MOTHER INDIA
MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

SPECIAL ISSUE
AUGUST 2020: THE ANNIVERSARY OF 
SRI AUROBINDO’S BIRTHDAY

PRICE: Rs. 30.00

SUBSCRIPTIONS

INLAND
Annual: Rs. 200.00 (or 2 years – Rs. 400/-, 3 years Rs. 600/- etc.)
For 10 years: Rs. 1,800.00
Price per Single Copy: Rs. 30.00

OVERSEAS
Sea Mail: (valid for USA and Canada only)
Annual: $35
For 10 years: $350
Air Mail:
Annual: $70
For 10 years: $700

All payments to be made in favour of Mother India. Cheque should be sent by speed post only. For NEFT/bank transfers (from within India only) kindly inform us by email with full name and address. Our bank details are:

Beneficiary Name: SAAT A/C Mother India
Account Number: 0927101035721
Beneficiary Bank Name: Canara Bank
Beneficiary Branch Name: Pondicherry Muthialpet
IFSC code: CNRB0000927

For Money Orders please send to:

Mother India, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 605002

All cheques and correspondence to be addressed to:

MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605002, India
Phone: (0413) 2233642
E-mail: motherindia@sriaurobindoashram.org.in

For all subscriptions correspondents should give their full address in BLOCK letters, with the correct PIN code along with their email id or telephone number. Current or past subscribers are requested to mention their subscription number in case of any inquiry.
Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.
"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

CONTENTS

SACRIFICE

(a selection of quotations from the Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s writings)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section One</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section Two</td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section Three</td>
<td></td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section Four</td>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section Five</td>
<td></td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Yoga demands mastery over the nature, not subjection to the nature.

Sri Aurobindo

OUR HOMAGE: BHAGAWATI OXYGEN
SACRIFICE

Limit not sacrifice to the giving up of earthly goods or the denial of some desires and yearnings, but let every thought and every work and every enjoyment be an offering to God within thee. Let thy steps walk in thy Lord, let thy sleep and waking be a sacrifice to Krishna.

Sri Aurobindo

(S12: 471)
SECTION ONE

The acceptable Sacrifice

The ascent to the divine Life is the human journey, the Work of works, the acceptable Sacrifice. This alone is man’s real business in the world and the justification of his existence, without which he would be only an insect crawling among other ephemeral insects on a speck of surface mud and water which has managed to form itself amid the appalling immensities of the physical universe. (S21: 48)

The concept and purpose of Sacrifice

“The law of sacrifice is the common divine action that was thrown out into the world in its beginning as a symbol of the solidarity of the universe. It is by the attraction of this law that a divinising, a saving power descends to limit and correct and gradually to eliminate the errors of an egoistic and self-divided creation. This descent, this sacrifice of the Purusha, the Divine Soul submitting itself to Force and Matter so that it may inform and illuminate them, is the seed of redemption of this world of Inconscience and Ignorance. For ‘with sacrifice as their companion,’ says the Gita, ‘the All-Father created these peoples.’ The acceptance of the law of sacrifice is a practical recognition by the ego that it is neither alone in the world nor chief in the world. It is its admission that, even in this much fragmented existence, there is beyond itself and behind that which is not its own egoistic person, something greater and completer, a diviner All which demands from it subordination and service.”

Sri Aurobindo
The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 98

Sweet Mother, what does the “sacrifice to the Divine” mean?

It is self-giving. It is the word the Gita uses for self-giving.

Only, the sacrifice is mutual, this is what Sri Aurobindo says at the beginning: the Divine has sacrificed Himself in Matter to awaken consciousness in Matter, which had become inconscient. And it is this sacrifice, this giving of the Divine in Matter, that is to say, His dispersion in Matter, which justifies the sacrifice of Matter to the Divine and makes it obligatory; for it is one and the same reciprocal movement. It is because the Divine has given Himself in Matter and scattered Himself everywhere in Matter to awaken it to the divine consciousness, that Matter is automatically
under the obligation to give itself to the Divine. It is a mutual and reciprocal sacrifice.

And this is the great secret of the Gita: the affirmation of the divine Presence in the very heart of Matter. And that is why, Matter must sacrifice itself to the Divine, automatically, even unconsciously — whether one wants it or not, this is what happens.

Only, when it is done unconsciously, one doesn’t have the joy of sacrifice; while if it is done consciously, one has the joy of sacrifice which is the supreme joy.

The word “sacrifice” in French has slightly too narrow a sense, which it doesn’t have in the original Sanskrit; for in French sacrifice implies a sort of suffering, almost a regret. While in Sanskrit this sense is not there at all; it corresponds to “self-giving”.

_Sweet Mother, here it is written:_

“All are linked together by a secret Oneness.”

_Ibid._

**What is this secret Oneness?**

It is precisely the divine Presence.

Because the Divine is essentially one, and yet He has subdivided Himself apparently in all beings, and in this way recreated the primordial Oneness. And it is because of this divine Oneness — which, however, appears fragmented in beings — that the Unity is re-established in its essence. And when one becomes conscious of this, one has the joy of the consciousness of this Oneness. But those who are not conscious — what they miss is the joy of consciousness. But the fact remains the same.

_Sri Aurobindo_ says: the Oneness exists; whether you are aware of it or not, it exists, in reality it makes no difference; but it makes a difference to you: if you are conscious, you have the joy; if you are not conscious, you miss this joy.

_But how can a sacrifice be made when one is unconscious?_ 

It is made automatically.

Whether you know it or not, whether you want it or not, you are all united by the divine Presence which, though it appears fragmented, is yet One. The Divine is One, He only appears fragmented in things and beings. And because this Unity is a fact, whether you are aware of it or not doesn’t alter the fact at all. And whether you want it or not, you are in spite of everything subject to this Unity.

This is what I have explained to you I don’t know how many times: you think you are separate from one another, but it is the same single Substance which is in
you all, despite differences in appearance; and a vibration in one centre automatically awakens a vibration in another.

*So, no effort is to be made to improve the sacrifice, there is no need to make an effort?*

I don’t understand this conclusion at all.

If you are happy to be unhappy, that’s all right, it is your own affair; if you are content to be unhappy and to suffer and remain in the ignorance and unconsciousness you are in, stay there. But if this does not satisfy you, if you want to be conscious and you want suffering to cease, then you must make constant efforts to become conscious of the sacrifice and to make your sacrifice consciously instead of unconsciously.

Everything turns around the consciousness, the fact of being or not being conscious. And it is only in the supreme Consciousness that you can attain the perfect expression of yourself.

But that the Oneness exists, even if you feel just the opposite, is a fact you can do nothing about, for it is a divine action and a divine fact — it is a divine action and a divine fact. If you are conscious of the Divine, you become conscious of this fact. If you are not conscious of the Divine, the fact exists but you simply are not conscious of it — that’s all.

So, everything turns around a phenomenon of consciousness. And the world is in a state of obscurity, suffering, misery, of . . . everything, all it is, simply because it is not conscious of the Divine, because it has cut off the connection in its consciousness, because its consciousness is separated from the Divine. That is to say, it has become unconscious.

For the true consciousness is the divine Consciousness. If you cut yourself off from the divine Consciousness, you become absolutely unconscious; that is exactly what has happened. And so, everything there is, the world as it is, your consciousness as it is, things in the state they are in, are the result of this separation of the consciousness and its immediate obscuration.

The minute the individual consciousness is separated from the divine Consciousness, it enters what we call the inconscience, and it is this inconscience that is the cause of all its miseries.

But all that is, is essentially divine, and the divine Oneness is a fact, you can’t do anything about it; all your unconsciences and all your denials will change nothing — it is a fact, it’s like that.

And the conclusion is this, that the true transformation is the transformation of consciousness — all the rest will follow automatically.

There we are, that’s all.
Sweet Mother, what part in us sets itself against a total renunciation?

It is as if you asked me, “What is unconscious in us?” But in fact, everything is unconscious except the Divine. And it is only when one can unite with the Divine that one re-establishes the true consciousness in one’s being. The rest is a kind of mixture of semi-consciousness and semi-unconsciousness.

Anything else? No?

(Turning to a disciple) Oh! he is longing to speak!

Mother, there is a magnificent sentence!

Ah! only one?

“Each existence is continually giving out perforce from its stock . . . .” and Sri Aurobindo adds, “And always again it receives something from its environment in return for its voluntary or involuntary tribute.”

Yes, that is what I was just saying. And then?

Does one receive from one’s environment or only from the Divine?

Oh! from both.

Because here it is written: “it receives from its environment.”

Yes! Because Sri Aurobindo says there is a oneness in Matter, a oneness in the manifestation, a oneness in substance, and that there is necessarily an interchange.

In fact, this is what we have said more than fifty thousand times: that all is the Divine and that consequently all is One; that it is only your consciousness which is separated and in a state of unconsciousness because it is separated; but that if you remove this unconsciousness and this sense of separation, you become divine.

But in ordinary life, in one’s environment, what one receives is not always what one gives.

Oh! but you must not understand things so superficially.

(Another disciple) Does the inconscient aspire to become conscious?
No. It is the Divine in the inconscient who aspires for the Divine in the consciousness. That is to say, without the Divine there would be no aspiration; without the consciousness hidden in the inconscient, there would be no possibility of changing the inconscience to consciousness. But because at the very heart of the inconscient there is the divine Consciousness, you aspire, and necessarily — this is what he says — automatically, mechanically, the sacrifice is made. And this is why when one says, “It is not you who aspire, it is the Divine, it is not you who make progress, it is the Divine, it is not you who are conscious, it is the Divine” — these are not mere words, it is a fact. And it is simply your ignorance and your unconsciousness which prevent you from realising it.

(M8: 74-79)

* 

Sweet Mother, what is this form of sacrifice in which animals are slaughtered upon altars?

It is certainly one of the obscurest and most unconscious. And the sacrifice spoken about here and in the Gita, is the sacrifice one makes of oneself, not of others.

Because here it is written: “Whoever the recipient, whatever the gift, it is the Supreme, the Eternal in things, who receives and accepts it.”

The Synthesis of Yoga, pp. 101-02

Happily for the poor creature which is sacrificed! Perhaps it goes straight to the Divine.

It would be very interesting to see. . . . Imagine a man who wants to win the Divine’s favour, or that of some god or other, some deity, in order to obtain something very selfishly personal, something he desires and finds it hard to get; and so he snatches a chicken from his yard and goes and cuts its throat before the deity, with his prayer, perhaps for a good harvest or the good sale of his harvest, or for a child if he doesn’t have one, or that his wife may be cured if she is ill — anything at all. And then imagine that this evolving psychic particle, already like a tiny spark in semi-consciousness — not even semi-consciousness — the rudiment of consciousness which is in the chicken, goes straight to the Divine who magnifies it; while the man who has offered the chicken to obtain some benefit or other is not even heard.

Most probably, this is what happens. So the one who has truly gained in this business is the chicken, not the man!

Sweet Mother, some people make sacrifices and offerings to hostile forces. Are these also received by the Divine?
You mean sacrifices like those I have just spoken about, from people offering something for altogether selfish ends?

_No, people who offer sacrifices to hostile forces._

To hostile forces? But they don’t know they are hostile! Or as they do here, when they take the deity of cholera round in a procession, for example, or the deity of smallpox: it is taken round with songs and beating of drums, and then all sorts of offerings are made to it. This is to satisfy it so that it doesn’t kill too many people.

One should first make sure that this deity exists, that it is not just a doll sitting there on its altar.

Anyway, in instances of this kind, I think it is people’s faith, above all, which saves them. When they have performed their little ceremony properly, they feel confident, “Oh! now it will be over, for she is satisfied.” And because they feel confident, it helps them to react and the illness disappears. I have seen this very often in the street. There might be a small hostile entity there, but these are very insignificant things.

In other cases, in some temples, there are vital beings who are more or less powerful and have made their home there.

But what Sri Aurobindo means here is that there is nothing, not even the most anti-divine force, which in its origin is not the Supreme Divine. So, necessarily, everything goes back to Him, consciously or unconsciously. In the consciousness of the one who makes the offering it does not go to the Divine: it goes to the greater or smaller demon to whom he turns. But through everything, through the wood of the idol or even the ill-will of the vital adversary, ultimately, all returns to the Divine, since all comes from Him. Only, the one who has made the offering or the sacrifice receives but in proportion to his own consciousness and to what he has asked. So one could say that theoretically it returns to the Divine, but that the response comes from that to which he has addressed himself, not from the supreme Origin, for one is not in contact with it; one is in contact only with the next step, the next intermediary — no higher.

It is quite certain that if the movement is absolutely unconscious, the result will also be absolutely unconscious; and if the movement is entirely egoistic, the result is also entirely egoistic. It is as in that story by Sri Aurobindo I read to you one Friday, the first story in which he explained Karma, saying that evil results in evil, and good results in good. Evil begets evil, and good begets good: that is Karma; it is not a punishment or a reward, it is something automatic. Well, if your sacrifice is egoistic and obscure, it will necessarily have an obscure and egoistic result.

1. The reference is to the tale “A Dream”, written originally in Bengali and published in _The Chariot of Jagannatha_.

MOTHER INDIA, AUGUST 2020
Sweet Mother, here it is written:

“The vulgar conception of sacrifice is an act of painful self-immolation, austere self-mortification, difficult self-effacement. . . . But the Gita discourages any excess of violence done to oneself; for the self within is really the Godhead evolving, it is Krishna, it is the Divine; it is not to be troubled and tortured as the Titans of the world trouble and torture it, but to be increasingly fostered, cherished, luminously opened to a divine light.”

Ibid., p. 100

How can one be luminously open?

If you like you may replace the word “luminously” by the word “sincerely”, or “transparently”, like something which is not opaque or does not distort; something clear, transparent, sincere, which does not obstruct.

You may take the image of a window open to the light. If your panes are of blackened or opaque glass, what comes through naturally becomes dark and opaque, and little passes through. And if the glass is quite transparent, then it is a luminous light which comes. Or if your glass is coloured, the light will be coloured in one way or another when it reaches you. While if the glass is absolutely pure and transparent, the light will come through pure and transparent.

Mother, the Gita speaks of the true essence of sacrifice, and Sri Aurobindo says,

“Its method is not self-mortification, but a greater life; not self-mutilation, but a transformation of our natural human parts into divine members. . . .”

Ibid., p. 101

Isn’t it physical transformation we aspire for?

When Sri Aurobindo says “integral transformation”, naturally he is speaking of physical transformation. But the Gita does not speak of integral transformation, I don’t think so. Because for the Gita, the idea of physical transformation does not exist. As I was explaining to you the other day, the world is as it is and you have but to take it as it is, and not be affected by what it is. For you enter a higher consciousness, you are liberated from outer forms, but they remain as they are. Indeed, some slight mention is made of changing one’s character, but there is no question of changing the material world.

Sweet Mother, I have not understood this:
“The spirit’s inner enemies . . . have to be sacrificed in the harsher sense of the word, whatever pain in going they may throw by reflection on the consciousness of the seeker.”

Ibid., pp. 100-01

Not understood? This has never happened to you? No? When, for instance, you have a movement you don’t like — a movement of anger or spite, all kinds of things like that, or an insincerity or something you don’t like — when you reject it from yourself, when you want to make an effort not to have it any more, it hurts you, doesn’t it? It hurts, it is as though something was being pulled out. Well, this is the pain he is speaking about; he says that it is the bad thing you throw away from you which, when leaving, gives you a nice little knock as a parting gift. That’s what he says.

For you are always under the illusion that pain belongs to you. This is not true. Pain is something thrust upon you. The same event could occur, exactly the same in all its details, without its inflicting the shadow of a pain on you; on the contrary, sometimes it can fill you with ecstatic joy. And it is exactly the same thing. But in one case, you are open to the adverse forces you want to reject from yourself, and in the other you are not, you are already too far away from them to be affected by them any longer; and so, instead of feeling the negative side they represent, you feel only the positive side the Divine represents in the experience. It is the divine Grace which makes you progress, and with the divine Grace you feel the divine Joy. But instead of identifying yourself with the Grace which makes you progress, you identify yourself with the ugly thing you want to get rid of; and so, naturally, you feel like it and suffer.

That is an experiment you can make if you are just a little conscious. There is something in you which you don’t want, something bad — for one reason or another you don’t want it, you want to pull it out — well, if you identify yourself ever so little with that thing, you feel the pain of the extraction; if, on the contrary, you identify yourself with the divine Force which comes to liberate you, you feel the joy of the divine Grace — and you experience the deep delight of the progress you have made.

And this is a sure sign for you, a sure indication of what you identify yourself with. If you are identified with the forces from below, you suffer; if you are identified with the forces from above, you are happy. And I am not speaking about feeling pleasure; you must not think that when one jumps about, dances, shouts and plays, one is identified with the divine forces — one may or may not be. That is not what I am speaking of. I am speaking of the divine Joy, the inner Joy which is unalloyed.

Each time a shadow passes, with what may be just an uneasiness or what may become a severe pain or an unbearable suffering, through the whole range, from the smallest to the greatest — as soon as it appears in your being, you may tell
yourself, “Ah, the enemy is there!” — in one form or another.

_Sweet Mother, what is the experience of the being who has given himself completely to the Divine?_

But . . . do it, my child, then you will know! It is not the same for everybody.

_Mother, “the intention . . . and . . . the spirit that is behind the intention,” what does that mean, isn’t it the same thing?_

What?

_The intention . . ._

Yes, I know.

_ . . . and the spirit that is behind._

To me it is as clear as crystal, I don’t understand your question. What is the difference between the intention and the spirit of the intention?

_The spirit that is behind._

Isn’t there a spirit behind all things? No?

_There is always a spirit behind._

Well, yes, and that is all he has said, nothing else, that you must know what kind of spirit there is behind your intention.

_He says the result is different._

But of course! According to the spirit in which you do things, the result is different.

_But the spirit and the intention are not the same thing?_

What do you want me to tell you? If you don’t feel the difference between the two, I can’t explain it to you.

2. “And the fruit also of the sacrifice varies according to the work, according to the intention in the work and according to the spirit that is behind the intention.” Sri Aurobindo, _The Synthesis of Yoga_, p. 102
There are forces at work all the time, which set people moving, which make them move. In the individual being this is translated into exact intentions; but behind the intention a force is acting which is not individual.

Do you understand?

Yes.

Ah!

I think one of the greatest difficulties in understanding things comes from an arbitrary simplification which puts spirit on one side and matter on the other. It is this foolishness that makes you incapable of understanding anything. There is spirit and matter — this is very convenient. So if one does not belong to spirit, one belongs to matter; if one does not belong to matter, one belongs to spirit. But what do you call spirit and what do you call matter? It is a countless crowd of things, an interminable ladder. The universe is a seemingly infinite gradation of worlds and states of consciousness, and in this increasingly subtle gradation, where does your matter come to an end? Where does your spirit begin? You speak of “spirit” — where does this spirit begin? With what you don’t see? Is that it? So you include in “spirit” all the beings of the vital world, for instance, because you don’t see them in your normal state — all that belongs to “spirit” — and they may indeed be the spirit which is behind your intention — and it isn’t up to much! That’s it.

It is like those people who say, “When you are alive you are in matter; when you are dead, you enter the spirit. There, then! So, liberate the spirit from matter, die, and you liberate your spirit from matter.” It is these stupidities which prevent you from understanding anything at all. But all this has nothing to do with the world as it really is.

For the human consciousness as it is, there are certainly infinitely more invisible things than visible things. What you know, the things which are visible to you and which you are conscious of — it’s almost like the skin of an orange compared with the orange itself — and even an orange with a very thin skin, not a thick one! And so, if you know only the skin of the orange, you know nothing about the orange.

And this is more or less what happens. All that you know about the universe is just a superficial little crust — and even this you hardly know. But that is all you know about it, and all the rest escapes you.

(M8: 80-87)

*
Mother, about the division of works, Sri Aurobindo writes here:

“A Yoga turned towards an all-embracing realisation of the Supreme will not despise the works or even the dreams, if dreams they are, of the Cosmic Spirit or shrink from the splendid toil and many-sided victory which he has assigned to himself in the human creature. But its first condition for this liberality is that our works in the world too must be part of the sacrifice offered to the Highest and to none else, to the Divine Shakti and to no other Power, in the right spirit and with the right knowledge, by the free soul and not by the hypnotised bondslave of material Nature. If a division of works has to be made, it is between those that are nearest to the heart of the sacred flame and those that are least touched or illumined by it because they are more at a distance, or between the fuel that burns strongly or brightly and the logs that if too thickly heaped on the altar may impede the ardour of the fire by their damp, heavy and diffused abundance.”

The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, p. 132

Psychologically, to what does this division correspond in our life?

I suppose it is different for each one. So each one must find those activities which increase his aspiration, his consciousness, his deeper knowledge of things, and those which, on the contrary, mechanise him and bring him back more thoroughly into a purely material relation with things.

It is difficult to make a general rule.

That means that everything ought to be done exactly, as an offering?

Truly speaking, it depends more on the way of doing a thing than on the thing itself.

