up his abode in a very small cell, and used the bench, which was so narrow and short that he could not stretch himself upon it, as his bed. In this hole, or upon the door, he lay at night in his usual bonds, for about eight years. It was also his custom, during the space of twenty-five years, provided he was staying in the convent, never to go after compline in winter into any warm room, or to the convent stove to warm himself, no matter how cold it might be, unless he was obliged to do so for other reasons. Throughout all these years he never took a bath, either a water or a sweating bath; and this he did in order to mortify his comfort-seeking body. He practiced during a long time such rigid poverty that he would neither receive nor touch a penny, either with leave or without it. For a considerable time he strove to attain such a high degree of purity that he would neither scratch nor touch any part of his body, save only his hands and feet.”³

(William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Barnes & Noble Classics, NY, 2004, pp. 268-273)

George Fox expresses well this isolation; and I can do no better at this point than read to you a page from his Journal, referring to the period of his youth when religion began to ferment within him seriously.

“I fasted much,” Fox says, “walked abroad in solitary places many days, and often took my Bible, and sat in hollow trees and lonesome places until night came on; and

frequently in the night walked mournfully about by myself for I was a man of sorrows in the time of the first workings of the Lord in me.

“During all this time I was never joined in profession of religion with any, but gave up myself to the Lord, having forsaken all evil company, taking leave of father and mother, and all other relations, and travelled up and down as a stranger on the earth, which way the Lord inclined my heart; taking a chamber to myself in the town where I came, and tarrying sometimes more, sometimes less in a place: for I durst not stay long in a place, being afraid both of professor and profane, lest, being a tender young man, I should be hurt by conversing much with either. For which reason I kept much as a stranger, seeking heavenly wisdom and getting knowledge from the Lord; and was brought off from outward things, to rely on the Lord alone. As I had forsaken the priests, so I left the separate preachers also, and those called the most experienced people; for I saw there was none among them all that could speak to my condition. And when all my hopes in them and in all men were gone so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do; then, oh then, I heard a voice which said, ‘There is one, even Jesus Christ, that can speak to thy condition.’ When I heard it, my heart did leap for joy. Then the Lord let me see why there was none upon the earth that could speak to my condition. I had not fellowship with any people, priests, nor professors, nor any sort of separated people. I was afraid of all carnal talk and talkers, for I could see nothing but corruptions. When I was in the deep, under all shut up, I could not believe that I should ever overcome; my troubles, my sorrows, and my temptations were so great that I often thought I should have despaired, I was so tempted. But when Christ opened to me how he was tempted by the same devil, and had overcome him, and had bruised his head; and that through him and his power, life,

grace, and spirit, I should overcome also, I had confidence in him. If I had had a king's diet, palace, and attendance, all would have been as nothing; for nothing gave me comfort but the Lord by his power. I saw professors, priests, and people were whole and at ease in that condition which was my misery, and they loved that which I would have been rid of. But the Lord did stay my desires upon himself, and my care was cast upon him alone."⁴

(William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Barnes & Noble Classics, NY, 2004, pp. 294-5)

¹ SAINT JEAN DE LA CROIX, *Vie et Œuvres*, Paris, 1893, ii. 94, 99 abridged.

² 'Insects,' i.e. lice, were an unfailing token of mediaeval sainthood. We read of Francis of Assisi's sheepskin that "often a companion of the saint would take it to the fire to clean and *dispediculate* it, doing so, as he said, because the seraphic father himself was no enemy of *pedocohi*, but on the contrary kept them on him (le portava adosso), and held it for an honor and a glory to wear these celestial pearls in his habit." Quoted by P. SABATIER: *Speculum Perfectionis*, etc., Paris, 1898, p. 231, note.

³ 'The Life of the Blessed HENRY SUSO, by Himself, translated by T. F. KNOX, London, 1865, pp. 56—80, abridged.

⁴ GEORGE FOX : *Journal*. Philadelphia, 1800, pp.59-61, abridged.

Appendix V

For some writers a 'mystic' is any person who believes in thought-transference, or spirit-return. Employed in this way the word has little value: there are too many less ambiguous synonyms. So, to keep it useful by restricting it, I will do what I did in the case of the word 'religion,' and simply propose to you four marks which, when an experience has them, may justify us in calling it mystical for the purpose of the present lectures. In this way we shall save verbal disputation, and the recriminations that generally go therewith.

1. *Ineffability*. — The handiest of the marks by which I classify a state of mind as mystical is negative. The subject of it immediately says that it defies expression, that no adequate report of its contents can be given in words. It follows from this that its quality must be directly experienced; it cannot be imparted or transferred to others. In this peculiarity mystical states are more like states of feeling than like states of intellect. No one can make clear to another who has never had a certain feeling, in what the quality or worth of it consists. One must have musical ears to know the value of a symphony; one must have been in love one's self to understand a lover's state of mind. Lacking the heart or ear, we cannot interpret the musician or the lover justly, and are even likely to consider him weak-minded or absurd. The mystic finds that most of us accord to his experiences an equally incompetent treatment.

2. *Noetic quality*. — Although so similar to states of feeling, mystical states seem to those who experience them to be also states of knowledge. They are. states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain; and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority for after-time.

These two characters will entitle any state to be called mystical, in the sense in which I use the word. Two other qualities are less sharply marked, but are usually found. These are:—

3. *Transiency*. — Mystical states cannot be sustained for long. Except in rare instances, half an hour, or at most an hour or two, seems to be the limit beyond which they fade into the light of common day. Often, when faded, their quality can but imperfectly be reproduced in memory; but when they recur it is recognized; and from one recurrence to another it is susceptible of continuous development in what is felt as inner richness and importance.
4. *Passivity*. — Although the oncoming of mystical states may be facilitated by preliminary voluntary operations, as by fixing the attention, or going through certain bodily performances, or in other ways which manuals of mysticism prescribe; yet when the characteristic sort of consciousness once has set in, the mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped and held by a superior power. This latter peculiarity connects mystical states with certain definite phenomena of secondary or alternative personality, such

as prophetic speech, automatic writing, or the mediumistic trance. When these latter conditions are well pronounced, however, there may be no recollection whatever of the phenomenon, and it may have no significance for the subject's usual inner life, to which, as it were, it makes a mere interruption. Mystical states, strictly so called, are never merely interruptive. Some memory of their content always remains, and a profound sense of their importance. They modify the inner life of the subject between the times of their recurrence. Sharp divisions in this region are, however, difficult to make, and we find all sorts of gradations and mixtures.

These four characteristics are sufficient to mark out a group of states of consciousness peculiar enough to deserve a special name and to call for careful study. Let it then be called the mystical group.

(William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Barnes & Noble Classics, NY, 2004, pp. 328-330)

Appendix VI

Here is a similar record from the memoirs of that interesting German idealist, Malwida von Meysenbug: —

“I was alone upon the seashore as all these thoughts flowed over me; liberating and reconciling; and now gain, as once before in distant days in the Alps of Dauphiné, I was impelled to kneel down, this time before the illimitable ocean, symbol of the Infinite. I felt that I prayed as I had never prayed before, and knew now what prayer really is: to return from the solitude of individuation into the consciousness of unity with all that is, to kneel down as one that passes away, and to rise up as one imperishable. Earth, heaven, and sea resounded as in one vast world-encircling harmony. It was as if the chorus of all the great who had ever lived were about me. I felt myself one with them, and it appeared as if I heard their greeting: ‘Thou, too belongest to the company of those who overcome.’”¹

The well-known passage from Walt Whitman is a classical expression of this sporadic type of mystical experience.

“I believe in you, my Soul ...

Loaf with me on the grass, loose the stop from your throat;
Only the lull I like, the hum of your valved voice.

I mind how once we lay, such a transparent summer morning.

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge that pass all the argument of the earth,

And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,
And I know that the sprit of God in the brother of my own,

And that all the men ever born are also my brothers and the
 women my sisters and lovers,
 And that a kelson of the creation is love.”²

I could easily give more instances, but one will suffice.
 I take it from the Autobiography of J. Trevor.³

“One brilliant Sunday morning, my wife and boys went to the Unitarian Chapel in Macclesfield. I felt it impossible to accompany them — as though to leave the sunshine on the hills, and go down there to the chapel, would be for the time an act of spiritual suicide. And I felt such need for new inspiration and expansion in my life. So, very reluctantly and sadly, I left my wife and boys to go down into the town, while I went further up to the hills with my stick and my dog. In the loveliness of the morning, and the beauty of the hills and valleys, I soon lost my sense of sadness and regret. For nearly an hour I walked along the road to the ‘Cat and Fiddle,’ and then returned. On the way back, suddenly without warning, I felt that I was in Heaven — an inward state of peace and joy and assurance indescribably intense, accompanied with a sense of being bathed in a warm glow of light, as, though external condition had brought about the internal effect — a feeling of having passed beyond the body, though the scene around me stood out more clearly and as if nearer to me than before, by reason of the illumination in the midst of which I seemed to be placed. This deep emotion lasted, though with decreasing strength, until I reached home, and for some time after, only gradually passing away.”

The writer adds that having had further experiences of a similar sort, he now knows them well.

“The spiritual life,” he writes, “justifies itself to those who live it; but what can we say to those who do not understand? This, at least, we can say, that it is a life whose

experiences are proved real to their possessor, because they remain with him when brought closest into contact with the objective realities of life. Dreams cannot stand this test. We wake from them to find that they are but dreams. Wanderings of an overwrought brain do not stand this test. These highest experiences that I have had of God's presence have been rare and brief — flashes of consciousness which have compelled me to exclaim with surprise — God is *here!* — or conditions of exaltation and insight, less intense, and only gradually passing away. I have severely questioned the worth of these moments. To no soul have I named them, lest I should be building my life and work on mere phantasies of the brain. But I find that, after every questioning and test, they stand out to-day as the most real experiences of my life, and experiences which have explained and justified and unified all past experiences and all past growth. Indeed, their reality and their far-reaching significance are ever becoming more clear and evident. When they came, I was living the fullest, strongest, sanest, deepest life. I was not seeking them. What I was seeking, with resolute determination, was to live more intensely my own life, as against what I knew would be the adverse judgment of the world. It was in the most real seasons that the Real Presence came, and I was aware that I was immersed in the infinite ocean of God.⁴

Even the least mystical of you must by this time be convinced of the existence of mystical moments as states of consciousness of an entirely specific quality, and of the deep impression which they make on those who have them. A Canadian psychiatrist, Dr. R. M. Bucke, gives to the more distinctly characterized of these phenomena the name of cosmic consciousness. "Cosmic consciousness in its more striking instances is not," Dr. Bucke says, "simply an expansion or extension of the self-conscious mind with

which we are all familiar, but the superaddition of a function as distinct from any possessed by the average man as *self-consciousness* is distinct from any function, possessed by one of the higher animals.”

