

Chapter VII

Standards of Conduct and Spiritual Freedom

THE KNOWLEDGE on which the doer of works in Yoga has to found all his action and development has for the keystone of its structure a more and more concrete perception of unity, the living sense of an all-pervading oneness; he moves in the increasing consciousness of all existence as an indivisible whole: all work too is part of this divine indivisible whole. His personal action and its results can no longer be or seem a separate movement mainly or entirely determined by the egoistic “free” will of an individual, himself separate in the mass. Our works are part of an indivisible cosmic action; they are put or, more accurately, put themselves into their place in the whole out of which they arise and their outcome is determined by forces that overpass us. That world action in its vast totality and in every petty detail is the indivisible movement of the One who manifests himself progressively in the cosmos. Man too becomes progressively conscious of the truth of himself and the truth of things in proportion as he awakens to this One within him and outside him and to the occult, miraculous and significant process of its forces in the motion of Nature. This action, this movement, is not confined even in ourselves and those around us to the little fragmentary portion of the cosmic activities of which we in our superficial consciousness are aware; it is supported by an immense underlying environing existence subliminal to our minds or subconscious, and it is attracted by an immense transcending existence which is super-conscious to our nature. Our action arises, as we ourselves have emerged, out of a universality of which we are not aware; we give it a shape by our personal temperament, personal mind and will of thought or force of impulse or desire; but the true

truth of things, the true law of action exceeds these personal and human formations. Every standpoint, every man-made rule of action which ignores the indivisible totality of the cosmic movement, whatever its utility in external practice, is to the eye of spiritual Truth an imperfect view and a law of the Ignorance.

Even when we have arrived at some glimpse of this idea or succeeded in fixing it in our consciousness as a knowledge of the mind and a consequent attitude of the soul, it is difficult for us in our outward parts and active nature to square accounts between this universal standpoint and the claims of our personal opinion, our personal will, our personal emotion and desire. We are forced still to go on dealing with this indivisible movement as if it were a mass of impersonal material out of which we, the ego, the person, have to carve something according to our own will and mental fantasy by a personal struggle and effort. This is man's normal attitude towards his environment, actually false because our ego and its will are creations and puppets of the cosmic forces and it is only when we withdraw from ego into the consciousness of the divine Knowledge-Will of the Eternal who acts in them that we can be by a sort of deputation from above their master. And yet is this personal position the right attitude for man so long as he cherishes his individuality and has not yet fully developed it; for without this view-point and motive-force he cannot grow in his ego, cannot sufficiently develop and differentiate himself out of the subconscious or half-conscious universal mass-existence.

But the hold of this ego-consciousness upon our whole habit of existence is difficult to shake off when we have no longer need of the separative, the individualistic and aggressive stage of development, when we would proceed forward from this necessity of littleness in the child-soul to unity and universality, to the cosmic consciousness and beyond, to our transcendent spirit-stature. It is indispensable to recognise clearly, not only in our mode of thought but in our way of feeling, sensing, doing, that this movement, this universal action is not a helpless impersonal wave of being which lends itself to the will of any ego according

to that ego's strength and insistence. It is the movement of a cosmic Being who is the Knower of his field, the steps of a Divinity who is the Master of his own progressive force of action. As the movement is one and indivisible, so he who is present in the movement is one, sole and indivisible. Not only all result is determined by him, but all initiation, action and process are dependent on the motion of his cosmic force and only belong secondarily and in their form to the creature.