You take up some work which is quite material, like cleaning the floor or dusting a room; well, it seems to me that this work can lead to a very deep consciousness if it is done with a certain feeling for perfection and progress; while other work considered of a higher kind as, for example, studies or literary and artistic work, if done with the idea of seeking fame or for the satisfaction of one’s vanity or for some material gain, will not help you to progress. So this is already a kind of classification which depends more on the inner attitude than on the outer fact. But this classification can be applied to everything.

Of course, there is a kind of work which is done only for purely pecuniary and personal reasons, like the one — whatever it may be — which is done to earn a living. That attitude is exactly the one Sri Aurobindo compares with the damp logs of wood which are heaped so thickly the flame cannot leap up. It has something dark.
and heavily dull about it.

And this brings us to something which I have already told you several times, but which presents a problem not yet solved by circumstances. I think I have already spoken to you about it, but still I shall speak about it again this evening because of this sentence of Sri Aurobindo’s.

At the beginning of my present earthly existence I came into contact with many people who said that they had a great inner aspiration, an urge towards something deeper and truer, but that they were tied down, subjected, slaves to that brutal necessity of earning their living, and that this weighed them down so much, took up so much of their time and energy that they could not engage in any other activity, inner or outer. I heard this very often, I saw many poor people — I don’t mean poor from the monetary point of view, but poor because they felt imprisoned in a material necessity, narrow and deadening.

I was very young at that time, and I always used to tell myself that if ever I could do it, I would try to create a little world — oh! quite a small one, but still . . . a small world where people would be able to live without having to be preoccupied with food and lodging and clothing and the imperative necessities of life, so as to see whether all the energies freed by this certainty of a secure material living would turn spontaneously towards the divine life and the inner realisation.

Well, towards the middle of my life — at least, what is usually the middle of a human life — the means were given to me and I could realise this, that is, create such conditions of life. And I have come to this conclusion, that it is not this necessity which hinders people from consecrating themselves to an inner realisation, but that it is a dullness, a tamas, a lack of aspiration, a miserable laxity, an I-don’t-care attitude, and that those who face even the hardest conditions of life are sometimes the ones who react most and have the intensest aspiration.

That’s all. I am waiting for the contrary to be proved to me.

I would very much like to see the contrary but I haven’t yet seen it. As there are many energies which are not utilised, since this terrible compulsion of having something to eat or a roof to sleep under or clothes on one’s back does not exist — as one is sure of all that — there is a whole mass of energies which are not utilised for that; well, they are spent in idle stupidities. And of these, the foolishness which seems to me the most disastrous is to keep one’s tongue going: chatter, chatter, chatter. I haven’t known a place where they chatter more than here, and say everything they should not say, busy themselves with things they should not be concerned with. And I know it is merely an overflow of unused energy.

That is all.

(M8: 159-161)
“It is here that the emergence of the secret psychic being in us as the leader of the sacrifice is of the utmost importance; for this inmost being alone can bring with it the full power of the spirit in the act, the soul in the symbol. It alone can assure, even while the spiritual consciousness is incomplete, the perennial freshness and sincerity and beauty of the symbol and prevent it from becoming a dead form or a corrupted and corrupting magic; it alone can preserve for the act its power with its significance. All the other members of our being, mind, life-force, physical or body consciousness are too much under the control of the Ignorance to be a sure instrumentation and much less can they be a guide or the source of an unerring impulse. Always the greater part of the motive and action of these powers clings to the old law, the deceiving tablets, the cherished inferior movements of Nature and they meet with reluctance, alarm or revolt or obstructing inertia the voices and the forces that call and impel us to exceed and transform ourselves into a greater being and a wider Nature. In their major part the response is either a resistance or a qualified or temporising acquiescence; for even if they follow the call, they yet tend — when not consciously, then by automatic habit — to bring into the spiritual action their own natural disabilities and errors. At every moment they are moved to take egoistic advantage of the psychic and spiritual influences and can be detected using the power, joy or light these bring into us for a lower life-motive. Afterwards too, even when the seeker has opened to the Divine Love transcendental, universal or immanent, yet if he tries to pour it into life, he meets the power of obscuration and perversion of these lower Nature-forces. Always they draw away towards pitfalls, pour into that higher intensity their diminishing elements, seek to capture the descending Power for themselves and their interests and degrade it into an aggrandised mental, vital or physical instrumentation for desire and ego. Instead of a Divine Love creator of a new heaven and a new earth of Truth and Light, they would hold it here prisoner as a tremendous sanction and glorifying force of sublimation to gild the mud of the old earth and colour with its rose and sapphire the old turbid unreal skies of sentimentalising vital imagination and mental idealised chimera. If that falsification is permitted, the higher Light and Power and Bliss withdraw, there is a fall back to a lower status; or else the realisation remains tied to an insecure halfway and mixture or is covered and even submerged by an inferior exaltation that is not the true Ananda. It is for this reason that the Divine Love which is at the heart of all creation and the most powerful of all redeeming and creative forces has yet been the least frontally present in earthly life, the least successfully redemptive, the least creative. Human nature has been unable to bear it in its purity for the very reason that it is the most powerful, pure, rare and intense of all the divine energies; what little could be seized has been corrupted at once into a vital pietistic ardour, a defenceless religious or ethical
sentimentalism, a sensuous or even sensual erotic mysticism of the roseate coloured mind or passionately turbid life-impulse and with these simulations compensated its inability to house the Mystic Flame that could rebuild the world with its tongues of sacrifice. It is only the inmost psychic being unveiled and emerging in its full power that can lead the pilgrim sacrifice unscathed through these ambushes and pitfalls; at each moment it catches, exposes, repels the mind’s and the life’s falsehoods, seizes hold on the truth of the Divine Love and Ananda and separates it from the excitation of the mind’s ardours and the blind enthusiasm of the misleading life-force. But all things that are true at their core in mind and life and the physical being it extricates and takes with it in the journey till they stand on the heights, new in spirit and sublime in figure.”

Sri Aurobindo

The Synthesis of Yoga, pp. 155-57

This is the most powerful, the most complete and true answer to all the questions which so many people have in their heads but do not dare to ask.

So many people doubt the effectiveness of the Protection, the safety of the Path, because others go astray. And in their egoism they tremble with fear instead of telling themselves what I have just been reading to you this evening, what is the cause of all catastrophes, small or great, which threaten those who follow the path of yoga without having taken the necessary care to be sufficiently pure and sincere.

No protection, no Grace can save those who refuse the indispensable purification.

And I would add this: that fear is an impurity, one of the greatest impurities, one of those which come most directly from the anti-divine forces which want to destroy the divine action on earth; and the first duty of those who really want to do yoga is to eliminate from their consciousness, with all the might, all the sincerity, all the endurance of which they are capable, even the shadow of a fear. To walk on the path, one must be dauntless, and never indulge in that petty, small, feeble, nasty shrinking back upon oneself, which is fear.

An indomitable courage, a perfect sincerity and a sincere self-giving, so that one does not calculate or bargain, does not give with the idea of receiving, does not trust with the idea of being protected, does not have a faith which asks for proofs — it is this that is indispensable in order to walk on the path, and it is this alone which can truly shelter you from all danger.

(M8: 258-261)
Sacrifice — a universal compulsion

Indeed, sacrifice is imposed and, where need be, compelled by the universal World-Force; it takes it even from those who do not consciously recognise the law, — inevitably, because this is the intrinsic nature of things. Our ignorance or our false egoistic view of life can make no difference to this eternal bedrock truth of Nature. For this is the truth in Nature, that this ego which thinks itself a separate independent being and claims to live for itself, is not and cannot be independent nor separate, nor can it live to itself even if it would, but rather all are linked together by a secret Oneness. Each existence is continually giving out perforce from its stock; out of its mental receipts from Nature or its vital and physical assets and acquisitions and belongings a stream goes to all that is around it. And always again it receives something from its environment gratis or in return for its voluntary or involuntary tribute. For it is only by this giving and receiving that it can effect its own growth while at the same time it helps the sum of things. At length, though at first slowly and partially, we learn to make the conscious sacrifice; even, in the end, we take joy to give ourselves and what we envisage as belonging to us in a spirit of love and devotion to That which appears for the moment other than ourselves and is certainly other than our limited personalities. The sacrifice and the divine return for our sacrifice then become a gladly accepted means towards our last perfection; for it is recognised now as the road to the fulfilment in us of the eternal purpose.

(S23: 106-07)

Sacrifice — the lower and higher sense

But, most often, the sacrifice is done unconsciously, egoistically and without knowledge or acceptance of the true meaning of the great world-rite. It is so that the vast majority of earth creatures do it; and, when it is so done, the individual derives only a mechanical minimum of natural inevitable profit, achieves by it only a slow painful progress limited and tortured by the smallness and suffering of the ego. Only when the heart, the will and the mind of knowledge associate themselves with the law and gladly follow it, can there come the deep joy and the happy fruitfulness of divine sacrifice. The mind’s knowledge of the law and the heart’s gladness in it culminate in the perception that it is to our own Self and Spirit and the one Self and Spirit of all that we give. And this is true even when our self-offering is still to our fellow-creatures or to lesser Powers and Principles and not yet to the Supreme. “Not for the sake of the wife,” says Yajnavalkya in the Upanishad, “but for the sake of the Self is the wife dear to us.” This in the lower sense of the individual self is the hard fact behind the coloured and passionate professions of egoistic love; but in a higher sense it is the inner significance of that love too which is not egoistic but divine. All true love and all sacrifice are in their essence Nature’s contradiction of
the primary egoism and its separative error; it is her attempt to turn from a necessary first fragmentation towards a recovered oneness. All unity between creatures is in its essence a self-finding, a fusion with that from which we have separated, a discovery of one’s self in others.

(S23: 107)

The true unity

But it is only a divine love and unity that can possess in the light what the human forms of these things seek for in the darkness. For the true unity is not merely an association and agglomeration like that of physical cells joined by a life of common interests; it is not even an emotional understanding, sympathy, solidarity or close drawing together. Only then are we really unified with those separated from us by the divisions of Nature, when we annul the division and find ourselves in that which seemed to us not ourselves. Association is a vital and physical unity; its sacrifice is that of mutual aid and concessions. Nearness, sympathy, solidarity create a mental, moral and emotional unity; theirs is a sacrifice of mutual support and mutual gratifications. But the true unity is spiritual; its sacrifice is a mutual self-giving, an interfusion of our inner substance. The law of sacrifice travels in Nature towards its culmination in this complete and unreserved self-giving; it awakens the consciousness of one common self in the giver and the object of the sacrifice. This culmination of sacrifice is the height even of human love and devotion when it tries to become divine; for there too the highest peak of love points into a heaven of complete mutual self-giving, its summit is the rapturous fusing of two souls into one.

(S23: 108)

Sacrifice — a positive fulfilment

. . . the true essence of sacrifice is not self-immolation, it is self-giving; its object not self-effacement, but self-fulfilment; its method not self-mortification, but a greater life, not self-mutilation, but a transformation of our natural human parts into divine members, not self-torture, but a passage from a lesser satisfaction to a greater Ananda. There is only one thing painful in the beginning to a raw or turbid part of the surface nature; it is the indispensable discipline demanded, the denial necessary for the merging of the incomplete ego. But for that there can be a speedy and enormous compensation in the discovery of a real greater or ultimate completeness in others, in all things, in the cosmic oneness, in the freedom of the transcendent Self and Spirit, in the rapture of the touch of the Divine. Our sacrifice is not a giving without any return or any fruitful acceptance from the other side; it is an interchange between the embodied soul and conscious Nature in us and the eternal Spirit. For even though no return is demanded, yet there is the knowledge deep within us that a marvellous
return is inevitable. The soul knows that it does not give itself to God in vain; claiming nothing, it yet receives the infinite riches of the divine Power and Presence. (S23: 109)

*  

Ye yathā māṁ prapadyante tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmyaham mama vartmanuvartante manusyaṁ partha sarvaśah (Gīṭa IV:11)

(As men approach me, so I accept them to my love. . . ; men follow in every way my path, O son of Pritha³)

. . . there is to be considered the recipient of the sacrifice and the manner of the sacrifice. The sacrifice may be offered to others or it may be offered to divine Powers; it may be offered to the cosmic All or it may be offered to the transcendent Supreme. The worship given may take any shape from the dedication of a leaf or flower, a cup of water, a handful of rice, a loaf of bread, to consecration of all that we possess and the submission of all that we are. Whoever the recipient, whatever the gift, it is the Supreme, the Eternal in things, who receives and accepts it, even if it be rejected or ignored by the immediate recipient. For the Supreme who transcends the universe, is yet here too, however veiled, in us and in the world and in its happenings; he is there as the omniscient Witness and Receiver of all our works and their secret Master. All our actions, all our efforts, even our sins and stumblings and sufferings and struggles are obscurely or consciously, known to us and seen or else unknown and in a disguise, governed in their last result by the One. All is turned towards him in his numberless forms and offered through them to the single Omnipresence. In whatever form and with whatever spirit we approach him, in that form and with that spirit he receives the sacrifice.

(S23: 109-10)

The fruit of our Yajna

And the fruit also of the sacrifice of works varies according to the work, according to the intention in the work and according to the spirit that is behind the intention. But all other sacrifices are partial, egoistic, mixed, temporal, incomplete, — even those offered to the highest Powers and Principles keep this character: the result too is partial, limited, temporal, mixed in its reactions, effective only for a minor or intermediate purpose. The one entirely acceptable sacrifice is a last and highest and uttermost self-giving, — it is that surrender made face to face, with devotion and

³. CWSA, Vol. 19, p. 147.
knowledge, freely and without any reserve to One who is at once our immanent Self, the environing constituent All, the Supreme Reality beyond this or any manifestation and, secretly, all these together, concealed everywhere, the immanent Transcendence. For to the soul that wholly gives itself to him, God also gives himself altogether. Only the one who offers his whole nature, finds the Self. Only the one who can give everything, enjoys the Divine All everywhere. Only a supreme self-abandonment attains to the Supreme. Only the sublimation by sacrifice of all that we are, can enable us to embody the Highest and live here in the immanent consciousness of the transcendent Spirit.

(S23: 110)

The demand of the Godhead

This, in short, is the demand made on us, that we should turn our whole life into a conscious sacrifice. Every moment and every movement of our being is to be resolved into a continuous and a devoted self-giving to the Eternal. All our actions, not less the smallest and most ordinary and trifling than the greatest and most uncommon and noble, must be performed as consecrated acts. Our individualised nature must live in the single consciousness of an inner and outer movement dedicated to Something that is beyond us and greater than our ego. No matter what the gift or to whom it is presented by us, there must be a consciousness in the act that we are presenting it to the one divine Being in all beings. Our commonest or most grossly material actions must assume this sublimated character; when we eat, we should be conscious that we are giving our food to that Presence in us; it must be a sacred offering in a temple and the sense of a mere physical need or self-gratification must pass away from us. In any great labour, in any high discipline, in any difficult or noble enterprise, whether undertaken for ourselves, for others or for the race, it will no longer be possible to stop short at the idea of the race, of ourselves or of others. The thing we are doing must be consciously offered as a sacrifice of works, not to these, but either through them or directly to the One Godhead; the Divine Inhabitant who was hidden by these figures must be no longer hidden but ever present to our soul, our mind, our sense. The workings and results of our acts must be put in the hands of that One in the feeling that that Presence is the Infinite and Most High by whom alone our labour and our aspiration are possible. For in his being all takes place; for him all labour and aspiration are taken from us by Nature and offered on his altar. Even in those things in which Nature is herself very plainly the worker and we only the witnesses of her working and its containers and supporters, there should be the same constant memory and insistent consciousness of a work and of its divine Master. Our very inspiration and respiration, our very heart-beats can and must be made conscious in us as the living rhythm of the universal sacrifice.

(S23: 111)
The results of our spiritual endeavour

It is clear that a conception of this kind and its effective practice must carry in them three results that are of a central importance for our spiritual ideal. It is evident, to begin with, that, even if such a discipline is begun without devotion, it leads straight and inevitably towards the highest devotion possible; for it must deepen naturally into the completest adoration imaginable, the most profound God-love. There is bound up with it a growing sense of the Divine in all things, a deepening communion with the Divine in all our thought, will and action and at every moment of our lives, a more and more moved consecration to the Divine of the totality of our being. Now these implications of the Yoga of works are also of the very essence of an integral and absolute Bhakti. The seeker who puts them into living practice makes in himself continually a constant, active and effective representation of the very spirit of self-devotion, and it is inevitable that out of it there should emerge the most engrossing worship of the Highest to whom is given this service. An absorbing love for the Divine Presence to whom he feels an always more intimate closeness, grows upon the consecrated worker. And with it is born or in it is contained a universal love too for all these beings, living forms and creatures that are habitations of the Divine — not the brief restless grasping emotions of division, but the settled selfless love that is the deeper vibration of oneness. In all the seeker begins to meet the one Object of his adoration and service. The way of works turns by this road of sacrifice to meet the path of Devotion; it can be itself a devotion as complete, as absorbing, as integral as any the desire of the heart can ask for or the passion of the mind can imagine.

(S23: 111-12)

The Divine — the Alpha and the Omega of our seeking

. . . the practice of this Yoga of sacrifice compels us to renounce all the inner supports of egoism, casting them out of our mind and will and actions, and to eliminate its seed, its presence, its influence out of our nature. All must be done for the Divine; all must be directed towards the Divine. Nothing must be attempted for ourselves as a separate existence; nothing done for others, whether neighbours, friends, family, country or mankind or other creatures merely because they are connected with our personal life and thought and sentiment or because the ego takes a preferential interest in their welfare. In this way of doing and seeing all works and all life become only a daily dynamic worship and service of the Divine in the unbounded temple of his own vast cosmic existence. Life becomes more and more the sacrifice of the eternal in the individual constantly self-offered to the eternal Transcendence. It is offered in the wide sacrificial ground of the field of the eternal cosmic Spirit; and the Force too that offers it is the eternal Force, the omnipresent Mother. Therefore is this way a way of union and communion by acts and by the
spirit and knowledge in the act as complete and integral as any our Godward will can hope for or our soul’s strength execute.

It has all the power of a way of works integral and absolute, but because of its law of sacrifice and self-giving to the Divine Self and Master, it is accompanied on its one side by the whole power of the path of Love and on the other by the whole power of the path of Knowledge. At its end all these three divine Powers work together, fused, united, completed, perfected by each other.

(S23: 113-14)

The Lord of our sacrifice

The Divine, the Eternal is the Lord of our sacrifice of works and union with him in all our being and consciousness and in its expressive instruments is the one object of the sacrifice; the steps of the sacrifice of works must therefore be measured, first, by the growth in our nature of something that brings us nearer to divine Nature, but secondly also by an experience of the Divine, his presence, his manifestation to us, an increasing closeness and union with that Presence. But the Divine is in his essence infinite and his manifestation too is multitudinously infinite. If that is so, it is not likely that our true integral perfection in being and in nature can come by one kind of realisation alone; it must combine many different strands of divine experience. It cannot be reached by the exclusive pursuit of a single line of identity till that is raised to its absolute; it must harmonise many aspects of the Infinite. An integral consciousness with a multiform dynamic experience is essential for the complete transformation of our nature.

(S23: 114)

The deepest secret

At one pole of it [the Duality] the seeker may be conscious only of the Master of Existence putting forth on him His energies of knowledge, power and bliss to liberate and divinise; the Shakti may appear to him only an impersonal Force expressive of these things or an attribute of the Ishwara. At the other pole he may encounter the World-Mother, creatrix of the universe, putting forth the Gods and the worlds and all things and existences out of her spirit-substance. Or even if he sees both aspects, it may be with an unequal separating vision, subordinating one to the other, regarding the Shakti only as a means for approaching the Ishwara. There results a one-sided tendency or a lack of balance, a power of effectuation not perfectly supported or a light of revelation not perfectly dynamic. It is when a complete union of the two sides of the Duality is effected and rules his consciousness that he begins to open to a fuller power that will draw him altogether out of the confused clash of Ideas and Forces here into a higher Truth and enable the descent of that Truth to illumine and
deliver and act sovereignly upon this world of Ignorance. He has begun to lay his hand on the integral secret which in its fullness can be grasped only when he overpasses the double term that reigns here of Knowledge inextricably intertwined with an original Ignorance and crosses the border where spiritual mind disappears into supramental Gnosis. It is through this third and most dynamic dual aspect of the One that the seeker begins with the most integral completeness to enter into the deepest secret of the being of the Lord of the Sacrifice.

(S23: 125-26)

The revelation of the Lord of the sacrifice

Beyond the limited human conception of God, he [the seeker of the integral Yoga] will pass to the one divine Eternal, but also he will meet him in the faces of the Gods, his cosmic personalities supporting the World-Play, detect him behind the mask of the Vibhutis, embodied World-Forces or human Leaders, reverence and obey him in the Guru, worship him in the Avatar. This will be to him his exceeding good fortune if he can meet one who has realised or is becoming That which he seeks for and can by opening to it in this vessel of its manifestation himself realise it. For that is the most palpable sign of the growing fulfilment, the promise of the great mystery of the progressive Descent into Matter which is the secret sense of the material creation and the justification of terrestrial existence.

