

On the Meaning of Realization

Part 16 of 16

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. . . recapitulation of the steps in the *sadhana* and to reach as far as we can into . . . of the gnostic . . .¹ In all forms of yoga insofar as . . . a certain principle is applied that is known as a fundamental in psychology. In the West it had its first formulation by William James. William James made this discovery: that there are certain attitudes of the body, certain facial expressions, that's a characteristic . . . He further discovered that if one voluntarily reproduced the facial attitudes . . . of the body, and so forth, that corresponded to . . . insofar as . . . there was a tendency to induce the initial state itself. Thus . . . If you were to place yourself before the mirror and take the body attitude that goes with happiness as far as you can, assume the facial expression . . . you would tend to destroy the fake depression and take on some degree of the state of joy. In fact this came to be known as . . . to which William James' name was associated.

In all forms of yoga that I know, something of that principle is applied. In the part of the *sadhana* which the individual works upon, applies in his own life, he attempts in one way or another to take on the response, the attitude, the state of mind, of body, and of feeling, that are a natural . . . some state of Realization. These attitudes he attempts to accomplish from without by a conscious effort; for instance, take the . . . of meditation, which is one of the yogic techniques—not an essential one, not employed in all forms of yoga, but a familiar one to most people—he attempts a meditation in this sense, a mediation for Realization is to produce a stillness of the mind and a slow rhythmic breath. Now, it takes quite an effort of the will to accomplish this. He'll often find considerable difficulty, but if he tries, if he uses a certain rhythmical breath, usually after considerable time, but sometimes quickly, he will experience a stilled mind without any thoughts . . . , without any perceptible movement. The stilled mind is a condition into which life, or consciousness, or formation from the higher levels of being can be implanted.

But one may attain meditation by quite a difference route as, in fact, I did in my own experience. In trying to stop the mind I very soon found that there was a thought of stopping thought, and there was an attention of willed effort—willed effort in the breath, willed effort in trying to hold the mind still. It was obvious to me that this was not a state of immobility, complete stillness. Ultimately, I discovered another way, and that was by a separation in the mind allowing one side to continue with thought and do nothing about it; but another side naturally entered into the stillness—a stillness in which the thought could even continue without affecting the stillness. And by this division a state of meditation was precipitated instead of being the immediate effort in which there was a

¹ Unfortunately, the quality of this audio recording is poor and many words are difficult to understand.

tendency toward the stilling of the thought. The breath would tend to become slow and rhythmical spontaneously.

Or again, it being a principle recognized in many yogas that the seeker aims to attain a state of non-action, this is often interpreted literally, and in the case of the *sannyasin*, the effort is made to act as nearly not at all as is possible. The strict rule is that there shall be no action other than breathing, the eating of food, and meditation—that is insofar as voluntary action is concerned—in addition to this the unavoidable actions of the body. But again, one realizes that you have not attained by this method a real inaction, you've only got a reduced activity. You haven't transcended the principle of activity as such. There is, again, another method by which one achieves the inaction without being concerned about the surface activity, that is by withdrawing the mind from the activity and finding a place of inaction that's unaffected by the activity. Inaction becomes, thus, an attitude of radical detachment, and one may continue in the midst of all action, even the most energetic in the world, and yet abide in a state of essential inaction. In this case one has found the level of inaction in a perfect sense instead of in the sense of rough approximation which is all the *sannyasins* can really attain. I'm interpreting the principle in its gross physical sense.

Now, in the case of the yoga of surrender with which we have been dealing here, the effort, the conscious effort on the part of the *sadhaka*, is to surrender everything that belongs to the egoic nature: all desires, all ambitions, all preferences, all opinions; to surrender all of these to a higher power in order that a higher power may take over. Now, as a matter of fact, if one achieves Realization by some other role than this, this very effect is one of the precipitated consequences. There is a spontaneous surrender rather than a disciplined surrender or an effort to surrender. The ambition in the purely egoistic sense tends to disappear, preferences tend to weaken, desires also pass, more and more, into a state of relative inactivity. When there is the descent of the higher power, this happens naturally.