But what then must be the spiritual position of the personal worker? What is his true relation in dynamic Nature to this one cosmic Being and this one total movement? He is a centre only — a centre of differentiation of the one personal consciousness, a centre of determination of the one total movement; his personality reflects in a wave of persistent individuality the one universal Person, the Transcendent, the Eternal. In the Ignorance it is always a broken and distorted reflection because the crest of the wave which is our conscious waking self throws back only an imperfect and falsified similitude of the divine Spirit. All our opinions, standards, formations, principles are only attempts to represent in this broken, reflecting and distorting mirror something of the universal and progressive total action and its many-sided movement towards some ultimate self-revelation of the Divine. Our mind represents it as best it can with a narrow approximation that becomes less and less inadequate in proportion as its thought grows in wideness and light and power; but it is always an approximation and not even a true partial figure. The Divine Will acts through the aeons to reveal progressively not only in the unity of the cosmos, not only in the collectivity of living and thinking creatures, but in the soul of each individual something of its divine Mystery and the hidden truth of the Infinite. Therefore there is in the cosmos, in the collectivity, in the individual, a rooted instinct or belief in its own perfectibility, a constant drive towards an ever increasing and more adequate and more harmonious self-development nearer to the secret truth of things. This effort is represented to the constructing mind of man by standards of knowledge, feeling, character, aesthesis and action, — rules, ideals, norms

and laws that he essays to turn into universal dharmas.

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If we are to be free in the spirit, if we are to be subject only to the supreme Truth, we must discard the idea that our mental or moral laws are binding on the Infinite or that there can be anything sacrosanct, absolute or eternal even in the highest of our existing standards of conduct. To form higher and higher temporary standards as long as they are needed is to serve the Divine in his world march; to erect rigidly an absolute standard is to attempt the erection of a barrier against the eternal waters in their onflow. Once the nature-bound soul realises this truth, it is delivered from the duality of good and evil. For good is all that helps the individual and the world towards their divine fullness, and evil is all that retards or breaks up that increasing perfection. But since the perfection is progressive, evolutive in Time, good and evil are also shifting quantities and change from time to time their meaning and value. This thing which is evil now and in its present shape must be abandoned was once helpful and necessary to the general and individual progress. That other thing which we now regard as evil may well become in another form and arrangement an element in some future perfection. And on the spiritual level we transcend even this distinction; for we discover the purpose and divine utility of all these things that we call good and evil. Then have we to reject the falsehood in them and all that is distorted, ignorant and obscure in that which is called good no less than in that which is called evil. For we have then to accept only the true and the divine, but to make no other distinction in the eternal processes.

To those who can act only on a rigid standard, to those who can feel only the human and not the divine values, this truth may seem to be a dangerous concession which is likely to destroy the very foundation of morality, confuse all conduct and establish only chaos. Certainly, if the choice must be between an eternal and unchanging ethics and no ethics at all, it would have that result for man in his ignorance. But even on the human level,

if we have light enough and flexibility enough to recognise that a standard of conduct may be temporary and yet necessary for its time and to observe it faithfully until it can be replaced by a better, then we suffer no such loss, but lose only the fanaticism of an imperfect and intolerant virtue. In its place we gain openness and a power of continual moral progression, charity, the capacity to enter into an understanding sympathy with all this world of struggling and stumbling creatures and by that charity a better right and a greater strength to help it upon its way. In the end where the human closes and the divine commences, where the mental disappears into the supramental consciousness and the finite precipitates itself into the infinite, all evil disappears into a transcendent divine Good which becomes universal on every plane of consciousness that it touches.

This, then, stands fixed for us that all standards by which we may seek to govern our conduct are only our temporary, imperfect and evolutive attempts to represent to ourselves our stumbling mental progress in the universal self-realisation towards which Nature moves. But the divine manifestation cannot be bound by our little rules and fragile sanctities; for the consciousness behind it is too vast for these things. Once we have grasped this fact, disconcerting enough to the absolutism of our reason, we shall better be able to put in their right place in regard to each other the successive standards that govern the different stages in the growth of the individual and the collective march of mankind. At the most general of them we may cast a passing glance. For we have to see how they stand in relation to that other standardless spiritual and supramental mode of working for which Yoga seeks and to which it moves by the surrender of the individual to the divine Will and, more effectively, through his ascent by this surrender to the greater consciousness in which a certain identity with the dynamic Eternal becomes possible.

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There are four main standards of human conduct that make an ascending scale. The first is personal need, preference and desire;

the second is the law and good of the collectivity; the third is an ideal ethic; the last is the highest divine law of the nature.