“The prime characteristic of cosmic consciousness is a consciousness of the cosmos, that is, of the life and order of the universe. Along with the consciousness of the cosmos there occurs an intellectual enlightenment which alone would place the individual on a new plane of existence— would make him almost a member of a new species. To this is added a state of moral exaltation, an indescribable feeling of elevation, elation, and joyousness, and a quickening of the moral sense, which is fully as striking, and more important than is the enhanced intellectual power. With these come what may be called a sense of immortality, a consciousness of eternal life, not a conviction that he shall have this, but the consciousness that he has it already.”⁵

It was Dr. Bucke’s own experience of a typical onset of cosmic consciousness in his own person which led him to investigate it in others. He has printed his conclusions in a highly interesting volume, from which I take the following account of what occurred to him:—

“I had spent the evening in a great city, with two friends reading and discussing poetry and philosophy. We parted at midnight. I had a long drive in a hansom to my lodging. My mind, deeply under the influence of the ideas, images, and emotions called up by the reading and talk, was calm and peaceful. I was in a state of quiet, almost passive enjoyment, not actually thinking, but letting ideas, images and emotions flow of themselves, as it were, through my mind. All at once, without warning of any kind, I found myself wrapped in a flame-colored cloud. For an instant I

thought of fire, an immense conflagration somewhere close by in that great city; the next, I knew that the fire was within myself. Directly afterwards there came upon me a sense of exultation of immense joyousness or immediately followed by an intellectual illumination impossible to describe. Among other things, I did not merely come to believe, but I saw that the universe is not composed of dead matter, but is, on the contrary, a living Presence; I became conscious in myself of eternal life. It was not a conviction that I would have eternal life, but a consciousness that I possessed eternal life then; I saw that all men are immortal; that the cosmic order is such that without any peradventure all things work together for the good of each and all; that the foundation principle of the world, of all the worlds, is what we call love, and that the happiness of each and all is in the long run absolutely certain. The vision lasted a few seconds and was gone; but the memory of it and the sense of the reality of what it taught has remained during the quarter of a century which has since elapsed. I knew that what the vision showed was true, I had attained to a point of view from which I saw that it must be true. That view, that conviction, I may say that consciousness, has never, even during periods of the deepest depression, been lost.”⁶

We have now seen enough of this cosmic or mystic consciousness, as it comes sporadically. We must next pass to its methodical cultivation as an element of the religious life. Hindus, Buddhists, Mohammedans, and Christians all have cultivated it methodically.

In India training in mystical insight has been known from time immemorial under the name of yoga. Yoga means the experimental union of the individual with the divine. It is based on persevering exercise; and the diet, posture, breathing, intellectual concentration, and moral discipline

vary slightly in the different systems which teach it. The yogi, or disciple, who has by these means overcome the obscurations of his lower nature sufficiently, enters into the condition termed *samādhi*, “and comes face to face with facts which no instinct or reason can ever know.” He learns —

“That the mind itself has a higher state of existence, beyond reason, a superconscious state, and that when the mind gets to that higher state, then this knowledge beyond reasoning comes. ...All the different steps in yoga are intended to bring us scientifically to the superconscious state or *samādhi*. ...Just as unconscious work is beneath consciousness, so there is another work which is above consciousness, and which, also, is not accompanied with the feeling of egoism. ...There is no feeling of *I*, and yet the mind works, desireless, free from restlessness, objectless, bodiless. Then the Truth shines in its full effulgence, and we know ourselves — for *Samādhi* lies potential in us all — for what we truly are, free, immortal, omnipotent, loosed from the finite, and its contrasts of good and evil altogether, and identical with the Atman or Universal Soul.”⁷

The Vedantists say that one may stumble into superconsciousness sporadically, without the previous discipline, but it is then impure. Their test of its purity, like our test of religion’s value, is empirical: its fruits must be good for life. When a man comes out of *Samādhi*, they assure us that he remains “enlightened, a sage, a prophet, a saint, his whole character changed, his life changed, illumined.”⁸

The Buddhists use the word ‘*samādhi*’ as well as the Hindus; but ‘*dhyāna*’ is their special word for higher states of contemplation. There seem to be four stages recognized

in dhyāna. The first stage comes through concentration of the mind upon one point. It excludes desire, but not discernment or judgment: it is still intellectual. In the second stage the intellectual functions drop off, and the satisfied sense of unity remains. In the third stage the satisfaction departs, and indifference begins, along with memory and self-consciousness. In the fourth stage the indifference, memory, and self-consciousness are perfected. [Just what 'memory' and 'self-consciousness' mean in this connection is doubtful. They cannot be the faculties familiar to us in the lower life.] Higher stages still of contemplation are mentioned—a region where there exists nothing, and where the meditator says: "There exists absolutely nothing," and stops. Then he reaches another region where he says: "There are neither ideas nor absence of ideas," and stops again. Then another region where, "having reached the end of both idea and. perception, he stops finally." This would seem to be, not yet Nirvāna, but as close an approach to it as this life affords.⁹

In the Mohammedan world the Sufi sect and various dervish bodies are the possessors of the mystical tradition. The Sufis have existed in Persia from the earliest times, and as their pantheism is so at variance with the hot and rigid monotheism of the Arab mind, it has been suggested that Sufism must have been inoculated into Islam by Hindu influences. We Christians know little of Sufism, for its secrets are disclosed only to those initiated. To give its existence a certain liveliness in your minds, I shall quote a Moslem document, and pass away from the subject.

Al-Ghazzali, a Persian philosopher and theologian, who flourished in the eleventh century, and ranks as one of the greatest doctors of the Moslem church, has left us one of the

few autobiographies to be found outside of Christian literature. Strange that a species of book so abundant among ourselves should be so little represented elsewhere— the absence of strictly personal confessions is the chief difficulty to the purely literary student who would like to become acquainted with the inwardness of religions other than the Christian.

M. Schmölders has translated a part of Al-Ghazzali's autobiography into French:¹⁰

“The Science of the Sufis,” says the Moslem author, “aims at detaching the heart from all that is not God, and at giving to it for sole occupation the meditation of the divine being. Theory being more easy for me than practice, I read [certain books] until I understood all that can be learned by study and hearsay. Then I recognized that what pertains most exclusively to their method is just what no study can grasp, but only transport, ecstasy, and the transformation of the soul. How great, for example, is the difference between knowing the definitions of health, of satiety, with their causes and conditions, and being really healthy or filled. How different to know in what drunkenness consists, — as being a state occasioned by a vapor that rises from the stomach, — and *being* drunk effectively. Without doubt, the drunken man knows neither the definition of drunkenness nor what makes it interesting for science. Being drunk, he knows nothing; whilst the physician, although not drunk, knows well in what drunkenness consists, and what are its predisposing conditions. Similarly there is difference between knowing the nature of abstinence, and *being* abstinent or having one's soul detached from the world. — Thus I had learned what words could teach of Sufism, but what was left could be learned neither by study nor through the ears, but solely by giving one's self up to ecstasy and leading a pious life.

“Reflecting on my situation, I found myself tied down by a multitude of bonds — temptations on every side. Considering my teaching, I found it was impure before God. I saw myself struggling with all my might to achieve glory and to spread my name. [Here follows an account of his six months’ hesitation to break away from the conditions of his life at Bagdad, at the end of which he fell ill with a paralysis of the tongue.] Then, feeling my own weakness, and having entirely given up my own will, I repaired to God like a man in distress who has no more resources. He answered, as he answers the wretch who invokes him. My heart no longer felt any difficulty in renouncing glory, wealth, and my children. So I quitted Bagdad, and reserving from my fortune only what was indispensable for my subsistence, I distributed the rest. I went to Syria, where I remained about two years, with no other occupation than living in retreat and solitude, conquering my desires, combating my passions, training myself to purify my soul, to make my character perfect, to prepare my heart for meditating on God — all according to the methods of the Sufis, as I had read of them.

“This retreat only increased my desire to live in solitude, and to complete the purification of my heart and fit it for meditation. But the vicissitudes of the times, the affairs of the family, the need of subsistence, changed in some respects my primitive resolve, and interfered with my plans for a purely solitary life. I had never yet found myself completely in ecstasy, save in a few single hours; nevertheless, I kept the hope of attaining this state. Every time that the accidents led me astray, I sought to return; and in this situation I spent ten years. During this solitary state things were revealed to me which it is impossible either to describe or to point out. I recognized for certain that the Sufis are assuredly walking in the path of God. Both in their acts and in their inaction, whether internal or

external, they are illumined by the light which proceeds from the prophetic source. The first condition for a Sufi is to purge his heart entirely of all that is not God. The next key of the contemplative life consists in the humble prayers which escape from the fervent soul, and in the meditations on God in which the heart is swallowed up entirely. But in reality this is only the beginning of the Sufi life, the end of Sufism being total absorption in God. The intuitions and all, that precede are, so to speak, only the threshold for those who enter. From the beginning, revelations take place in so flagrant a shape that the Sufis see before them, whilst wide awake, the angels and the souls of the prophets. They hear their voices and obtain their favors. Then the transport rises from the perception of forms and figures to a degree which escapes all expression, and which no man may seek to give an account of without his words involving sin.

“Whoever has had no experience of the transport knows of the true nature of prophetism nothing but the name. He may meanwhile be sure of its existence, both by experience and by what he hears the Sufis say. As there are men endowed only with the sensitive faculty who reject what is offered them in the way of objects of the pure understanding, so there are intellectual men who reject and avoid the things perceived by the prophetic faculty. A blind man can understand nothing of colors save what he has learned by narration and hearsay. Yet God has brought prophetism near to men in giving them all a state analogous to it in its principal characters. This state is sleep. If you were to tell a man who was himself without experience of such a phenomenon that there are people who at times swoon away so as to resemble dead men, and who [in dreams] yet perceive things that are hidden, he would deny it [and give his reasons]. Nevertheless, his arguments would be refuted by actual experience. Wherefore, just as the understanding is a stage of human life in which an eye

opens to discern various intellectual objects uncomprehended by sensations; just so in the prophetic the sight is illumined by a light which uncovers hidden things and objects which the intellect fails to reach. The chief properties of prophetism are perceptible only during the transport, by those who embrace the Sufi life. The prophet is endowed with qualities to which you possess nothing analogous, and which consequently you cannot possibly understand. How should you know their true nature, since one knows only what one can comprehend? But the transport which one attains by the method of the Sufis is like an immediate perception, as if one touched the objects with one's hand."¹

This incommunicableness of the transport is the key note of all mysticism. Mystical truth exists for the individual who has the transport, but for no one else. In this, as I have said, it resembles the knowledge given to us in sensations more than that given by conceptual thought. Thought, with its remoteness and abstractness, has often enough in the history of philosophy been contrasted unfavorably with sensation. It is a commonplace of metaphysics that God's knowledge cannot be discursive but must be intuitive, that is, must be constructed more after the pattern of what in ourselves is called immediate feeling, than after that of proposition and judgment. But *our* immediate feelings have no content but what the five senses supply; and we have seen and shall see again that mystics may emphatically deny that the senses play any part in the very highest type of knowledge which their transports yield.