Thus reveals himself to the seeker in the progress of the sacrifice the Lord of the sacrifice. At any point this revelation can begin; in any aspect the Master of the Work can take up the work in him and more and more press upon him and it for the unfolding of his presence. In time all the Aspects disclose themselves, separate, combine, fuse, are unified together. At the end there shines through it all the supreme integral Reality, unknowable to Mind which is part of the Ignorance, but knowable because self-aware in the light of a spiritual consciousness and a supramental knowledge.

(S23: 130)

The triple path and the triple sacrifice

The achievement itself takes the shape of a union of our own existence with That which is thus made manifest to our vision and experience, and the union has a threefold character. There is a union in spiritual essence, by identity; there is a union by the indwelling of our soul in this highest Being and Consciousness; there is a dynamic union of likeness or oneness of nature between That and our instrumental being here. The first is the liberation from the Ignorance and identification with the Real and Eternal, mokṣa, sāyujya, which is the characteristic aim of the Yoga of Knowledge. The second, the dwelling of the soul with or in the Divine, sāmīpya,
sāloka, is the intense hope of all Yoga of love and beatitude. The third, identity in nature, likeness to the Divine, to be perfect as That is perfect, is the high intention of all Yoga of power and perfection or of divine works and service. The combined completeness of the three together, founded here on a multiple Unity of the self-manifesting Divine, is the complete result of the integral Yoga, the goal of its triple Path and the fruit of its triple sacrifice.

(S23: 130-31)

The sacrifice in our Yoga and the Vedic ascent of the sacrifice

There must be an ascension of the whole being, an ascension of spirit chained here and trammelled by its instruments and its environment to sheer Spirit free above, an ascension of soul towards some blissful Super-soul, an ascension of mind towards some luminous Supermind, an ascension of life towards some vast Super-life, an ascension of our very physicality to join its origin in some pure and plastic spirit-substance. And this cannot be a single swift upsoaring but, like the ascent of the sacrifice described in the Veda, a climbing from peak to peak in which from each summit one looks up to the much more that has still to be done. At the same time there must be a descent too to affirm below what we have gained above: on each height we conquer we have to turn to bring down its power and its illumination into the lower mortal movement; the discovery of the Light for ever radiant on high must correspond with the release of the same Light secret below in every part down to the deepest caves of subconscient Nature. And this pilgrimage of ascension and this descent for the labour of transformation must be inevitably a battle, a long war with ourselves and with opposing forces around us which, while it lasts, may well seem interminable.

(S23: 132)

Our conversion, consecration and the acceptance by the Divine of our sacrifice

It is for this [to make the final supramental conversion and reversal of consciousness by which the Divine Truth must be established in us in its plenitude] that a surrender and submission to That which is beyond us enabling the full and free working of its Power is indispensable. As that self-giving progresses, the work of the sacrifice becomes easier and more powerful and the prevention of the opposing Forces loses much of its strength, impulsion and substance. Two inner changes help most to convert what now seems difficult or impracticable into a thing possible and even sure. There takes place a coming to the front of some secret inmost soul within which was veiled by the restless activity of the mind, by the turbulence of our vital impulses and by the obscurity of the physical consciousness, the three powers which in their confused combination we now call our self. There will come about as a
result a less impeded growth of a Divine Presence at the centre with its liberating Light and effective Force and an irradiation of it into all the conscious and subconscious ranges of our nature. These are the two signs, one marking our completed conversion and consecration to the great Quest, the other the final acceptance by the Divine of our sacrifice.

(S23: 133)

Identity with the Divine in our soul and resemblance with Him in our nature

This then is in its foundations the integral knowledge of the Supreme and Infinite to whom we offer our sacrifice, and this the nature of the sacrifice itself in its triple character, — a sacrifice of works, a sacrifice of love and adoration, a sacrifice of knowledge. For even when we speak of the sacrifice of works by itself, we do not mean the offering only of our outward acts, but of all that is active and dynamic in us; our internal movements no less than our external doings are to be consecrated on the one altar. The inner heart of all work that is made into a sacrifice is a labour of self-discipline and self-perfection by which we can hope to become conscious and luminous with a Light from above poured into all our movements of mind, heart, will, sense, life and body. An increasing light of divine consciousness will make us close in soul and one by identity in our inmost being and spiritual substance with the Master of the world-sacrifice, — the supreme object of existence proposed by the ancient Vedanta; but also it will tend to make us one in our becoming by resemblance to the Divine in our nature, the mystic sense of the symbol of sacrifice in the sealed speech of the seers of the Veda.

(S23: 134)

The lower pursuits are worthless without a higher knowledge

Yet even in the earthward life a higher knowledge is indeed the one thing that is throughout needful, and without it the lower sciences and pursuits, however fruitful, however rich, free, miraculous in the abundance of their results, become easily a sacrifice offered without due order and to false gods; corrupting, hardening in the end the heart of man, limiting his mind’s horizons, they confine in a stony material imprisonment or lead to a final baffling incertitude and disillusionment. A sterile agnosticism awaits us above the brilliant phosphorescence of a half-knowledge that is still the Ignorance.

(S23: 141)
The first condition of liberality

A Yoga turned towards an all-embracing realisation of the Supreme will not despise the works or even the dreams, if dreams they are, of the Cosmic Spirit or shrink from the splendid toil and many-sided victory which he has assigned to himself in the human creature. But its first condition for this liberality is that our works in the world too must be part of the sacrifice offered to the Highest and to none else, to the Divine Shakti and to no other Power, in the right spirit and with the right knowledge, by the free soul and not by the hypnotised bondslave of material Nature.

(S23: 141)

The delineation of the path

First, there is a large turning in which all the natural mental activities proper to the individual nature are taken up or referred to a higher standpoint and dedicated by the soul in us, the psychic being, the priest of the sacrifice, to the divine service; next, there is an attempt at an ascent of the being and a bringing down of the Light and Power proper to some new height of consciousness gained by its upward effort into the whole action of the knowledge. Here there may be a strong concentration on the inward central change of the consciousness and an abandonment of a large part of the outward-going mental life or else its relegation to a small and subordinate place. At different stages it or parts of it may be taken up again from time to time to see how far the new inner psychic and spiritual consciousness can be brought into its movements; but that compulsion of the temperament or the nature which in human beings necessitates one kind of activity or another and makes it seem almost an indispensable portion of the existence, will diminish and eventually no attachment will be left, no lower compulsion or driving force felt anywhere. Only the Divine will matter, the Divine alone will be the one need of the whole being; if there is any compulsion to activity it will be not that of implanted desire or of force of Nature, but the luminous driving of some greater Consciousness-Force which is becoming more and more the sole motive power of the whole existence.

(S23: 145-46)

The ascent of the sacrifice

It is not a separation of some activities, but a transformation of them all by the change of the informing consciousness that is the way of liberation, an ascent of the sacrifice of knowledge to a greater and ever greater light and force. All the works of mind and intellect must be first heightened and widened, then illumined, lifted into the domain of a higher Intelligence, afterwards translated into workings of a greater non-mental Intuition, these again transformed into the dynamic outpourings of the
Overmind radiance, and those transfigured into the full light and sovereignty of the supramental Gnosis. It is this that the evolution of consciousness in the world carries prefigured but latent in its seed and in the straining tense intention of its process; nor can that process, that evolution cease till it has evolved the instruments of a perfect in place of its now imperfect manifestation of the Spirit.

(S23: 149)

**The sacrifice of love demanded of us**

If the sacrifice of knowledge rightly done is easily the largest and purest offering we can bring to the Highest, the sacrifice of love is not less demanded of us for our spiritual perfection; it is even more intense and rich in its singleness and can be made not less vast and pure. This pure wideness is brought into the intensity of the sacrifice of love when into all our activities there is poured the spirit and power of a divine infinite joy and the whole atmosphere of our life is suffused with an engrossing adoration of the One who is the All and the Highest. For then does the sacrifice of love attain its utter perfection when, offered to the divine All, it becomes integral, catholic and boundless, and when, uplifted to the Supreme, it ceases to be the weak, superficial and transient movement men call love and becomes a pure and grand and deep uniting Ananda.

(S23: 158)

**Making all life a sacrifice**

All action must be made in it part of the God-life, our acts of knowledge, our acts of power and production and creation, our acts of joy and beauty and the soul’s pleasure, our acts of will and endeavour and struggle and not our acts only of love and beneficent service. Its way to do these things will be not outward and mental, but inward and spiritual, and to that end it will bring into all activities, whatever they are, the spirit of divine love, the spirit of adoration and worship, the spirit of happiness in the Divine and in the beauty of the Divine so as to make all life a sacrifice of the works of the soul’s love to the Divine, its cult of the Master of its existence.

(S23: 162)

**The transfiguration of all action and creation**

All action, all creation must be turned into a form, a symbol of the cult, the adoration, the sacrifice; it must carry something that makes it bear in it the stamp of a dedication, a reception and translation of the Divine Consciousness, a service of the Beloved, a self-giving, a surrender. This has to be done wherever possible in the outward body and form of the act; it must be done always in its inward emotion and an intensity...
that shows it to be an outflow from the soul towards the Eternal.

(S23: 164-65)

**Adoration in the act — a great and complete and powerful sacrifice**

In itself the adoration in the act is a great and complete and powerful sacrifice that tends by its self-multiplication to reach the discovery of the One and make the radiation of the Divine possible. For devotion by its embodiment in acts not only makes its own way broad and full and dynamic, but brings at once into the harder way of works in the world the divinely passionate element of joy and love which is often absent in its beginning when it is only the austere spiritual Will that follows in a struggling uplifting tension the steep ascent, and the heart is still asleep or bound to silence. If the spirit of divine love can enter, the hardness of the way diminishes, the tension is lightened, there is a sweetness and joy even in the core of difficulty and struggle. The indispensable surrender of all our will and works and activities to the Supreme is indeed only perfect and perfectly effective when it is a surrender of love. All life turned into this cult, all actions done in the love of the Divine and in the love of the world and its creatures seen and felt as the Divine manifested in many disguises become by that very fact part of an integral Yoga.

(S23: 165)

**The psychic fire into which everything must be thrown**

It is the inner offering of the heart’s adoration, the soul of it in the symbol, the spirit of it in the act, that is the very life of the sacrifice. If this offering is to be complete and universal, then a turning of all our emotions to the Divine is imperative. This is the intensest way of purification for the human heart, more powerful than any ethical or aesthetic catharsis could ever be by its half-power and superficial pressure. A psychic fire within must be lit into which all is thrown with the Divine Name upon it. In that fire all the emotions are compelled to cast off their grosser elements and those that are undivine perversions are burned away and the others discard their insufficiencies, till a spirit of largest love and a stainless divine delight arises out of the flame and smoke and frankincense. It is the divine love which so emerges that, extended in inward feeling to the Divine in man and all creatures in an active universal equality, will be more potent for the perfectibility of life and a more real instrument than the ineffective mental ideal of brotherhood can ever be. It is this poured out into acts that could alone create a harmony in the world and a true unity between all its creatures; all else strives in vain towards that end so long as Divine Love has not disclosed itself as the heart of the delivered manifestation in terrestrial Nature.

(S23: 165-66)
Sacrifice and the works of Life

Into the... last category of the works of sacrifice can be gathered all that is directly proper to the Yoga of works; for here is its direct field of effectuation and major province. It covers the entire range of life’s more visible activities; under it fall the multiform energies of the Will-to-Life throwing itself outward to make the most of material existence. It is here that an ascetic or other-worldly spirituality feels an insurmountable denial of the Truth which it seeks after and is compelled to turn away from terrestrial existence, rejecting it as for ever the dark playground of an incurable Ignorance. Yet it is precisely these activities that are claimed for a spiritual conquest and divine transformation by the integral Yoga. Abandoned altogether by the more ascetic disciplines, accepted by others only as a field of temporary ordeal or a momentary, superficial and ambiguous play of the concealed spirit, this existence is fully embraced and welcomed by the integral seeker as a field of fulfilment, a field for divine works, a field of the total self-discovery of the concealed and indwelling spirit. A discovery of the Divinity in oneself is his first object, but a total discovery too of the Divinity in the world behind the apparent denial offered by its scheme and figures and, last, a total discovery of the dynamism of some transcendent Eternal; for by its descent this world and self will be empowered to break their disguising envelopes and become divine in revealing form and manifesting process as they now are secretly in their hidden essence.

(S23: 169-70)

The sublimation of the erring human into a divine Life-Force

In Life itself there is the seed of its own salvation, it is from the Life-Energy that we must get our leverage; for though there is a saving light in Knowledge, a redeeming and transforming force in Love, these cannot be effective here unless they secure the consent of Life and can use the instrumentation of some delivered energy at its centre for a sublimation of the erring human into a divine Life-Force. It is not possible to cut the difficulty by a splitting up of the works of sacrifice; we cannot escape it by deciding that we shall do only the works of Love and Knowledge and leave aside the works of will and power, possession and acquisition, production and fruitful expense of capacity, battle and victory and mastery, striking away from us the larger part of life because it seems to be made of the very stuff of desire and ego and therefore doomed to be a field of disharmony and mere conflict and disorder.

(S23: 172-73)
The conditions and the aims of the divine effectuation of the works of Life and their progressive transformation

This is life’s true object: growth, but a growth of the spirit in Nature, affirming and developing itself in mind, life and body; possession, but a possession by the Divine of the Divine in all things, and not of things for their own sake by the desire of the ego; enjoyment, but an enjoyment of the divine Ananda in the universe; battle and conquest and empire in the shape of a victorious conflict with the Powers of Darkness, an entire spiritual self-rule and mastery over inward and outward Nature, a conquest by Knowledge, Love and Divine Will over the domains of the Ignorance.

These are the conditions and these must be the aims of the divine effectuation of the works of Life and their progressive transformation which is the third element of the triple sacrifice. It is not a rationalisation but a supramentalisation, not a moralising but a spiritualising of life that is the object of the Yoga. It is not a handling of externals or superficial psychological motives that is its main purpose, but a refounding of life and its action on their hidden divine element; for only such a refounding of life can bring about its direct government by the secret Divine Power above us and its transfiguration into a manifest expression of the Divinity, not as now a disguise and a disfiguring mask of the eternal Actor. It is a spiritual essential change of consciousness, not the surface manipulation which is the method of Mind and Reason, that can alone make Life other than it now is and rescue it out of its present distressed and ambiguous figure.

(S23: 176)

How does Life become a call to that which is beyond Life?

A determined orientation towards the greater Light to be, a soul-instinct, a psychic tact and insight into the true substance, motion and intention of things, coming always nearer and nearer to a spiritual vision, to a knowledge by inner contact, inner sight and even identity, begin to replace the superficial keenness of mental judgment and the eager grasplings of the life-force. The works of Life right themselves, escape from confusion, substitute for the artificial or legal order imposed by the intellect and for the arbitrary rule of desire the guidance of the soul’s inner insight, enter into the profound paths of the Spirit. Above all, the psychic being imposes on life the law of the sacrifice of all its works as an offering to the Divine and the Eternal. Life becomes a call to that which is beyond Life; its every smallest act enlarges with the sense of the Infinite.

(S23: 179)
**Sacrifice to the Supreme — a yogic imperative**

The first necessity is an entire spirit of self-consecration in our works; it must become first the constant will, then the ingrained need in all the being, finally its automatic but living and conscious habit, the self-existent turn to do all action as a sacrifice to the Supreme and to the veiled Power present in us and in all beings and in all the workings of the universe. Life is the altar of this sacrifice, works are our offering; a transcendent and universal Power and Presence as yet rather felt or glimpsed than known or seen by us is the Deity to whom they are offered. This sacrifice, this self-consecration has two sides to it; there is the work itself and there is the spirit in which it is done, the spirit of worship to the Master of Works in all that we see, think and experience.

(S23: 221)

*Karmanyevaḥḥikāraste . . .
Be dedicated not attached*

The essential of the sacrifice of works must be there and the essential is the surrender of all desire for the fruit of our works, the renunciation of all attachment to the result for which yet we labour. For so long as we work with attachment to the result, the sacrifice is offered not to the Divine, but to our ego. We may think otherwise, but we are deceiving ourselves; we are making our idea of the Divine, our sense of duty, our feeling for our fellow-creatures, our idea of what is good for the world or others, even our obedience to the Master a mask for our egoistic satisfactions and preferences and a specious shield against the demand made on us to root all desire out of our nature.

(S23: 221-22)

**Equality — the sign of our adoration of the Master of Works**

The renunciation of attachment to the work and its fruit is the beginning of a wide movement towards an absolute equality in the mind and soul which must become all-enveloping if we are to be perfect in the spirit. For the worship of the Master of works demands a clear recognition and glad acknowledgment of him in ourselves, in all things and in all happenings. Equality is the sign of this adoration; it is the soul’s ground on which true sacrifice and worship can be done. The Lord is there equally in all beings, we have to make no essential distinctions between ourselves and others, the wise and the ignorant, friend and enemy, man and animal, the saint and the sinner. We must hate none, despise none, be repelled by none; for in all we have to see the One disguised or manifested at his pleasure. He is a little revealed in one or more revealed in another or concealed and wholly distorted in others according
to his will and his knowledge of what is best for that which he intends to become in form in them and to do in works in their nature. All is ourself, one self that has taken many shapes. Hatred and disliking and scorn and repulsion, clinging and attachment and preference are natural, necessary, inevitable at a certain stage: they attend upon or they help to make and maintain Nature’s choice in us. But to the Karmayogin they are a survival, a stumbling-block, a process of the Ignorance and, as he progresses, they fall away from his nature. The child-soul needs them for its growth; but they drop from an adult in the divine culture. In the God-nature to which we have to rise there can be an adamantine, even a destructive severity but not hatred, a divine irony but not scorn, a calm, clear-seeing and forceful rejection but not repulsion and dislike. Even what we have to destroy, we must not abhor or fail to recognise as a disguised and temporary movement of the Eternal.

(S23: 223)

**The abolition of the ego-sense**

Before this labour for the annihilation of desire and the conquest of the soul’s equality can come to its absolute perfection and fruition, that turn of the spiritual movement must have been completed which leads to the abolition of the sense of ego. But for the worker the renunciation of the egoism of action is the most important element in this change. For even when by giving up the fruits and the desire of the fruits to the Master of the Sacrifice we have parted with the egoism of rajasic desire, we may still have kept the egoism of the worker. Still we are subject to the sense that we are ourselves the doer of the act, ourselves its source and ourselves the giver of the sanction. It is still the “I” that chooses and determines, it is still the “I” that undertakes the responsibility and feels the demerit or the merit.

(S23: 228-29)

**The three steps on the way**

The first step on this long path is to consecrate all our works as a sacrifice to the Divine in us and in the world; this is an attitude of the mind and heart, not too difficult to initiate, but very difficult to make absolutely sincere and all-pervasive. The second step is to renounce attachment to the fruit of our works; for the only true, inevitable and utterly desirable fruit of sacrifice — the one thing needful — is the Divine Presence and the Divine Consciousness and Power in us, and if that is gained, all else will be added. This is a transformation of the egoistic will in our vital being, our desire-soul and desire-nature, and it is far more difficult than the other. The third step is to get rid of the central egoism and even the ego-sense of the worker. That is the most difficult transformation of all and it cannot be perfectly done if the first two steps have not been taken; but these first steps too cannot be
completed unless the third comes in to crown the movement and, by the extinction of egoism, eradicates the very origin of desire. Only when the small ego-sense is rooted out from the nature can the seeker know his true person that stands above as a portion and power of the Divine and renounce all motive-force other than the will of the Divine Shakti.

(S23: 247-48)

**The first and most ancient priest of our sacrifice**

In reality, thought is only a scout and pioneer; it can guide but not command or effectuate. The leader of the journey, the captain of the march, the first and most ancient priest of our sacrifice is the Will. This Will is not the wish of the heart or the demand or preference of the mind to which we often give the name. It is that inmost, dominant and often veiled conscious force of our being and of all being, Tapas, Shakti, Sraddha, that sovereignly determines our orientation and of which the intellect and the heart are more or less blind and automatic servants and instruments. The Self that is quiescent, at rest, vacant of things and happenings is a support and background to existence, a silent channel or a hypostasis of something Supreme: it is not itself the one entirely real existence, not itself the Supreme. The Eternal, the Supreme is the Lord and the all-originating Spirit. Superior to all activities and not bound by any of them, it is the source, sanction, material, efficient power, master of all activities.

(S23: 289-90)

**The mystic sense of the Vedic sacrifice**

If we can break down the veil of the intellectual, emotional, sensational mind which our ordinary existence has built between us and the Divine, we can then take up through the Truth-mind all our mental, vital and physical experience and offer it up to the spiritual — this was the secret or mystic sense of the old Vedic “sacrifice” — to be converted into the terms of the infinite truth of Sachchidananda, and we can receive the powers and illuminations of the infinite Existence in forms of a divine knowledge, will and delight to be imposed on our mentality, vitality, physical existence till the lower members are transformed into the perfect vessel of the higher nature. This was the double Vedic movement of the descent and birth of the gods in the human creature and the ascent of the human powers that struggle towards the divine knowledge, power and delight and climb into the godheads, the result of which was the possession of the One, the infinite, the beatific existence, the union with God, the Immortality. By possession of this ideal plane we break down entirely the opposition of the lower and the higher existence, the false gulf created by the Ignorance between the finite and the Infinite, God and Nature, the One and the
Many, open the gates of the Divine, fulfil the individual in the complete harmony of the cosmic consciousness and realise in the cosmic being the epiphany of the transcendent Sachchidananda.