Now, in this yoga therefore you are trying to accomplish in the beginning a duplication, as far as that is possible, of what is natural when one has reached an effective Realization. You cannot do it 100 percent. No one by his own efforts, his own unaided efforts, can totally eradicate desire, preference, and ambition, and the negative emotions. He does that as far as he possibly can until he has produced a certain degree of effect as a result of the sincerity of his genuine will to devotion and to self-consecration. Presently another power begins to come in and that which you labor to do becomes easy, becomes natural—step by step by step. Until finally this other power takes over the whole *sadhana*, or at any rate most of it, and the personal effort goes more and more into the background. The laborious part is the beginning part. There's where the test comes: the test of one's sincerity, the test of one's persistence, the test of one's completeness of disinterested attitude. When I say disinterested, it means a self-giving without a thought of getting.

There is one statement that comes from the great Western mystic Plotinus that formulates the goal in the sense of the traditional yoga. The words run this way, "It is the return of the alone to the Alone." I feel in connection with those words a sense of . . . beauty. I can feel the aloneness of unevolved spirit that has been imbedded in matter, and life, and mind, throughout untold ages, on the surface seemingly separate from the

transcendent spirit and abiding in that solitude, that solitude of separation feels alone. And there comes the day when the mystic break occurs and this alone pilgrim returns to that other Alone—Alone because it is the One without a second, the One that is all in all. And as alone returns to that Alone, there is a stillness, an inexpressible relief, an unutterable and illimitable freedom, and rest, and peace, and feeling that at last the pilgrim is home. Thus, it's in terms that belong to a Western mystic who has expressed the attitude of the traditional yoga which aims at *Nirvana* and its release as the sufficient end. And as I pointed out time after time, the yoga which we are enunciating here, the yoga of Sri Aurobindo, aims at a different goal though acknowledging not only the possibility but the real desirability of this ancient traditional goal. The aim of this yoga is for a transformation of the being such that the being, as a liberated entity, a being of knowledge, remains within the evolution connected with objects, connected with processes, and not simply a return to the silent, eternal Alone.

But to achieve this further step in yoga, it has been necessary that the *sadhaka* shall trace the course which leads to the yoga of Liberation, and then go on. I pointed out how in this process certain essential steps are involved. There is first of all the movement from the surface of the being towards the inner being. Corresponding to the three aspects of the surface being of body, the life, and the mind, there is an inner body, life, and mind. So one moves either to one or another or all of these inner phases of the being as a first step and then draws forth that subtle principle, the psychic being, which is, you might say, the soul, that part of man which persists from incarnation to incarnation but abides within the evolution; most of the time, however, hidden under the outer nature of the mind, vital, and physical able to act only indirectly. But the first aim of the yoga is to reach this being and to draw it to the surface so that it may henceforth guide the *sadhana*. The psychic being is part and parcel of the Divine, and in a sense it is just that which aims and seeks with the transcendent Divine it is the . . . but it directs and guides the nature. When the psychic being comes to the surface, becomes dominant, the *sadhaka* is secure in his *sadhana*; then he reaches on upward to the great step that stands before him on . . . as his next movement in the scale of evolution, that is becoming a spiritual being.

I pointed out how spirituality in the strict sense is not simply the highest aspiration, the highest idea, the greatest nobility of feeling, and of determination that moves human beings. These very fine things are still lingerings of the mind. Spirituality is something more. The presence of these fine elements are necessary aids for the arousing of the spiritual entity in the man, but the arousing of the spiritual entity is the awakening of a potential in being, and in consciousness, that is quite farther than the mind or the life—actually so far up that the mind cannot imagine it any more than a purely vital being could imagine the highest possibilities of the mind. I illustrated that, you may remember, by the imagined congress of animals that tried to understand what went on in a mathematician's mind, and we saw what difficulties such creatures would have; and in the same way, the most advanced mental being could no more understand a spiritual being than the animals could understand the mathematician.