Man starts on the long career of his evolution with only the first two of these four to enlighten and lead him; for they constitute the law of his animal and vital existence and it is as the vital and physical animal man that he begins his progress. The true business of man upon earth is to express in the type of humanity a growing image of the Divine; whether knowingly or unknowingly, it is to this end that Nature is working in him under the thick veil of her inner and outer processes. But the material or animal man is ignorant of the inner aim of life; he knows only its needs and its desires and he has necessarily no other guide to what is required of him than his own perception of need and his own stirrings and pointings of desire. To satisfy his physical and vital demands and necessities before all things else and, in the next rank, whatever emotional or mental cravings or imaginations or dynamic notions rise in him must be the first natural rule of his conduct. The sole balancing or overpowering law that can modify or contradict this pressing natural claim is the demand put on him by the ideas, needs and desires of his family, community or tribe, the herd, the pack of which he is a member.

If man could live to himself, — and this he could only do if the development of the individual were the sole object of the Divine in the world, — this second law would not at all need to come into operation. But all existence proceeds by the mutual action and reaction of the whole and the parts, the need for each other of the constituents and the thing constituted, the interdependence of the group and the individuals of the group. In the language of Indian philosophy the Divine manifests himself always in the double form of the separative and the collective being, *vyasṭi*, *samaṣṭi*. Man, pressing after the growth of his separate individuality and its fullness and freedom, is unable to satisfy even his own personal needs and desires except in conjunction with other men; he is a whole in himself and yet incomplete without others. This obligation englobes his personal law of conduct in a group-law which arises from the formation of a lasting group-entity with a collective mind and life of its

own to which his own embodied mind and life are subordinated as a transitory unit. And yet is there something in him immortal and free, not bound to this group-body which outlasts his own embodied existence but cannot outlast or claim to chain by its law his eternal spirit.

In itself this seemingly larger and overriding law is no more than an extension of the vital and animal principle that governs the individual elementary man; it is the law of the pack or herd. The individual identifies partially his life with the life of a certain number of other individuals with whom he is associated by birth, choice or circumstance. And since the existence of the group is necessary for his own existence and satisfaction, in time, if not from the first, its preservation, the fulfilment of its needs and the satisfaction of its collective notions, desires, habits of living, without which it would not hold together, must come to take a primary place. The satisfaction of personal idea and feeling, need and desire, propensity and habit has to be constantly subordinated, by the necessity of the situation and not from any moral or altruistic motive, to the satisfaction of the ideas and feelings, needs and desires, propensities and habits, not of this or that other individual or number of individuals, but of the society as a whole. This social need is the obscure matrix of morality and of man's ethical impulse.

It is not actually known that in any primitive times man lived to himself or with only his mate as do some of the animals. All record of him shows him to us as a social animal, not an isolated body and spirit. The law of the pack has always overridden his individual law of self-development; he seems always to have been born, to have lived, to have been formed as a unit in a mass. But logically and naturally from the psychological viewpoint the law of personal need and desire is primary, the social law comes in as a secondary and usurping power. Man has in him two distinct master impulses, the individualistic and the communal, a personal life and a social life, a personal motive of conduct and a social motive of conduct. The possibility of their opposition and the attempt to find their equation lie at the very roots of human civilisation and persist in other figures when he

has passed beyond the vital animal into a highly individualised mental and spiritual progress.

The existence of a social law external to the individual is at different times a considerable advantage and a heavy disadvantage to the development of the divine in man. It is an advantage at first when man is crude and incapable of self-control and self-finding, because it erects a power other than that of his personal egoism through which that egoism may be induced or compelled to moderate its savage demands, to discipline its irrational and often violent movements and even to lose itself sometimes in a larger and less personal egoism. It is a disadvantage to the adult spirit ready to transcend the human formula because it is an external standard which seeks to impose itself on him from outside, and the condition of his perfection is that he shall grow from within and in an increasing freedom, not by the suppression but by the transcendence of his perfected individuality, not any longer by a law imposed on him that trains and disciplines his members but by the soul from within breaking through all previous forms to possess with its light and transmute his members.