(S23: 417-418)

**The Vedic parable of Shunahshepa**

We may train our mentality not to seize, as it does now, upon every separate flash of intuitive illumination for its own inferior purposes, not to precipitate our thought at once into a crystallising intellectual action around it; we can train it to think in a stream of successive and connected intuitions, to pour light upon light in a brilliant and triumphant series. We shall succeed in this difficult change in proportion as we purify the interfering intelligence, — if we can reduce in it the element of material thought enslaved to the external appearances of things, the element of vital thought enslaved to the wishes, desires, impulses of the lower nature, the element of intellectual thought enslaved to our preferred, already settled or congenial ideas, conceptions, opinions, fixed operations of intelligence, if, having reduced to a minimum those elements, we can replace them by an intuitive vision and sense of things, an intuitive insight into appearances, an intuitive will, an intuitive ideation. This is hard enough for our consciousness naturally bound by the triple tie of mentality, vitality, corporeality to its own imperfection and ignorance, the upper, middle and lower cord in the Vedic parable of the soul’s bondage, cords of the mixed truth and falsehood of appearances by which Shunahshepa was bound to the post of sacrifice. 4

(S23: 480-81)

**The sacrifice of Love**

The bhakta offers up his life and all that he is and all that he has and all that he does to the Divine. This surrender may take the ascetic form, as when he leaves the ordinary life of men and devotes his days solely to prayer and praise and worship or to ecstatic meditation, gives up his personal possessions and becomes the monk or the mendicant whose one and only possession is the Divine, gives up all actions in life except those only which help or belong to the communion with the Divine and communion with other devotees, or at most keeps the doing from the secure fortress of the ascetic life of those services to men which seem peculiarly the outflowing of

4. “If there is any truth in the old legend of Shunahshepa bound as a victim on the altar of sacrifice, it is yet quite certain, as we shall see, that in the Rig Veda the occurrence or the legend is used as a symbol of the human soul bound by the triple cord of sin and released from it by the divine power of Agni, Surya, Varuna.” (S15: 161);

“Ignorance, this matrix of sin, has in its substantial effect the appearance of a triple cord of limited mind, inefficient life, obscure physical animality, the three ropes with which the Rishi Shunahshepa in the parable was bound as a victim to the sacrificial post.” (S15: 505) — Ed.
the divine nature of love, compassion and good. But there is the wider self-consecration, proper to any integral Yoga, which, accepting the fullness of life and the world in its entirety as the play of the Divine, offers up the whole being into his possession; it is a holding of all one is and has as belonging to him only and not to ourselves and a doing of all works as an offering to him. By this comes the complete active consecration of both the inner and the outer life, the unmutilated self-giving.

(S24: 573-74)

**The complete redemption . . .**

The complete redemption comes by the descent of the divine Power into the human mind and body and the remoulding of their inner life into the divine image, — what the Vedic seers called the birth of the Son by the sacrifice. It is in fact by a continual sacrifice or offering, a sacrifice of adoration and aspiration, of works, of thought and knowledge, of the mounting flame of the Godward will that we build ourselves into the being of this Infinite.

(S24: 598)

**The sacrifice of aspiration**

All our thoughts, impulses, feelings, actions have to be referred to him for his sanction or disallowance, or if we cannot yet reach this point, to be offered to him in our sacrifice of aspiration, so that he may more and more descend into us and be present in them all and pervade them with all his will and power, his light and knowledge, his love and delight. In the end all our thoughts, feelings, impulses, actions will begin to proceed from him and change into some divine seed and form of themselves; in our whole inner living we shall have grown conscious of ourselves as a part of his being till between the existence of the Divine whom we adore and our own lives there is no longer any division. So too in all happenings we have to come to see the dealings with us of the divine Lover and take such pleasure in them that even grief and suffering and physical pain become his gifts and turn to delight and disappear finally into delight, slain by the sense of the divine contact, because the touch of his hands is the alchemist of a miraculous transformation.

(S24: 602)
SECTION TWO

The *niyataṁ karma* of the Gita should not be equated with the *nityakarma* of the Vedic rule

... I cannot accept the current interpretation of *niyataṁ karma* as if it meant fixed and formal works and were equivalent to the Vedic *nityakarma*, the regular works of sacrifice, ceremonial and the daily rule of Vedic living. Surely, *niyata* simply takes up the *niyamya* of the last verse. Krishna makes a statement, “he who controlling the senses by the mind engages with the organs of action in Yoga of action, he excels,” *manasā niyamya ārabhate karmayogam*, and he immediately goes on to draw from the statement an injunction, to sum it up and convert it into a rule. “Do thou do controlled action,” *niyataṁ kuru karma tvam: niyatam* takes up the *niyamya*, *kuru karma* takes up the *ārabhate karmayogam*. Not formal works fixed by an external rule, but desireless works controlled by the liberated *buddhi*, is the Gita’s teaching.

(S19: 109fn)

Let us then interpret the *niyata karma* of the Gita as the *nityakarma* of the Vedic rule, its *kartavya karma* or work that has to be done as the Aryan rule of social duty and let us take too its work done as a sacrifice to mean simply these Vedic sacrifices and this fixed social duty performed disinterestedly and without any personal object. This is how the Gita’s doctrine of desireless work is often interpreted. But it seems to me that the Gita’s teaching is not so crude and simple, not so local and temporal and narrow as all that. It is large, free, subtle and profound; it is for all time and for all men, not for a particular age and country. Especially, it is always breaking free from external forms, details, dogmatic notions and going back to principles and the great facts of our nature and our being. It is a work of large philosophic truth and spiritual practicality, not of constrained religious and philosophical formulas and stereotyped dogmas.

(S19: 110)

**True impersonality impossible without rising to the highest in ourselves**

We cannot become impersonal by obeying something outside ourselves, for we cannot so get outside ourselves; we can only do it by rising to the highest in ourselves,
into our free Soul and Self which is the same and one in all and has therefore no personal interests, to the Divine in our being who possesses Himself transcendent of cosmos and is therefore not bound by His cosmic works or His individual action. That is what the Gita teaches and desirelessness is only a means to this end, not an aim in itself. Yes, but how is it to be brought about? By doing all works with sacrifice as the only object, is the reply of the divine Teacher. “By doing works otherwise than for sacrifice, this world of men is in bondage to works; for sacrifice practise works, O son of Kunti, becoming free from all attachment.” It is evident that all works and not merely sacrifice and social duties can be done in this spirit; any action may be done either from the ego-sense narrow or enlarged or for the sake of the Divine. All being and all action of Prakriti exist only for the sake of the Divine; from that it proceeds, by that it endures, to that it is directed. But so long as we are dominated by the ego-sense we cannot perceive or act in the spirit of this truth, but act for the satisfaction of the ego and in the spirit of the ego, otherwise than for sacrifice. Egoism is the knot of the bondage. By acting Godwards, without any thought of ego, we loosen this knot and finally arrive at freedom.

(The Gita resolves the opposition between Veda and Vedanta)

In the opposition of Vedism and Vedantism works, *karma*, are restricted to Vedic works and sometimes even to Vedic sacrifice and ritualised works, all else being excluded as not useful to salvation. Vedism of the Mimansakas insisted on them as the means, Vedantism taking its stand on the Upanishads looked on them as only a preliminary belonging to the state of ignorance and in the end to be overpassed and rejected, an obstacle to the seeker of liberation. Vedism worshipped the Devas, the gods, with sacrifice and held them to be the powers who assist our salvation. Vedantism was inclined to regard them as powers of the mental and material world opposed to our salvation (men, says the Upanishad, are the cattle of the gods, who do not desire man to know and be free); it saw the Divine as the immutable Brahman who has to be attained not by works of sacrifice and worship but by knowledge. Works only lead to material results and to an inferior Paradise; therefore they have to be renounced.

The Gita resolves this opposition by insisting that the Devas are only forms of the one Deva, the Ishwara, the Lord of all Yoga and worship and sacrifice and austerity, and if it is true that sacrifice offered to the Devas leads only to material results and to Paradise, it is also true that sacrifice offered to the Ishwara leads beyond them to the great liberation. For the Lord and the immutable Brahman are not two different beings, but one and the same Being, and whoever strives towards either, is striving towards that one divine Existence.

(S19: 112)
All works in their totality find their culmination and completeness in the knowledge of the Divine, \textit{sarvam karmākhilam pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate}. They are not an obstacle, but the way to the supreme knowledge. Thus this opposition too is reconciled with the help of a large elucidation of the meaning of sacrifice. In fact its conflict is only a restricted form of the larger opposition between Yoga and Sankhya. Vedism is a specialised and narrow form of Yoga; the principle of the Vedantists is identical with that of the Sankhyas, for to both the movement of salvation is the recoil of the intelligence, the \textit{buddhi}, from the differentiating powers of Nature, from ego, mind, senses, from the subjective and the objective, and its return to the undifferentiated and the immutable. It is with this object of reconciliation in his mind that the Teacher first approaches his statement of the doctrine of sacrifice; but throughout, even from the very beginning, he keeps his eye not on the restricted Vedic sense of sacrifice and works, but on their larger and universal application, — that widening of narrow and formal notions to admit the great general truths they unduly restrict which is always the method of the Gita.

\textit{(S19: 112-13)}

\textbf{The Gita’s theory of sacrifice}

The Gita’s theory of sacrifice is stated in two separate passages; one we find in the third chapter, another in the fourth; the first gives it in language which might, taken by itself, seem to be speaking only of the ceremonial sacrifice; the second interpreting that into the sense of a large philosophical symbolism, transforms at once its whole significance and raises it to a plane of high psychological and spiritual truth. “With sacrifice the Lord of creatures of old created creatures and said, By this shall you bring forth (fruits or offspring), let this be your milker of desires. Foster by this the gods and let the gods foster you; fostering each other, you shall attain to the supreme good. Fostered by sacrifice the gods shall give you desired enjoyments; who enjoys their given enjoyments and has not given to them, he is a thief. The good who eat what is left from the sacrifice, are released from all sin; but evil are they and enjoy sin who cook (the food) for their own sake. From food creatures come into being, from rain is the birth of food, from sacrifice comes into being the rain, sacrifice is born of work; work know to be born of Brahman, Brahman is born of the Immutable; therefore is the all-pervading Brahman established in the sacrifice. He who follows not here the wheel thus set in movement, evil is his being, sensual is his delight, in vain, O Partha, that man lives.” Having thus stated the necessity of sacrifice, — we shall see hereafter in what sense we may understand a passage which seems at first sight to convey only a traditional theory of ritualism and the necessity of the ceremonial offering, — Krishna proceeds to state the superiority of the spiritual man to works. “But the man whose delight is in the Self and who is satisfied with the enjoyment of the Self and in the Self he is content, for him there
exists no work that needs to be done. He has no object here to be gained by action done and none to be gained by action undone; he has no dependence on all these existences for any object to be gained."

(S19: 114-15)

**Vedist and Vedantist ideals**

Here then are the two ideals, Vedist and Vedantist, standing as if in all their sharp original separation and opposition, on one side the active ideal of acquiring enjoyments here and the highest good beyond by sacrifice and the mutual dependence of the human being and the divine powers and on the other, facing it, the austerer ideal of the liberated man who, independent in the Spirit, has nothing to do with enjoyment or works or the human or the divine worlds, but exists only in the peace of the supreme Self, joys only in the calm joy of the Brahman. The next verses create a ground for the reconciliation between the two extremes; the secret is not inaction as soon as one turns towards the higher truth, but desireless action both before and after it is reached. The liberated man has nothing to gain by action, but nothing also to gain by inaction, and it is not at all for any personal object that he has to make his choice. “Therefore without attachment perform ever the work that is to be done (done for the sake of the world, *lokasaṅgraha*, as is made clear immediately afterward); for by doing work without attachment man attains to the highest. For it was even by works that Janaka and the rest attained to perfection.” It is true that works and sacrifice are a means of arriving at the highest good, śreyāḥ param avāpsyatha; but there are three kinds of works, that done without sacrifice for personal enjoyment which is entirely selfish and egoistic and misses the true law and aim and utility of life, *mogham pārtha sa jīvati*, that done with desire, but with sacrifice and the enjoyment only as a result of sacrifice and therefore to that extent consecrated and sanctified, and that done without desire or attachment of any kind. It is the last which brings the soul of man to the highest, *param āpnoti pūruṣaḥ*.

(S19: 115)

*The whole sense and drift of this teaching turns upon the interpretation we are to give to the important words, *yajña, karma, brahma*, sacrifice, work, Brahman. If the sacrifice is simply the Vedic sacrifice, if the work from which it is born is the Vedic rule of works and if the *Brahman* from which the work itself is born is the *śabdabrahman* in the sense only of the letter of the Veda, then all the positions of the Vedist dogma are conceded and there is nothing more. Ceremonial sacrifice is the right means of gaining children, wealth, enjoyment; by ceremonial sacrifice rain is brought down from heaven and the prosperity and continuity of the race assured;*
life is a continual transaction between the gods and men in which man offers ceremonial gifts to the gods from the gifts they have bestowed on him and in return is enriched, protected, fostered. Therefore all human works have to be accompanied and turned into a sacrament by ceremonial sacrifice and ritualistic worship; work not so dedicated is accursed, enjoyment without previous ceremonial sacrifice and ritual consecration is a sin. Even salvation, even the highest good is to be gained by ceremonial sacrifice. It must never be abandoned. Even the seeker of liberation has to continue to do ceremonial sacrifice, although without attachment; it is by ceremonial sacrifice and ritualistic works done without attachment that men of the type of Janaka attained to spiritual perfection and liberation.

Obviously, this cannot be the meaning of the Gita, for it would be in contradiction with all the rest of the book. Even in the passage itself, without the illuminating interpretation afterwards given to it in the fourth chapter, we have already an indication of a wider sense where it is said that sacrifice is born from work, work from brahman, brahman from the Akshara, and therefore the all-pervading Brahman, sarvagataṁ brahma, is established in the sacrifice. The connecting logic of the “therefore” and the repetition of the word brahma are significant; for it shows clearly that the brahman from which all work is born has to be understood with an eye not so much to the current Vedic teaching in which it means the Veda as to a symbolical sense in which the creative Word is identical with the all-pervading Brahman, the Eternal, the one Self present in all existences, sarvabhūtesu, and present in all the workings of existence. The Veda is the knowledge of the Divine, the Eternal, — “I am He who is to be known in all the books of the Knowledge,” vedaiś ca vedyah, Krishna will say in a subsequent chapter; but it is the knowledge of him in the workings of Prakriti, in the workings of the three guṇas, first qualities or modes of Nature, traiguṇyaviśayā vedāḥ. This Brahman or Divine in the workings of Nature is born, as we may say, out of the Akshara, the immutable Purusha, the Self who stands above all the modes or qualities or workings of Nature, nistraigunya. The Brahman is one but self-displayed in two aspects, the immutable Being and the creator and originator of works in the mutable becoming, ātman, sarvabhūtāni; it is the immobile omnipresent Soul of things and it is the spiritual principle of the mobile working of things, Purusha poised in himself and Purusha active in Prakriti; it is aksara and kṣara. In both of these aspects the Divine Being, Purushottama, manifests himself in the universe; the immutable above all qualities is His poise of peace, self-possession, equality, samaṁ brahma; from that proceeds His manifestation in the qualities of Prakriti and their universal workings; from the Purusha in Prakriti, from
this Brahman with qualities, proceed all the works\textsuperscript{1} of the universal energy, Karma, in man and in all existences; from that work proceeds the principle of sacrifice. Even the material interchange between gods and men proceeds upon this principle, as typified in the dependence of rain and its product food on this working and on them the physical birth of creatures. For all the working of Prakriti is in its true nature a sacrifice, \textit{yajña}, with the Divine Being as the enjoyer of all energisms and works and sacrifice and the great Lord of all existences, \textit{bhoktāram yajñatapasām sarvaloka-maheśvaram}, and to know this Divine all-pervading and established in sacrifice, \textit{sarvagatan yajñe pratiṣṭhitam}, is the true, the Vedic knowledge.

(S19: 115-17)

Sacrifice as a way of attaining to the Highest

But he [\textit{the Divine}] may be known in an inferior action through the \textit{devas}, the gods, the powers of the divine Soul in Nature and in the eternal interaction of these powers and the soul of man, mutually giving and receiving, mutually helping, increasing, raising each other’s workings and satisfaction, a commerce in which man rises towards a growing fitness for the supreme good. He recognises that his life is a part of this divine action in Nature and not a thing separate and to be held and pursued for its own sake. He regards his enjoyments and the satisfaction of his desires as the fruit of sacrifice and the gift of the gods in their divine universal workings and he ceases to pursue them in the false and evil spirit of sinful egoistic selfishness as if they were a good to be seized from life by his own unaided strength without return and without thankfulness. As this spirit increases in him, he subordinates his desires, becomes satisfied with sacrifice as the law of life and works and is content with whatever remains over from the sacrifice, giving up all the rest freely as an offering in the great and beneficent interchange between his life and the world-life. Whoever goes contrary to this law of action and pursues works and enjoyment for his own isolated personal self-interest, lives in vain; he misses the true meaning and aim and utility of living and the upward growth of the soul; he is not on the path which leads to the highest good. But the highest only comes when the sacrifice is no longer to the gods, but to the one all-pervading Divine established in the sacrifice, of whom the gods are inferior forms and powers, and when he puts away the lower self that

\textsuperscript{1} That this is the right interpretation results also from the opening of the eighth chapter where the universal principles are enumerated, \textit{akṣara (brahma), svabhāva, karma, kṣara bhāva, puruṣa, adhiyajña}. Akshara is the immutable Brahman, spirit or self, Atman; swabhava is the principle of the self, \textit{adhyātma}, operative as the original nature of the being, “own way of becoming”, and this proceeds out of the self, the Akshara; Karma proceeds from that and is the creative movement, \textit{visarga}, which brings all natural beings and all changing subjective and objective shapes of being into existence; the result of Karma therefore is all this mutable becoming, the changes of nature developed out of the original self-nature, \textit{kṣara bhāva} out of \textit{svabhāva}; Purusha is the soul, the divine element in the becoming, \textit{adhidaivata}, by whose presence the workings of Karma become a sacrifice, \textit{yajña}, to the Divine within; \textit{adhiyajña} is this secret Divine who receives the sacrifice.
desires and enjoys and gives up his personal sense of being the worker to the true executeur of all works, Prakriti, and his personal sense of being the enjoyer to the Divine Purusha, the higher and universal Self who is the real enjoyer of the works of Prakriti. In that Self and not in any personal enjoyment he finds now his sole satisfaction, complete content, pure delight; he has nothing to gain by action or inaction, depends neither on gods nor men for anything, seeks no profit from any, for the self-delight is all-sufficient to him, but does works for the sake of the Divine only, as a pure sacrifice, without attachment or desire. Thus he gains equality and becomes free from the modes of Nature, nistraigunya; his soul takes its poise not in the insecurity of Prakriti, but in the peace of the immutable Brahman, even while his actions continue in the movement of Prakriti. Thus is sacrifice his way of attaining to the Highest.

(S19: 118-19)

The inner renunciation yet physical doing of works

That this is the sense of the passage is made clear in what follows, by the affirmation of lokasaṅgraha as the object of works, of Prakriti as the sole doer of works and the divine Purusha as their equal upholder, to whom works have to be given up even in their doing, — this inner giving up of works and yet physical doing of them is the culmination of sacrifice, — and by the affirmation that the result of such active sacrifice with an equal and desireless mind is liberation from the bondage of works. “He who is satisfied with whatever gain comes to him and equal in failure and success, is not bound even when he acts. When a man liberated, free from attachment, acts for sacrifice, all his action is dissolved,” leaves, that is to say, no result of bondage or after-impression on his free, pure, perfect and equal soul. To these passages we shall have to return. They are followed by a perfectly explicit and detailed interpretation of the meaning of yajña in the language of the Gita which leaves no doubt at all about the symbolic use of the words and the psychological character of the sacrifice enjoined by this teaching. In the ancient Vedic system there was always a double sense physical and psychological, outward and symbolic, the exterior form of the sacrifice and the inner meaning of all its circumstances. But the secret symbolism of the ancient Vedic mystics, exact, curious, poetic, psychological, had been long forgotten by this time and it is now replaced by another, large, general and philosophical in the spirit of Vedanta and a later Yoga. The fire of sacrifice, agni, is no material flame, but brahmāgni, the fire of the Brahman, or it is the Brahman-ward energy, inner Agni, priest of the sacrifice, into which the offering is poured; the fire is self-control or it is a purified sense-action or it is the vital energy in that discipline of the control of the vital being through the control of the breath which is common to Rajayoga and Hathayoga, or it is the fire of self-knowledge, the flame of the supreme sacrifice. The food eaten as the leavings of the
sacrifice is, it is explained, the nectar of immortality, amṛta, left over from the offering; and here we have still something of the old Vedic symbolism in which the Soma-wine was the physical symbol of the amṛta, the immortalising delight of the divine ecstasy won by the sacrifice, offered to the gods and drunk by men. The offering itself is whatever working of his energy, physical or psychological, is consecrated by him in action of body or action of mind to the gods or God, to the Self or to the universal powers, to one’s own higher Self or to the Self in mankind and in all existences.

