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*Is delight the highest state? And if so, could it be said that when one loses delight, one's consciousness is lowered?*

Sri Aurobindo has said that the universe is built upon the delight of existence and that delight, being its origin is necessarily also its goal, so this would mean in fact that delight is the highest state.

But I don't need to tell you that this is not delight as it is understood in the ordinary human consciousness.... Indeed, that delight is beyond the states which are generally considered as the highest from the yogic point of view, as for instance, the state of perfect serenity, of perfect equality of soul, of absolute detachment, of identity with the infinite and eternal Divine, which necessarily raises you above all contingencies. Parallel to this state there can be another which is the state of perfect, integral, universal love, which is the very essence of compassion and the most perfect expression of the Grace which wipes out the consequences of all error and all ignorance. These two states have always been considered as the summit of consciousness; they are what could be called the frontier, the extreme limit of what the individual consciousness can attain in its union with the Divine.

But there is something which lies beyond; it is precisely a state of perfect delight which is not static: delight in a progressive manifestation, a perfect unfolding of the supreme Consciousness.

The first of the two states I spoke about leads almost always to a withdrawal from action, an almost static condition, and very easily would it lead to Nirvana — in fact, it has always been the way prescribed for all those in search of Nirvana. But this state of delight I am speaking about, which is essentially divine

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because it is free, totally free from all possibility of oppositions and opposites, does not break away from action; on the contrary, it leads to an integral action, perfect in its essence and completely liberated from all ignorance and all bondage to ignorance.

One can experience, on the path — when one has made some progress, when there is a greater understanding, a more total opening, a more intimate union with the divine Consciousness, one can experience this Delight as something that passes by and colours life and gives it its true meaning, but as long as one is in the human consciousness, this Delight is very easily deformed and changes into something which no longer resembles it at all. Therefore, one could hardly say that if one loses the delight, one's consciousness is lowered, for... the Delight I am speaking about is something which cannot ever be lost. If one has reached beyond the two states I spoke about a while ago, that is to say, the state of perfect detachment and close union, and the state of perfect love and compassion, if one has gone beyond these two states and found the divine Delight, it is practically impossible to come down from there. But in practical life, that is, on the path of yoga, if you are touched, even in passing, by this divine Delight, it is obvious that, should it leave you, you are bound to feel that you have come down from a peak into a rather dark valley.

But Delight without detachment would be a very dangerous gift which could very easily be perverted. So, to seek Delight before having acquired detachment does not seem to be very wise. One must first be above all possible opposites: indeed, above pain and pleasure, suffering and happiness, enthusiasm and depression. If one is above all that, then one may safely aspire for Delight.

But as long as this detachment is not realised, one can easily confuse Delight with an exalted state of ordinary human happiness, and this would not at all be the true thing nor even a perversion of the thing, for the nature of the two is so different, almost opposite, that you cannot pass from one to the other.

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So, if one wants to be safe on the path, it seems to me that to seek for peace, for perfect calm, perfect equality, for a widening of the consciousness, a vaster understanding and liberation from all desire, all preference, all attachment, is certainly an indispensable preliminary condition.

It is the guarantee of both inner and outer equipoise.

And then on this equilibrium, on this foundation which must be *very solid*, one may build whatever one wants. But to begin with, the foundation must be there, unshakable.

(*Silence*)

Someone has asked me what I meant by these words:

*“One must be calm.”*

It is obvious that when I tell someone, “Be calm”, I mean many different things according to the person. But the first indispensable calm is mental quietude, for generally that is the one that’s most lacking. When I tell someone, “Be calm”, I mean: Try not to have restless, excited, agitated thoughts; try to quieten your mind and to stop turning around in all your imaginations and observations and mental constructions.

One could justifiably add a question: You tell us “Be calm”, but what should we do to be calm?... The answer is always more or less the same: you must first of all feel the need for it and want it, and then aspire, and then try! For trying, there are innumerable methods which have been prescribed and attempted by many. These methods are generally long, arduous, difficult; and many people get discouraged before reaching the goal, for, the more they try, the more do their thoughts start whirling around and becoming restless in their heads.