We then attempted to get some glimpse of the nature of the spiritual being insofar as that may be suggested to our mental or our feeling consciousness. The one respect we can isolate, and this is by the isolation of the true self, the true "I am," which stands as the immobile witness behind all processes—processes physical, vital, or mental. Mind can

isolate this if it moves in a sufficiently subtle way, as I tried to illustrate last Wednesday night by an instance of such an analysis. When one has found this self and has made the essential step, he comes to the Realization that the reality of himself is that self, that . . . , and thenceforth he looks down upon his mental, vital, and physical simply as instrumentations lying below. But as the mind makes its final effort to reach thus beyond itself to this spiritual being, this is the experience which it has. Thought, and discrimination, and analysis, are carried to their utmost limits to the furthest shore of their possible action, and then there is a sudden leap into what seems to the mind as a void. It seems like a void because it is a void to mental consciousness and is thus reported in that way. A void, however, which is known to be a full consciousness, but not a consciousness concerned with contents—not concerned with forms. A consciousness which is eternal, involving no process, utterly peaceful, calm, aloof, and eternal.

But if one stands in this consciousness still and permits further development it is possible there's something further to come forth. This something further is the dynamic principle, the principle of consciousness-force corresponding to the immobile stasis² of this stage of realized consciousness. Now remember that at this moment I am speaking concerning a consciousness which has heretofore been regarded as the high point of yoga, simply *Nirvana*—a rare attainment. It is possible for one to stand in this *nirvanic* consciousness and for something further to develop after a time. It is possible to stand in the *nirvanic* consciousness and continue to move about in the world, although, the action of the organism or of the mind does not seem to be continued by the entity resident in the organism, in the individual. It is as though nature takes over the action. Aurobindo tells of having stood in this state where before his consciousness there was only a void for days on end and at the same time was responsible for the editorial management of two newspapers and had to give lectures. He managed the papers and gave the lectures and yet his own consciousness all that time was in this stillness and this void. Nature, *prakriti*, took over, a higher power, and performed the labors that were necessary on the part of the organism. Of course out of such an experience there comes the clear Realization that these functions which we *seem* to perform, which seem to be done by our efforts, are in reality the action of nature in us and through us. But our ordinary consciousness is so confused, so mixed, and so blended, that we get this sense that I am doing, which is a conclusion and a delusion; whereas, in point of fact, nature is acting through us, nature is thinking through us, and nature is functioning in all ways through us, whereas "I" am the static witness watching all this, supporting it fundamentally, but not performing the action. At this lofty level that I've just outlined, these facts become evident. After a time something else develops and then a power comes back that belongs to the field of action. There, there is participation of the entity in that action in a sense that never existed before.

Now, meanwhile the spiritual consciousness has mounted over the four steps of the mind above the head. I'll reiterate these, and I do repeat for a definite reason because these are points that it is important to remember. Above our *outer mind* and above our *inner mind*—the outer mind being the mind that's concerned with facts; the inner mind being illustrated by the kind of thinking you find in Immanuel Kant—above these there is a *higher mind* which is still a thinking mind but not dependent upon words for its

² Wolff mispronounces stasis here as "status."

thought, word concepts, and having a quality which is a foretaste of that which becomes dominant when we achieve the *supermind*. And this quality is this: that there is not the typical distinction between the concept and the thing meant by the concept.

Maybe I better introduce a footnote at this point to elucidate what is meant. It's a point that has been brought out with considerable force in modern semantics. We think of things as desk or table. Those words represent concepts in the mind, but those concepts point towards objects that are perceptual in their existence—as the concept and word 'desk' mean this—a perceptual existence outside. We have, thus, a concept and another order which it means. A separation between those two is characteristic of our normal, our ordinary thinking. But when we come into the thought of the *higher mind*, the concept and the thing meant are fused in greater or less identity, and the result is that the thought brings that which it means. This is a very important distinction—a very important characteristic of *higher mind* and of all the overhead powers of mind.

Above the *higher mind* there is that principle of mind which does not think, where the power is the power of Vision, where the consciousness is molded as truths seen—seen as luminous. When this *illuminative mind* function is awakened, most typically in the *sadhaka* there is an experience of light—a light that sometimes is very intense indeed; may seem even to be like an objective light.

And yet above this there is the higher level of *intuition*—still a mental power, still a power that is not the all-in-all by any manner or means, but a power that strikes with special or specific truths in a manner which on its own level is definite and authoritative, however much it may be distorted in its descent into the outer consciousness. While this principle operates usually by only single lightning-like flashes, those flashes may be developed until they come as great masses; yet, nonetheless, this is not yet the highest reach of spiritual mind.