(S19: 119-20)

Only the divine Purusha acting by his own divine Prakriti in His own being . . .

This elaborate explanation of the Yajña sets out with a vast and comprehensive definition in which it is declared that the act and energy and materials of the sacrifice, the giver and receiver of the sacrifice, the goal and object of the sacrifice are all the one Brahman. “Brahman is the giving, Brahman is the food-offering, by Brahman it is offered into the Brahman-fire, Brahman is that which is to be attained by samadhi in Brahman-action.” This then is the knowledge in which the liberated man has to do works of sacrifice. It is the knowledge declared of old in the great Vedantic utterances, “I am He”, “All this verily is the Brahman, Brahman is this Self.” It is the knowledge of the entire unity; it is the One manifest as the doer and the deed and the object of works, knower and knowledge and the object of knowledge. The universal energy into which the action is poured is the Divine; the consecrated energy of the giving is the Divine; whatever is offered is only some form of the Divine; the giver of the offering is the Divine himself in man; the action, the work, the sacrifice is itself the Divine in movement, in activity; the goal to be reached by sacrifice is the Divine. For the man who has this knowledge and lives and acts in it, there can be no binding works, no personal and egoistically appropriated action; there is only the divine Purusha acting by the divine Prakriti in His own being, offering everything into the fire of His self-conscious cosmic energy, while the knowledge and the possession of His divine existence and consciousness by the soul unified with Him is the goal of all this God-directed movement and activity. To know that and to live and act in this unifying consciousness is to be free.

(S19: 120)

All the various sacrifices as a way towards the Highest

But all even of the Yogins have not attained to this knowledge. “Some Yogins follow after the sacrifice which is of the gods; others offer the sacrifice by the sacrifice itself into the Brahman-fire.” The former conceive of the Divine in various forms and powers and seek him by various means, ordinances, dharmas, laws or, as we
might say, settled rites of action, self-discipline, consecrated works; for the latter, those who already know, the simple fact of sacrifice, of offering whatever work to the Divine itself, of casting all their activities into the unified divine consciousness and energy, is their one means, their one dharma. The means of sacrifice are various; the offerings are of many kinds. There is the psychological sacrifice of self-control and self-discipline which leads to the higher self-possession and self-knowledge. “Some offer their senses into the fires of control, others offer the objects of sense into the fires of sense, and others offer all the actions of the sense and all the actions of the vital force into the fire of the Yoga of self-control kindled by knowledge.” There is, that is to say, the discipline which receives the objects of sense-perception without allowing the mind to be disturbed or affected by its sense-activities, the senses themselves becoming pure fires of sacrifice; there is the discipline which stills the senses so that the soul in its purity may appear from behind the veil of mind-action, calm and still; there is the discipline by which, when the self is known, all the actions of the sense-perceptions and all the action of the vital being are received into that one still and tranquil soul. The offering of the striver after perfection may be material and physical, dravya-yajña, like that consecrated in worship by the devotee to his deity, or it may be the austerity of his self-discipline and energy of his soul directed to some high aim, tapo-yajña, or it may be some form of Yoga like the Pranayama of the Rajayogins and Hathayogins, or any other yoga-yajña. All these tend to the purification of the being; all sacrifice is a way towards the attainment of the highest.

(S19: 121)

Sacrifice is the Law of the world

The one thing needful, the saving principle constant in all these variations, is to subordinate the lower activities, to diminish the control of desire and replace it by a superior energy, to abandon the purely egoistic enjoyment for that diviner delight which comes by sacrifice, by self-dedication, by self-mastery, by the giving up of one’s lower impulses to a greater and higher aim. “They who enjoy the nectar of immortality left over from the sacrifice attain to the eternal Brahman.” Sacrifice is the law of the world and nothing can be gained without it, neither mastery here, nor the possession of heavens beyond, nor the supreme possession of all; “this world is not for him who doeth not sacrifice, how then any other world?” Therefore all these and many other forms of sacrifice have been “extended in the mouth of the Brahman,” the mouth of that Fire which receives all offerings; they are all means and forms of the one great Existence in activity, means by which the action of the human being can be offered up to That of which his outward existence is a part and with which his inmost self is one. They are “all born of work”; all proceed from and are ordained by the one vast energy of the Divine which manifests itself in the universal karma
and makes all the cosmic activity a progressive offering to the one Self and Lord and of which the last stage for the human being is self-knowledge and the possession of the divine or Brahmic consciousness. “So knowing thou shalt become free.”

(S19: 121-22)

The gradations in sacrifice — the sacrifice of knowledge being the highest

But there are gradations in the range of these various forms of sacrifice, the physical offering the lowest, the sacrifice of knowledge the highest. Knowledge is that in which all this action culminates, not any lower knowledge, but the highest, self-knowledge and God-knowledge, that which we can learn from those who know the true principles of existence, that by possessing which we shall not fall again into the bewilderment of the mind’s ignorance and into its bondage to mere sense-knowledge and to the inferior activity of the desires and passions. The knowledge in which all culminates is that by which “thou shalt see all existences (becomings, bhūtāni) without exception in the Self, then in Me.” For the Self is that one, immutable, all-pervading, all-containing, self-existent reality or Brahman hidden behind our mental being into which our consciousness widens out when it is liberated from the ego; we come to see all beings as becomings, bhūtāni, within that one self-existence.

(S19: 122)

The Self and the Divine are not different

But this Self or immutable Brahman we see too to be the self-presentation to our essential psychological consciousness of a supreme Being who is the source of our existence and of whom all that is mutable or immutable is the manifestation. He is God, the Divine, the Purushottama. To Him we offer everything as a sacrifice; into His hands we give up our actions; in His existence we live and move; unified with Him in our nature and with all existence in Him, we become one soul and one power of being with Him and with all beings; with His supreme reality we identify and unite our self-being. By works done for sacrifice, eliminating desire, we arrive at knowledge and at the soul’s possession of itself; by works done in self-knowledge and God-knowledge we are liberated into the unity, peace and joy of the divine existence.

(S19: 122-23)

Sacrifice — the cornerstone of the Gita’s gospel of works

The whole of the Gita’s gospel of works rests upon its idea of sacrifice and contains in fact the eternal connecting truth of God and the world and works. The human mind seizes ordinarily only fragmentary notions and standpoints of a many-sided
eternal truth of existence and builds upon them its various theories of life and ethics and religion, stressing this or that sign or appearance, but to some entirety of it it must always tend to reawaken whenever it returns in an age of large enlightenment to any entire and synthetic relation of its world-knowledge with its God-knowledge and self-knowledge. The gospel of the Gita reposes upon this fundamental Vedantic truth that all being is the one Brahman and all existence the wheel of Brahman, a divine movement opening out from God and returning to God. All is the expressive activity of Nature and Nature a power of the Divine which works out the consciousness and will of the divine Soul master of her works and inhabitant of her forms.

(S19: 124)

A constantly enlarging sacrifice

All truth of works must depend upon the truth of being. All active existence must be in its inmost reality a sacrifice of works offered by Prakriti to Purusha, Nature offering to the supreme and infinite Soul the desire of the multiple finite Soul within her. Life is an altar to which she brings her workings and the fruits of her workings and lays them before whatever aspect of the Divinity the consciousness in her has reached for whatever result of the sacrifice the desire of the living soul can seize on as its immediate or its highest good. According to the grade of consciousness and being which the soul has reached in Nature, will be the Divinity it worships, the delight which it seeks and the hope for which it sacrifices. And in the movement of the mutable Purusha in Nature all is and must be interchange; for existence is one and its divisions must found themselves on some law of mutual dependence, each growing by each and living by all. Where sacrifice is not willingly given, Nature exacts it by force, she satisfies the law of her living. A mutual giving and receiving is the law of Life without which it cannot for one moment endure, and this fact is the stamp of the divine creative Will on the world it has manifested in its being, the proof that with sacrifice as their eternal companion the Lord of creatures has created all these existences. The universal law of sacrifice is the sign that the world is of God and belongs to God and that life is his dominion and house of worship and not a field for the self-satisfaction of the independent ego; not the fulfilment of the ego, — that is only our crude and obscure beginning, — but the discovery of God, the worship and seeking of the Divine and the Infinite through a constantly enlarging sacrifice culminating in a perfect self-giving founded on a perfect self-knowledge, is that to which the experience of life is at last intended to lead.

(S19: 125-26)
Life is not a field for the fulfilment of the ego

But the individual being begins with ignorance and persists long in ignorance. Acutely conscious of himself he sees the ego as the cause and whole meaning of life and not the Divine. He sees himself as the doer of works and does not see that all the workings of existence including his own internal and external activities are the workings of one universal Nature and nothing else. He sees himself as the enjoyer of works and imagines that for him all exists and him Nature ought to satisfy and obey his personal will; he does not see that she is not at all concerned with satisfying him or at all careful of his will, but obeys a higher universal will and seeks to satisfy a Godhead who transcends her and her works and creations; his finite being, his will and his satisfactions are hers and not his, and she offers them at every moment as a sacrifice to the Divine of whose purpose in her she makes all this the covert instrumentation. Because of this ignorance whose seal is egoism, the creature ignores the law of sacrifice and seeks to take all he can for himself and gives only what Nature by her internal and external compulsion forces him to give. He can really take nothing except what she allows him to receive as his portion, what the divine Powers within her yield to his desire. The egoistic soul in a world of sacrifice is as if a thief or robber who takes what these Powers bring to him and has no mind to give in return. He misses the true meaning of life and, since he does not use life and works for the enlargement and elevation of his being through sacrifice, he lives in vain.

(S19: 126-27)

A Law other than that of desire . . .

Only when the individual being begins to perceive and acknowledge in his acts the value of the self in others as well as the power and needs of his own ego, begins to perceive universal Nature behind his own workings and through the cosmic godheads gets some glimpse of the One and the Infinite, is he on his way to the transcendence of his limitation by the ego and the discovery of his soul. He begins to discover a law other than that of his desires, to which his desires must be more and more subordinated and subjected; he develops the purely egoistic into the understanding and ethical being. He begins to give more value to the claims of the self in others and less to the claims of his ego; he admits the strife between egoism and altruism and by the increase of his altruistic tendencies he prepares the enlargement of his own consciousness and being. He begins to perceive Nature and divine Powers in Nature to whom he owes sacrifice, adoration, obedience, because it is by them and by their law that the workings both of the mental and the material world are controlled, and he learns that only by increasing their presence and their greatness in his thought and will and life can he himself increase his powers, knowledge, right action and
the satisfactions which these things bring to him. Thus he adds the religious and supraphysical to the material and egoistic sense of life and prepares himself to rise through the finite to the Infinite.

(S19: 127)

The sacrifice has to be offered to the Purushottama

But this is only a long intermediate stage. It is still subject to the law of desire, to the centrality of all things in the conceptions and needs of his ego and to the control of his being as well as his works by Nature, though it is a regulated and governed desire, a clarified ego and a Nature more and more subtilised and enlightened by the sattwic, the highest natural principle. All this is still within the domain, though the very much enlarged domain, of the mutable, finite and personal. The real self-knowledge and consequently the right way of works lies beyond; for the sacrifice done with knowledge is the highest sacrifice and that alone brings a perfect working. That can only come when he perceives that the self in him and the self in others are one being and this self is something higher than the ego, an infinite, an impersonal, a universal existence in whom all move and have their being, — when he perceives that all the cosmic gods to whom he offers his sacrifice are forms of one infinite Godhead and when again, leaving all his limited and limiting conceptions of that one Godhead, he perceives him to be the supreme and ineffable Deity who is at once the finite and the infinite, the one self and the many, beyond Nature though manifesting himself through Nature, beyond limitation by qualities though formulating the power of his being through infinite quality. This is the Purushottama to whom the sacrifice has to be offered, not for any transient personal fruit of works, but for the soul’s possession of God and in order to live in harmony and union with the Divine.

(S19: 127-28)

The way to liberation and perfection lies through an increasing impersonality

In other words, man’s way to liberation and perfection lies through an increasing impersonality. It is his ancient and constant experience that the more he opens himself to the impersonal and infinite, to that which is pure and high and one and common in all things and beings, the impersonal and infinite in Nature, the impersonal and infinite in life, the impersonal and infinite in his own subjectivity, the less he is bound by his ego and by the circle of the finite, the more he feels a sense of largeness, peace, pure happiness. The pleasure, joy, satisfaction which the finite by itself can give or the ego in its own right attain, is transitory, petty and insecure. To dwell entirely in the ego-sense and its finite conceptions, powers, satisfactions is to find this world for ever full of transience and suffering, anityam asukham; the finite life
is always troubled by a certain sense of vanity for this fundamental reason that the finite is not the whole or the highest truth of life; life is not entirely real until it opens into the sense of the infinite. It is for this reason that the Gita opens its gospel of works by insisting on the Brahmic consciousness, the impersonal life, that great object of the discipline of the ancient sages. For the impersonal, the infinite, the One in which all the impermanent, mutable, multiple activity of the world finds above itself its base of permanence, security and peace, is the immobile Self, the Akshara, the Brahman. If we see this, we shall see that to raise one’s consciousness and the poise of one’s being out of limited personality into this infinite and impersonal Brahman is the first spiritual necessity. To see all beings in this one Self is the knowledge which raises the soul out of egoistic ignorance and its works and results; to live in it is to acquire peace and firm spiritual foundation.

(S19: 128-29)

The impersonal liberation is not the last word of the Gita

The liberation given by this perfect impersonality is real, is complete, is indispensable; but is it the last word, the end of the whole matter? All life, all world-existence, we have said, is the sacrifice offered by Nature to the Purusha, the one and secret soul in Nature, in whom all her workings take place; but its real sense is obscured in us by ego, by desire, by our limited, active, multiple personality. We have risen out of ego and desire and limited personality and by impersonality, its great corrective, we have found the impersonal Godhead; we have identified our being with the one self and soul in whom all exist. The sacrifice of works continues, conducted not by ourselves any longer, but by Nature, — Nature operating through the finite part of our being, mind, senses, body, — but in our infinite being. But to whom then is this sacrifice offered and with what object? For the impersonal has no activity and no desires, no object to be gained, no dependence for anything on all this world of creatures; it exists for itself, in its own self-delight, in its own immutable eternal being.

(S19: 130)

_Uttamamrahasyam — the highest secret_

There is still, after the ego has been conquered, a divine Lord and enjoyer of the sacrifice, _bhoktārām yajñatapasām_, and there is still an object in the sacrifice. The impersonal Brahman is not the very last word, not the utterly highest secret of our being; for impersonal and personal, finite and infinite turn out to be only two opposite, yet concomitant aspects of a divine Being unlimited by these distinctions who is both these things at once. God is an ever unmanifest Infinite ever self-impelled to manifest himself in the finite; he is the great impersonal Person of whom all
personalities are partial appearances; he is the Divine who reveals himself in the human being, the Lord seated in the heart of man. Knowledge teaches us to see all beings in the one impersonal self, for so we are liberated from the separative ego-sense, and then through this delivering impersonality to see them in this God, ātmani athoodūmī, “in the Self and then in Me.” Our ego, our limiting personalities stand in the way of our recognising the Divine who is in all and in whom all have their being; for, subject to personality, we see only such fragmentary aspects of Him as the finite appearances of things suffer us to seize. We have to arrive at him not through our lower personality, but through the high, infinite and impersonal part of our being, and that we find by becoming this self one in all in whose existence the whole world is comprised. This infinite containing, not excluding all finite appearances, this impersonal admitting, not rejecting all individualities and personalities, this immobile sustaining, pervading, containing, not standing apart from all the movement of Nature, is the clear mirror in which the Divine will reveal His being. Therefore it is to the Impersonal that we have first to attain; through the cosmic deities, through the aspects of the finite alone the perfect knowledge of God cannot be totally obtained. But neither is the silent immobility of the impersonal Self, conceived as shut into itself and divorced from all that it sustains, contains and pervades, the whole all-revealing all-satisfying truth of the Divine. To see that we have to look through its silence to the Purushottama, and he in his divine greatness possesses both the Akshara and the Kshara; he is seated in the immobility, but he manifests himself in the movement and in all the action of cosmic Nature; to him even after liberation the sacrifice of works in Nature continues to be offered.

The real goal of the Yoga is then a living and self-completing union with the divine Purushottama and is not merely a self-extinguishing immersion in the impersonal Being. To raise our whole existence to the Divine Being, to dwell in him (mayyeva nivasisyasi), to be at one with him, unify our consciousness with his, to make our fragmentary nature a reflection of his perfect nature, to be inspired in our thought and sense wholly by the divine knowledge, to be moved in will and action utterly and faultlessly by the divine will, to lose desire in his love and delight, is man’s perfection; it is that which the Gita describes as the highest secret. It is the true goal and the last sense of human living and the highest step in our progressive sacrifice of works. For he remains to the end the master of works and the soul of sacrifice.

(S19: 131-33)

Sacrifice and self-giving — a spiritual necessity

Sacrifice and self-giving are indeed a true principle and a spiritual necessity, for we cannot affirm our being rightly without sacrifice or without self-giving to something larger than our ego; but that too must be done with a right consciousness and will
founded on a true knowledge. To develop the sattwic part of our nature, a nature of light, understanding, balance, harmony, sympathy, good-will, kindness, fellow-feeling, self-control, rightly ordered and harmonised action, is the best we can do in the limits of the mental formation, but it is a stage and not the goal of our growth of being. These are solutions by the way, palliatives, necessary means for a partial dealing with this root difficulty, provisional standards and devices given us as a temporary help and guidance because the true and total solution is beyond our present capacity and can only come when we have sufficiently evolved to see it and make it our main endeavour.

(S21: 652)

The moral and psychological value of sacrifice

Sacrifice has a moral and psychological value always. This value is the same no matter what may be the cause for which the sacrifice is made, provided the one who makes it believes in the truth or justice or other worthiness of his cause. If one makes the sacrifice for a cause one knows to be wrong or unworthy, all depends on the motive and spirit of the sacrifice. Bhishma accepting death in a cause he knew to be unjust, obeyed the call of loyalty to what he felt to be his personal duty. Many have done that in the past, and the moral and psychic value of their act lies, irrespective of the nature of the cause, in the nobility of the motive.

As to the other question, in this sense of the word sacrifice there is none for the man who gives up something which he does not value, except in so far as he undergoes loss, defies social ban or obloquy or otherwise pays a price for his liberation. I may say, however, that without being cold and unloving a man may be so seized by a spiritual call or the call of a great human cause that the family or other ties count for nothing beside it, and he leaves all joyfully, without a pang, to follow the summoning Voice.

In the spiritual sense, however, sacrifice has a different meaning — it does not so much indicate giving up what is held dear as an offering of oneself, one’s being, one’s mind, heart, will, body, life, actions to the Divine. It has the original sense of “making sacred” and is used as an equivalent of the word Yajna. When the Gita speaks of the “sacrifice of knowledge”, it does not mean a giving up of anything, but a turning of the mind towards the Divine in the search for knowledge and an offering of oneself through it. It is in this sense, too, that one speaks of the offering or sacrifice of works. The Mother has written somewhere that the spiritual sacrifice is joyful and not painful in its nature. On the spiritual path, very commonly, if a seeker still feels the old ties and responsibilities strongly, he is not asked to sever or leave them, but to let the call in him grow till all within is ready. Many, indeed, come away earlier because they feel that to cut loose is their only chance, and these have to go sometimes through a struggle. But the pain, the struggle, is not the
Sacrifice signifies inner offering

It [pain and struggle in offering oneself to the Divine] simply means that your sacrifice is still mental and has not yet become spiritual in its character. When your vital being consents to give up its desires and enjoyments, when it offers itself to the Divine, then the yajna will have begun. What I meant was that the European sense of the word is not the sense of the word “yajna” or the sense of “sacrifice” in such phrases as “the sacrifice of works”. It does not mean that you give up all works for the sake of the Divine — for then there would be no sacrifice of works at all. Similarly the sacrifice of knowledge does not mean that you painfully and resolutely make yourself a fool for the sake of the Lord. Sacrifice means an inner offering to the Divine and the real spiritual sacrifice is a very joyful thing. Otherwise, one is only trying to make oneself fit and has not yet begun the real yajna. It is because your mind is struggling with your vital, the unwilling animal, and asking it to allow itself to be immolated that there is the pain and struggle. If the spiritual will (or psychic) were more in the front then you would not be lamenting over the loss of the ghee and butter and curds thrown into the Fire or trying to have a last lick at it before casting it. The only difficulty would be about bringing down the gods fully enough (a progressive labour), not about lamentations over the ghee. By the way, do you think that the Mother or myself or others who have taken up the spiritual life had not enjoyed life and that it is therefore that the Mother was able to speak of a joyous sacrifice to the Divine as the true spirit of spiritual sacrifice? Or do you think we spent the preliminary stages in longings for the lost fleshpots of Egypt and that it was only later on we felt the joy of the spiritual sacrifice? Of course we did not; we and many others had no difficulty on the score of giving up anything we thought necessary to give up and no hankerings afterwards. Your rule is as usual a stiff rule that does not at all apply generally.

