

Yoga of Love

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July 26, 1970

In my principal work, *The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object*, the main objective is to try to establish the possibility of a metaphysical knowledge in such a way as to satisfy our present philosophical, epistemological, and psychological criticism. The emphasis here is upon knowledge. Naturally, we must have some basis of knowing before we can be sure of the course of possibility. But the end or the purpose of Realization is not completely summed up in the metaphysical kind of knowing. That is only one-third of the whole, though it has been in my own experience the aspect of chief interest—as it was with Shankara of old. As was pointed out in the record of the Realization which took place on the 7th of August, 1936, and the second Realization of a major sort which occurred on the 9th of September, 1936, while in the record of this it was shown that there were effects both in the domain of power and of delight, these aspects have not been largely developed in what I have written and said. So it seemed appropriate to give some attention to these two aspects.

Fundamental yoga consists of three aspects known as the *Trimarga*. They are technically: *karma* yoga, *bhakti* yoga, and *jnana* yoga. The line of emphasis in my own experience was the *jnana* yoga, but it is true to my experience to say that out of this came more than knowledge; there was a sense of the most profound delight, and a sense of a profound but subtle power. It would seem, therefore, that to have traveled the way of one of these yogas is to realize the benefit, in some measure, of the other two. Aurobindo, in his writings, confirms this. But he also makes the observation that on each of the lines of the *Trimarga* there is a special emphasis or aspect that is developed which is something more than the partial Realization of the two other forms of yoga when one has developed primarily over one of them, and that therefore all three paths should be traveled, if possible at the same time, and this would be a kind of synthesis of yoga, or if that is not practical, then successively so that all the possibilities of the three may be realized.

There are certain observations made in an essay by Sri Aurobindo on the subject of Heraclitus and his insights, and there is a portion at the end that is worth our serious attention, for it bears upon a problem that is peculiar to the West. Aurobindo says at the end as follows, speaking of Heraclitus:

But there is one great gap and defect whether in his knowledge of things or his knowledge of the self of man. We see in how many directions the deep divining eye of Heraclitus anticipated the largest and profoundest generalisations of Science and Philosophy and how even his more superficial thoughts indicate later powerful tendencies of the occidental mind, how too some of his ideas influenced such profound and fruitful thinkers as Plato, the Stoics, the Neo-Platonists. But in his defect also he is a forerunner; it illustrates the great deficiency of later European thought, such of it at least as has not been profoundly influenced by Asiatic

religions or Asiatic mysticism. I have tried to show how often his thought touches and is almost identical with the Vedic and Vedantic. But his knowledge of the truth of things stopped with the vision of the universal reason and the universal force; he seems to have summed up the principle of things in these two first terms, the aspect of consciousness, the aspect of power, a supreme intelligence and a supreme energy. The eye of the Indian thought saw a third aspect of the Self and of Brahman; besides the universal consciousness active in divine knowledge, besides the universal force active in divine will, it saw the universal delight active in divine love and joy. European thought, following the line of Heraclitus' thinking, has fixed itself on reason and on force and made them the principles towards whose perfection our being has to aspire. Force is the first aspect of the world, war, the clash of energies; the second aspect, reason, emerges out of the appearance of force in which it is at first hidden and reveals itself as a certain justice, a certain harmony, a certain determining intelligence and reason in things; the third aspect is a deeper secret behind these two, universal delight, love, beauty which taking up the other two can establish something higher than justice, better than harmony, truer than reason,—unity and bliss, the ecstasy of our fulfilled existence. Of this last secret power Western thought has only seen two lower aspects, pleasure and aesthetic beauty; it has missed the spiritual beauty and the spiritual delight. For that reason Europe has never been able to develop a powerful religion of its own; it has been obliged to turn to Asia. Science takes possession of the measures and utilities of Force; rational philosophy pursues reason to its last subtleties; but inspired philosophy and religion can seize hold of the highest secret, *uttamam rahasyam*.