Beyond this, the *overmind*, where knowledge is by means of direct contact, where there is a massive awareness, a massive movement that has no beginning or end in time and no beginning or end within the limits of any finite space, a movement that is in terms of the infinite and the eternal. It is a level of mind at which there is the beginning of differentiation, the beginning of the setting aside or demarking or delimiting particular qualities as they descend down into the consciousness here; and in the ascending sense the introduction to the consciousness that is completely synthetic and integral. Here we've reached the greatest height that mind can reach—spiritual mind at that. We have reached the uppermost limit of the lower hemisphere.

Now, within spiritual being there is the further possibility of the awakening of what Sri Aurobindo has named the *gnostic* being or the *supramental* being. The supramental being is distinguished from the simple spiritual being in this sense: that it is the kinetic, or dynamic, or manifesting aspect, of the spiritual consciousness as contrasted to the purely static aspect. When the *sadhaka* has finally ascended this scale and has at last been born, not simply as a spiritual being, but as a supramental being then there stands before him the chance to descend once more into the outer nature even as far down as the unconscious depths of the physical to the end of transforming the whole nature: mind, life, and body; and, in fact, ultimately the nature of the planet itself—the ultimate objective being the destruction of the ignorance and the complete movement of the

evolution over into knowledge, into the light of knowledge. But naturally this is a process that will take place in the very few, the very rare ones, in the beginning, however much this complete racial and world-wide goal may be the ultimate end. And for those beings there is the task of leading or of performing a leading part in the evolution towards the supramental consciousness and the supramental race embodying this consciousness.

Can we get any glimpse, any glimpse however dim of what this consciousness would be like? I think possibly we can—perhaps only schematically. Our ordinary consciousness is a narrow field with a large and immeasurable zone above it that is superconscious. Now, let me return to an earlier stage and develop here a point. When the superconscious state is superimposed upon our ordinary consciousness, to the inexperienced individual it seems like a blank of consciousness, like something that had no determinateness of character whatsoever. The mystic, when he firsts makes his overturn into the new birth, is able usually to trace a certain distance into the superconscious and make a correlation between it and his relative consciousness, but he only goes so far and then he may have this experience: he may prevent himself from having this experience by not being willing to go all the way. But suppose he puts no limits on himself, lets himself fly to the limit of possibility. He presently goes beyond the point where his mind can trace anything and he finds himself rising to heights beyond heights in an illimitable vastness, something beyond all possibility of relative measure, and the only thing he can report from it is this sense of movement into such a vastness—no particular quality, no feeling, just that sense of movement into a vastness, a depth, that somehow is more enormous than everything else.

Now, let him return again and again to this zone and presently more and more of it becomes recognizable in terms of his relative consciousness. It will have a character which begins to seem clear enough to him until he tries to talk about it; and then in his effort to talk about it and to give it delineation that has some meaning here, he's inevitably bound to use language which to the outer consciousness is meaningless. He has to combine notions which we don't combine here to suggest what he has there. I know one experience that I had, a sense of a movement of a current, a current which was bliss, and it was consciousness, and it was light, but instead of moving from the past into the future it was as though it moved in a circle, it turned upon itself. So you had a ceaseless motion, but an effect at the same time of an utter stability. Now, make a description like that, it doesn't make sense to the outer mind at all as I discovered later. In other words, you come into something which is perfectly clear to your consciousness at the time, something that's overlapped your consciousness from a superconscious level, you're perfectly at home in it, and any effort to express it to make it intelligible produces a weird and queer effect so far as the external mind is concerned when it tries to listen to it. Well now, there can be deeper zones in which this overlapping takes place so that this conscious is becoming aware further and further into the superconscious. That's the essential part of evolution.