One has always oneself to give . . .

Sacrifice depends on the inner attitude. If one has nothing outward to sacrifice, one has always oneself to give.
Our main energies to be directed towards one thing

It is a universally accepted principle of the spiritual endeavour that one must be prepared to sacrifice everything without reserve in order to reach the Divine through a spiritualised consciousness. If self-development on the mental, vital and physical plane is his aim that is another matter — that life is the life of the ego with the soul kept behind undeveloped or half developed. But for the spiritual seeker the only development he seeks is the development of the psychic and spiritual consciousness and that too, only because it is necessary to reach and to serve the Divine, not for its own sake. Whatever mental, vital, physical development or use of faculties can be made part of the spiritual life and an instrumentation for the Divine can be kept on condition of surrender of them for transformation and restatement on the spiritual basis. But they must not be kept for their own sake or for the sake of the ego or considered as one’s own possession or used for one’s own purpose but only for the sake of the Divine.

As for James’ statement\(^2\) it is of course true except in so far as the politician can indulge in other things as hobbies for his leisure hours, but if he wants to succeed as a politician he must give his best energies to politics. Conversely if Shakespeare or Newton had spent part of their energies in politics they would not have been able to reach such heights in poetry and in science or even if they had they would have done much less. The main energies have to be concentrated on one thing; the others can only be minor pursuits at leisure or for distraction or interests rather than pursuits useful for keeping up a general culture.

(S29: 15-16)

The path of Integral Yoga is extremely difficult

To come to this Yoga merely with the idea of being a superman would be an act of vital egoism which would defeat its own object. Those who put this object in the front of their preoccupations invariably come to grief, spiritually and otherwise. The aim of this Yoga is, first, to enter into the divine consciousness by merging into it the separative ego (incidentally, in doing so one finds one’s true individual self which is not the limited, vain and selfish human ego but a portion of the Divine) and, secondly, to bring down the supramental consciousness on earth to transform mind, life and body. All else can be only a result of these two aims, not the primary object of the Yoga.

---

2. *The correspondent wrote:* “Prof. James even says [in Principles of Psychology] about the ‘social me’ and other ‘me’s, that one has to suppress several of them in order to achieve one or two main aims in life. A politician, in order to concentrate on politics alone, has to let go his tendency for music or painting or social fame or family affections.” — Ed.
The extreme difficulty of these two aims has never been concealed from the sadhakas; on the contrary, difficulties and dangers have been overemphasised, rather than minimised. If still they choose and persist in this path, it is supposed that they are ready to risk everything, sacrifice everything, surrender everything in order to achieve this end or help towards its achievement.

(S29: 21)

Agni

There are many forms of Agni, — the solar fire, the vaidyuta fire and the nether fire are one Trinity — the fivefold fire is part of the Vedic symbolism of sacrifice.

(S30: 155)

The psychic fire

The fire [one feels within] is always the fire of sacrifice and self-offering, the fire of aspiration or the fire of tapasya.

(S30: 368)

The Karmayoga of the Gita

I do not know that it is possible for me to give any guidance on the path you have chosen — it is at any rate difficult for me to say anything definite without more precise data than those contained in your letter.

There is no need for you to change the line of life and work you have chosen so long as you feel that to be the way of your nature (svabhāva) or dictated to you by your inner being or, for some reason, it is seen to be your proper dharma. These are the three tests and apart from that I do not know if there is any fixed line of conduct or way of work or life that can be laid down for the yoga of the Gita. It is the spirit or consciousness in which the work is done that matters most; the outer form can vary greatly for different natures. This, so long as one does not get the settled experience of the Divine Power taking up one’s works and doing them; afterwards it is the Power which determines what is to be done or not done.

The overcoming of all attachments must necessarily be difficult and cannot come except as the fruit of a long sādhanā — unless there is a rapid general growth in the inner spiritual experience which is the substance of the Gita’s teaching. The cessation of desire of the fruit, of the attachment to the work itself, the growth of equality to all beings, to all happenings, to good repute or ill repute, praise or blame, to good fortune or ill fortune, the dropping of the ego which are necessary for the loss of all attachments can come completely only when all work becomes a spontaneous sacrifice to the Divine, the heart is offered up to Him and one has the
settled experience of the Divine in all things and all beings. This consciousness or experience must come in all parts and movements of the being, *sarvabhaavana*, not only in the mind and idea; then the falling away of all attachments becomes easy. I speak of the Gita’s way of yoga, for in the ascetic life one obtains the same object differently, by cutting away from the objects of attachment and the consequent atrophy of the attachment itself through rejection and disuse.

(S29: 236-37)

* 

The ordinary life consists in work for personal aim and satisfaction of desire under some mental or moral control, touched sometimes by a mental ideal. The Gita’s Yoga consists in the offering of one’s work as a sacrifice to the Divine, the conquest of desire, egoless and desireless action, bhakti for the Divine, an entering into the cosmic consciousness, the sense of unity with all creatures, oneness with the Divine. This Yoga adds the bringing down of the supramental Light and Force (its ultimate aim) and the transformation of the nature.

(S29: 238)

**Apparent contradictions in the Gita**

There is no real contradiction; the two passages indicate in the Gita’s system two different movements of its Yoga, the complete surrender being the crowning movement. One has first to conquer the lower nature, deliver the self involved in the lower movement by means of the higher Self which rises into the divine nature; at the same time one offers all one’s actions including the inner action of the Yoga as a sacrifice to the Purushottama, the transcendent and immanent Divine. When one has risen into the higher Self, has the knowledge and is free, one makes the complete surrender to the Divine, abandoning all other dharmas, living only by the divine Consciousness, the divine Will and Force, the divine Ananda.

(S29: 442)

**Our Yoga not identical with the Yoga of the Gita**

Our Yoga is not identical with the Yoga of the Gita although it contains all that is essential in the Gita’s Yoga. In our Yoga we begin with the idea, the will, the aspiration of the complete surrender; but at the same time we have to reject the lower nature, deliver our consciousness from it, deliver the self involved in the

*3. The correspondent asked how to reconcile two passages in the Gita: “Deliver the self by means of the Self” and “Abandon all dharmas, take refuge in Me alone” (Gita 6.5 and 18.66). — Ed.*

MOTHER INDIA, AUGUST 2020
lower nature by the self rising to freedom in the higher nature. If we do not do this
double movement, we are in danger of making a tamasic and therefore unreal
surrender, making no effort, no tapas and therefore no progress; or else we may
make a rajasic surrender not to the Divine but to some self-made false idea or image
of the Divine which masks our rajasic ego or something still worse.

(S29: 442)

A sacramental attitude in dealing with Matter

A certain reverence, even, for Matter and a sacramental attitude in all dealings with
it is possible. As in the Gita the act of the taking of food is spoken of as a material
sacrament, a sacrifice, an offering of Brahman to Brahman by Brahman, so also the
gnostic consciousness and sense can view all the operations of Spirit with Matter.
The Spirit has made itself Matter in order to place itself there as an instrument for the
well-being and joy, yogakṣema, of created beings, for a self-offering of universal
physical utility and service. The gnostic being, using Matter but using it without
material or vital attachment or desire, will feel that he is using the Spirit in this form
of itself with its consent and sanction for its own purpose. There will be in him a
certain respect for physical things, an awareness of the occult consciousness in
them, of its dumb will of utility and service, a worship of the Divine, the Brahman in
what he uses, a care for a perfect and faultless use of his divine material, for a true
rhythm, ordered harmony, beauty in the life of Matter, in the utilisation of Matter.

(S22: 1022-23)

The spirit of work offered as sacrifice

As for the work, it is a means of preparation, it can also be a means of growing into
the inner consciousness. But then it must be done not as work only but as an offering
to the Mother, without insisting on the ego, with an aspiration to feel her Force
working in one, her Presence presiding over the work, seeking to give all to her, not
claiming anything for oneself. That is the spirit of work offered as a sacrifice; done
like that, work becomes a sadhana and a Yoga.

(S29: 242)

All work done as a sacrifice to the Divine

Self-dedication does not depend on the particular work you do, but on the spirit in
which all work, of whatever kind it may be, is done. Any work, done well and
carefully as a sacrifice to the Divine, without desire or egoism, with equality of
mind and calm tranquillity in good or bad fortune, for the sake of the Divine and not
for the sake of any personal gain, reward or result, with the consciousness that it is
the Divine Power to which all work belongs, is a means of self-dedication through Karma.

(S29: 246-47)

I may say however that I do not regard business as something evil or tainted, any more than it was so regarded in ancient spiritual India. If I did, I would not be able to receive money from X or from those of our disciples who in Bombay trade with East Africa; nor could we then encourage them to go on with their work but would have to tell them to throw it up and attend to their spiritual progress alone. How are we to reconcile X’s seeking after spiritual light and his mill? Ought I not to tell him to leave his mill to itself and to the devil and go into some Ashram to meditate? Even if I myself had had the command to do business as I had the command to do politics I would have done it without the least spiritual or moral compunction. All depends on the spirit in which a thing is done, the principle on which it is built and use to which it is turned. I have done politics and the most violent kind of revolutionary politics, ghorani karma, and I have supported war and sent men to it, even though politics is not always or often a very clean occupation nor can war be called a spiritual line of action. But Krishna calls upon Arjuna to carry on war of the most terrible kind and by his example encourage men to do every kind of human work, sarvakarmāni. Do you contend that Krishna was an unspiritual man and that his advice to Arjuna was mistaken or wrong in principle? Krishna goes farther and declares that a man by doing in the right way and in the right spirit the work dictated to him by his fundamental nature, temperament and capacity and according to his and its dharma can move towards the Divine. He validates the function and dharma of the Vaishya as well as of the Brahmin and Kshatriya. It is in his view quite possible for a man to do business and make money and earn profits and yet be a spiritual man, practise Yoga, have an inner life. The Gita is constantly justifying works as a means of spiritual salvation and enjoining a Yoga of works as well as of Bhakti and Knowledge. Krishna, however, superimposes a higher law also that work must be done without desire, without attachment to any fruit or reward, without any egoistic attitude or motive, as an offering or sacrifice to the Divine. This is the traditional Indian attitude towards these things, that all work can be done if it is done according to the dharma and, if it is rightly done, it does not prevent the approach to the Divine or the access to spiritual knowledge and the spiritual life.

There is of course also the ascetic ideal which is necessary for many and has its place in the spiritual order. I would myself say that no man can be spiritually complete if he cannot live ascetically or follow a life as bare as the barest anchorite’s. Obviously, greed for wealth and money-making has to be absent from his nature as much as greed for food or any other greed and all attachment to these things must
be renounced from his consciousness. But I do not regard the ascetic way of living as indispensable to spiritual perfection or as identical with it. There is the way of spiritual self-mastery and the way of spiritual self-giving and surrender to the Divine, abandoning ego and desire even in the midst of action or of any kind of work or all kinds of work demanded from us by the Divine. If it were not so, there would not have been great spiritual men like Janaka or Vidura in India and even there would have been no Krishna or else Krishna would have been not the Lord of Brindavan and Mathura and Dwarka or a prince and warrior or the charioteer of Kurukshetra, but only one more great anchorite. The Indian scriptures and Indian tradition, in the Mahabharata and elsewhere, make room both for the spirituality of the renunciation of life and for the spiritual life of action. One cannot say that one only is the Indian tradition and that the acceptance of life and works of all kinds, sarvakarmaṇī, is un-Indian, European or Western and unspiritual.

(S29: 248-50)

Sacrifice as self-immolation

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.

(M3: 114)

Sacrifice and surrender

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 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 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.

(M3: 114-16)

Wrong ideas about surrender

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 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. (M3: 116-17)

**Spirituality and morality**

If you have understood this, you will be ready to understand the difference, the great difference between spirituality 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 another sphere, — but because they belong to the impulses or forces that, being unillumined 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 unillumined 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 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.

(M3: 117-20)
Sacrifice and religion

Many religions are founded upon the idea of sacrifice; for instance, all the Chaldean religions. The reforms of the Muslim religion also had a very strong tendency towards sacrifice. All the first adepts, the first faithful, paid with their life for changing their religion. In Persia, they were persecuted beyond all telling. There are even many writings in which the joys of sacrifice are praised highly — that is a Chaldean idea. But you should be on your guard; all depends upon the meaning given to the word. It is obvious that for him who sacrifices himself willingly, that is, who gives up his life voluntarily and with joy, it is no longer a sacrifice, by the very definition we have given to the word.

We also speak of the “sacrifice” of the Divine. But I have noticed that one calls it “sacrifice” when one understands that if obliged to do it oneself it would be very difficult! It would give you much pain, it would be very hard (laughing) so one speaks of sacrifice, but it is probable that for the Divine it was not painful and he did it willingly, with all the joy of self-giving.

I knew Abdul Baha very well, the successor of Baha Ullah, founder of the Bahai religion; Abdul Baha was his son. He was born in prison and lived in prison till he was forty, I believe. When he came out of prison his father was dead and he began to preach his father’s religion. He told me his story and what had happened in Persia at the beginning of the religion. And I remember him telling me with what intense joy, what a sense of the divine Presence, of the divine Force, these people went to the sacrifice — it can’t be called “sacrifice”, it was a very joyful gift of their life. . . . He always spoke to me of someone who was, it appears, a very great poet and who had been arrested as a heretic because he followed the Bahai religion. They wanted to take him away to kill him — or burn him, hang him, crucify him, I don’t know what, the manner of death in vogue at the time — and, because he expressed his faith and said he would be happy to suffer anything for his faith and his God, people devised the plan of fixing small lighted candle-ends on his body, his arms, his shoulders. Naturally the candles melted with the hot wax all over, till the wick of the candle burnt the skin. It seems Abdul Baha was there when this man was tortured and as they came to the spot where he was to be killed, Abdul Baha went up to speak to him affectionately — and he was in an ecstasy of joy. Abdul Baha spoke to him of his sufferings; he replied, “Suffer! It is one of the most beautiful hours of my life. . . .” This cannot be called a sacrifice, can it?

Generally, all those who have suffered tortures for their faith, that is, for their highest thought, their most sublime ideal, have always felt a kind of divine grace helping them and keeping them from suffering. Of course, outsiders call this a “sacrifice” (that is understandable, they have sacrificed their life), but one cannot use the word for what personally concerns them, because for them it was not a sacrifice, it was a joy. All depends on the inner attitude. Now, if for a single moment
during the torture they had had the least idea, “Why am I being tortured?” they would have undergone unbearable suffering. A single passing thought suffices.

Almost all events — at least all the important circumstances of human life — may be looked at from two sides: from below or from above. If you see them from below, with the feelings of the ordinary man, you are terrified by the amount of suffering of all those who have preached a new religion or wished to set an example to humanity — they have all suffered, that is, they have all been persecuted by men. Generally speaking, with a very few exceptions, men do not like what is superior to them, and when they meet someone who is far above them (I am saying, apart from some exceptions), that makes them furious. They suffer an almost insurmountable annoyance in meeting something so infinitely higher than what they are. They have only one idea, to destroy it, and in fact that is what they have done. Throughout human history it has been thus. Those who have come with special abilities, a special grace, and have tried to make men come out of their ordinary rut, have been more or less persecuted, martyred, burnt alive, put on the cross. . . . The situation now is apparently a little better because now slightly more plausible reasons than those of old are needed to burn men — the habit of doing so is no longer there — but the feelings are not very different. The human race, generally, has a sort of rancour against what surpasses it; it feels humiliated, and men do not like to be humiliated.

(M4: 315-17)
SECTION THREE

Sacrifice is necessary to draw nearer to the integral truth

One who strives in sincere quest for truth, who is ready, if necessary, to sacrifice all he had thought until then to be true, in order to draw ever nearer to the integral truth that can be no other than the progressive knowledge of the whole universe in its infinite progression, enters gradually into relation with great masses of deeper, completer and more luminous thoughts.

After much meditation and contemplation, he comes into direct contact with the great universal current of pure intellectual force, and thenceforth no knowledge can be veiled from him.

From that moment serenity — mental peace — is his portion. In all beliefs, in all human knowledge, in all religious teachings, which sometimes appear so contradictory, he perceives the deep truth which nothing can now conceal from his eyes.

Even errors and ignorance no longer disturb him, for, as an unknown master says:

“He who walks in the Truth is not troubled by any error, for he knows that error is the first effort of life towards truth.”

But to attain this state of perfect serenity is to attain to the summit of thought. Without hoping to reach that point at once, we can strive to acquire an individual thought that is both original and as equitable as possible. Thus we shall have become minds of some consequence, with the right to bring to society the precious contribution of their highest intuitions.

(M2: 28-29)

Ridiculous desire for sacrifice

In each one of us there is a difficulty which is more central than all the others; it is the one which, relative to the part we have to play in the world, is like the shadow of that light, a shadow which gradually dissolves, fades more and more as the light becomes more intense, more brilliant, more powerful and extends to the whole being.

This difficulty, which is particular to each one, seems to me to be the one which deserves all our attention and effort, for if we know how to observe ourselves, we shall see that it is the source of all the others which may obstruct our way.

So this evening, I shall make a brief survey of a difficulty of this kind.
Some people have an excessive sensitivity, which becomes most acute when it does not manifest itself outwardly. This sensitivity is of an affective, emotional kind.

It usually comes from a supra-nervous substance which is highly intellectualised but not spiritualised enough for its degree of intellectualisation.

It is a stage of evolution in which the being is ready for self-giving, for he is conscious of himself; but, as a result of the work of individualisation, of intellectualisation he has undergone, he has acquired the habit of considering everything in relation to himself and has carried the illusion of personality to its utmost limit.

Thus it is sometimes very difficult for him not to watch himself acting, feeling and thinking, and this results in a lack of spontaneity which verges on insincerity.

The being takes pleasure in his extreme sensitivity; he is a delicate instrument which responds marvellously to the least vibration, and so, instead of exteriorising himself and forgetting his own self as he should, he withdraws into himself, observes and analyses and almost contemplates himself.

Thus cultivated, the emotional sensitivity goes on increasing, sharpening and refining itself. And since in life opportunities for suffering are more frequent than opportunities for joy, the need to experience and study these subtle movements of feeling develops an inclination, a taste for suffering, a true mystical aberration which is nothing but self-seeking through suffering, a refined but very pernicious form of egoism.

The practical results of this need to suffer are altogether disastrous if you add to it the intuitive but still inaccurate perception that the work you have to accomplish, your purpose in life, is to draw towards yourself, to take upon yourself, the suffering of others and change it into harmony.

As a matter of fact, on one hand this knowledge is incomplete because you do not know that the only way to relieve others, to eliminate a little suffering in this world, is not to allow any sensitivity, however painful it may seem, to arouse suffering in yourself or to disturb your peace and serenity. On the other hand the idea of the work to be accomplished is itself warped by the illusion of personality. The correct idea is not to draw all suffering to yourself, which is unrealisable, but to identify yourself with all suffering, in all others, to become in it and in them a seed of light and love which will give birth to a deep understanding, to hope, trust and peace.

Until this is well understood, the taste for sacrifice rises in the being; and each time an opportunity for it appears, since you are not disinterested in this matter, since you desire this sacrifice, it becomes something sentimental and irrational and results in absurd errors which sometimes have disastrous consequences. Even if you are in the habit of reflecting before acting, the reflections preceding the act will necessarily be biased, since they are warped by the taste for suffering, by the desire to have an opportunity to impose a painful sacrifice on yourself.

Thus, consciously or not, instead of sacrificing yourself for the good of others,
you sacrifice yourself for the pleasure of it, which is perfectly absurd and of no benefit to anyone.

No action should be deemed good, no action should be undertaken until we know its immediate and, if possible, its distant consequences, and until it appears that they must in the end add, however little, to earthly happiness. But to be able to give a sound judgment on the matter, this judgment must in no way be disturbed by any personal preference, and this implies self-detachment.

Not the detachment which is equivalent to the annihilation of the capacity to feel, but the detachment which brings about the abolition of the capacity to suffer.

By this you should understand that for the time being I am excluding insensitive people, those who do not suffer because the substance they are made of is still too unrefined, too crude to feel, those who are not even ready for suffering.

But of those who have achieved a high development of sensitivity, it can be said that their capacity to suffer is the exact measure of their imperfection.

Indeed, the expression of a true psychic life in the being is peace, a joyful serenity.

Any suffering is therefore a precious indication to us of our weak point, of the point which demands a greater spiritual effort from us.

Thus, to cure in ourselves this attraction for suffering, we must understand the absurdity, the petty egoism of the various causes of our sufferings.