For each one the method is different, but *first* one must feel the need, for whatever reason it may be — whether because one is tired or because one is overstrained or because one truly wants

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to rise beyond the state one lives in — one must first understand, feel the need of this quietude, this peace in the mind. And then, afterwards, one may try out successively all the methods, known ones and new, to attain the result.

Now, one quickly realises that there is another quietude which is necessary, and even very urgently needed — this is vital quietude, that is to say, the absence of desire. Only, the vital when not sufficiently developed, as soon as it is told to keep quiet, either goes to sleep or goes on strike; it says, "Ah! no. Nothing doing! I won't go any farther. If you don't give me the sustenance I need, excitement, enthusiasm, desire, even passion, I prefer not to move and I won't do anything any longer." So there the problem becomes a little more delicate and perhaps even more difficult still; for surely, to fall from excitement into inertia is very far from being a progress! One must never mistake inertia or a somnolent passivity for calm.

Quietude is a very positive state; there is a positive peace which is not the opposite of conflict — an active peace, contagious, powerful, which controls and calms, which puts everything in order, organises. It is of this I am speaking; when I tell someone, "Be calm", I don't mean to say "Go and sleep, be inert and passive, and don't do anything", far from it!... True quietude is a very great force, a very great strength. In fact one can say, looking at the problem from the other side, that all those who are really strong, powerful, are always very calm. It is only the weak who are agitated; as soon as one becomes truly strong, one is peaceful, calm, quiet, and one has the power of endurance to face the adverse waves which come rushing from outside in the hope of disturbing one. This true quietude is always a sign of force. Calmness belongs to the strong.

And this is true even in the physical field. I don't know if you have observed animals like lions, tigers, elephants, but it is a fact that when they are not in action, they are always so perfectly still. A lion sitting and looking at you always seems to be telling you, "Oh, how fidgety you are!" It looks at you

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with such a peaceful air of wisdom! And all its power, energy, physical strength are there, gathered, collected, concentrated and — without a shadow of agitation — ready for action when the order is given.

I have seen people, many people, who could not sit still for half an hour without fidgeting. They had to move a foot or a leg, or an arm or their head; they had to stir restlessly all the time, for they did not have the power or the strength to remain quiet.

This capacity to remain still when one wants to, to gather all one's energies and spend them as one wishes, completely if one wants, or to apportion them as one wants in action, with a perfect calm even in action — that is always the sign of strength. It may be physical strength or vital strength or mental strength. But if you are in the least agitated, you may be sure there is a weakness somewhere; and if your restlessness is integral, it is an integral weakness.

So, if I tell someone "Be calm", I may be telling him all kinds of things, it depends upon each person. But obviously, most often it is, "Make your mind quiet, don't be restless all the time in your head, don't stir up lots of ideas, calm yourself."

For most people an experience exists only when they can explain it to themselves. The experience in itself — contact with a certain force, a widening of consciousness, communion with an aspect of the Divine, no matter what experience, an opening of the being, the breaking down of an obstacle, crossing over a stage, opening new doors — all these experiences, if people cannot explain them to themselves in so many words and materialise them in precise thoughts, it is as though these did not exist! And it is just this need for expression, this need for translation, which causes the greater part of the experience to lose its power of action on the individual consciousness. How is it that you have a decisive, definitive experience, that, for instance, you have opened the door of your psychic being, you have been in communion with it, you know what this means, and then — it

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does not stay? It is because it does not have a sufficiently tangible power unless you can express it to yourself. The experience begins for you only when you are able to describe it. Well, when you are able to describe it, the greater part of its intensity and its capacity of action for the inner and outer transformation has already evaporated. There it may be said that expression, explanation is always a coming down. The experience itself is on a much higher plane.