Heraclitus might have seen it if he had carried his vision a little farther. Force by itself can only produce a balance of forces, the strife that is justice; in that strife there takes place a constant exchange, and once this need of exchange is seen, there arises the possibility of modifying and replacing war by reason as the determinant principle of the exchange. This is the second effort of man, of which Heraclitus did not clearly see the possibility. From exchange we can rise to the highest possible idea of interchange, a mutual dependency of self-giving as the hidden secret of life; from that can grow the power of Love replacing strife and exceeding the cold balance of reason. There is the gate of the divine ecstasy. Heraclitus could not see it, and yet his one saying about the kingdom of the child touches, almost reaches the heart of the secret. For this kingdom is evidently spiritual, it is the crown, the mastery to which the perfected man arrives; and the perfect man is a divine child! He is the soul which awakens to the divine play, accepts it without fear or reserve, gives itself up in a spiritual purity to the Divine, allows the careful and troubled force of man to be freed from care and grief and become the joyous play of the divine Will, his relative and stumbling reason to be replaced by that divine knowledge which to the Greek, the rational man, is foolishness, and the laborious pleasure-seeking of the bound mentality to lose itself in the spontaneity of the divine Ananda; “for of such

is the kingdom of heaven.” The Paramhansa, the liberated man, is in his soul *balavat*, even as if a child.¹

In this critique of Sri Aurobindo, I think I must agree; for I do not find this third aspect recognized with real seriousness in our Western philosophies. To be sure, we have the conception of the hedonic tone, the degree to which a state of consciousness may be colored or toned either by happiness or suffering; but this is not generally taken in the profound sense of *ananda*, as known in yoga. Also, I am impressed with the fact that in the history of Christianity there is a rather grim and somber quality. Solemnity is a note that appears there, but it is more or less a grim solemnity. Very often, particularly in the early days of Christianity, the *imitatio Christi* was interpreted as an acceptance of suffering. And it is said that it was even viewed by those early dedicated Christians that it was necessary to finish life painfully and violently as was true of the Christ. Our own history is connected with the Puritan movement, which in its term denounced the lighter, more joyous things of life, denied to religiosity all of the coloring that come from art and from music, and imposed a rather grim and austere life upon the parishioners.

Now, I know from my experience of the Realizations that there is a quality of delight in their state of consciousness which actually is beyond imagining; but let us outline, somewhat, of what the three parts of the *Trimarga* are. Let us start with *karma* yoga. *Karma* means action. But action involves the exercise of the will; so we can call this as manifesting through three aspects, or so, such as the will, the principle of power, and the principle of effectuation. Taking next the *jnana* yoga, in its turn it manifests through the principle of knowledge, of judgment, and discernment. The keynote here is the determination of truth. But our third form, known as *bhakti* yoga, covers the neglected side, namely that which we may call variously, eros, aesthesis, the aspect of love, of delight, of beauty, of sweetness. The quality perhaps requiring most emphasis in this yoga is the quality which we generally represent by love.

There are certain terms that suggest this particular aspect or mode of our consciousness, such as benevolence, compassion, pity, brotherly feeling, [and] goodwill. None of them are quite adequate to express the quality in the yogic Realization that carries this delight, for our association of meaning with these terms tends to be mundane or perhaps sociological, even restricted to a purely vital meaning. Thus when one speaks of love, ordinarily he has in mind the vital aspect of love, an aspect that is as much a matter of self-seeking as of self-giving. It often is very closely connected with its opposite, namely hate, so that its expression here is often a matter of love-hate, a passionate turmoil very often. And often, too, he who functions in this way does not want too much of the quality of gentleness, too much of the quality of peace, but actually craves combat preceding a period of peaceful reconciliation. The adjustment of life is therefore something like a fight and love, and so forth. This is love at a low level, not much above that of the animals. It has its admirable aspects, its capacity for self-sacrifice and dedication to the object, even the capacity to give up life itself for the beloved in some cases, but it is also selfish, seeking the good only of the narrow circle of the beloved and oneself, and then beyond to one's family. The word is so loaded with this

¹ Aurobindo Ghose, *Heraclitus* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1941), 70-74.

meaning that it actually is not a good term for expressing what is true of the love of the Divine, or of the divine Love.

‘Benevolence’ also is inadequate because it suggests something of a bestowal upon those who occupy a lesser position, as contrasted to that of the benevolent one. It is doing well and kindly toward those who have need and is, of course, a very worthy attitude. It may reach definitely above a purely vital level, and may have something of the mental in it and perhaps a touch of the spiritual; but this, too, falls far short of the love of the Divine, or the divine Love.