And to cure our excessive and ridiculous desire for sacrifice — too frequently for its own sake, regardless of any useful results — we must understand that if we are to remain in contact with all human sufferings through our sensitivity, we must also be vigilant and discerning enough to dissolve these sufferings as they come; to the clear-sighted, they are purely imaginary.

For, from this point of view, the only way to come to the help of men is to oppose to their suffering an immutable and smiling serenity which will be the highest human expression of Impersonal Love.

Finally, in a case such as the one I have just shown to you, even more than in any other, it is indispensable to keep in mind that true impersonality does not consist only in forgetting ourselves in our acts, but above all in the fact of not being aware that we are forgetting ourselves.

In short, to be truly impersonal, we must stop noticing that we are being impersonal.

And then the work can be accomplished with a large-hearted spontaneity, in all its perfection.

(M2: 58-61)
A love made of consecration and sacrifice

. . . a modern philosopher writes:

“Sometimes thinkers in their meditations, explorers and prospectors of the intellectual world in their discoveries, and poets — the diviners of thought — in their dreams, feel and vaguely sense that the idea is not something abstract and bodiless. It appears to them to be winged, something which soars, comes close and flees, denies and gives itself, something which must be called, pursued and won.

“To the most clairvoyant, the idea seems to be an aloof person with her whims and desires, her preferences, her queenly disdain, her virgin modesty. They know that it takes much care to win her and but a little thing to lose her, that there is a love of the mind for the idea, a love made of consecration and sacrifice, and without this the idea cannot belong to it.

“But these are pretty symbols, and few indeed can perceive the very precise reality which lies beneath them.

“It needed a Plato to identify this thing which lives and vibrates, which moves and shines, travels and is propagated through time and space, which acts and wills and freely chooses its own time and place — in short, to know the Idea as a being.”

Let us take especially one phrase from this beautiful page: “There is a love of the mind for the idea, a love made of consecration and sacrifice, and without this the idea cannot belong to it.” This is not an image. To enter into an intimate and conscious relation with the idea, we must consecrate ourselves to it, love it with a disinterested love, in itself, for itself.

(M2: 79-80)

Balance between self-control and power of sacrifice

There are innumerable categories of “successful” people; these categories are determined by the greater or lesser breadth, nobility, complexity, purity and luminosity of their ideal. One may “succeed” as a rag-picker or “succeed” as master of the world or even as a perfect ascetic; in all three cases, although on very different levels, it is one’s more or less integral and extensive self-mastery which makes the “success” possible.

On the other hand, there is only one way of being a “failure”; and that happens to the greatest, to the most sovereign intelligence, as well as to the smallest, the most limited, to all those who are unable to subordi nate the sensation of the present moment to the ideal they wish to achieve, but without having the strength to take up the path — identical for all in nature if not in extent and complexity — that leads to this achievement.

Between the extreme of an individual who has fully and perfectly realised all he had conceived and that of one who has been incapable of realising anything at
all, there is, of course, an almost unlimited range of intermediate cases; this range is remarkably complex, because not only is there a difference in the degree of realisation of the ideal, but there is also a difference between the varied qualities of the ideal itself. There are ambitions which pursue mere personal interests, material, sentimental or intellectual, others which have more general, more collective or higher aims, and yet others which are superhuman, so to say, and strive to scale the peaks that open on the splendours of eternal Truth, eternal Consciousness and eternal Peace. It is easy to understand that the power of one’s effort and renunciation must be commensurate with the breadth and height of the goal one has chosen.

At any level, from the most modest to the most transcendent, one rarely finds a perfect balance between the sum of self-control, the power of sacrifice available to the individual who has chosen a goal, and the sum of renunciations of every kind and nature which the goal requires.

When the constitution of an individual permits this perfect balance, then his earthly existence yields its utmost possible result.

(M2: 121-22)

The sacrifice offered to one’s smallness

Generally, people are altogether blind to the ugliness of their own actions. They do wrong through ignorance, through unconsciousness, through smallness, through that sort of doubling back on oneself which comes from unconsciousness and ignorance, that obscure instinct of self-preservation which makes one ready to sacrifice the whole world for the sake of one’s own well-being. And the smaller one is, the more natural appears the sacrifice offered to one’s smallness.

One must be very much higher on the scale to see that what one does is ugly. One must already have at the core of oneself a kind of foreknowledge of what beauty, nobility, generosity are, to be able to suffer from the fact that one doesn’t carry them within oneself.

(M3: 197)

At the time of the Buddha . . .

Throughout this teaching [of the Dhammapada] there is one thing to be noticed; it is this: you are never told that to live well, to think well, is the result of a struggle or of a sacrifice; on the contrary it is a delightful state which cures all suffering. At that time, the time of the Buddha, to live a spiritual life was a joy, a beatitude, the happiest state, which freed you from all the troubles of the world, all the sufferings, all the cares, making you happy, satisfied, contented.

It is the materialism of modern times that has turned spiritual effort into a hard struggle and a sacrifice, a painful renunciation of all the so-called joys of life.
This insistence on the exclusive reality of the physical world, of physical pleasures, physical joys, physical possessions, is the result of the whole materialistic tendency of human civilisation. It was unthinkable in ancient times. On the contrary, withdrawal, concentration, liberation from all material cares, consecration to the spiritual joy, that was happiness indeed.

From this point of view it is quite evident that humanity is far from having progressed; and those who were born into the world in the centres of materialistic civilisation have in their subconscious this horrible notion that only material realities are real and that to be concerned with things that are not material represents a wonderful spirit of sacrifice, an almost sublime effort. Not to be preoccupied from dawn to dusk and from dusk to dawn with all the little physical satisfactions, physical pleasures, physical sensations, physical preoccupations, is to bear evidence of a remarkable spirit. One is not aware of it, but the whole of modern civilisation is built on this conception: “Ah, what you can touch, you are sure that is true; what you can see, you are sure that is true; what you have eaten, you are sure of having eaten it; but all the rest — pooh! We are not sure whether they are not vain dreams and whether we are not giving up the real for the unreal, the substance for the shadow. After all, what are you going to gain? A few dreams! But when you have some coins in your pocket, you are sure that they are there!”

And that is everywhere, underneath everything. Scratch the appearances just a little, it is there, within your consciousness; and from time to time you hear this thing whispering within you, “Take care, don’t be taken in.” Indeed, it is lamentable.

The instinct of sacrifice in animals

In animals there is sometimes a very intense psychic truth. Naturally, I believe that the psychic being is a little more formed, a little more conscious in a child than in an animal. But I have experimented with animals, just to know; well, I assure you that in human beings I have rarely come across some of the virtues which I have seen in animals, very simple, unpretentious virtues. As in cats, for example: I have studied cats a lot; if one knows them well they are marvellous creatures. I have known mother-cats which have sacrificed themselves entirely for their babies — people speak of maternal love with such admiration, as though it were purely a human privilege, but I have seen this love manifested by mother-cats to a degree far surpassing ordinary humanity. I have seen a mother-cat which would never touch her food until her babies had taken all they needed. I have seen another cat which stayed eight days beside her kittens, without satisfying any of her needs because she was afraid to leave them alone; and a cat which repeated more than fifty times the same movement to teach her young one how to jump from a wall on to a window, and I may add, with a care, an intelligence, a skill which many uneducated women
do not have. And why is it thus? — since there was no mental intervention. It was altogether spontaneous instinct. But what is instinct? — it is the presence of the Divine in the genus of the species, and that, that is the psychic of animals; a collective, not an individual psychic.

I have seen in animals all the reactions, emotional, affective, sentimental, all the feelings of which men are so proud. The only difference is that animals cannot speak of them and write about them, so we consider them inferior beings because they cannot flood us with books on what they have felt.

(M4: 27-28)

**Surrender and sacrifice**

Mother reads a question asked during her talk in 1929:

“*Is not surrender the same as sacrifice?*”

*Questions and Answers 1929*

Who is going to answer? What is the difference?

*Surrender comes spontaneously.*

I congratulate those whose surrender is spontaneous! It is not so easy. No, that is not the difference.

*Sacrifice diminishes the being.*

That is true, but why? One thing is so, so simple — it is the very meaning of the word. To sacrifice means to give up something to which one clings. To sacrifice one’s life is to give up one’s life to which one clings; otherwise it would not be a sacrifice, it would be a gift. If you use the word “sacrifice”, it means it is something which makes you suffer when you give it up. The word “sacrifice” is used at random, that is understood, but I am speaking of the true sense. One can sacrifice only what one holds dear. If one does not cling to it, it is not a sacrifice, it is a gift with all the joy of the giving. Surrender has no value if it is painful, if it is a sacrifice. Surrender must be truly a joyous offering (I am using the word *soumission* in the sense of surrender, but it is not quite surrender — surrender is between *soumission* and *abandon*). One gives up something, surrenders oneself, but without sacrifice.

(M4: 314)
Human sacrifices

In the past, why did men offer human sacrifices in temples?

I don’t quite understand the question. Why should they not do it! There is not much difference between killing a goat and killing a man. I don’t know. In any case, what has come down to posterity and what really happened may be two very different things. When they spoke of sacrifice, it was perhaps only symbolic. Certain religions, we are told, have massacred men by thousands. It is possible, it is the same instinct which makes men destroy things. And these were certainly religions which tended towards destruction. Now, there are many different cases, and if someone asks why people offered material sacrifices, one should first be sure about it. As for me, I am not sure of it. It is possible. It depends on the way one looks at life. And in any case, if one arrogates to oneself the right to make use of another man’s existence to offer a sacrifice to the Divine, or if one looks at it in a certain way, it is a pretty bad attitude. I was saying at the beginning I don’t see why one should make a difference between any other animal and a human animal. It is a very strange thing.

In the majority of religions, I believe it used to be as it still is here in the temple of the headless Kali1 — it is an extremely dark and ignorant affair. It comes from a sort of unhealthy fear of a monstrous god who needs either blood or force or no matter what in order to be satisfied and not to do harm. And all this comes from a dread and a conception of the Divine which is a monstrosity. But should it be admitted, there would be only one tolerable sacrifice, the sacrifice of oneself. If one wants to sacrifice something to the Divine, I don’t see by what right one can seek the life of another, be it human being or animal, to offer it in one’s own stead. If one wants to sacrifice, it is one’s own self one must sacrifice, not others. And as the movement itself is sufficiently ugly and obscure and unconscious, I don’t see why there should be such a difference between sacrificing a goat and sacrificing a human being. From the goat’s point of view it is an intolerable idea — if a goat were to be asked why.

Men have strange ideas about their own importance in the world and the respective worth of their person. It does not make much difference. If they are told, “You have no right to take the life of another”, it is acceptable; but then do not offer sacrifices, or if you want to sacrifice, sacrifice your own self; if you believe there is a terrible God who needs to be given blood or whatever else it may be, vital forces to satisfy him, do it. But by what right are you going to take the life of others to give it? That is an intolerable tyranny. Even were it only all those chickens one kills! But I believe there is another reason for that — it is that people can enjoy a good feast! It is simply an opportunity to swallow a considerable amount of food.

1. In whose honour, every year, men wring the necks of a huge number of chickens.
I don’t know, for me it does not make a great difference.  

(M5: 346-47)

Sacrifice and bargaining

As I have said elsewhere about surrender and sacrifice, if one regrets something, that means that one is not in a spiritual state of consciousness. If one regrets that one can no longer satisfy one’s desires, that means the desires are at least as important as, if not more than, the thing one aspires for. You may say, “Desires are something of which I am quite conscious, whilst if I give up my desires with the idea of getting the Divine, I am yet not sure that I shall have Him: hence I call this a sacrifice.” But I, I call that bargaining! It is bargaining with the Divine. One tells Him, “Give and take; I, I give You the joy I have in satisfying my desires, You must give me in exchange the joy of feeling You within myself, else it is not just.” — This is not self-giving, this is bargaining.

This is something I have heard so often, so often: “I have sacrificed so many things, I have made so much effort, have taken so much trouble, and now see, I have nothing in exchange.” All that I can answer is, “No wonder!”

(M5: 349-50)

Animal Sacrifices

In the temples people offer animals to the Divine. In this case can it be called cruelty?

This comes much closer to ignorance and unconsciousness than to cruelty. They don’t do it because they are cruel — there are exceptions — but still, generally speaking, it is not that they feel a special pleasure in killing but they are afraid of a particular god and think that by such killing they will win his favour.

Close by here, near the seashore, there is a fishermen’s temple — Virampatnam, I think; when you go as far as Ariancouppam and from there turn to the left and go towards the sea, at the end of the road there is a temple. It is the temple of a strange godhead . . . it is one of the Kalis. Well, extraordinary stories are told about this Kali, but in any case, the custom is to kill a fairly large number of chickens every year in her honour. I happened to go down there — I believe it was the day after the festival had been celebrated: one could still see all the feathers scattered on the sands — and, above all, there was in that place an atmosphere of creepy dread and total ignorance, and also (I don’t know the practice — who eats the chickens? whether it is the one who kills them or the priests — but here truly there were too many! If the priests ate all that they would be quite sick! So it must probably have been also the people who had killed the chickens), there was that atmosphere of
greed, not only greed but of gluttony, of people who think about eating. And there was that Kali who was particularly satisfied with all the vital forces of all those poor little chickens; they had been killed off by hundreds and each one had a little vital force which escaped when its throat was cut, and so that Kali was feeding upon all that: she was very happy. And there was evidently — I don’t know if it could be called cruelty, it was rather greed, — greed of vital forces, of a very unconscious vital force, for these poor chickens don’t have anything very conscious. And the whole thing created a very low, very heavy, very unconscious and painful atmosphere, yet not of the intensity of cruelty. So it can’t be said that this practice is due to cruelty, I don’t think so. Perhaps some of these people, had they to sacrifice a little goat, a little lamb they loved, perhaps they would even find this a little sad. It is rather a great unconsciousness and a great fear. Oh, fear! In religions there is so much fear! Fear: “If I don’t do this or that, if I don’t cut the throat of a dozen chickens, disastrous things will happen to me all my life through or at least the whole of this year. My children will be ill, I shall lose my job, I won’t be able to earn my living; very, very unpleasant things will happen to me.” . . . And so, let us sacrifice the dozen chickens. But it is not from the desire to kill. It can’t be said that it’s through cruelty: it’s through unconsciousness.

What did that Kali do when you went to see her?

You know the story, don’t you? . . . I did not know the place, but there is a bit of a road between Ariancouppam and this temple. And so, half-way, I was seated quietly in my car knowing nothing — I knew nothing, neither the story of that Kali nor of the chickens nor anything — I was seated in my car when suddenly I saw a black being coming, with hair all dishevelled, who asked me to make a pact. And she assumed a tone of great supplication and told me, “Ah! If you wish, if you wish to adopt me and come to help me, how many people would come, how very glorious this place would become.” She was a funny little creature. She was black, dishevelled, quite thin, she didn’t seem to be flourishing much! Later I was told — I don’t know the story exactly, I can’t say — that some misfortune had befallen her: her head had been cut off, wasn’t that it? Something like that. (Turning to a disciple) Amrita, do you know the story of the Kali of Virampatnam? . . . No, you don’t? Someone had related it to me, anyway it was not very interesting, it was an unfortunate Kali. I told her to remain quiet and that I did not understand what she wanted of me, that I came . . . that if she had a sincere aspiration, well, there would be a response to her aspiration. The next moment we reached the temple; then I began to understand that this was the person for whom the temple had been built. Later we went to walk on the seashore under the casuarina trees, and there we saw all the feathers and drops of blood and the remains of the fire — the fire on which, evidently, people had cooked their chickens. And we asked for the story. And I knew then the story of
that Kali and how, for that festival, chickens were massacred in great numbers.

So, that’s it. I don’t suppose that creature felt any considerable satisfaction in seeing the chickens killed — I know nothing about it. As I said, all the profit she could get out of it was the absorption of some vital forces coming out of the chicken. But it was evident that she felt an enormous satisfaction in seeing a large crowd — the more people came there and the more chickens were killed, the greater was the sign of success. This proved that she had become a person of considerable importance! And so in her ingenuousness she came to ask my help, telling me that if I wanted to help her and give her something of my vital force and vital presence, there would be still more people and more chickens! Then that would be a very great success. I replied that as things stood it was quite enough, that she should remain quiet.

(M6: 65-67)

*  

Certainly from the point of view of strength, of suppleness, of agility, man is not the most gifted of animals, but for expressing the Spirit no other animal can be compared with him. Everything is made with this in view. We may wish to add to this possibility other things which seem to have been sacrificed just for the sake of the mental life — but also precisely because of this capacity of expressing a mental life man is able to develop in himself faculties which are only latent.

(M9: 220)

A stupid nationalism which does not respect altered conditions

To recreate Manu entire in modern society is to ask Ganges to flow back to the Himalayas. Manu is no doubt national, but so is the animal sacrifice and the burnt offering. Because a thing is national of the past, it need not follow that it must be national of the future. It is stupid not to recognise altered conditions.

(S12: 51)

Sacrifice is the great revealer of values

When we have entered into the Unknowable, then all this other knowledge becomes valid. When we have sacrificed all forms into the Formless, then all forms become at once negligible and infinitely precious.

For the rest, that is true of all things. What we have not renounced, has no worth. Sacrifice is the great revealer of values.

(S12: 144)
Yajna to Sri Krishna

In order to stand aside, you must know yourself as the Purusha who merely watches, consents to God’s work, holds up the Adhar and enjoys the fruits that God gives. The work itself is done by God as Shakti, by Kali, and is offered up by her as a Yajna to Sri Krishna; you are the Yajamana who sees the sacrifice done, whose presence is necessary to every movement of the sacrifice and who tastes its results. This separation of yourself, this renunciation of the kārtya-abhimāna (the idea of yourself as the doer) is easier if you know what the Adhar is. Above the buddhi which is the highest function of mind is the higher buddhi, or vijñāna, the seat of the satyadharma, truth of knowledge, truth of bhāva, truth of action, and above this ideal faculty is the ānanda or cosmic bliss in which the divine part of you dwells. It is of this vijñāna and this ānanda that Christ spoke as the kingdom of God that is within you.

Unity

Unity is the secret, a complex, understanding and embracing unity. When the full heart of Love is tranquillised by knowledge into a calm ecstasy and vibrates with strength, when the strong hands of Power labour for the world in a radiant fullness of joy and light, when the luminous brain of knowledge accepts and transforms the heart’s obscure inspirations and lends itself to the workings of the high-seated Will, when all these gods are founded together on a soul of sacrifice that lives in unity with all the world and accepts all things to transmute them, then is the condition of man’s integral self-transcendence. This and not a haughty, strong and brilliant egoistic self-culture enthroning itself upon an enslaved humanity is the divine way of supermanhood.

Heraclitus and animal sacrifice

Doubly interesting is his condemnation of animal sacrifice; it is, he says, a vain attempt at purification by defilement of oneself with blood, as if we were to cleanse mud-stained feet with mud. Here we see the same trend of revolt against an ancient and universal religious practice as that which destroyed in India the sacrificial system of the Vedic religion, — although Buddha’s great impulse of compassion was absent from the mind of Heraclitus: pity could never have become a powerful motive among the old Mediterranean races. But the language of Heraclitus shows us that the ancient system of sacrifice in Greece and in India was not a mere barbaric propitiation of savage deities, as modern inquiry has falsely concluded; it had a
psychological significance, purification of the soul as well as propitiation of higher and helpful powers, and was therefore in all probability mystic and symbolical; for purification was, as we know, one of the master ideas of the ancient Mysteries. In India of the Gita, in the development of Judaism by the prophets and by Jesus, while the old physical symbols were discouraged and especially the blood-rite, the psychological idea of sacrifice was saved, emphasised and equipped with subtler symbols, such as the Christian Eucharist and the offerings of the devout in the Shaiva or Vaishnava temples. But Greece with its rational bent and its insufficient religious sense was unable to save its religion; it tended towards that sharp division between philosophy and science on one side and religion on the other which has been so peculiar a characteristic of the European mind. Here too Heraclitus was, as in so many other directions, a forerunner, an indicator of the natural bent of occidental thought.

(S13: 246-47)

The outward rewards and the sufferings of life are small things . . .

The outward rewards and the sufferings of life are small things to the higher soul of knowledge in man: even his high mind of knowledge will often face all that the world can do to afflict it, just as it is ready to make all manner of sacrifices in the pursuit and the affirmation of the truth it knows and lives for.

(S13: 425)

To embrace individuality after transcending it is the last and divine sacrifice

There is a transcendent Consciousness which surpasses the universe and of which all these worlds are only a side-issue and a by-play. To that consciousness he aspires and attains. There is a Consciousness which, being transcendent, is yet the universe and all that the universe contains. Into that consciousness he enlarges his limited ego; he becomes one with all beings and all inanimate objects in a single self-awareness, love, delight, all-embracing energy. There is a consciousness which, being both transcendental and universal, yet accepts the apparent limitations of individuality for work, for various standpoints of knowledge, for the play of the Lord with His creations; for the ego is there that it may finally convert itself into a free centre of the divine work and the divine play. That consciousness too he has sufficient love, joy and knowledge to accept; he is puissant enough to effect that conversion. To embrace individuality after transcending it is the last and divine sacrifice. The perfect Arhat is he who is able to live simultaneously in all these three apparent states of existence, elevate the lower into the higher, receive the higher into the lower, so that he may represent perfectly in the symbols of the world that with which he is identified in all parts of his being, — the triple and triune Brahman.

