

reach the sunlight. In a virgin forest, for instance, where man does not interfere, there is this kind of struggle among all the plants which are always growing straight upwards in one way or another in their *effort* to catch the sunlight. It is very interesting. But even if you put a flower-pot in a fairly small courtyard surrounded by walls, where the sun doesn't come, a plant which normally is as high as this (*gesture*), becomes as tall as that: it stretches up and makes an *effort* to find the light. Therefore there is a consciousness, a will to live which is already manifesting.

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The trees rise towards the sky, beautiful symbol of Nature's aspiration towards the light.

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It is not certain whether the plant makes an effort or not. And in any case, it has an aspiration; plants grow because they aspire for the light, for the sun, for the open air.

And it's a kind of competition. If one goes into a wood, for instance, into a park where there are many different plants, one can observe very clearly that there is a sort of competition among plants to pass each other and reach the light and open air above. It is indeed quite wonderful to see.

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We must suppose in the plant and the metal also a force to which we can give the name of consciousness although it is not the human or animal mentality for which we have hitherto preserved the monopoly of that description.

Not only is this probable but, if we will consider things dispassionately, it is certain. In ourselves there is such a vital consciousness which acts in the cells of the body and the automatic vital functions so that we go through purposeful movements and obey attractions and repulsions to which our mind is a stranger. In animals this vital consciousness is an even more important factor. In plants it is intuitively evident. The seekings and shrinkings of the plant, its pleasure and pain, its sleep and its wakefulness and all that strange life whose truth an Indian scientist [Jagadish Chandra Bose] has brought to light by rigidly scientific methods, are all movements of consciousness, but, as far as we can see, not of mentality. There is then a sub-mental, a vital consciousness which has precisely the same initial reactions as the mental, but is different in the constitution of its self-experience, even as that which is superconscious is in the constitution of its self-experience different from the mental being.