‘Compassion’, too, while a very noble attitude and involving a meaning akin to benevolence nonetheless especially indicates a relationship of a superior who is not in need towards an inferior who has needs, and therefore requires help. In our use of the term, it is akin to pity. But there is another meaning as explained in a footnote of *The Voice of the Silence*, which involves much more.² Actually the word in our dictionary use of it is not correct for this meaning, but evidently there is no other word available that will serve better. It means the maintaining of the balance in the operation of the world and the forces that move among men so that the harmony in things may be maintained. In this sense, the compassionate one is the maintainer of the equilibrium, the balance, the harmony, the symmetry, of the universe and of all life. And because suffering of creatures tends to destroy this harmony, it follows that the compassionate one seeks to heal the suffering so that the harmony may be maintained. It is in this sense that we speak of the Buddha of Compassion.

The concept of brotherhood carries part of the meaning. Brotherhood rises above the particular vitalistic meanings that have been so largely associated with our conception of love, which is oriented most particularly to the relationship between the sexes and the parent’s relationship to his offspring, and of the offspring to their parents. But, again, brotherhood can be conceived, and generally is conceived, as a purely horizontal relationship of man to man, of race to race, of class to class, and does not of itself imply a transcendental relationship between the lover of God and the God Love to this lover, which is something very different indeed. Yet, since our terminology is inadequate, and the word has not yet been produced to suggest the true meaning, we’ll have to do the best we can; and so we’ll speak of the yoga of love.

² H.P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence* (Los Angeles: The Theosophy Co., 1928), 75-76:

But stay, Disciple . . . Yet one word. Canst thou destroy divine COMPASSION? Compassion is no attribute. It is the Law of Laws—eternal Harmony, Alaya’s SELF; a shoreless universal essence, the light of everlasting Right, and fitness of all things, the law of Love eternal.

The more thou dost become at one with it, thy being melted in its BEING, the more thy Soul unites with that which Is, the more thou wilt become COMPASSION ABSOLUTE.*

*This “compassion” must not be regarded in the same light as “God, the divine love” of the Theists. Compassion stands here as an abstract, impersonal law, whose nature, being absolute Harmony, is thrown into confusion by discord, suffering and sin.

The yoga of love, or *bhakti* yoga, differs from the other two forms of the *Trimarga* in that essentially there is no discipline in this yoga. The yoga of action, or *karma* yoga, has as its governing principle the renunciation of all fruits of action—to act without concern for the fruits; and ultimately at a more advanced stage, we even renounce the actions themselves. *Jnana* yoga involves the fundamental discipline of renouncing all predilections, all preconceptions of the truth, all preferred ideas. There are other subsidiary disciplines that may aid with respect to these yogas. Some use very difficult body disciplines—the breath, for example; there may be meditation at prescribed times. But all of this is simply in the form of aids. One may not have the attitude of renouncing the fruits of his actions; he may be strongly colored as the candidate with the desire for those fruits, even viewing the fruits as the reason for the action. But by a discipline in which he simulates, as best he can, an attitude of acting without concern for the fruits, as something received by him but sacrificing them to the Divine or to the All, even though lacking this feeling, he may simulate it and in time so suggest it to himself that he acquires, in some measure, the attitude that is proper. This is not likely to be perfect, but it may in time prove to be enough so that the Door will open, and then there descends upon him the fullness of the attitude itself.

And the same is true with respect to the preliminary discipline for *jnana* yoga; one may come with philosophic ideas for which he has a strong preference, a view of the world to which he is strongly attached, and the renunciation of this may be quite difficult. Nonetheless, by trying, by opening himself, by being prepared to accept what may be, as an attitude imposed in perhaps a certain degree artificially, gradually he grows in to some approximation of the true attitude; and then when Truth descends he has the open mind which will receive it without resistance.

But in the case of the yoga of love, no simulation of attitude is adequate as a discipline. One must have the flair of the true devotee or lover, and this becomes in its fullness something very intense and complete. It is an attitude of self-giving so all-possessing that there is no thought of self itself. There is no seeking of a return, but simply a completeness of giving to the Other, which may be called God, or Buddha, or by any other name. This becomes so complete that anything required by that Other, the Divine, or Buddha, is gladly granted and offered without any regret, even though the demand is the extinction of self. And even beyond this, when one has dropped the burden of selfhood and known the fullness of that state which in the beginning seemed like a kind of death, yet when realized, is the fullness of delight itself, yet even having reached this point, if it is required that he go forth and assume the burden of selfhood for unnumbered *kalpas*, he would gladly do so, for he wishes nothing other than to comply with the request of the Beloved.

