

4 August 1929

Is not surrender the same as sacrifice?

In our Yoga there is no room for sacrifice. But everything depends on the meaning you put on the word. In its pure sense it means a consecrated giving, a making sacred to the Divine. But in the significance that it now bears, sacrifice is something that works for destruction; it carries about it an atmosphere of negation. This kind of sacrifice is not fulfilment; it is a deprivation, a self-immolation. It is your possibilities that you sacrifice, the possibilities and realisations of your personality from the most material to the highest spiritual range. Sacrifice diminishes your being. If physically you sacrifice your life, your body, you give up all your possibilities on the material plane; you have done with the achievements of your earthly existence.

In the same way you can morally sacrifice your life; you give up the amplitude and free fulfilment of your inner existence. There is always in this idea of self-immolation a sense of forcing, a constriction, an imposed self-denial. This is an ideal that does not give room for the soul's deeper and larger spontaneities. By surrender we mean not this but a spontaneous self-giving, a giving of all your self to the Divine, to a greater Consciousness of which you are a part. Surrender will not diminish, but increase; it will not lessen or weaken or destroy your personality, it will fortify and aggrandise it. Surrender means a free total giving with all the delight of the giving; there is no sense of sacrifice in it. If you have the slightest feeling that you are making a sacrifice, then it is no longer surrender. For it means that you reserve yourself or that you are trying to give, with grudging or with pain and effort, and have not the joy of the gift, perhaps not even the feeling that you are giving. When you do anything with the sense of a compression of your being, be sure that you

4 August 1929

are doing it in the wrong way. True surrender enlarges you; it increases your capacity; it gives you a greater measure in quality and in quantity which you could not have had by yourself. This new greater measure of quality and quantity is different from anything you could attain before: you enter into another world, into a wideness which you could not have entered if you did not surrender. It is as when a drop of water falls into the sea; if it still kept there its separate identity, it would remain a little drop of water and nothing more, a little drop crushed by all the immensity around, because it has not surrendered. But, surrendering, it unites with the sea and participates in the nature and power and vastness of the whole sea.

There is no ambiguity or vagueness in the movement, it is clear and strong and definite. If a small human mind stands in front of the Divine Universal Mind and clings to its separateness, it will remain what it is, a small bounded thing, incapable of knowing the nature of the higher reality or even of coming in contact with it. The two continue to stand apart and are, qualitatively as well as quantitatively, quite different from each other. But if the little human mind surrenders, it will be merged in the Divine Universal Mind; it will be one in quality and quantity with it; losing nothing but its own limitations and deformations, it will receive from it its vastness and luminous clearness. The small existence will change its nature; it will put on the nature of the greater truth to which it surrenders. But if it resists and fights, if it revolts against the Universal Mind, then a conflict and pressure are inevitable in which what is weak and small cannot fail to be drawn into that power and immensity. If it does not surrender, its only other possible fate is absorption and extinction. A human being, who comes into contact with the Divine Mind and surrenders, will find that his own mind begins at once to be purified of its obscurities and to share in the power and the knowledge of the Divine Universal Mind. If he stands in front, but separated, without any contact, he will remain what he is, a little drop of water in the measureless vastness. If

Questions and Answers

he revolts, he will lose his mind; its powers will diminish and disappear. And what is true of the mind is true of all the other parts of the nature. It is as when you fight against one who is too strong for you — a broken head is all you gain. How can you fight something that is a million times stronger? Each time you revolt, you get a knock, and each blow takes away a portion of your strength, as when one who engages in a pugilistic encounter with a far superior rival receives blow after blow and each blow makes him weaker and weaker till he is knocked out. There is no necessity of a willed intervention, the action is automatic. Nothing else can happen if you dash yourself in revolt against the Immensity. As long as you remain in your corner and follow the course of the ordinary life, you are not touched or hurt; but once you come in contact with the Divine, there are only two ways open to you. You surrender and merge in it, and your surrender enlarges and glorifies you; or you revolt and all your possibilities are destroyed and your powers ebb away and are drawn from you into That which you oppose.

There are many wrong ideas current about surrender. Most people seem to look upon surrender as an abdication of the personality; but that is a grievous error. For the individual is meant to manifest one aspect of the Divine Consciousness, and the expression of its characteristic nature is what creates his personality; then, by taking the right attitude towards the Divine, this personality is purified of all the influences of the lower nature which diminish and distort it and it becomes more strongly personal, more itself, more complete. The truth and power of the personality come out with a more resplendent distinctness, its character is more precisely marked than it could possibly be when mixed with all the obscurity and ignorance, all the dirt and alloy of the lower nature. It undergoes a heightening and glorification, an aggrandisement of capacity, a realisation of the maximum of its possibilities. But to have this sublimating change, he must first give up all that, by distorting, limiting and obscuring the true nature, fetters and debases and disfigures