In the Christian church there have always been mystics. Although many of them have been viewed with suspicion, some have gained favor in the eyes of the authorities. The experiences of these have been treated as precedents, and a

codified system of mystical theology has been based upon them, in which everything legitimate finds its place.¹² The basis of the system is 'orison' or meditation, the methodical elevation of the soul towards God. Through the practice of orison the higher levels of mystical experience may be attained. It is odd that Protestantism, especially evangelical Protestantism, should seemingly have abandoned everything methodical in this line. Apart from what prayer may lead to, Protestant mystical experience appears to have been almost exclusively sporadic. It has been left to our mind-curers to reintroduce methodical meditation into our religious life.

The first thing to be aimed at in orison is the mind's detachment from outer sensations, for these interfere with its concentration upon ideal things. Such manuals as Saint Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* recommend the disciple to expel sensation by a graduated series of efforts to imagine holy scenes. The acme of this kind of discipline would be a semi-hallucinatory mono-ideism — an imaginary figure of Christ, for example, coming fully to occupy the mind. Sensorial images of this sort, whether literal or symbolic, play an enormous part in mysticism.¹³ But in certain cases imagery may fall away entirely, and in the very highest raptures it tends to do so. The state of consciousness becomes then insusceptible of any verbal description. Mystical teachers are unanimous as to this. Saint John of the Cross, for instance, one of the best of them, thus describes the condition called the 'union of love,' which, he says, is reached by 'dark contemplation.' In this the Deity compenetrates the soul, but in such a hidden way that the soul —

“finds no terms, no means, no comparison whereby to render the sublimity of the wisdom and the delicacy of the

spiritual feeling with which she is filled. ...We receive this mystical knowledge of God clothed in none of the kinds of images, in none of the sensible representations, which our mind makes use of in other circumstances. Accordingly, in this knowledge, since the senses and the imagination are not employed, we get neither form nor impression, nor can we give any account or furnish any likeness, although the mysterious and sweet-tasting wisdom comes home so clearly to the inmost parts of our soul. Fancy a man seeing a certain kind of things for the first time in his life. He can understand it, use and enjoy it, but he cannot apply a name to it, nor communicate any idea of it, even though all the while it be a mere thing of sense. How much greater will be his powerlessness when it goes beyond the senses! This is the peculiarity of the divine language. The more infused, intimate, spiritual, and supersensible it is, the more does it exceed the senses, both inner and outer, and impose silence upon them. ...The soul then feels as if placed in a vast and profound solitude, to which no created thing has access, in an immense and boundless desert, desert the more delicious the more solitary it is. There, in this abyss of wisdom, the soul grows by what it drinks in from the well-springs of the comprehension of love,... and recognizes, however sublime and learned may be the terms we employ, how utterly vile, insignificant, and improper they are, when we seek to discourse of divine things by their means."¹⁴

I cannot pretend to detail to you the sundry stages of the Christian mystical life.¹⁵ Our time would not suffice, for one thing; and moreover, I confess that the subdivisions and names which we find in the Catholic books seem to me to represent nothing objectively distinct. So many men, so many minds: I imagine that these experiences can be as infinitely varied as are the idiosyncrasies of individuals.

The cognitive aspects of them, their value in the way of

revelation is what we are directly concerned with, and it is easy to show by citation how strong an impression they leave of being revelations of new depth of truth. Saint Teresa is the expert of experts in describing such conditions, so I will turn immediately to what she says of one of the highest of them, the 'orison of union.'

"In the orison of union," says Saint Teresa, "the soul is fully awake as regards God, but wholly asleep as regards things of this world and in respect of herself. During the short time the union lasts, she is as it were deprived of every feeling, and even if she would, she could not think of any single thing. Thus she needs to employ no artifice in order to arrest the use of her understanding: it remains so stricken with inactivity that she neither knows what she loves, nor in what manner she loves, nor what she wills. In short, she is utterly dead to the things of the world and lives solely in God. ...I do not even know whether in this state she has enough life left to breathe. It seems to me she has not; or at least that if she does breathe, she is unaware of it. Her intellect would fain understand something of what is going on within her, but it has so little force now that it can act in no way whatsoever. So a person who falls into a deep faint appears as if dead....

"Thus does God, when he raises a soul to union with himself, suspend the natural action of all her faculties. She neither sees, hears, nor understands, so long as she is united with God. But this time is always short, and it seems even shorter than it is. God establishes himself in the interior of this soul in such a way, that when she returns to herself, it is wholly impossible for her to doubt that she has been in God, and God in her. This truth remains so strongly impressed on her that, even though many years should pass without the condition returning, she can neither forget the favor she received, nor doubt of its reality. If you,

nevertheless, ask how it is possible that the soul can see and understand that she has been in God, since during the union she has neither sight nor understanding, I reply that she does not see it then, but that she sees it clearly later, after she has returned to herself, not by any vision, but by a certitude which abides with her and which God alone can give her. I knew a person who was ignorant of the truth that God's mode of being in everything must be either by presence, by power, or by essence, but who, after having received the grace of which I am speaking, believed this truth in the most unshakable manner. So much so that, having consulted a half-learned man who was as ignorant on this point as she had been before she was enlightened, when he replied that God is in us only by 'grace,' she disbelieved his reply, so sure she was of the true answer; and when she came to ask wiser doctors, they confirmed her in her belief, which much consoled her....

"But how, you will repeat, *can* one have such certainty in respect to what one does not see? This question, I am powerless to answer. These are secrets of God's omnipotence which it does not appertain to me to penetrate. All that I know is that I tell the truth; and I shall never believe that any soul who does not possess this certainty has ever been really united to God."¹⁶

The kinds of truth communicable in mystical ways, whether these be sensible or supersensible, are various. Some of them relate to this world, — visions of the future, the reading of hearts, the sudden understanding of texts, the knowledge of distant events, for example; but the most important revelations are theological or metaphysical.

"Saint Ignatius confessed one day to Father Laynez that a single hour of meditation at Manresa had taught him more truths about heavenly things than all the teachings of all the

doctors put together could have taught him.... One day in orison, on the steps of the choir of the Dominican church, he saw in a distinct manner the plan of divine wisdom in the creation of the world. On another occasion, during a procession, his spirit was ravished in God, and it was given him to contemplate, in a form and images fitted to the weak understanding of a dweller on the earth, the deep mystery of the holy Trinity. This last vision flooded his heart with such sweetness, that the mere memory of it in after times made him shed abundant tears.”¹⁷

(William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Barnes & Noble Classics, NY, 2004, pp. 341-55)

This overcoming of all the usual barriers between the individual and the Absolute is the great mystic achievement. In the mystic states we both become one with the Absolute and we become aware of our oneness. This is the everlasting and triumphant mystical tradition, hardly altered by differences of clime or creed. In Hinduism, in Neoplatonism, in Sufism, in Christian mysticism, in Whitmanism, we find the same recurring note, so that there is about mystical utterances an eternal unanimity which ought to make a critic stop and think, and which brings it about that the mystical classics have, as has been said, neither birthday nor native land. Perpetually telling of the unity of man with God, their speech antedates languages, and they do not grow old.¹⁸

‘That art Thou!’ say the Upanishads, and the Vedantists add: ‘Not a part, not a mode of That, but identically That, that absolute Spirit of the World.’ “As pure water poured into pure water remains the same, thus, O Gautama, is the Self of a thinker who knows. Water in water, fire in fire, ether in ether, no one can distinguish them; likewise a man whose mind has entered into the Self.”¹⁹ “‘Every man,’ says

the Sufi Gulshan-Rāz, ‘whose heart is no longer shaken by any doubt, knows with certainty that there is no being save only One. ...In his divine majesty the *me*, the *we*, the *thou*, are not found, for in the One there can be no distinction. Every being who is annulled and entirely separated from himself, hears resound outside of him this voice and this echo: *I am God*: he has an eternal way of existing, and is no longer subject to death.’”²⁰ In the vision of God, says Plotinus, “what sees is not our reason, but something prior and superior to our reason.... He who thus sees does not properly see, does not distinguish or imagine two things. He changes, he ceases to be himself, preserves nothing of himself. Absorbed in God, he makes but one with him, like a centre of a circle coinciding with another centre.”²¹ “Here,” writes Suso, “the spirit dies, and yet is all alive in the marvels of the Godhead... and is lost in the stillness of the glorious dazzling obscurity and of the naked simple unity. It is in this modeless *where* that the highest bliss is to be found.”²² “Ich bin so gross als Gott,” sings Angelus Silesius again, “Er ist als ich so klein; Er kann nicht über mich, ich unter ihm nicht sein.”²³

In mystical literature such self-contradictory phrases as ‘dazzling obscurity,’ ‘whispering silence,’ ‘teeming desert,’ are continually met with. They prove that not conceptual speech, but music rather, is the element through which we are best spoken to by mystical truth. Many mystical scriptures are indeed little more than musical compositions.

“He who would hear the voice of Nada, ‘the Soundless Sound,’ and comprehend it, he has to learn the nature of Dhāranā.... When to himself his form appears unreal, as do on waking all the forms he sees in dreams; when he has ceased to hear the many, he may discern the ONE — the

inner sound which kills the outer.... For then the soul will hear, and will remember. And then to the inner ear will speak THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE.... And now thy *Self* is lost in SELF, *thyself* unto THYSELF, merged in that SELF from which thou first didst radiate.... Behold! thou hast become the Light, thou hast become the Sound, thou art thy Master and thy God. Thou art THYSELF the object of they search: the VOICE unbroken, that resounds throughout eternities, exempt from change, from sin exempt, the seven sounds in one, the VOICE OF THE SILENCE. *Om tat Sat.*²⁴

These words, if they do not awaken laughter as you receive them, probably stir chords within you which music and language touch in common. Music gives you ontological messages which non-musical criticism is unable to contradict, though it may laugh at our foolishness in minding them. There is a verge of the mind which these things haunt; and whispers therefrom mingle with the operations of our understanding, even as the waters of the infinite ocean send their waves to break among the pebbles that lie upon our shores.