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In the conflict of the claims of society with the claims of the individual two ideal and absolute solutions confront one another. There is the demand of the group that the individual should subordinate himself more or less completely or even lose his independent existence in the community, — the smaller must be immolated or self-offered to the larger unit. He must accept the need of the society as his own need, the desire of the society as his own desire; he must live not for himself but for the tribe, clan, commune or nation of which he is a member. The ideal and absolute solution from the individual's standpoint would be a society that existed not for itself, for its all-overriding collective purpose, but for the good of the individual and his fulfilment, for the greater and more perfect life of all its members. Representing as far as possible his best self and helping him to realise it, it would

respect the freedom of each of its members and maintain itself not by law and force but by the free and spontaneous consent of its constituent persons. An ideal society of either kind does not exist anywhere and would be most difficult to create, more difficult still to keep in precarious existence so long as individual man clings to his egoism as the primary motive of existence. A general but not complete domination of the society over the individual is the easier way and it is the system that Nature from the first instinctively adopts and keeps in equilibrium by rigorous law, compelling custom and a careful indoctrination of the still subservient and ill-developed intelligence of the human creature.

In primitive societies the individual life is submitted to rigid and immobile communal custom and rule; this is the ancient and would-be eternal law of the human pack that tries always to masquerade as the everlasting decree of the Imperishable, *eṣa dharmah sanātanaḥ*. And the ideal is not dead in the human mind; the most recent trend of human progress is to establish an enlarged and sumptuous edition of this ancient turn of collective living towards the enslavement of the human spirit. There is here a serious danger to the integral development of a greater truth upon earth and a greater life. For the desires and free seekings of the individual, however egoistic, however false or perverted they may be in their immediate form, contain in their obscure shell the seed of a development necessary to the whole; his searchings and stumblings have behind them a force that has to be kept and transmuted into the image of the divine ideal. That force needs to be enlightened and trained but must not be suppressed or harnessed exclusively to society's heavy cart-wheels. Individualism is as necessary to the final perfection as the power behind the group-spirit; the stifling of the individual may well be the stifling of the god in man. And in the present balance of humanity there is seldom any real danger of exaggerated individualism breaking up the social integer. There is continually a danger that the exaggerated pressure of the social mass by its heavy unenlightened mechanical weight may suppress or unduly discourage the free development of the individual spirit. For man in the individual can be more easily enlightened, conscious,

open to clear influences; man in the mass is still obscure, half-conscious, ruled by universal forces that escape its mastery and its knowledge.

Against this danger of suppression and immobilisation Nature in the individual reacts. It may react by an isolated resistance ranging from the instinctive and brutal revolt of the criminal to the complete negation of the solitary and ascetic. It may react by the assertion of an individualistic trend in the social idea, may impose it on the mass consciousness and establish a compromise between the individual and the social demand. But a compromise is not a solution; it only salves over the difficulty and in the end increases the complexity of the problem and multiplies its issues. A new principle has to be called in other and higher than the two conflicting instincts and powerful at once to override and to reconcile them. Above the natural individual law which sets up as our one standard of conduct the satisfaction of our individual needs, preferences and desires and the natural communal law which sets up as a superior standard the satisfaction of the needs, preferences and desires of the community as a whole, there had to arise the notion of an ideal moral law which is not the satisfaction of need and desire, but controls and even coerces or annuls them in the interests of an ideal order that is not animal, not vital and physical, but mental, a creation of the mind's seeking for light and knowledge and right rule and right movement and true order. The moment this notion becomes powerful in man, he begins to escape from the engrossing vital and material into the mental life; he climbs from the first to the second degree of the threefold ascent of Nature. His needs and desires themselves are touched with a more elevated light of purpose and the mental need, the aesthetic, intellectual and emotional desire begin to predominate over the demand of the physical and vital nature.

