

# The Quest

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September 17, 1972

There are two attitudes toward the objective of Fundamental Realization or Enlightenment which are adverse. This is the attitude of over-credulity and of over-skepticism. On the whole, I would prefer that an individual erred slightly on the side of skepticism, but there is an attitude which is better than either of these where one does not have, as yet, any substantial certainty, and that is an attitude of neutral reservation of judgment—an attitude of entertaining an idea without either acceptance or rejection. There's a great deal of material with which one is confronted which he's neither in a position to intelligently accept or intelligently reject, and in that case, the attitude which I recommend is that of simply entertaining it as a possibility and storing it in his memory until such time as he can reach a definite decision.

Now, with respect to Fundamental Realization or Enlightenment, there is this historic fact to bear in mind, that the record indicates that all basic religious movements have originated with such Fundamental Realization or Enlightenment. Buddhism begins not with the birth of the young prince known as Gautama, but with the Enlightenment under the Bodhi tree at which moment that individual became Buddha. The same is true with the origination of the Advaita Vedanta. It is not begun with the birth of Shankara, but with his Fundamental Realizations under the direction of the one whom he called Govinda. And likewise in the case of Sri Aurobindo, we know this explicitly from what this one himself has written, that it was with Fundamental Realizations that his work began. And though we do not have the evidence in the literature, we may infer that somewhere in those eighteen years in the life of Christ between the age of twelve and the age of thirty, which are not to be found in the gospel record but which have been claimed to have been presented in a certain document originally found in Tibet known as *The Life of Saint Issa*, that we have reason to believe, therefore, that somewhere in that period when he traveled, according to this statement, in the East, he too had Fundamental Realization and that that was the origination of Christianity and not the moment of his birth.

The fact is that one should view Fundamental Realization or Enlightenment as the most important thing to be attained, not alone for himself, but in dealing with the problems of a suffering humanity, or an ignorant humanity, or, as in the Christian view, a humanity possessed with an adverse will, that with respect to these problems, the most useful thing that one can possibly do is to make progress toward his own Fundamental Realization, that everything else that he may do without this is of palliative value only, that attaining Fundamental Realization is more important than all of the affairs of the world without it, and by the affairs of the world I mean all the problems of the government of nations, of the production of business, of the production of foods, of the development of sciences, the performances of charities of various sort, is only of kindergarten value and produces no effective transformation in the history of humanity. If one can do no more than this, well and good; but if he can attain, or can make progress

toward the attainment of Realization, then only does he contribute something that is more than a palliation. Even the *Pratyeka* Buddha who selfishly accepts the goal of *Nirvana* for himself, nonetheless, at the moment of attainment of his Fundamental Realization through the psychical influence of that event, does lift humanity to that extent. But having entered into the *nirvanic* state we have reason to believe that he can do no more. To do more it is necessary to take the step indicated by the *Kwan-Yin* vow and by the major message conveyed in *The Voice of the Silence*. Beyond this, there are higher possibilities. There is such a thing as not merely the redemption of individual entities, but the possibility of the redemption, or in Aurobindo's terms, the transformation of the whole *Sangsara* itself so that instead of being a purely perverse field of action in which no essential good can be done, in which one is entangled, as it were, in a maze which in the end leads nowhere, instead of that it may serve a positive office for the manifestation of the Unrevealed. This being so, the supreme effort should be toward that attainment.

One may legitimately ask the question, Is there any sufficient reason to believe that such attainment is possible? There is evidence, and the evidence is spread throughout the literature. There is the evidence that I have mentioned with respect to the founding of all the great religious movements of the world; but there is not proof for the individual who has not yet made the breakthrough. Therefore, he moves with only a presumption in favor of the existence of such a state of consciousness, such an attainment. This is not difficult to see, for we are not now dealing with something which can be proven in the same way that you could prove a mathematical proposition. We have something that is more akin to what would be necessary if one wished to know that there was such an experience as that of the color blue if he were born blind. No one could prove to him, so long as he is blind, that there was such an experience as that of blue. Because testimony came to him repeatedly, he might feel that there is a reasonable presumption that it exists, but he would not know it. The only way he could know it would be through regaining the power of sight. In other words, it's known only by immediacy; and this is a general principle not only applying to the domain of the sensuous experience, but also to the domain that I call the introceptual. It is another kind of immediacy. In the volume called the *Buddhist Logic*, it is called intelligible immediacy, or intelligible intuition, and that which can be known only by immediacy cannot be proven before the imperience of it.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, there is a demand upon the candidate for faith and confidence in going over a way where he cannot know before he attains.