“Here begins the sea that ends not till the world’s end.
 Where we stand,
 Could we know the next high sea-mark set beyond
 these waves that gleam,
 We should know what never man hath known, nor
 eye of man hath scanned....
 Ah, but here man’s heart leaps, yearning towards the
 gloom with venturous glee,
 From the shore that bath no shore beyond it, set in all
 the sea.”²⁵

(William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Barnes & Noble Classics, NY, 2004, pp. 362-5)

- ¹ *Memoiren einer Idealistin*, 5te Auflage, 1900, iii. 166. For years she had been unable to pray, owing to materialistic belief.
- ² Whitman in another place expresses in a quieter way what was probably with him a chronic mystical perception: "There is," he writes, "apart from mere intellect, in the make-up of every superior human identity, a wondrous something that realizes without argument, frequently without what is called education (though I think it the goal and apex of all education deserving the name), an intuition of the absolute balance, in time and space, of the whole of this multifariousness, this revel of fools, and incredible make-believe and general unsettledness, we call *the world*; a soul-sight of that divine clue and unseen thread which holds the whole congeries of things, all history and time, and all events, however trivial, however momentous, like a leashed dog in the hand of the hunter. [Of] such soul-sight and root-centre for the mind mere optimism explains only the surface." Whitman charges it against Carlyle that he lacked this perception. *Specimen Days and Collect*, Philadelphia, 1882, p. 174.
- ³ *My Quest for God*, London, 1897, pp. 268, 269, abridged.
- ⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 256, 257, abridged.
- ⁵ *Cosmic Consciousness: a study in the evolution of the human Mind*, Philadelphia, 1901 p.2.
- ⁶ *Loc. cit.*, pp. 7, 8. My quotation follows the privately printed pamphlet which preceded Dr. Bucke's larger work, and differs verbally a little from the text of the latter.
- ⁷ My quotations are from VIVEKANANDA, *Raja Yoga*, London, 1896. The completest source of information on Yoga is the work translated by VIHARI LALA MITRA: *Yoga Vasishta Maha Ramayana*, 4 vols., Calcutta, 1891—99.
- ⁸ A European witness, after carefully comparing the results of Yoga with those of the hypnotic or dreamy states artificially producible by us, says: "It makes of its true disciples good, healthy, and happy men. ...Through the mastery which the yogi attains over his thoughts and his body, he grows into a 'character.' By the subjection of his impulses and propensities to his will, and the fixing of the latter upon the ideal of goodness, he becomes a 'personality' hard to influence by others, and thus almost the opposite of what we usually imagine a 'medium'

so-called, or 'psychic subject' to be." KARL KELLNER: *Yoga: Eine Skizze*, München, 1896, p.21.

- ⁹ I follow the account in C. F. KOEPPEN: *Die Religion des Buddha*, Berlin, 1857, i.585 ff.
- ¹⁰ For a full account of him, see D. B. MACDONALD: *The Life of Al-Ghazzali*, in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 1899, vol. xx. p.71.
- ¹¹ A. SCHMÖLDERS: *Essai sur les écoles philosophiques chez les Arabes*, Paris, 1842, pp. 54-68, abridged.
- ¹² GÖRRES's *Christliche Mystik* gives a full account of the facts. So does RIBET's *Mystique Divine*, 2 vols., Paris, 1890. A still more methodical modern work is the *Mystica Theologia* of VALLGORNERA, 2 vols., Turin, 1890.
- ¹³ M. RÉCÉJAC, in a recent volume, makes them essential. Mysticism he defines as "the tendency to draw near to the Absolute morally, *and by the aid of Symbols.*" See his *Fondements de la Connaissance mystique*, Paris, 1897, p. 66. But there are unquestionably mystical conditions in which sensible symbols play no part.
- ¹⁴ Saint John of the Cross: *The Dark Night of the Soul*, book ii. Ch. Xvii., in *Vie et Œuvres*, 3me édition, Paris, 1893, iii. 428-432. Chapter xi. of book ii. of Saint John's *Ascent of Carmel* is devoted to showing the harmfulness for the mystical life of the use of sensible imagery.
- ¹⁵ In particular I omit mention of visual and auditory hallucinations, verbal and graphic automatisms, and such marvels as 'levitation,' stigmatization, and the healing of disease. These phenomena, which mystics have often presented (or are believed to have presented), have no essential mystical significance, for they occur with no consciousness of illumination whatever, when they occur, as they often do, in persons of non-mystical mind. Consciousness of illumination is for us the essential mark of 'mystical' states.
- ¹⁶ *The Interior Castle, Fifth Abode*, ch.i., in *Œuvres*, translated by BOUIX, iii. 421-424.
- ¹⁷ BARTOLI-MICHEL: *Vie de Saint Ignace de Loyola*, i. 34-36.
- ¹⁸ Compare M. MAETERLINCK: *L'Ornement des Noces spirituelles de Ruysbroeck*, Bruxelles, 1891, Introduction, p. xix.

¹⁹ Upanishads, M. MÜLLER's translation, ii. 17, 334.

²⁰ SCHMÖLDERS: Op. cit., p. 210.

²¹ Enneads, BOUILLIER's translation, Paris, 1861, iii. 561. Compare pp.473-477, and vol. i. p. 27.

²² Autobiography, pp. 309, 310.

²³ Op. cit., Strophe 10.

²⁴ H.P. BLAVATSKY: The Voice of the Silence.

²⁵ SWINBURNE: On the Verge, in 'A Midsummer Vacation.'

Appendix VII

At about the age of fifty, Tolstoy relates that he began to have moments of perplexity, of what he calls arrest, as if he knew not 'how to live,' or what to do. It is obvious that these were moments in which the excitement and interest which our functions naturally bring had ceased. Life had been enchanting, it was now flat sober, more than sober, dead. Things were meaningless whose meaning had always been self-evident. The questions 'Why?' and 'What next?' began to beset him more and more frequently. At first it seemed as if such questions must be answerable, and as if he could easily find the answers if he would take the time; but as they ever became more urgent, he perceived that it was like those first discomforts of a sick man, to which he pays but little attention till they run into one continuous suffering, and then he realizes that what he took for a passing disorder means the most momentous thing in the world for him, means his death.

These questions 'Why?' 'Wherefore?' 'What for?' found no response.

"I felt," says Tolstoy, "that something had broken within me on which my life always rested, that I had nothing left to hold on to, and that morally my life had stopped. An invincible force impelled me to get rid of my existence, in one way or another. It cannot be said exactly that I *wished* to kill myself, for the force which drew me away from life was fuller, more powerful, more general than any mere desire. It was a force like my old aspiration to live, only it impelled me in the opposite direction. It was an aspiration

of my whole being to get out of life.

“Behold me then, a man happy and in good health, hiding the rope in order not to hang myself to the rafters of the room where every night I went to sleep alone; behold me no longer going shooting, lest I should yield to the too easy temptation of putting an end to myself with my gun.

“I did not know what I wanted. I was afraid of life; I was driven to leave it; and in spite of that I still hoped something from it.

“All this took place at a time when so far as all my outer circumstances went, I ought to have been completely happy. I had a good wife who loved me and whom I loved; good children and a large property which was increasing with no pains taken on my part. I was more respected by my kinsfolk and acquaintance than I had ever been; I was loaded with praise by strangers; and without exaggeration I could believe my name already famous. Moreover I was neither insane nor ill. On the contrary, I possessed a physical and mental strength which I have rarely met in persons of my age. I could mow as well as the peasants, I could work with my brain eight hours uninterruptedly and feel no bad effects.

“And yet I could give no reasonable meaning to any actions of my life. And I was surprised that I had not understood this from the very beginning. My state of mind was as if some wicked and stupid jest was being played upon me by some one. One can live only so long as one is intoxicated, drunk with life; but when one grows sober one cannot fail to see that it is all a stupid cheat. What is truest about it is that there is nothing even funny or silly in it; it is cruel and stupid, purely and simply.

“The oriental fable of the traveler surprised in the desert by a wild beast is very old.

“Seeking to save himself from the fierce animal, the traveler jumps into a well with no water in it; but at the bottom of this well he sees a dragon waiting with open mouth to devour him. And the unhappy man, not daring to go out lest he should be the prey of the beast, not daring to jump to the bottom lest he should be devoured by the dragon, clings to the branches of a wild bush which grows out of one of the cracks of the well. His hands weaken, and he feels that he must soon give way to certain fate; but still he clings, and sees two mice, one white, the other black, evenly moving round the bush to which he hangs, and gnawing off its roots.

“The traveler sees this and knows that he must inevitably perish; but while thus hanging he looks about him and finds on the leaves of the bush some drops of honey. These he reaches with his tongue and licks them off with rapture.

“Thus I hang upon the boughs of life, knowing that the inevitable dragon of death is waiting ready to tear me, and I cannot comprehend why I am thus made a martyr. I try to suck the honey which formerly consoled me; but the honey pleases me no longer, and day and night the white mouse and the black mouse gnaw the branch to which I cling. I can see but one thing: the inevitable dragon and the mice—I cannot turn my gaze away from them.

“This is no fable, but the literal incontestable truth which every one may understand. What will be the outcome of what I do to-day? Of what I shall do to-morrow? What will be the outcome of all my life? Why should I live? Why should I do anything? Is there in life any purpose which the inevitable death which awaits me does not undo and destroy?

“These questions are the simplest in the world. From the stupid child to the wisest old man, they are in the soul of every human being. Without an answer to them, it is

impossible, as I experienced, for life to go on.

“‘But perhaps,’ I often said to myself, ‘there may be something I have failed to notice or to comprehend. It is not possible that this condition of despair should be natural to mankind.’ And I sought for an explanation in all the branches of knowledge acquired by men. I questioned painfully and protractedly and with no idle curiosity. I sought, not with indolence, but laboriously and obstinately for days and nights together. I sought like a man who is lost and seeks to save himself, — and I found nothing. I became convinced, moreover, that all those who before me had sought for an answer in the sciences have also found nothing. And not only this, but that they have recognized that the very thing which was leading me to despair — the meaningless absurdity of life — is the only incontestable knowledge accessible to man.”

To prove this point, Tolstoy quotes the Buddha, Solomon, and Schopenhauer. And he finds only four ways in which men of his own class and society are accustomed to meet the situation. Either mere animal blindness, sucking the honey without seeing the dragon or the mice, — “and from such a way,” he says, “I can learn nothing, after what I now know;” or reflective epicureanism, snatching what it can while the day lasts, — which is only a more deliberate sort of stupefaction than the first; or manly suicide; or seeing the mice and dragon and yet weakly and plaintively clinging to the bush of life.

Suicide was naturally the consistent course dictated by the logical intellect.