But our consciousness ordinarily is a mental consciousness. Know how hard it is to reach up to this *overmind* that I've been speaking of, now we've got to move into a superconscious level where mind as such even in those lofty levels of which I spoke can not reach. But another power in consciousness has to come in; for this power in consciousness the transcendent is conscious and at the same time formation on all levels

below are conscious. That's one of the prime distinguishing marks of the supramental being as contrasted to even the highest and most spiritualized mental being. There is an ever present sense of the unity, and yet combined with a multitudinous variety in manifestation. Supramental beings would work in a complete natural harmony with each other because the consciousness of any one is blended at the same time with the transcendental unity, with the self that is the self of all. There is a state of complete freedom and a state of complete harmony between all parts. The freedom here is not a freedom to do wrong, or a freedom to present falsehood. As a matter of fact it's an utter impossibility for a supramental being to do wrong or to engage in falsehood. It would not seem to a supramental being that being able to do wrong or engage in a falsehood was a freedom but rather an act of terrific bondage. No, the freedom is a freedom that at the same time does not violate the principle of harmony.

I thought of a figure to suggest the state drawn from the field of music. Let us take a symphonic production of an orchestra. First of all a symphony is the work of some musical composer, the great symphonies being the work of men of great ability, men indeed who have been able to tap some degree of superconsciousness. But in organizing the symphony they have laboriously worked out harmonic relationships, maintained the unity, designated the parts for each instrument in the various stages of the various movements that make up the symphony as a whole. I understand the labor is so vast that a man may very well spend a whole year in the composition of a major symphony. And then when it is produced you bring together perhaps a hundred or so musicians who are skilled in a number of different instruments—several forming up a bank of violins, and violas, and others stringed instruments, brass, wind instruments, woodwinds, percussion instruments, and so on—and then you have a director who also is very much of a disciplinarian as well as a musician, and he forces all of these human elements, often by something like violence, at least that's the way it sounds, to come into an order. And at last he produces an approximation to a harmonious symphony.

Now, let us imagine supramental beings whose individual nature has expressed itself in the form of music—each has his instrument or instruments, and they happen to come together spontaneously into a group and decide they wish to make a symphonic production; and each one acting out of his own spontaneous freedom plays upon his instrument by the method of improvisation, improvised composition then and there, all of them together doing the same thing, each as an act of freedom, each pausing as follows his inclination, each performing as follows his inclination, and the product being a symphonic whole having unity never matched by the creations of mental man. You see harmony through the conscious union with the unity of the Divine on one side, freedom in the expression of that harmony through the individuality of the various supramental beings, produced an effect that could not by any possibility be out of harmony. It necessarily had to be symphonic.

Now imagine a life of that sort, a consciousness of that sort, moving on all levels in such freedom. Naturally, there'd be no such thing as government in the sense we now know it. The government is entirely from within. There's full consciousness of the inner unity. There's an inability to move contrary to that inner unity. There's not the faintest possibility of any wrongness arising in the expression of freedom. Yet there is freedom. Now, how can that be? Perhaps we think that an organized form must be rigidly of one

sort or another rather than plastic, but that is a mistake. As a matter of fact, there's more than one possible turn in a symphonic creation; there's more than one possible way that remains harmonic. Hence, you have freedom in the selection of any one of these different possible harmonic ways. The nature of the supramental being is incapable of moving outside of the harmony—the harmony of all; and yet quite capable of free expression of the Divine according to his own individual character. This, then, would be the law that extends through all life, all existence in the domain of the supramental beings. It would mean that henceforth the evolution is a completely conscious process; it would mean a descent into the physical nature, to the end that that physical nature would be completely transformed although yet remaining physical, becoming completely conscious instead of being largely inconscient as it now is, becoming an instrument of light instead of an instrument of darkness which largely makes up its present character—a being that is physical, vital, and mental, as well as supramental.

What, then, about the offices of these instrumental powers? Take for instance the mind which has been heretofore the dominant, the leading power. The mind no longer would have the activity of discovery. Discovery belongs to the mind acting in the ignorance. It belongs to a consciousness in the darkness seeking light. It's the greatest joy of the mind to discover. But for the supramental being, knowledge is complete, knowledge is infinite already; but it's knowledge in the sense of its unmanifested, eternal, transcendent, truth consciousness. What the supramental does is to manifest, to make evident, to bring to the fore, this knowledge which is known in the deeps. The function of the mind, therefore, is to bring the known into manifestation rather than to discover the unknown. An analogous difference in the office of the vital would correspond to that. The artist would not create; the artist would manifest. Furthermore, there could not be adventure, for after all, adventure depends upon the distance of unknown factors; again, the man of action would manifest rather than adventure.³

³ This audio recording appears to be incomplete.