This yoga leads to a peculiar kind of intimacy with the Otherness, call it what you will. It is a fact of experience that there is an Otherness, whether it is another part of one's own being or a transcendent Otherness which some call God and some call Buddha, it is a fact, and an unquestionable fact of experience that one, at certain stages, becomes keenly aware of this Otherness. And in this state of Realization of the Otherness, there is an inexpressible tenderness and richness and beauty and joy and sweetness.

I might give some account of my own Realization of this type of experience. Back in 1929, I had my first glimpse. On one occasion, I think I was digging into the problem of preparing a lecture, I finally found myself transformed into a state of a superposition upon another consciousness; or perhaps better, a superposition of another consciousness was placed over my own consciousness. This I recognized as the consciousness of the Blessed One. There was in it an indescribable sweetness, a sort of uplifting that produced a sense of an ineffable purity, and involved the sense that this *sadhaka* was of value to the All. It was so lofty that the touch again with the mundane world was like going down into something very coarse indeed.

Another occasion was in the days of August 1936 shortly before the first Fundamental Realization on August 7. I was on the banks of Eldorado Creek, at about the time of the Realization known as *substantiality is inversely proportional to ponderability* when a sense of benevolence took possession of me. This was not a cultivated phenomenon, a moral effort on my part; it was simply a descent of the quality of an all-encompassing benevolence. There was in that environment, entities that ordinarily are regarded by us as unpleasant, such as rattlesnakes, black widow spiders, daddy longlegs, slugs, scorpions. Our ordinary attitude towards creatures of this sort is one of repulsion or revulsion, a definite distaste, even a fear of the poisonous members of the group; but this benevolence that descended caused the feeling in me to include even them, along with all other things, a sense that they too were a part of the All, evolving in their way, and not evil or repugnant things in reality. It was a totally non-artificial attitude, but one that was completely spontaneous which was an expression of an underlying quality behind the veil in this universe.

These were foretastes of what broke forth on August 7 and persisted over a long period of time, in which there was a descent of unimaginable delight. This delight has little in common with what we call pleasure; in fact, it was a quality with respect to which the thought of pleasure in the ordinary sense brought in a feeling of something painful, something to be endured. All the mundane values, whether painful or pleasant, took on a quality of sordidness. One felt a distaste for embodiment in an animal body; there was even an inclination to cast it off—something which had to be resisted. The exuberance of the feeling was beyond the capacity of the organism to contain it. It carried a force of strong purification. One felt himself as standing upon holy ground; and one felt a goodwill that extended to all creatures, not only those that are noble manifestations, but those that we ordinarily regard as ignoble and dark and evil. There is in it a quality of indescribable sweetness. And here is a mysterious thing, something strange and not yet adequately explained in my understanding: this sweetness can manifest almost physically, like a nectar on the lips and in the breath, almost something that one can taste. Analysis showed that it was not something from outside, but seemed to be associated preeminently with the exhaled breath. There was also a sense of beauty transcending all experience of beauty as attached to the things of the environment, which is our ordinary sense, as of beautiful flowers, beautiful scenery, beautiful persons, beautiful gems, and so forth, something which we think of ordinarily as a quality possessed by the objects which we perceive; but rather, it was a beauty that was self-existent, a quality which could be bestowed upon the object which, though it might be ugly in the ordinary sense, became thereby beautiful. Beauty was a quality which spread over all and enveloped all.

This, all of this which I have described may be called the aesthesis, the neglected side of Western man and the side which is so well developed among the Orientals. One feels here, especially, that he stands upon holy ground. And the result is that with the powers of the yoga of action and the yoga of knowledge, one may go forth into the arenas of the world and meet all comers with the fiat of a transcendental will and the dialectic of a profound and subtle reason and ask no quarter and accept none. Strong in the power of transcendental will, and transcendental knowledge, he faces all. But this that belongs to the yoga of love, seems that it should abide behind the veil in the temple where abides the holy place, the something which underlies all motivation but is not carried on the surface or carelessly upon one's sleeve. One thing which this yoga of love achieves, as neither of the other two forms of the *Trimarga*, is a sense of something more than simply a reconciliation with this manifested universe, but, beyond that, a feeling of acceptance of it with all of its darkness and its painfulness as realized in the ordinary sense. One might be inclined to withdraw from life, having known the knowledge and having known the will; one might seek to return to the mother-womb of the universe to abide in that transcendental state beyond all conceiving. But he who knows the yoga of love is content to accept the world which the power behind the world has produced, and to bring to it such blessings as it may be possible to bring to serve the end of the redemption of it or the transformation of it, because this is what the Divine Beloved wishes, and that is sufficient reason. There is no longer a question as to whether life is worthwhile, as to whether thought is worthwhile, or as to whether doing is worthwhile. There is no longer a feeling that this may all be a divine mistake, something that should be cut off and abolished, but instead a happy willingness to go along, to become part and parcel of it knowing that there is adequate reason for this that is, and a joyous acceptance of it. This is a partial portrait of the yoga of devotion.