“Yet,” says Tolstoy, “whilst my intellect was working, something else in me was working too, and kept me from the deed — a consciousness of life, as I may call it, which

was like a force that obliged my mind to fix itself in another direction and draw me out of my situation of despair.... During the whole course of this year, when I almost unceasingly kept asking myself how to end the business, whether by the rope or by the bullet, during all that time, alongside of all those movements of my ideas and observations, my heart kept languishing with another pining emotion. I can call this by no other name than that of a thirst for God. This craving for God had nothing to do with the movement of my ideas, — in fact, it was the direct contrary of that movement, — but it came from my heart. It was like feeling of dread that made me seem like an orphan and isolated in the midst of all things that were so foreign. And this feeling of dread was mitigated by the hope of finding the assistance of some one.”¹

(William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Barnes & Noble Classics, NY, 2004, pp. 139-142)

¹ My extracts are from the French translation by ‘ZONIA’. In abridging I have taken the liberty of transposing one passage.

Appendix VIII

The Divine Worker¹

I face earth's happenings with an equal soul;
In all are heard Thy steps: Thy unseen feet
Tread Destiny's pathways in my front. Life's whole
Tremendous theorem is Thou complete.

No danger can perturb my spirit's calm:
My acts are Thine; I do Thy works and pass;
Failure is cradled on Thy deathless arm,
Victory is Thy passage mirrored in Fortune's glass.

In this rude combat with the fate of man
Thy smile within my heart makes all my strength;
Thy Force in me labours at its grandiose plan,
Indifferent to the Time-snake's crawling length.

No power can slay my soul; it lives in Thee.
Thy presence is my immortality.

¹ (Sri Aurobindo, *Collected Poems*, Vol. 5, Centenary edition, Pondicherry, 1972, p. 143.)

Appendix IX

Before this labour for the annihilation of desire and the conquest of the soul's equality can come to its absolute perfection and fruition, that turn of the spiritual movement must have been completed which leads to the abolition of the sense of ego. But for the worker the renunciation of the egoism of action is the most important element in this change. For even when by giving up the fruits and the desire of the fruits to the Master of the Sacrifice we have parted with the egoism of rajasic desire, we may still have kept the egoism of the worker. Still we are subject to the sense that we are ourselves the doer of the act, ourselves its source and ourselves the giver of the sanction. It is still the "I" that chooses and determines, it is still the "I" that undertakes the responsibility and feels the demerit or the merit. An entire removal of this separative ego-sense is an essential aim of our Yoga. If any ego is to remain in us for a while it is only a form of it which knows itself to be a form and is ready to disappear as soon as a true centre of consciousness is manifested or built in us. That true centre is a luminous formulation of the one Consciousness and a pure channel and instrument of the one Existence. A support for the individual manifestation and action of the universal Force, it gradually reveals behind it the true Person in us, the central eternal being, an everlasting being of the Supreme, a power and portion of the transcendent Shakti.¹

Here too, in this movement by which the soul divests itself gradually of the obscure robe of the ego, there is a

progress by marked stages. For not only the fruit of works belongs to the Lord alone, but our works also must be his; he is the true Lord of our action no less than of our results. This we must not see with the thinking mind only, it must become entirely true to our entire consciousness and will. The Sadhaka has not only to think and know but to see and feel concretely and intensely even in the moment of the working and in its initiation and whole process that his works are not his at all, but are coming through him from the Supreme Existence. He must be always aware of a Force, a Presence, a Will that acts through his individual nature. But there is in taking this turn the danger that he may confuse his own disguised or sublimated ego or an inferior power with the Lord and substitute its demands for the supreme dictates. He may fall into a common ambush of this lower nature and distort his supposed surrender to a higher Power into an excuse for a magnified and uncontrolled indulgence of his own self-will and even of his desires and passions. A great sincerity is asked for and has to be imposed not only on the conscious mind but still more on the subliminal part of us which is full of hidden movements. For there is there, especially in our subliminal vital nature, an incorrigible charlatan and actor. The Sadhaka must first have advanced far in the elimination of desire and in the firm equality of his soul towards all workings and all happenings before he can utterly lay down the burden of his works on the Divine. At every moment he must proceed with a vigilant eye upon the deceits of the ego and the ambushes of the misleading Powers of Darkness who ever represent themselves as the one source of Light and Truth and take on them a simulacrum of divine forms in order to capture the soul of the seeker.

Immediately he must take the further step of relegating

himself to the position of the Witness. Aloof from the Prakriti, impersonal and dispassionate, he must watch the executive Nature-Force at work within him and understand its action; he must learn by this separation to recognise the play of her universal forces, distinguish her interweaving of light and night, the divine and the undivine, and detect her formidable Powers and Beings that use the ignorant human creature. Nature works in us, says the Gita, through the triple quality of Prakriti, the quality of light and good, the quality of passion and desire and the quality of obscurity and inertia. The seeker must learn to distinguish, as an impartial and discerning witness of all that proceeds within this kingdom of his nature, the separate and the combined action of these qualities; he must pursue the workings of the cosmic forces in him through all the labyrinth of their subtle unseen processes and disguises and know every intricacy of the maze. As he proceeds in this knowledge, he will be able to become the giver of the sanction and no longer remain an ignorant tool of Nature. At first he must induce the Nature-Force in its action on his instrument to subdue the working of its two lower qualities and bring them into subjection to the quality of light and good and, afterwards, he must persuade that again to offer itself so that all three may be transformed by a higher Power into their divine equivalents, supreme repose and calm, divine illumination and bliss, the eternal divine dynamis, Tapas. The first part of this discipline and change can be firmly done in principle by the will of the mental being in us; but its full execution and the subsequent transformation can be done only when the deeper psychic soul increases its hold on the nature and replaces the mental being as its ruler. When this happens, he will be ready to make, not only with an aspiration and intention and an initial and progressive self-abandonment but with the most intense

actuality of dynamic self-giving, the complete renunciation of his works to the Supreme Will. By degrees his mind of an imperfect human intelligence will be replaced by a spiritual and illumined mind and that can in the end enter into the supramental Truth-Light; he will then no longer act from his nature of the Ignorance with its three modes of confused and imperfect activity, but from a diviner nature of spiritual calm, light, power and bliss. He will act not from an amalgam of an ignorant mind and will with the drive of a still more ignorant heart of emotion and the desire of the life-being and the urge and instinct of the flesh, but first from a spiritualised self and nature and, last, from a supramental Truth-Consciousness and its divine force of supernature.

Thus are made possible the final steps when the veil of Nature is withdrawn and the seeker is face to face with the Master of all existence and his activities are merged in the action of a supreme Energy which is pure, true, perfect and blissful for ever. Thus can he utterly renounce to the supramental Shakti his works as well as the fruits of his works and act only as the conscious instrument of the eternal Worker. No longer giving the sanction, he will rather receive in his instruments and follow in her hands a divine mandate. No longer doing works, he will accept their execution through him by her unsleeping Force. No longer willing the fulfilment of his own mental constructions and the satisfaction of his own emotional desires, he will obey and participate in an omnipotent Will that is also an omniscient Knowledge and a mysterious, magical and unfathomable Love and a vast bottomless sea of the eternal Bliss of Existence.

(Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol. 20, Centenary edition, Pondicherry, 1972, pp. 216-9.)

¹ *amśa sanātanaḥ, parā prakṛtir jivabhūtā*

Appendix X

The supreme Form is then made visible. It is that of the infinite Godhead whose faces are everywhere and in whom are all the wonders of existence, who multiplies unendingly all the many marvellous revelations of his being, a world-wide Divinity seeing with innumerable eyes, speaking from innumerable mouths, armed for battle with numberless divine uplifted weapons, glorious with divine ornaments of beauty, robed in heavenly raiment of deity, lovely with garlands of divine flowers, fragrant with divine perfumes. Such is the light of this body of God as if a thousand suns had risen at once in heaven. The whole world multitudinously divided and yet unified is visible in the body of the God of Gods. Arjuna sees him, God magnificent and beautiful and terrible, the Lord of souls who has manifested in the glory and greatness of his spirit this wild and monstrous and orderly and wonderful and sweet and terrible world, and overcome with marvel and joy and fear he bows down and adores with words of awe and with clasped hands the tremendous vision. "I see" he cries "all the gods in thy body, O God, and different companies of beings, Brahma the creating lord seated in the Lotus, and the Rishis and the race of the divine Serpents. I see numberless arms and bellies and eyes and faces, I see thy infinite forms on every side, but I see not thy end nor thy middle nor thy beginning, O Lord of the universe, O Form universal. I see thee crowned and with thy mace and thy discus, hard to discern because thou art a luminous mass of energy on all sides of me, an

encompassing blaze, a sun-bright fire-bright Immeasurable. Thou art the supreme Immutable whom we have to know, thou art the high foundation and abode of the universe, thou art the imperishable guardian of the eternal laws, thou art the sempiternal soul of existence.”

But in the greatness of this vision there is too the terrific image of the Destroyer. This Immeasurable without end or middle or beginning is he in whom all things begin and exist and end. This Godhead who embraces the worlds with his numberless arms and destroys with his million hands, whose eyes are suns and moons, has a face of blazing fire and is ever burning up the whole universe with the flame of his energy. The form of him is fierce and marvellous and alone it fills all the regions and occupies the whole space between earth and heaven. The companies of the gods enter it, afraid, adoring; the Rishis and the Siddhas crying “May there be peace and weal” praise it with many praises; the eyes of Gods and Titans and Giants are fixed on it in amazement. It has enormous burning eyes; it has mouths that gape to devour, terrible with many tusks of destruction; it has faces like the fires of Death and Time. The kings and the captains and the heroes on both sides of the world-battle are hastening into its tusked and terrible jaws and some are seen with crushed and bleeding heads caught between its teeth of power; the nations are rushing to destruction with helpless speed into its mouths of flame like many rivers hurrying in their course towards the ocean or like moths that cast themselves on a kindled fire. With those burning mouths the Form of Dread is licking all the regions around; the whole world is full of his burning energies and baked in the fierceness of his lustres. The world and its nations are shaken and in anguish with the terror of destruction and Arjuna shares in the trouble

and panic around him; troubled and in pain is the soul within him and he finds no peace or gladness. He cries to the dreadful Godhead, "Declare to me who thou art that wearest this form of fierceness. Salutation to thee, O thou great Godhead, turn thy heart to grace. I would know who thou art who wast from the beginning, for I know not the will of thy workings."

This last cry of Arjuna indicates the double intention in the vision. This is the figure of the supreme and universal Being, the Ancient of Days who is for ever, *sanātanaṁ puruṣaṁ purāṇam*, this is he who for ever creates, for Brahma the Creator is one of the Godheads seen in his body, he who keeps the world always in existence, for he is the guardian of the eternal laws, but who is always too destroying in order that he may new-create, who is Time, who is Death, who is Rudra the Dancer of the calm and awful dance, who is Kali with her garland of skulls trampling naked in battle and flecked with the blood of the slaughtered Titans, who is the cyclone and the fire and the earthquake and pain and famine and revolution and ruin and the swallowing ocean.

(Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, vol. 13, Centenary edition, Pondicherry, 1972, pp. 365-6)

Appendix XI

Liberation¹

I have thrown from me the whirling dance of mind
And stand now in the spirit's silence free;
Timeless and deathless beyond creature-kind,
The centre of my own eternity.

I have escaped and the small self is dead;
I am immortal, alone, ineffable;
I have gone out from the universe I made,
And have grown nameless and immeasurable.

My mind is hushed in a wide and endless light,
My heart a solitude of delight and peace,
My sense unsnared by touch and sound and sight,
My body a point in white infinities.

I am the one Being's sole immobile Bliss:
No one I am, I who am all that is.

¹ (Sri Aurobindo, *Collected Poems*, vol. 5, Centenary edition, Pondicherry, 1972, p. 133)

Appendix XII

Adwaita¹

I walked on the high-wayed Seat of Solomon
Where Shankaracharya's tiny temple stands
Facing Infinity from Time's edge, alone
On the bare ridge ending earth's vain romance.

Around me was a formless solitude:
All had become one strange Unnamable,
An unborn sole Reality world-nude,
Topless and fathomless, for ever still.

A Silence that was Being's only word,
The unknown beginning and the voiceless end
Abolishing all things moment-seen or heard,
On an incommunicable summit reigned,

A lonely Calm and void unchanging Peace
On the dumb crest of Nature's mysteries.

Nirvana²

All is abolished but the mute Alone.

The mind from thought released, the heart from grief
Grow inexistent now beyond belief;

There is no I, no Nature, known-unknown.

The city, a shadow picture without tone,

Floats, quivers unreal; forms without relief

Flow, a cinema's vacant shapes; like a reef

Foundering in shoreless gulfs the world is done.

Only the illimitable Permanent

Is here. A Peace stupendous, featureless, still,

Replaces all, — what once was I, in It

A silent unnamed emptiness content

Either to fade in the Unknowable

Or thrill with the luminous seas of the Infinite.

¹ (Sri Aurobindo, *Collected Poems*, vol. 5, Centenary edition, Pondicherry, 1972, p. 153.

² Sri Aurobindo, *Collected Poems*, vol. 5, Centenary edition, Pondicherry, 1972, p. 161

Appendix – XIII

Love Mad^{1*}

The poetic image used in the following verses is characteristically Indian. The mother of a love-stricken girl (symbolising the human soul yearning to merge into the Godhead) is complaining to her friend of the sad plight of her child whom love for Krishna has rendered “mad”—the effect of the “madness” being that in all things she is able to see nothing but forms of Krishna —,the ultimate Spirit of the universe.

The Realisation of God in all things by the Vision of Divine Love.

1. Seated, she caresses Earth and cries, “This earth is Vishnu’s”;
Salutes the sky and bids us “behold the Heaven He ruleth”;
Or standing with tear-filled eyes cries aloud, “O sea hued Lord!”
All helpless am I, my friends; my child He has rendered mad.
2. Or joining her hands she fancies “The Sea where my Lord reposes !”
Or hailing the ruddy Sun she cries: “Yes, this is His form”,
Languid, she bursts into tears and mutters Narayan’s name.

I am dazed at the things she is doing, my gazelle, thy child shaped god-like.

3. Knowing, she embraces red Fire, is scorched and, cries "O Deathless!"

And she hugs the Wind; "'Tis my own Govinda", she tells us.

She smells of the honied Tulsi, my gazelle-like child. Ah me!

How many the pranks she plays for my sinful eyes to behold.

4. The rising moon she showeth, "'Tis the shining gem-hued Krishna!"

Or, eyeing the standing hill, she cries: "O come, high Vishnu!"

It rains; and she dances and cries out "He hath come, the God of my love!"

O the mad conceits He hath given to my tender, dear one!

5. The soft-limbed calf she embraces, for "Such did Krishna tend",

And follows the gliding serpent, explaining "That is His couch".

I know not where this will end, this folly's play in my sweet one

Afflicted, ay, for my sins, by Him, the Divine Magician.

6. Where tumblers dance with their pots, she runs and cries "Govinda";

At the charming notes of a flute she faints, for "Krishna, He playeth."

When cowherd dames bring butter, she is sure it was tasted by Him, —

So mad for the Lord who sucked out the Demoness' life through her bosom!

7. In rising madness she raves, "All worlds are by Krishna made"
And she runs after folk ash-smeared; forsooth, they serve high Vishnu!
Or she looks at the fragrant Tulsi and claims Narayan's garland.
She is ever for Vishnu, my darling, or in, or out of her wits.
8. And in all your wealthy princes she but sees the Lord of Lakshmi.
At the sight of beautiful colours, she cries, "O my Lord world-scanning!"
And all the shrines in the land, to her, are shrines of Vishnu.
In awe and in love, unceasing, she adores the feet of that Wizard.
9. All Gods and saints are Krishna — Devourer of infinite Space!
And the huge, dark clouds are Krishna; all fain would she fly to reach them.
Or the kine, they graze on the meadow and thither she runs to find Him.
The Lord of Illisions, He makes my dear one pant and rave.
10. Languid she stares around her or gazes afar into space;
She sweats and with eyes full of tears she sighs and faints away;
Rising, she speaks but His name and cries, "Do come, O Lord."
Ah, what shall I do with my poor child o'erwhelmed by this maddest love?

Translations – Tamil – Andal

I dreamed a dream²

I dreamed a dream, O friend.

The wedding was fixed for the morrow. And He, the Lion, Madhava, the young Bull whom they call the master of radiances, He came into the hall of wedding decorated with luxuriant palms.

I dreamed a dream, O friend.

And the throng of the Gods was there with Indra, the Mind Divine, at their head. And in the shrine they declared me bride and clad me in a new robe of affirmation. And Inner Force is the name of the goddess who adorned me with the garland of the wedding.

I dreamed a dream, O friend.

There were beatings of the drum and blowings of the conch; and under the canopy hung heavily with strings of pearls He came, my lover and my lord, the vanquisher of the demon Madhu and grasped me by the hand.

I dreamed a dream, O friend.

Those whose voices are blest, they sang the Vedic songs. The holy grass was laid. The sun was established. And He who was puissant like a war-elephant in its rage, He seized my hand and we paced round the Flame.

Ye Others³

Ye others cannot conceive of the love that I bear to Krishna. And your warnings to me are vain like the pleadings of the deaf and mute. The Boy who left his mother's home and was reared by a different mother, — Oh, take me forth to his city of Mathura where He won the field without fighting the battle and leave me there.

Of no further avail is modesty. For all the neighbours have known of this fully. Would ye really heal me of this ailing and restore me to my pristine state? Then know ye this illness will go if I see Him, the maker of illusions, the youthful one who measured the world. Should you really wish to save me, then take me forth to his home in the hamlet of the cowherds and leave me there.

The rumour is already spread over the land that I fled with Him and went the lonely way, leaving all of you behind—my parents, relations and friends. The tongue of scandal ye can hardly silence now. And He, the deceiver, is haunting me with his forms. Oh, take me forth at midnight to the door of the Cowherd named Bliss who owns this son, the maker of havoc, this mocker, this pitiless player; and leave me there.

Oh, grieve not ye, my mothers. Others know little of this strange malady of mine. He whose hue is that of the blue sea, a certain youth called Krishna — the gentle caress of his hand can heal me, for his Yoga is sure and proved.

On the bank of the waters he ascended the Kadamba tree and he leaped to his dance on the hood of the snake, the dance that killed the snake, Oh take me forth to the bank of

that lake and leave me there.

There is a parrot here in this cage of mine that ever calls out his name, saying 'Govinda, Govinda'. In anger I chide it and refuse to feed it. 'O Thou' it then cries, in its highest pitch, 'O Thou who hast measured the worlds.' I tell you, my people, if ye really would avoid the top of scandal in all this wide country, if still ye would guard your weal and your good fame, then take me forth to his city of Dwaraka of high mansion and decorated turrets; and leave me there.

Translations – Bengali – Horu Thakur⁴

VII

*The soul longs for reunion with God, without whom the
sweetnesses of love and life are vain.*

All day and night in lonely anguish wasting
The heart's wish to the lips unceasing comes, —
“O that I had a bird's wings to go hasting
Where that dark wanderer roams!
I should behold the flute on loved lips resting.”

Where shall I find him, joy in his sweet kisses?
How shall I hope my love's feet to embrace?
O void is home and vain affection's bliss is
Without the one loved face,
Crishna who has nor home nor kindred misses.

Translations – Bengali – Bidyapati^s**XI**

How shall I tell of Caanou's beauty bright?
Men will believe it a vision of the night.

As lightning was his saffron garment blown
Over the beautiful cloud-limbs half shown.

His coal-black curls assumed with regal grace
A peacock's plume above that moonlike face.

And such a fragrance fierce the mad wind wafts
Love wakes and trembles for his flowery shafts.

Yea, what shall words do, friend? Love's whole estate
Exhausted was that wonder to create.

Selected Poems of Jnanadas⁶

The soul, as yet divided from the Eternal, yet having caught a glimpse of his intoxicating beauty grows passionate in remembrance and swoons with the sensuous expectation of union.

O beauty meant all hearts to move!
 O body made for girls to kiss!
 In every limb an idol of love,
 A spring of passion and of bliss.

The eyes that once his beauty see,
 Poor eyes! can never turn away,
 The heart follows him ceaselessly
 Like a wild beast behind its prey.

Not to be touched those limbs, alas!
 They are another's nest of joy.
 But ah their natural loveliness!
 Ah God, the dark, the wonderful boy!

His graceful sportive motion sweet
 Is as an ornament to earth,
 And from his lovely pacing feet
 Beauties impossible take birth.

Catching one look not long nor sure,
 One look of casual glory shed,
 How many noble maidens pure
 Lay down on love as on a bed.

The heart within the heart deep hid
 He ravishes; almost in play
 One looks, — ere falling of the lid,
 Her heart has gone with him away!

Oh if his eyes wake such sweet pain
That even sleep will not forget,
What dreadful sweetness waits me when
Body and passionate body meet.

•

Translations – Bengali – Jnanadas⁷

VII

The human soul, in a moment of rapt excitement when the robe of sense has fallen from it, is surprised and seized by the vision of the Eternal.

I will lay bare my heart's whole flame,
To thee, heart's sister, yea the whole.
The dark-hued limbs I saw in dream,
To these I have given my body and soul.

It was a night of wildest showers;
Ever incessant and amain
The heavens thundered through the hours,
Outside was pattering of the rain.

Exulting in the lightning's gleams,
Joyous, I lay down on my bed;
The dress had fallen from my limbs,
I slept with rumours overhead.

The peacocks in the treetops high
Between their gorgeous dances shrilled,
The cuckoo cried exultantly,
The frogs were clamorous in the field;

And ever with insistent chime
The bird of rumour shrieking fled
Amidst the rain, at such a time
A vision stood beside my bed.