If the individual were moving alone without the guidance of a guru in this field, he would be like an explorer moving in dimensions of the world that were not known. As was true at the time of Columbus and those who followed him, he would be daring the unknown, and as in the case of Columbus, he might be daring the possibility that the world was flat and that there was danger of sailing over the edge of the world and being lost in a great tumble into the depths of space; and it was feared by many of the sailors, so it is said, who traveled with Columbus that such was about to happen to them. You'd be facing dangers, and yet to many men this is a challenge. They risk loss of life, and there

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<sup>1</sup> For the definition of 'imperience', see the audio recordings "General Discourse on the Subject of My Philosophy," part 10, and "Extemporaneous Statement of My Philosophy." In speaking of introceptual knowledge, Wolff says, "The third function therefore gives you imperience, not experience. It is akin to sense perception in the sense of being immediate, but is not sensuous."

are those who have, in adventuring forth to the acquirement of new knowledge, that have lost their life in the venture. Still, I think most of us would agree that the challenge is worth the risk.

And here, I suggest, there is another challenge, another venture into the unknown that is well worth the possible risks. Yes there are evidences that there are risks here too, as there are risks for him who dares to travel in space for the first time as well as those in older days who traveled in unknown regions of the earth for the first time. The dangers are not that so much of physical death as of a psychical disruption, and that means that one would become no longer organized psychologically and might have to become a problem for healing in that respect; nonetheless, the potential values are such that I say he would be preeminently justified in making the exploration and facing the dangers. I submit it takes more courage to face the dangers of psychical disruption than it does to face the danger of physical death, but we need in this world men and women of courage. We would not be where we are scientifically on the *sangsaric* level if there had not been men of courage to dare new things. So also, it calls for men of courage, men and women of courage, to dare this venture into the unknown imperia of the Transcendent.

Now, it is true that this danger can be greatly reduced if one is so fortunate as to have the guidance of a guru who has also tread the way. And it is a general rule that the *sadhakas* who seek to go this way do go under the guidance of gurus. Those who go alone without the gurus are the exceptions to the rule, but it does happen on occasion. It did seem to happen in the case of Buddha, but not in the case of Shankara, who had a guru. So, most are not required to venture on their own without the guidance of a guru. But there is a certain thing that's very important in accepting the guidance of a guru, first of all, to select one whom the *sadhaka* feels is one with whom he can come into fundamental rapport; to select the philosophy which fits him best. But having selected a guru, there is a certain important attitude on the part of the *sadhaka* or *chela* that is more important than anything that the guru can do, and that is an attitude of pliability, to view the guru, if the *sadhaka* is one who is oriented to either the theological point of view, the pantheistic point of view, or the panentheistic point of view, in that case to see in the guru a manifestation of the Divine for that *sadhaka*. It doesn't mean that that guru has such a meaning for others; but for the *sadhaka*, the guru should be viewed as the voice of the Divine for him. Or if he is oriented to the nontheistic point of view that is characteristic of Buddhism, to view in the guru for the *sadhaka* the presence of the Buddha, which doesn't mean that that particular guru is the presence of the guru<sup>2</sup> for others, but for the *sadhaka*, and that his attitude should be that of plasticity and obedience in any directions that come from that guru. More depends on the attitude of the *sadhaka* than depends upon the capacities of the guru. An inferior guru can lead to a large awakening if the *sadhaka* is a master *sadhaka*. Aurobindo demonstrated that and reported the experience.

Aurobindo tells of himself that he strived by his own means to achieve, but made little or no progress and in fact was stuck until he saw one in whom he saw a spiritual capacity. He went to this one and took him as a guru. See, the guru doesn't reach out for *sadhakas* or *chelas*; it's the *chela* that forces the hand of the guru. It's a very foolish man who would reach out for *chelas*, but it's the duty of him who is sought as a guru to

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<sup>2</sup> Wolff evidently meant to say “. . . the presence of the Buddha . . .”

respond to the *chela's* demand. Aurobindo saw in this one spiritual capacity, and that he has pointed out is all that's required. Even this guru that he picked out was an individual who was inferior to Aurobindo intellectually and in spiritual potential. But very quickly, because Aurobindo was well-nigh a perfect *chela*, he had an enormous breakthrough. He said in a letter that *Nirvana* walked into him; and he functioned in the *nirvanic* state, continuing with what he was doing, and he was publishing papers and in educational work at the time and he continued this; but, he did not during this period do it, it happened through him—a very curious state, a tremendous experience. His own guru did not know what had happened to Aurobindo, did not understand it; but he was wise enough to say, I cannot lead you anymore, follow your own inner light—and released him. Actually the guru did not believe in *Nirvana*, and Aurobindo wasn't seeking it. It just walked in on him. But it was the beginning of his great spiritual experience. And later—and this is rather funny—the guru thought Aurobindo was in danger and came back and tried to save him. But actually he had been the means of starting Aurobindo upon his great career. Now, it illustrates a point that Aurobindo has developed to some extent in his yoga, that there seems to be a law in nature such that even the *avatars*—who are conceived of as incarnations of divinity itself—make use of the guru for the breaking thorough of the first initial Awakening.

Now, this does call for faith and confidence, and for some temperaments that is not easy; nonetheless, I suggest that no more is required of one than is dared by the adventurers or explorers of the earth, of the domains under the sea, and the domains in space. If we are not willing to dare, because we do not have certainty before hand, we will not progress to new possibilities.