There is something which should be added to what has been said, in the form of a commentary. Joy is attractive, naturally, and therefore there is the temptation to seek joy as an objective. And here, self can enter into the picture in an invidious sense. There can be the temptation to seek joy by routes that are entirely improper. True yoga is incompatible with self-seeking—seeking of joy or seeking of knowledge as a possession, or seeking of power also as a possession. The essential thing is self-giving, self-abandonment.

Now it so happens that it is possible by certain devices, such as the use of drugs of a certain sort, such as the employment of certain practices typical of the *Tantra*, to break in to an experience, a minor experience of delight, without having dissolved selfness, and these are temptations. It is false to think that there is any shortcut to the real attainment of yoga. It is possible, however, to attain an imperfect, and perhaps even false, appearance of yogic objective by these shortcut methods, and that may be a temptation that will actually delay the ultimate attainment, perhaps for many lifetimes. The essential objective is the attainment of truth, be it pleasant or unpleasant; or the attainment of God-Realization, to fulfill the purposes of the Divine; or the attainment of Buddhahood, to fulfill the underlying purpose working in the universe. For this, self-renunciation is necessary. One must give up the hope of attaining something as a possession. He must be willing to abandon all as an object of self possession. He must be able to give all, and then, in time there will be a return, but that return can be no part of his motivation. Self-giving must be his motivation,

even though the self-giving may lead to the Via Dolorosa, if such should be the will of that which is the heart of the universe.

It is a pitiful sight to see these many young people of goodwill, of idealistic tendencies, giving themselves over to the illusions produced by the shortcuts of the drug or *tantric* practices. Body disciplines are only of subsidiary importance, and they are not for the purpose of attaining something for self; largely they are only minor aids. What one eats, what one does with the organism is a mere incidental detail. Self-giving is all important; self-abandonment, that is the purpose. Even a willingness to stand outside the veil, even a willingness to grant to some other, if such were possible, the Realization which one seeks, and to forego it oneself, that is part of the fundamental discipline. This is essential discipline; all these actions that give something like a counterfeit of the real thing lead only to what is known as the *intermediate zone* where one may be lost for lifetimes.

Be not impatient with time; the hour will strike. If the delight comes, be prepared to be just a channel through which it flows to a starving humanity. Be willing to sacrifice one's own personal enjoyment of it so that it may serve the good of the whole. For, if one seeks to dam up the stream which flows from *Sumeru*, to make it into a personally possessed lake, the waters will become stagnant and even poisonous. To be a channel for this stream that it may flow through to the starving many is the one true attitude. Then that stream remains uncorrupted and pure and in the flowing through leaves a delight for him who has become such a channel. Seek the Realization not for self, but so that humanity may be blessed.³

³ Ibid., 70-79:

Would'st thou thus dam the waters born on Sumeru? Shalt thou divert the stream for thine own sake, or send it back to its prime source along the crests of cycles?

If thou would'st have that stream of hard-earn'd knowledge, of Wisdom heaven-born, remain sweet running waters, thou should'st not leave it to become a stagnant pond.

Know, if of Amitabha, the "Boundless Age", thou would'st become co-worker, then must thou shed the light acquired, like to the Bodhisattvas twain, upon the span of all three worlds.

Know that the stream of superhuman knowledge and the Deva-Wisdom thou hast won, must, from thyself, the channel of Alaya be poured forth into another bed.

Know, O Narjol, thou of the Secret Path, its pure fresh waters must be used to sweeter make the Ocean's bitter waves—that mighty sea of sorrow formed of the tears of men.