He moved like fire into my soul,
The love of him became a part

Of being, and oh his whispers stole
Murmuring in and filled my heart.

His loving ways, his tender wiles,
The hearts that feel, ah me! so burn
That maidens pure with happy smiles
From shame and peace and honour turn.

The lustre of his looks effaced
The moon, of many lovely moods
He is the master; on his breast
There was a wreath of jasmine buds.

Holding my feet, down on the bed
He sat; my breasts were fluttering birds;
His hands upon my limbs, he laid,
He bought me for his slave with words.

O me! his eyebrows curved like bows!
O me! his panther body bright!
Love from his sidelong glances goes
And takes girls prisoners at sight.

He speaks with little magic smiles
That force a girl's heart from her breast.
How many sweet ways he beguiles,
I know; they cannot be expressed.

Burning he tore me from my bed
And to his passionate bosom clutched;
I could not speak a word; he said
Nothing, his lips and my lips touched.

My body almost swooned away
And from my heart went fear and shame
And maiden pride; panting I lay;
He was around me like a flame.⁸

Selected Poems of *Chandidas*⁹

Love, but my words are vain as air!
 In my sweet joyous youth, a heart untried,
 Thou took'st me in Love's sudden snare,
 Thou wouldst not let me in my home abide.

And now I have nought else to try,
 But I will make my soul one strong desire
 And into Ocean leaping die:
 So shall my heart be cooled of all its fire.

Die and be born to life again
 As Nanda's son, the joy of Braja's girls,
 And I will make thee Radha then,
 A laughing child's face set with lovely curls.

Then I will love thee and then leave;
 Under the Codome's boughs when thou goest by
 Bound to the water morn or eve,
 Lean on that tree fluting melodiously.

Thou shalt hear me and fall at sight
 Under my charm; my voice shall wholly move
 Thy simple girl's heart to delight;
 Then shalt thou know the bitterness of love.

¹ (Sri Aurobindo, *Translations*, vol. 8, Centenary edition, Pondicherry, 1972, pp. 400-1

² Sri Aurobindo, *Translations*, vol. 8, Centenary edition, Pondicherry, 1972, p. 405.

³ Sri Aurobindo, *Translations*, vol. 8, Centenary edition, Pondicherry, 1972, p. 406.

⁴ Sri Aurobindo, *Translations*, vol. 8, Centenary edition, Pondicherry, 1972, p. 286.

- ⁵ Sri Aurobindo, *Translations*, vol. 8, Centenary edition, Pondicherry, 1972, p. 229.
- ⁶ Sri Aurobindo, *Translations*, vol. 8, Centenary edition, Pondicherry, 1972, pp. 289-290.
- ⁷ Sri Aurobindo, *Translations*, vol. 8, Centenary edition, Pondicherry, 1972, pp. 297-8.
- ⁸ And felt him round me like a flame.
- ⁹ Sri Aurobindo, *Translations*, vol. 8, Centenary edition, Pondicherry, 1972, p. 301.

Appendix XIV

It is only when we follow the yogic process of quieting the mind itself that a profounder result of our self-observation becomes possible. For first we discover that mind is a subtle substance, a general determinate — or generic indeterminate — which mental energy when it operates throws into forms or particular determinations of itself, thoughts, concepts, percepts, mental sentiments, activities of will and reactions of feeling, but which, when the energy is quiescent, can live either in an inert torpor or in an immobile silence and peace of self-existence. Next we see that the determinations of our mind do not all proceed from itself; for waves and currents of mental energy enter into it from outside: these take form in it or appear already formed from some universal Mind or from other minds and are accepted by us as our own thinking. We can perceive also an occult or subliminal mind in ourselves from which thoughts and perceptions and will-impulses and mental feelings arise; we can perceive too higher planes of consciousness from which a superior mind energy works through us or upon us. Finally we discover that that which observes all this is a mental being supporting the mind substance and mind energy; without this presence, their upholder and source of sanctions, they could not exist or operate. This mental being or Purusha first appears as a silent witness and, if that were all, we would have to accept the determinations of mind as a phenomenal activity imposed upon the being by Nature, by Prakriti, or else as a creation presented to it by Prakriti, a world of thought which Nature

constructs and offers to the observing Purusha. But afterwards we find that the Purusha, the mental being, can depart from its posture of a silent or accepting Witness; it can become the source of reactions, accept, reject, even rule and regulate, become the giver of the command, the knower. A knowledge also arises that this mind-substance manifests the mental being, is its own expressive substance and the mental energy is its own consciousness-force, so that it is reasonable to conclude that all mind determinations arise from the being of the Purusha. But this conclusion is complicated by the fact that from another viewpoint our personal mind seems to be little more than a formation of universal Mind, an engine for the reception, modification, propagation of cosmic thought-waves, idea-currents, will-suggestions, waves of feeling, sense-suggestions, form-suggestions. It has no doubt its own already realised expression, predispositions, propensities, personal temperament and nature; what comes from the universal can only find a place there if it is accepted and assimilated into the self-expression of the individual mental being, the personal Prakriti of the Purusha. But still, in view of these complexities, the question remains entire whether all this evolution and action is a phenomenal creation by some universal Energy presented to the mental being or an activity imposed by Mind-Energy on the Purusha's indeterminate, perhaps indeterminable existence, or whether the whole is something predetermined by some dynamic truth of Self within and only manifested on the mind surface. To know that we would have to touch or to enter into a cosmic state of being and consciousness to which the totality of things and their integral principle would be better manifest than to our limited mind experience.

Overmind consciousness is such a state or principle beyond individual mind, beyond even universal mind in the Ignorance; it carries in itself a first direct and masterful cognition of cosmic truth: here then we might hope to understand something of the original working of things, get some insight into the fundamental movements of cosmic Nature. One thing indeed becomes clear; it is self-evident here that both the individual and the cosmos come from a transcendent Reality which takes form in them: the mind and life of the individual being, its self in nature must therefore be a partial self-expression of the cosmic Being and, both through that and directly, a self-expression of the transcendent Reality, — a conditional and half-veiled expression it may be, but still that is its significance. But also we see that what the expression shall be is also determined by the individual himself: only what he can in his nature receive, assimilate, formulate, his portion of the cosmic being or of the Reality, can find shape in his mind and life and physical parts; something that derives from Reality, something that is in the cosmos he expresses, but in the terms of his own self-expression, in the terms of his own nature. But the original question set out for us by the phenomenon of the universe is not solved by the overmind knowledge, — the question, in this case, whether the building of thought, experience, world of perceptions of the mental Person, the mind Purusha, is truly a self-expression, a self-determination proceeding from some truth of his own spiritual being, a manifestation of that truth's dynamic possibilities, or whether it is not rather a creation or construction presented to him by Nature, by Prakriti, and only in the sense of being individualised in his personal formation of that Nature can it be said to be his own or

dependent on him; or, again, it might be a play of a cosmic Imagination, a fantasia of the Infinite imposed on the blank indeterminable of his own eternal pure existence. These are the three views of creation that seem to have an equal chance of being right, and mind is incapable of definitely deciding between them; for each view is armed with its own mental logic and its appeal to intuition and experience. Overmind seems to add to the perplexity, for the overmental view of things allows each possibility to formulate itself in its own independent right and realise its own existence in cognition, in dynamic self-presentation, in substantiating experience.

In Overmind, in all the higher ranges of the mind, we find recurring the dichotomy of a pure silent self without feature or qualities or relations, self-existent, self-poised, self-sufficient, and the mighty dynamis of a determinative knowledge-power, of a creative consciousness and force which precipitates itself into the forms of the universe. This opposition which is yet a collocation, as if these two were correlatives or complementaries, although apparent contradictions of each other, sublimates itself into the co-existence of an impersonal Brahman without qualities, a fundamental divine Reality free from all relations or determinates, and a Brahman with infinite qualities, a fundamental divine Reality who is the source and container and master of all relations and determinations — Nirguna, Saguna. If we pursue the Nirguna into a farthest possible self-experience, we arrive at a supreme Absolute void of all relations and determinations, the ineffable first and last word of existence. If we enter through the Saguna into some ultimate possible of experience, we arrive at a divine Absolute, a personal supreme and omnipresent Godhead, transcendent as well as universal, an infinite Master of all

relations and determinations who can uphold in his being a million universes and pervade each with a single ray of his self-light and a single degree of his ineffable existence. The overmind consciousness maintains equally these two truths of the Eternal which face the mind as mutually exclusive alternatives; it admits both as supreme aspects of one Reality: somewhere, then, behind them there must be a still greater Transcendence which originates them or upholds them both in its supreme Eternity. But what can that be of which such opposites are equal truths, unless it be an original indeterminable Mystery of which any knowledge, any understanding by the mind is impossible? We can know it indeed to some degree, in some kind of experience or realisation, by its aspects, powers, constant series of fundamental negatives and positives through which we have to pursue it, independently in either or integrally in both together; but in the last resort it seems to escape even from the highest mentality and remain unknowable.

But if the supreme Absolute is indeed a pure Indeterminable, then no creation, no manifestation, no universe is possible. And yet the universe exists. What then is it that creates this contradiction, is able to effect the impossible, bring this insoluble riddle of self-division into existence? A Power of some kind it must be, and since the Absolute is the sole reality, the one origin of all things, this Power must proceed from it, must have some relation with it, a connection, a dependence. For if it is quite other than the supreme Reality, a cosmic Imagination imposing its determinations on the eternal blank of the Indeterminable, then the sole existence of an absolute Parabrahman is no longer admissible; there is then a dualism at the source of things, — not substantially different from the Sankhya

dualism of Soul and Nature. If it is a Power, the sole Power indeed, of the Absolute, we have this logical impossibility that the existence of the Supreme Being and the Power of his existence are entirely opposite to each other, two supreme contradictories; for Brahman is free from all possibility of relations and determinations, but Maya is a creative Imagination imposing these very things upon it, an originator of relations and determinations of which Brahman must necessarily be the supporter and witness, — to the logical reason an inadmissible formula. If it is accepted, it can only be as a suprarational mystery, something neither real nor unreal, inexplicable in its nature, *anirvacanîya*. But the difficulties are so great that it can be accepted only if it imposes itself irresistibly as the inevitable ultimate, the end and summit of metaphysical inquiry and spiritual experience. For even if all things are illusory creations, they must have at least a subjective existence and they can exist nowhere except in the consciousness of the Sole Existence; they are then subjective determinations of the Indeterminable. If, on the contrary, the determinations of this Power are real creations, out of what are they determined, what is their substance? It is not possible that they are made out of a Nothing, a Non-Existence other than the Absolute; for that will erect a new dualism, a great positive Zero over against the greater indeterminable x we have supposed to be the one Reality. It is evident therefore that the Reality cannot be a rigid Indeterminable. Whatever is created must be of it and in it, and what is of the substance of the utterly Real must itself be real: a vast baseless negation of reality purporting to be real cannot be the sole outcome of the eternal Truth, the Infinite Existence. It is perfectly understandable that the Absolute is and must be indeterminable in the sense that it

cannot be limited by any determination or any sum of possible determinations, but not in the sense that it is incapable of self-determination. The Supreme Existence cannot be incapable of creating true self-determinations of its being, incapable of upholding a real self-creation or manifestation in its self-existent infinite.