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The natural law of conduct proceeds from a conflict to an equilibrium of forces, impulsions and desires; the higher ethical law

proceeds by the development of the mental and moral nature towards a fixed internal standard or else a self-formed ideal of absolute qualities, — justice, righteousness, love, right reason, right power, beauty, light. It is therefore essentially an individual standard; it is not a creation of the mass mind. The thinker is the individual; it is he who calls out and throws into forms that which would otherwise remain subconscious in the amorphous human whole. The moral striver is also the individual; self-discipline, not under the yoke of an outer law, but in obedience to an internal light, is essentially an individual effort. But by positing his personal standard as the translation of an absolute moral ideal the thinker imposes it, not on himself alone, but on all the individuals whom his thought can reach and penetrate. And as the mass of individuals come more and more to accept it in idea if only in an imperfect practice or no practice, society also is compelled to obey the new orientation. It absorbs the ideative influence and tries, not with any striking success, to mould its institutions into new forms touched by these higher ideals. But always its instinct is to translate them into binding law, into pattern forms, into mechanic custom, into an external social compulsion upon its living units.

For, long after the individual has become partially free, a moral organism capable of conscious growth, aware of an inward life, eager for spiritual progress, society continues to be external in its methods, a material and economic organism, mechanical, more intent upon status and self-preservation than on growth and self-perfection. The greatest present triumph of the thinking and progressive individual over the instinctive and static society has been the power he has acquired by his thought-will to compel it to think also, to open itself to the idea of social justice and righteousness, communal sympathy and mutual compassion, to feel after the rule of reason rather than blind custom as the test of its institutions and to look on the mental and moral assent of its individuals as at least one essential element in the validity of its laws. Ideally at least, to consider light rather than force as its sanction, moral development and not vengeance or restraint as the object even of its penal action, is becoming just

possible to the communal mind. The greatest future triumph of the thinker will come when he can persuade the individual integer and the collective whole to rest their life-relation and its union and stability upon a free and harmonious consent and self-adaptation, and shape and govern the external by the internal truth rather than to constrain the inner spirit by the tyranny of the external form and structure.

But even this success that he has gained is rather a thing in potentiality than in actual accomplishment. There is always a disharmony and a discord between the moral law in the individual and the law of his needs and desires, between the moral law proposed to society and the physical and vital needs, desires, customs, prejudices, interests and passions of the caste, the clan, the religious community, the society, the nation. The moralist erects in vain his absolute ethical standard and calls upon all to be faithful to it without regard to consequences. To him the needs and desires of the individual are invalid if they are in conflict with the moral law, and the social law has no claims upon him if it is opposed to his sense of right and denied by his conscience. This is his absolute solution for the individual that he shall cherish no desires and claims that are not consistent with love, truth and justice. He demands from the community or nation that it shall hold all things cheap, even its safety and its most pressing interests, in comparison with truth, justice, humanity and the highest good of the peoples.

No individual rises to these heights except in intense moments, no society yet created satisfies this ideal. And in the present state of morality and of human development none perhaps can or ought to satisfy it. Nature will not allow it, Nature knows that it should not be. The first reason is that our moral ideals are themselves for the most part ill-evolved, ignorant and arbitrary, mental constructions rather than transcriptions of the eternal truths of the spirit. Authoritative and dogmatic, they assert certain absolute standards in theory, but in practice every existing system of ethics proves either in application unworkable or is in fact a constant coming short of the absolute standard to which the ideal pretends. If our ethical system is a compromise

or a makeshift, it gives at once a principle of justification to the further sterilising compromises which society and the individual hasten to make with it. And if it insists on absolute love, justice, right with an uncompromising insistence, it soars above the head of human possibility and is professed with lip homage but ignored in practice. Even it is found that it ignores other elements in humanity which equally insist on survival but refuse to come within the moral formula. For just as the individual law of desire contains within it invaluable elements of the infinite whole which have to be protected against the tyranny of the absorbing social idea, the innate impulses too both of individual and of collective man contain in them invaluable elements which escape the limits of any ethical formula yet discovered and are yet necessary to the fullness and harmony of an eventual divine perfection.