4 August 1929

the true personality; he must throw from him whatever belongs to the ignorant lower movements of the ordinary man and his blind limping ordinary life. And first of all he must give up his desires; for desire is the most obscure and the most obscuring movement of the lower nature. Desires are motions of weakness and ignorance and they keep you chained to your weakness and to your ignorance. Men have the impression that their desires are born within; they feel as if they come out of themselves or arise within themselves; but it is a false impression. Desires are waves of the vast sea of the obscure lower nature and they pass from one person to another. Men do not generate a desire in themselves, but are invaded by these waves; whoever is open and without defence is caught in them and tossed about. Desire by engrossing and possessing him makes him incapable of any discrimination and gives him the impression that it is part of his nature to manifest it. In reality, it has nothing to do with his true nature. It is the same with all the lower impulses, jealousy or envy, hatred or violence. These too are movements that seize you, waves that overwhelm and invade; they deform, they do not belong to the true character or the true nature; they are no intrinsic or inseparable part of yourself, but come out of the sea of surrounding obscurity in which move the forces of the lower nature. These desires, these passions have no personality, there is nothing in them or their action that is peculiar to you; they manifest in the same way in everyone. The obscure movements of the mind too, the doubts and errors and difficulties that cloud the personality and diminish its expansion and fulfilment, come from the same source. They are passing waves and they catch anyone who is ready to be caught and utilised as their blind instrument. And yet each goes on believing that these movements are part of himself and a precious product of his own free personality. Even we find people clinging to them and their disabilities as the very sign or essence of what they call their freedom.

If you have understood this, you will be ready to understand the difference, the great difference between spirituality

Questions and Answers

and morality, two things that are constantly confused with each other. The spiritual life, the life of Yoga, has for its object to grow into the divine consciousness and for its result to purify, intensify, glorify and perfect what is in you. It makes you a power for manifesting of the Divine; it raises the character of each personality to its full value and brings it to its maximum expression; for this is part of the Divine plan. Morality proceeds by a mental construction and, with a few ideas of what is good and what is not, sets up an ideal type into which all must force themselves. This moral ideal differs in its constituents and its ensemble at different times and different places. And yet it proclaims itself as a unique type, a categoric absolute; it admits of none other outside itself; it does not even admit a variation within itself. All are to be moulded according to its single ideal pattern, everybody is to be made uniformly and faultlessly the same. It is because morality is of this rigid unreal nature that it is in its principle and its working the contrary of the spiritual life. The spiritual life reveals the one essence in all, but reveals too its infinite diversity; it works for diversity in oneness and for perfection in that diversity. Morality lifts up one artificial standard contrary to the variety of life and the freedom of the spirit. Creating something mental, fixed and limited, it asks all to conform to it. All must labour to acquire the same qualities and the same ideal nature. **Morality is not divine or of the Divine; it is of man and human.** Morality takes for its basic element a fixed division into the good and the bad; but this is an arbitrary notion. It takes things that are relative and tries to impose them as absolutes; for this good and this bad differ in differing climates and times, epochs and countries. **The moral notion goes so far as to say that there are good desires and bad desires and calls on you to accept the one and reject the other. But the spiritual life demands that you should reject desire altogether. Its law is that you must cast aside all movements that draw you away from the Divine.** You must reject them, not because they are bad in themselves,— for they may be good for another man or in

4 August 1929

another sphere, — but because they belong to the impulses or forces that, being unilluminated and ignorant, stand in the way of your approach to the Divine. All desires, whether good or bad, come within this description; for desire itself arises from an unilluminated vital being and its ignorance. On the other hand you must accept all movements that bring you into contact with the Divine. But you accept them, not because they are good in themselves, but because they bring you to the Divine. Accept then all that takes you to the Divine. Reject all that takes you away from it, but do not say that this is good and that is bad or try to impose your outlook on others; for, what you term bad may be the very thing that is good for your neighbour who is not trying to realise the Divine Life.

Let us take an illustration of the difference between the moral and the spiritual view of things. The ordinary social notions distinguish between two classes of men, — the generous, the avaricious. The avaricious man is despised and blamed, while the generous man is considered unselfish and useful to society and praised for his virtue. But to the spiritual vision, they both stand on the same level; the generosity of the one, the avarice of the other are deformations of a higher truth, a greater divine power. There is a power, a divine movement that spreads, diffuses, throws out freely forces and things and whatever else it possesses on all the levels of nature from the most material to the most spiritual plane. Behind the generous man and his generosity is a soul-type that expresses this movement; he is a power for diffusion, for wide distribution. There is another power, another divine movement that collects and amasses; it gathers and accumulates forces and things and all possible possessions, whether of the lower or of the higher planes. The man you tax with avarice was meant to be an instrument of this movement. Both are important, both needed in the entire plan; the movement that stores up and concentrates is no less needed than the movement that spreads and diffuses. Both, if truly surrendered to the Divine, will be utilised as instruments for its divine work

Questions and Answers

to the same degree and with an equal value. But when they are not surrendered both are alike moved by impulses of ignorance. One is pushed to throw away, the other is pulled towards keeping back; but both are driven by forces obscure to their own consciousness, and between the two there is little to choose. One could say to the much-praised generous man, from the higher point of vision of Yoga, "All your impulses of generosity are nothing in the values of the spirit, for they come from ego and ignorant desire." And, on the other hand, among those who are accused of avarice, you can see sometimes a man amassing and hoarding, full of a quiet and concentrated determination in the work assigned to him by his nature, who, once awakened, would make a very good instrument of the Divine. But ordinarily the avaricious man acts from ego and desire like his opposite; it is the other end of the same ignorance. Both will have to purify themselves and change before they can make contact with the something higher that is behind them and express it in the way to which they are called by their nature.

In the same way you could take all other types and trace them to some original intention in the Divine Force. Each is a diminution or caricature of the type intended by the Divine, a mental and vital distortion of things that have a greater spiritual value. It is a wrong movement that creates the distortion or the caricature. Once this false impulsion is mastered, the right attitude taken, the right movement found, all reveal their divine values. All are justified by the truth that is in them, all equally important, equally needed, different but indispensable instruments of the Divine Manifestation.