Overmind, then, gives us no final and positive solution; it is in a supramental cognition beyond it that we are left to seek for an answer. A supramental Truth-Consciousness is at once the self-awareness of the Infinite and Eternal and a power of self-determination inherent in that self-awareness; the first is its foundation and status, the second is its power of being, the dynamis of its self-existence. All that a timeless eternity of self-awareness sees in itself as truth of being, the conscious power of its being manifests in Time-eternity. To Supermind therefore the Supreme is not a rigid Indeterminable, an all-negating Absolute; an infinite of being complete to itself in its own immutable purity of existence, its sole power a pure consciousness able only to dwell on the being's changeless eternity, on the immobile delight of its sheer self-existence, is not the whole Reality. The Infinite of Being must also be an Infinite of Power; containing in itself an eternal repose and quiescence, it must also be capable of an eternal action and creation: but this too must be an action in itself, a creation out of its own self eternal and infinite, since there could be nothing else out of which it could create; any basis of creation seeming to be other than itself must be still really in itself and of itself and could not be something foreign to its existence. An infinite Power cannot be solely a Force resting in a pure inactive sameness, an immutable quiescence; it must have in it endless powers of its being and energy: an infinite Consciousness must hold within it

endless truths of its own self-awareness. These in action would appear to our cognition as aspects of its being, to our spiritual sense as powers and movements of its dynamis, to our aesthesis as instruments and formulations of its delight of existence. Creation would then be a self-manifestation: it would be an ordered deploying of the infinite possibilities of the Infinite. But every possibility implies a truth of being behind it, a reality in the Existent; for without that supporting truth there could not be any possibles. In manifestation a fundamental reality of the Existent would appear to our cognition as a fundamental spiritual aspect of the Divine Absolute; out of it would emerge all its possible manifestations, its innate dynamisms: these again must create or rather bring out of a non-manifest latency their own significant forms, expressive powers, native processes; their own being would develop their own becoming, *svarūpa*, *svabhāva*. This then would be the complete process of creation: but in our mind we do not see the complete process, we see only possibilities that determine themselves into actualities and, though we infer or conjecture, we are not sure of a necessity, a predetermining truth, an imperative behind them which capacitates the possibilities, decides the actualities. Our mind is an observer of actuals, an inventor or discoverer of possibilities, but not a seer of the occult imperatives that necessitate the movements and forms of a creation: for in the front of universal existence there are only forces determining results by some balance of the meeting of their powers; the original Determinant or determinants, if it or they exist, are veiled from us by our ignorance. But to the supramental Truth-Consciousness these imperatives would be apparent, would be the very stuff of its seeing and experience: in the supramental creative process the

imperatives, the nexus of possibilities, the resultant actualities would be a single whole, an indivisible movement; the possibilities and actualities would carry in themselves the inevitability of their originating imperative, — all their results, all their creation would be the body of the Truth which they manifest in predetermined significant forms and powers of the All-Existence.

Our fundamental cognition of the Absolute, our substantial spiritual experience of it is the intuition or the direct experience of an infinite and eternal Existence, an infinite and eternal Consciousness, an infinite and eternal Delight of Existence. In overmental and mental cognition it is possible to make discrete and even to separate this original unity into three self-existent aspects: for we can experience a pure causeless eternal Bliss so intense that we are that alone; existence, consciousness seem to be swallowed up in it, no longer ostensibly in presence; a similar experience of pure and absolute consciousness and a similar exclusive identity with it is possible, and there can be too a like identifying experience of pure and absolute existence. But to a supermind cognition these three are always an inseparable Trinity, even though one can stand in front of the others and manifest its own spiritual determinates; for each has its primal aspects or its inherent self-formations, but all of these together are original to the triune Absolute. Love, Joy and Beauty are the fundamental determinates of the Divine Delight of Existence, and we can see at once that these are of the very stuff and nature of that Delight: they are not alien impositions on the being of the Absolute or creations supported by it but outside it; they are truths of its being, native to its consciousness, powers of its force of existence. So too is it with the fundamental determinates of

the absolute consciousness, — knowledge and will; they are truths and powers of the original Consciousness-Force and are inherent in its very nature. This authenticity becomes still more evident when we regard the fundamental spiritual determinates of the absolute Existence; they are its triune powers, necessary first postulates for all its self-creation or manifestation, — Self, the Divine, the Conscious Being; Atman, Ishwara, Purusha.¹

¹ (Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, vol. 18, Centenary edition, Pondicherry, 1972, pp. 308-315)

Appendix XV

“Right in the midst between either host set thou my car, O unfallen. Let me scan these who stand arrayed and greedy for battle; let me know who must wage war with me in this great holiday of fight. Fain would I see who are these that are here for combat to do in battle the will of Dhritarashtra’s witless son.”

Thus, O Bharata, to Hrishikesha Gudakesha said, who set in the midst between either army the noble car, in front of Bhishma and Drona and all those kings of earth.

“Lo, O Partha,” he said, “all these Kurus met in one field!” There Partha saw fathers and grandsires stand, and teachers and uncles and brothers and sons and grandsons and dear comrades, and fathers of wives and heart’s friends, all in either battle opposed. And when the son of Coonty beheld all these dear friends and kindred facing each other in war, his heart was besieged with utter pity and failed him, and he said,

“O Krishna, I behold these kinsmen and friends arrayed in hostile arms and my limbs sink beneath me and my face grows dry, and there are shudderings in my body, and my hair stands on end, Gandeva falls from my hand and my very skin is on fire. Yea, I cannot stand and my brain whirls, and evil omens, O Keshava, meet mine eyes. I can see no blessing for me, having slain my kin in fight. I desire not victory, O Krishna, no nor kingship nor delights. What shall we do with kingship, O Govinda, what with enjoyments,

what with life? They for whose sake we desire kingship and enjoyments and delight, lo they all stand in battle against us casting behind them their riches and lives, our teachers and our fathers and our sons, our grandsires and uncles and the fathers of our wives, and our grandsons and our wives' brothers and the kin of our beloved. These, though they slay me, O Madhushudan, I would not slay, no not for the empire of heaven and space and hell, much less for this poor earth of ours. Slaying the sons of Dhritarashtra what joy would be left to us, O Janardana? Sin, sin alone would find lodging in us, if we slew these, though our adversaries and foes. Therefore we do not right to slay the children of Dhritarashtra and their friends, for how can we be happy, O Madhava, if we slay our kin? Even though these see not, for their hearts are swept away by greed, error done in the ruin of our house and grievous sin in treachery to natural friends, how shall we not understand and turn back from this sin, we who have eyes, O Janardana, for error done in the ruin of our house? When the family dwindle, the eternal ideals of the race are lost, and when ideals are lost, unrighteousness besets the whole race; in the prevalence of unrighteousness, O Krishna, the women of the race go astray, and when women grow corrupt, bastard confusion is born again; but confusion brings the slayers of the race and the race itself to very hell; for the long line of fathers perish and the food ceaseth and the water is given no more. By these sins who bring their race to perdition, fathers they of bastard confusion, the eternal ideals of the nation and the hearth are overthrown, and for men who have lost the ancient righteousness of the race, in hell an eternal habitation is set apart, it is told. Alas, a dreadful sin have we set ourselves to do, that we have made ready, from greed of lordship and pleasure, to slay our own kin. Yea, even if the

sons of Dhritarashtra slay me with their armed hands, me unarmed and unresisting, it were better and more fortunate for me than this.”

Thus spake Urjoona, and in the very battle's heart sat down upon his chariot seat, and let fall his bow when the arrow was on the string, for his soul was perplexed with grief.

CHAPTER TWO

To him thus besieged with pity and his eyes full bewildered with crowding tears, to him weak with sorrow, Madhusudan spake this word.

KRISHNA

“Whence hath this stain of darkness come upon thee in the very crisis and the stress, O Urjoona, this weakness unheavenly, inglorious, beloved of un-Aryan minds? Fall not into coward impotence, O Partha; not on thee does that sit well; fling from thee the miserable weakness of thy hearts O scourge of thy foes.”

URJOONA

“How shall I combat Bhishma in the fight and Drona, O Madhusudan, how shall I smite with arrows those venerable heads? Better were it, not piercing these great and worshipped hearts to eat even a beggar's bread on this our earth. I slay our earthly wealth and bliss when I slay these; bloodstained will be the joys I shall taste. Therefore we know not which of these is better, that we should be victors or that we should be vanquished: for they whom slaying we should have no heart to live, lo, they Dhritarashtrians face us in the

foeman's van. Pain and unwillingness have swept me from my natural self, my heart is bewildered as to right and wrong: thee then I question. Tell me what would surely be my good, for I am thy disciple; teach me, for in thee I have sought my refuge. I see not what shall banish from me the grief that parcheth up the senses, though I win on earth rich kingship without rival and empire over the very gods in heaven."

Thus Gudakesha to Hrishiksha; the scourger of his foe said unto Govinda, "I will not fight", and ceased from words. On him thus overcome with weakness in the midmost of either battle.¹

¹ (Sri Aurobindo, *Translations*, vol. 8, (Original in Sanskrit by Vyasa) Centenary edition, Pondicherry, 1972, pp. 78-80)

Kireet Joshi (b. 1931) studied philosophy and law at the Bombay University. He was selected for the I.A.S. in 1955 but in 1956, he resigned in order to devote himself at Pondicherry to the study and practice of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. He taught Philosophy and Psychology at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education at Pondicherry and participated in numerous educational experiments under the direct guidance of The Mother.

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This book attempts at introducing a study of the varieties of yogic experience, in the light of the integral experience and realisations described in the Veda, Upanishads, Gita, and lastly, in Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga. According to Sri Aurobindo — all of whose experiences and realisations have been confirmed by the Mother — the Spirit is infinite, and there is a difference between the essential cognition of the Infinite and mental, overmental, and supramental cognitions of that Infinite. This chasm has to be bridged, and it is by the process of Integral Yoga in which the Infinite is experienced not merely at the mental plane and even at the overmental plane, but at the supramental plane that all the varieties of yogic experiences, even their conflicts can be harmonised.

This book may be regarded as an introduction to the theme of the infinity of the One, its varied experiences and the unity of these experiences in the supramental consciousness.