Moreover, absolute love, absolute justice, absolute right reason in their present application by a bewildered and imperfect humanity come easily to be conflicting principles. Justice often demands what love abhors. Right reason dispassionately considering the facts of nature and human relations in search of a satisfying norm or rule is unable to admit without modification either any reign of absolute justice or any reign of absolute love. And in fact man's absolute justice easily turns out to be in practice a sovereign injustice; for his mind, one-sided and rigid in its constructions, puts forward a one-sided partial and rigorous scheme or figure and claims for it totality and absoluteness and an application that ignores the subtler truth of things and the plasticity of life. All our standards turned into action either waver on a flux of compromises or err by this partiality and unelastic structure. Humanity sways from one orientation to another; the race moves upon a zigzag path led by conflicting claims and, on the whole, works out instinctively what Nature intends, but with much waste and suffering, rather than either what it desires or what it holds to be right or what the highest light from above demands from the embodied spirit.

The fact is that when we have reached the cult of absolute ethical qualities and erected the categorical imperative of an ideal law, we have not come to the end of our search or touched the truth that delivers. There is, no doubt, something here that helps us to rise beyond limitation by the physical and vital man in us, an insistence that overpasses the individual and collective needs and desires of a humanity still bound to the living mud of Matter in which it took its roots, an aspiration that helps to develop the mental and moral being in us: this new sublimating element has been therefore an acquisition of great importance; its workings have marked a considerable step forward in the difficult evolution of terrestrial Nature. And behind the inadequacy of these ethical conceptions something too is concealed that does attach to a supreme Truth; there is here the glimmer of a light and power that are part of a yet unreached divine Nature. But the mental idea of these things is not that light and the moral formulation of them is not that power. These are only representative constructions of the mind that cannot embody the divine spirit which they vainly endeavour to imprison in their categorical formulas. Beyond the mental and moral being in us is a greater divine being that is spiritual and supramental; for it is only through a large spiritual plane where the mind's formulas dissolve in a white flame of direct inner experience that we can reach beyond mind and pass from its constructions to the vastness and freedom of the supramental realities. There alone can we touch the harmony of the divine powers that are poorly misrepresented to our mind or framed into a false figure by the conflicting or wavering elements of the moral law. There alone the unification of the transformed vital and physical and the illumined mental man becomes possible in that supramental Spirit which is at once the secret source and goal of our mind and life and body. There alone is there any possibility of an absolute justice, love and right — far other than that which we imagine — at one with each other in the light of a supreme divine knowledge. There alone can there be a reconciliation of the conflict between our members.

In other words there is, above society's external law and

man's moral law and beyond them, though feebly and ignorantly aimed at by something within them, a larger truth of a vast unbound consciousness, a law divine towards which both these blind and gross formulations are progressive faltering steps that try to escape from the natural law of the animal to a more exalted light or universal rule. That divine standard, since the godhead in us is our spirit moving towards its own concealed perfection, must be a supreme spiritual law and truth of our nature. Again, as we are embodied beings in the world with a common existence and nature and yet individual souls capable of direct touch with the Transcendent, this supreme truth of ourselves must have a double character. It must be a law and truth that discovers the perfect movement, harmony, rhythm of a great spiritualised collective life and determines perfectly our relations with each being and all beings in Nature's varied oneness. It must be at the same time a law and truth that discovers to us at each moment the rhythm and exact steps of the direct expression of the Divine in the soul, mind, life, body of the individual creature.¹ And we find in experience that this supreme light and force of action in its highest expression is at once an imperative law and an absolute freedom. It is an imperative law because it governs by immutable Truth our every inner and outer movement. And yet at each moment and in each movement the absolute freedom of the Supreme handles the perfect plasticity of our conscious and liberated nature.

The ethical idealist tries to discover this supreme law in his own moral data, in the inferior powers and factors that belong to the mental and ethical formula. And to sustain and organise them he selects a fundamental principle of conduct essentially unsound and constructed by the intellect—utility, hedonism, reason, intuitive conscience or any other generalised standard. All such efforts are foredoomed to failure. Our inner nature is the progressive expression of the eternal Spirit and too complex a power to be tied down by a single dominant mental or

¹ Therefore the Gita defines "dharma", an expression which means more than either religion or morality, as action controlled by our essential manner of self-being.

moral principle. Only the supramental consciousness can reveal to its differing and conflicting forces their spiritual truth and harmonise their divergences.

The later religions endeavour to fix the type of a supreme truth of conduct, erect a system and declare God's law through the mouth of Avatar or prophet. These systems, more powerful and dynamic than the dry ethical idea, are yet for the most part no more than idealistic glorifications of the moral principle sanctified by religious emotion and the label of a superhuman origin. Some, like the extreme Christian ethic, are rejected by Nature because they insist unworkably on an impracticable absolute rule. Others prove in the end to be evolutionary compromises and become obsolete in the march of Time. The true divine law, unlike these mental counterfeits, cannot be a system of rigid ethical determinations that press into their cast-iron moulds all our life-movements. The Law divine is truth of life and truth of the spirit and must take up with a free living plasticity and inspire with the direct touch of its eternal light each step of our action and all the complexity of our life issues. It must act not as a rule and formula but as an enveloping and penetrating conscious presence that determines all our thoughts, activities, feelings, impulses of will by its infallible power and knowledge.

The older religions erected their rule of the wise, their dicta of Manu or Confucius, a complex Shastra in which they attempted to combine the social rule and moral law with the declaration of certain eternal principles of our highest nature in some kind of uniting amalgam. All three were treated on the same ground as equally the expression of everlasting verities, *sanātana dharma*. But two of these elements are evolutionary and valid for a time, mental constructions, human readings of the will of the Eternal; the third, attached and subdued to certain social and moral formulas, had to share the fortunes of its forms. Either the Shastra grows obsolete and has to be progressively changed or finally cast away or else it stands as a rigid barrier to the self-development of the individual and the race. The Shastra erects a collective and external standard; it ignores the inner nature of the individual, the indeterminable

elements of a secret spiritual force within him. But the nature of the individual will not be ignored; its demand is inexorable. The unrestrained indulgence of his outer impulses leads to anarchy and dissolution, but the suppression and coercion of his soul's freedom by a fixed and mechanical rule spells stagnation or an inner death. Not this coercion or determination from outside, but the free discovery of his highest spirit and the truth of an eternal movement is the supreme thing that he has to discover.

The higher ethical law is discovered by the individual in his mind and will and psychic sense and then extended to the race. The supreme law also must be discovered by the individual in his spirit. Then only, through a spiritual influence and not by the mental idea, can it be extended to others. A moral law can be imposed as a rule or an ideal on numbers of men who have not attained that level of consciousness or that fineness of mind and will and psychic sense in which it can become a reality to them and a living force. As an ideal it can be revered without any need of practice. As a rule it can be observed in its outsides even if the inner sense is missed altogether. The supramental and spiritual life cannot be mechanised in this way, it cannot be turned into a mental ideal or an external rule. It has its own great lines, but these must be made real, must be the workings of an active Power felt in the individual's consciousness and the transcriptions of an eternal Truth powerful to transform mind, life and body. And because it is thus real, effective, imperative, the generalisation of the supramental consciousness and the spiritual life is the sole force that can lead to individual and collective perfection in earth's highest creatures. Only by our coming into constant touch with the divine Consciousness and its absolute Truth can some form of the conscious Divine, the dynamic Absolute, take up our earth-existence and transform its strife, stumbling, sufferings and falsities into an image of the supreme Light, Power and Ananda.

The culmination of the soul's constant touch with the Supreme is that self-giving which we call surrender to the divine Will and immergence of the separated ego in the One who is all. A vast universality of soul and an intense unity with all is

the base and fixed condition of the supramental consciousness and spiritual life. In that universality and unity alone can we find the supreme law of the divine manifestation in the life of the embodied spirit; in that alone can we discover the supreme motion and right play of our individual nature. In that alone can all these lower discords resolve themselves into a victorious harmony of the true relations between manifested beings who are portions of the one Godhead and children of one universal Mother.

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All conduct and action are part of the movement of a Power, a Force infinite and divine in its origin and secret sense and will even though the forms of it we see seem inconscient or ignorant, material, vital, mental, finite, which is working to bring out progressively something of the Divine and Infinite in the obscurity of the individual and collective nature. This power is leading towards the Light, but still through the Ignorance. It leads man first through his needs and desires; it guides him next through enlarged needs and desires modified and enlightened by a mental and moral ideal. It is preparing to lead him to a spiritual realisation that overrides these things and yet fulfils and reconciles them in all that is divinely true in their spirit and purpose. It transforms the needs and desires into a divine Will and Ananda. It transforms the mental and moral aspiration into the powers of Truth and Perfection that are beyond them. It substitutes for the divided straining of the individual nature, for the passion and strife of the separate ego, the calm, profound, harmonious and happy law of the universalised person within us, the central being, the spirit that is a portion of the supreme Spirit. This true Person in us, because it is universal, does not seek its separate gratification but only asks in its outward expression in Nature its growth to its real stature, the expression of its inner divine self, that transcendent spiritual power and presence within it which is one with all and in sympathy with each thing and creature and with all the collective personalities and powers of the divine

existence, and yet it transcends them and is not bound by the egoism of any creature or collectivity or limited by the ignorant controls of their lower nature. This is the high realisation in front of all our seeking and striving, and it gives the sure promise of a perfect reconciliation and transmutation of all the elements of our nature. A pure, total and flawless action is possible only when that is effected and we have reached the height of this secret Godhead within us.

The perfect supramental action will not follow any single principle or limited rule. It is not likely to satisfy the standard either of the individual egoist or of any organised group-mind. It will conform to the demand neither of the positive practical man of the world nor of the formal moralist nor of the patriot nor of the sentimental philanthropist nor of the idealising philosopher. It will proceed by a spontaneous outflowing from the summits in the totality of an illumined and uplifted being, will and knowledge and not by the selected, calculated and standardised action which is all that the intellectual reason or ethical will can achieve. Its sole aim will be the expression of the divine in us and the keeping together of the world and its progress towards the Manifestation that is to be. This even will not be so much an aim and purpose as a spontaneous law of the being and an intuitive determination of the action by the Light of the divine Truth and its automatic influence. It will proceed like the action of Nature from a total will and knowledge behind her, but a will and knowledge enlightened in a conscious supreme Nature and no longer obscure in this ignorant Prakriti. It will be an action not bound by the dualities but full and large in the spirit's impartial joy of existence. The happy and inspired movement of a divine Power and Wisdom guiding and impelling us will replace the perplexities and stumblings of the suffering and ignorant ego.

If by some miracle of divine intervention all mankind at once could be raised to this level, we should have something on earth like the Golden Age of the traditions, Satya Yuga, the Age of Truth or true existence. For the sign of the Satya Yuga is that the Law is spontaneous and conscious in each creature and does

its own works in a perfect harmony and freedom. Unity and universality, not separative division, would be the foundation of the consciousness of the race; love would be absolute; equality would be consistent with hierarchy and perfect in difference; absolute justice would be secured by the spontaneous action of the being in harmony with the truth of things and the truth of himself and others and therefore sure of true and right result; right reason, no longer mental but supramental, would be satisfied not by the observation of artificial standards but by the free automatic perception of right relations and their inevitable execution in the act. The quarrel between the individual and society or disastrous struggle between one community and another could not exist: the cosmic consciousness imbedded in embodied beings would assure a harmonious diversity in oneness.

In the actual state of humanity, it is the individual who must climb to this height as a pioneer and precursor. His isolation will necessarily give a determination and a form to his outward activities that must be quite other than those of a consciously divine collective action. The inner state, the root of his acts, will be the same; but the acts themselves may well be very different from what they would be on an earth liberated from ignorance. Nevertheless his consciousness and the divine mechanism of his conduct, if such a word can be used of so free a thing, would be such as has been described, free from that subjection to vital impurity and desire and wrong impulse which we call sin, unbound by that rule of prescribed moral formulas which we call virtue, spontaneously sure and pure and perfect in a greater consciousness than the mind's, governed in all its steps by the light and truth of the Spirit. But if a collectivity or group could be formed of those who had reached the supramental perfection, there indeed some divine creation could take shape; a new earth could descend that would be a new heaven, a world of supramental light could be created here amidst the receding darkness of this terrestrial ignorance.