(S13: 443-44)
SECTION FOUR

Sacrifice and the Vedic society

This picture of Vedic society \([a \ completely \ pastoral \ life, \ without \ priests \ or \ warriors]\) could easily be challenged. The householder may have lit daily the fire on the household altar, but when he wanted to offer a sacrifice he did it with the aid of sacrificial priests who knew the ritual. Sometimes the Rishi himself performed the sacrifice for the householder. He was not a priest by profession, however, for he might have any occupation in the society. Besides, in a large sacrifice there were many versed in the Vedic rites who performed different functions. In the very first verse of the Rig Veda Agni is described as being himself the Purohit, the priest representative of the householder sacrificer, Yajamana, as the Ritwik, the one who saw to the arrangement of the rites, the Hota who invoked the Gods and gave the offering, and in other hymns he is spoken of as the priest of the purification, the priest of the lustration etc. All this has obviously an esoteric sense but it testifies to the habitual presence of a number of priests at any large sacrifice. So we cannot say that there were no priests in the Vedic age. There does not seem to have been any priestly caste until later times when the four castes came definitely into being. But the Brahmins were not predominantly priests but rather scholars and intellectuals with a religious authority derived from birth and from knowledge of the scriptures and the books of the social law, Shastra. The function of priesthood has never been highly honoured in India and it would therefore be incorrect to speak of priestcraft or any rule by priests or ecclesiastics at any time in Indian history.

As for the warriors, there are in the Rig Veda two or three hymns describing a great battle which the scholars declare to have been the fight of one king against ten allied kings, and besides that, the hymns are full of images of war and battle. These too have an esoteric meaning, but they indicate a state of things in which war and battle must have been frequent; so we cannot say that there were no warriors.

Again, your description seems to indicate that all the householders were initiated in the knowledge held by the Rishis. But this was a secret knowledge imparted by the Rishi to his family and to disciples whom he found to be fit, it was not given to everyone. The language of the Veda was also veiled and mystic, “secret words of seer-wisdom which yielded their meaning to the seer” as one of the Rishis described them, but understood in an outward sense by the ordinary uninitiated man. This principle of secrecy was common to all the mysteries in every country and it was maintained also in ancient India. The religious worship practised by the common man and any communion it might bring with the gods was only a preliminary
preparation and not the deeper knowledge.

It was always held in ancient India that religion, life and society should be so arranged that every man should have the opportunity to grow spiritually by whatever means is suitable to his capacity, adhikāra. Everywhere there was a system of gradations by which this purpose could be served. It provided for a continual contact of man at every step with what was behind and beyond the material life. In Vedic times meditation, worship and sacrifice were the means by which this connection with the Unseen was sought to be established and maintained. The sacrifice was symbolic in its ritual and the symbols were supposed to have an occult power to create a relation between the unseen powers worshipped and the worshipper; by it they were called in to preside over and help all the action and life of the human being. Worship was for establishing a more inner relation and meditation the means of spiritual experience, development and knowledge. The institutions which grew up in later Vedic times, such as the four Asramas and the four Varnas, the fourfold arrangement of society originally had the same intention and are so recognised in the Gita. So trained a man could develop until he was ready for a deeper knowledge and receive the initiation. In the Vedic times this deeper knowledge was the mystic doctrine and practice of the Vedic Rishis; it was that that afterwards developed on a hundred branching lines into the later systems of Yoga.

(S29: 418-20)

The Rig Veda

From the historical point of view the Rig Veda may be regarded as a record of a great advance made by humanity by special means at a certain period of its collective progress. In its esoteric, as well as its exoteric significance, it is the Book of Works, of the inner and the outer sacrifice; it is the spirit’s hymn of battle and victory as it discovers and climbs to planes of thought and experience inaccessible to the natural or animal man, man’s praise of the divine Light, Power and Grace at work in the mortal. It is far, therefore, from being an attempt to set down the results of intellectual or imaginative speculation, nor does it consist of the dogmas of a primitive religion. Only, out of the sameness of experience and out of the impersonality of the knowledge received, there arise a fixed body of conceptions constantly repeated and a fixed symbolic language which, perhaps, in that early human speech, was the inevitable form of these conceptions because alone capable by its combined concreteness and power of mystic suggestion of expressing that which for the ordinary mind of the race was inexpressible. We have, at any rate, the same notions repeated from hymn to hymn with the same constant terms and figures and frequently in the same phrases with an entire indifference to any search for poetical originality or any demand for novelty of thought and freshness of language. No pursuit of aesthetic grace, richness or beauty induces these mystic poets to vary the consecrated form which had become
for them a sort of divine algebra transmitting the eternal formulae of the Knowledge to the continuous succession of the initiates.

\[(S15: 10-11)\]

**The Upanishadic Rishis**

The Rishis of the Upanishads followed another method. They sought to recover the lost or waning knowledge by meditation and spiritual experience and they used the text of the ancient mantras as a prop or an authority for their own intuitions and perceptions; or else the Vedic Word was a seed of thought and vision by which they recovered old truths in new forms. What they found, they expressed in other terms more intelligible to the age in which they lived. In a certain sense their handling of the texts was not disinterested; it was not governed by the scholar’s scrupulous desire to arrive at the exact intention of the words and the precise thought of the sentences in their actual framing. They were seekers of a higher than verbal truth and used words merely as suggestions for the illumination towards which they were striving. They knew not or they neglected the etymological sense and employed often a method of symbolic interpretation of component sounds in which it is very difficult to follow them. For this reason, while the Upanishads are invaluable for the light they shed on the principal ideas and on the psychological system of the ancient Rishis, they help us as little as the Brahmanas in determining the accurate sense of the texts which they quote. Their real work was to found Vedanta rather than to interpret Veda.

\[(S15: 14-15)\]

**Veda culminating in Vedanta**

For this great movement resulted in a new and more permanently powerful statement of thought and spirituality, Veda culminating in Vedanta. And it held in itself two strong tendencies which worked towards the disintegration of the old Vedic thought and culture. First, it tended to subordinate more and more completely the outward ritual, the material utility of the mantra and the sacrifice to a more purely spiritual aim and intention. The balance, the synthesis preserved by the old Mystics between the external and the internal, the material and the spiritual life was displaced and disorganised. A new balance, a new synthesis was established, leaning finally towards asceticism and renunciation, and maintained itself until it was in its turn displaced and disorganised by the exaggeration of its own tendencies in Buddhism. The sacrifice, the symbolic ritual became more and more a useless survival and even an encumbrance; yet, as so often happens, by the very fact of becoming mechanical and ineffective the importance of everything that was most external in them came to be exaggerated and their minutiae irrationally enforced by that part of the national
mind which still clung to them. A sharp practical division came into being, effective though never entirely recognised in theory, between Veda and Vedanta, a distinction which might be expressed in the formula, “the Veda for the priests, the Vedanta for the sages.”

(S15: 15)

The transition from the Vedic speech to the clearer and more philosophical language of the Upanishads ending in Buddhism and abolishing of the Vedic sacrifice

The second tendency of the Vedantic movement was to disencumber itself progressively of the symbolic language, the veil of concrete myth and poetic figure, in which the Mystics had shrouded their thought and to substitute a clearer statement and more philosophical language. The complete evolution of this tendency rendered obsolete the utility not only of the Vedic ritual but of the Vedic text. Upanishads, increasingly clear and direct in their language, became the fountainhead of the highest Indian thought and replaced the inspired verses of Vasishtha and Vishwamitra.1 The Vedas, becoming less and less the indispensable basis of education, were no longer studied with the same zeal and intelligence; their symbolic language, ceasing to be used, lost the remnant of its inner sense to new generations whose whole manner of thought was different from that of the Vedic forefathers. The Ages of Intuition were passing away into the first dawn of the Age of Reason.

Buddhism completed the revolution and left of the externalities of the ancient world only some venerable pomps and some mechanical usages. It sought to abolish the Vedic sacrifice and to bring into use the popular vernacular in place of the literary tongue. And although the consummation of its work was delayed for several centuries by the revival of Hinduism in the Puranic religions, the Veda itself benefited little by this respite. In order to combat the popularity of the new religion it was necessary to put forward instead of venerable but unintelligible texts Scriptures written in an easy form of a more modern Sanskrit. For the mass of the nation the Puranas pushed aside the Veda and the forms of new religious systems took the place of the ancient ceremonies. As the Veda had passed from the sage to the priest, so now it began to pass from the hands of the priest into the hands of the scholar. And in that keeping it suffered the last mutilation of its sense and the last diminution of its true dignity and sanctity.

(S15: 15-16)

1. Again this expresses the main tendency and is subject to qualification. The Vedas are also quoted as authorities; but as a whole it is the Upanishads that become the Book of Knowledge, the Veda being rather the Book of Works.
On scrupulous accuracy depended the effectuality of the sacrifice

The text of the Veda which we possess has remained uncorrupted for over two thousand years. It dates, so far as we know, from that great period of Indian intellectual activity, contemporaneous with the Greek efflorescence, but earlier in its beginnings, which founded the culture and civilisation recorded in the classical literature of the land. We cannot say to how much earlier a date our text may be carried. But there are certain considerations which justify us in supposing for it an almost enormous antiquity. An accurate text, accurate in every syllable, accurate in every accent, was a matter of supreme importance to the Vedic ritualists; for on scrupulous accuracy depended the effectuality of the sacrifice. We are told, for instance, in the Brahmanas the story of Twashtri who, performing a sacrifice to produce an avenger of his son slain by Indra, produced, owing to an error of accentuation, not a slayer of Indra, but one of whom Indra must be the slayer. The prodigious accuracy of the ancient Indian memory is also notorious. And the sanctity of the text prevented such interpolations, alterations, modernising revisions as have replaced by the present form of the Mahabharata the ancient epic of the Kurus. It is not, therefore, at all improbable that we have the Sanhita of Vyasa substantially as it was arranged by the great sage and compiler.

(S15: 17)

The Karmakanda

In the formula of the philosophic schools, the hymns, even while standing as a supreme authority for knowledge, are yet principally and fundamentally concerned with the Karmakanda, with works, — and by works was understood, preeminently, the ritualistic observation of the Vedic sacrifices. Sayana labours always in the light of this idea. Into this mould he moulds the language of the Veda, turning the mass of its characteristic words into the ritualistic significances, — food, priest, giver, wealth, praise, prayer, rite, sacrifice.

(S15: 22)

The modern theory of the Veda

The modern theory of the Veda starts with the conception, for which Sayana is responsible, of the Vedas as the hymnal of an early, primitive and largely barbaric society crude in its moral and religious conceptions, rude in its social structure and entirely childlike in its outlook upon the world that environed it. The ritualism which Sayana accepted as part of a divine knowledge and as endowed with a mysterious efficacy, European scholarship accepted as an elaboration of the old savage propitiatory sacrifices offered to imaginary superhuman personalities who might be
benevolent or malevolent according as they were worshipped or neglected. The historical element admitted by Sayana was readily seized on and enlarged by new renderings and new explanations of the allusions in the hymns developed in an eager hunt for clues to the primitive history, manners and institutions of those barbarous races. The naturalistic element played a still more important role. The obvious identification of the Vedic gods in their external aspects with certain Nature-Powers was used as the starting-point for a comparative study of Aryan mythologies; the hesitating identification of certain of the less prominent deities as Sun-Powers was taken as a general clue to the system of primitive myth-making and elaborate sun-myth and star-myth theories of comparative mythology were founded. In this new light the Vedic hymnology has come to be interpreted as a half-superstitious, half-poetic allegory of Nature with an important astronomical element. The rest is partly contemporary history, partly the formulae and practices of a sacrificial ritualism, not mystic, but merely primitive and superstitious.

(S15: 25)

The Rig Veda is one in all its parts

The Rig Veda is one in all its parts. Whichever of its ten Mandalas we choose, we find the same substance, the same ideas, the same images, the same phrases. The Rishis are the seers of a single truth and use in its expression a common language. They differ in temperament and personality; some are inclined to a more rich, subtle and profound use of Vedic symbolism; others give voice to their spiritual experience in a barer and simpler diction, with less fertility of thought, richness of poetical image or depth and fullness of suggestion. Often the songs of one seer vary in their manner, range from the utmost simplicity to the most curious richness. Or there are risings and fallings in the same hymn; it proceeds from the most ordinary conventions of the general symbol of sacrifice to a movement of packed and complex thought. Some of the Suktas are plain and almost modern in their language; others baffle us at first by their semblance of antique obscurity. But these differences of manner take nothing from the unity of spiritual experience, nor are they complicated by any variation of the fixed terms and the common formulae. In the deep and mystic style of Dirghatamas Auchathya as in the melodious lucidity of Medhatithi Kanwa, in the puissant and energetic hymns of Vishwamitra as in Vasishtha’s even harmonies we have the same firm foundation of knowledge and the same scrupulous adherence to the sacred conventions of the Initiates.

(S15: 58)
Difference in Sayana’s and Sri Aurobindo’s approach to Vedic exegesis and interpretation of Yajña

Sayana gives to the words dhī, rtam, etc., very variable significances. Rtam, which is almost the key-word of any psychological or spiritual interpretation, is rendered by him sometimes as “truth”, more often “sacrifice”, occasionally in the sense of water. The psychological interpretation gives it invariably the sense of Truth. Dhī is rendered by Sayana variously “thought”, “prayer”, “action”, “food”, etc. The psychological interpretation gives it consistently the sense of thought or understanding. And so with the other fixed terms of Veda. Moreover, Sayana’s tendency, is to obliterate all fine shades and distinctions between words and to give them their vaguest general significance. All epithets conveying ideas of mental activity mean for him simply “intelligent”, all words suggesting various ideas of force, and the Veda overflows with them, are reduced to the broad idea of strength. I found myself on the contrary impressed by the great importance of fixing and preserving the right shade of meaning and precise association to be given to different words, however close they may be to each other in their general sense. I do not see indeed why we should suppose that the Vedic Rishis, unlike all other masters of poetic style, used words pell-mell and indiscriminately without feeling their just associations and giving them their right and exact force in the verbal combination.

By following this principle I found that without departing from the simple natural and straightforward sense of words and clauses an extraordinarily large body not only of separate verses but of entire passages came at once into evidence which entirely altered the whole character of the Veda. For this Scripture then appeared to have a constant vein of the richest gold of thought and spiritual experience running all through it and appearing sometimes in small streaks, sometimes in larger bands, in the majority of its hymns. Moreover, besides the words that in their plain and ordinary sense give at once a wealth of psychological significance to their context, the Veda is full of others to which it is possible to give either an external and material or an internal and psychological value according to our conception of the general purport of Veda. For instance such words as rāye, rayi, rādhas, ratma, may mean either merely material prosperity and riches or internal felicity and plenitude applying itself equally to the subjective and the objective world; dhana, vāja, poṣa may mean either objective wealth, plenty and increase or all possessions internal or external, their plenitude and their growth in the life of the individual. Rāye is used in the Upanishads, in a quotation from the Rig Veda, to mean spiritual felicity; why should it be incapable of bearing that sense in the original text? Vāja occurs frequently in a context in which every other word has a psychological significance and the mention of physical plenty comes in with a violent jar of incoherency into the homogeneous totality of the thought. Commonsense, therefore, demands that the use of these words with a psychological import should
be admitted in the Veda.

But if this is done consistently, not only whole verses and passages, but whole hymns assume at once the psychological complexion. On one condition this transformation is frequently complete, leaving no word or phrase unaffected, — the condition that we should admit the symbolic character of the Vedic sacrifice. We find in the Gita the word *yajña*, sacrifice, used in a symbolic sense for all action, whether internal or external, that is consecrated to the gods or to the Supreme. Was such symbolic use of the word born of a later philosophical intellectualty, or was it inherent in the Vedic idea of sacrifice? I found that in the Veda itself there were hymns in which the idea of the *yajña* or of the victim is openly symbolical, others in which the veil is quite transparent. The question then arose whether these were later compositions developing an incipient symbolism out of old superstitious practices or rather the occasional plainer statement of a sense which is in most hymns more or less carefully veiled by the figure. If there were no constant recurrence of psychological passages in the Veda, the former explanation would, no doubt, have to be accepted. But on the contrary whole hymns took naturally a psychological sense proceeding with a perfect and luminous coherency from verse to verse, where the only points of obscurity were the mention of the sacrifice or of the offering or sometimes of the officiating priest, who might be either a man or a god. If these words could be interpreted symbolically, I found always that the progression of thought became more perfect, more luminous, more coherent and the sense of the hymn in its entirety was victoriously completed. I felt therefore justified by every canon of sound criticism in pursuing my hypothesis farther and including in it the symbolic sense of the Vedic ritual.

(S15: 39-41)

**The Vedic sacrifice**

The Vedic sacrifice consists of three features, — omitting for the moment the god and the mantra, — the persons who offer, the offering and the fruits of the offering. If the *yajña* is the action consecrated to the gods, I could not but take the *yajamāna*, the giver of the sacrifice, as the doer of the action. *Yajña* is works, internal or external, the *yajamāna* must be the soul or the personality as the doer. But there were also the officiating priests, *hotā, rtvij, purohitā, brahmā, adhvaryu* etc. What was their part in the symbolism? For if we once suppose a symbolic sense for the sacrifice, we must suppose also a symbolic value for each feature of the ceremony. I found that the gods were continually spoken of as priests of the offering and in many passages it was undisguisedly a non-human power or energy which presided over the sacrifice. I perceived also that throughout Veda the elements of our personality are themselves continually personified. I had only to apply this rule inversely and to suppose that the person of the priest in the external figure represented in the internal activities
figured a non-human power or energy or an element of our personality. It remained to fix the psychological sense of the different priestly offices. Here I found that the Veda itself presented a clue by its philological indications and insistences, such as the use of the word *purohita* in its separated form with the sense of the representative “put in front” and a frequent reference to the god Agni who symbolises the divine Will or Force in humanity that takes up the action in all consecration of works.

The offerings were more difficult to understand. Even if the Soma-wine by the context in which it occurred, its use and effect and the philological indication of its synonyms, suggested its own interpretation, what could possibly be indicated by the “ghrītam”, the clarified butter in the sacrifice? And yet the word as used in the Veda was constantly insisting on its own symbolical significance. What for instance could be made of clarified butter dropping from heaven or dripping from the horses of Indra or dripping from the mind? Obviously, this was grotesque nonsense, if the sense of *ghṛta* as clarified butter was anything more than a symbol used with great looseness, so that often the external sense was wholly or partly put aside in the mind of the thinker. It was possible of course to vary conveniently the sense of the words, to take *ghṛta* sometimes as butter and sometimes as water and *manas* sometimes as the mind, sometimes as food or a cake. But I found that *ghṛta* was constantly used in connection with the thought or the mind, that heaven in Veda was a symbol of the mind, that Indra represented the illuminated mentality and his two horses double energies of that mentality and even that the Veda sometimes speaks plainly of offering the intellect (*manīśa*) as purified *ghṛta* to the gods, *ghṛtam na pūtaṁ manīśām.* The word *ghṛta* counts also among its philological significances the sense of a rich or warm brightness. It was by this concurrence of indications that I felt justified in fixing a certain psychological significance for the figure of the clarified butter. And I found the same rule and the same method applicable to other features of the sacrifice.

The fruits of the offering were in appearance purely material — cows, horses, gold, offspring, men, physical strength, victory in battle. Here the difficulty thickened. But I had already found that the Vedic cow was an exceedingly enigmatical animal and came from no earthly herd. The word *go* means both cow and light and in a number of passages evidently meant light even while putting forward the image of the cow. This is clear enough when we have to do with the cows of the sun — the Homeric kine of Helios — and the cows of the Dawn. Psychologically, the physical Light might well be used as a symbol of knowledge and especially of the divine knowledge. But how could this mere possibility be tested and established? I found that passages occurred in which all the surrounding context was psychological and only the image of the cow interfered with its obtrusive material suggestion. Indra is invoked as the maker of perfect forms to drink the wine of Soma; drinking he becomes full of ecstasy and a “giver of cows”; then we can attain to his most intimate

2. See *Rig Veda* I.110.6 and III.2.1. — Ed.
or his most ultimate right thinkings, then we question him and his clear discernment brings us our highest good. It is obvious that in such a passage these cows cannot be material herds nor would the giving of physical Light carry any sense in the context. In one instance at least the psychological symbolism of the Vedic cow was established with certainty to my mind. I then applied it to other passages in which the word occurred and always I saw that it resulted in the best sense and the greatest possible coherency in the context.

The cow and horse, go and aśva, are constantly associated. Usha, the Dawn, is described as gomatī aśvatī; Dawn gives to the sacrificer horses and cows. As applied to the physical dawn gomatī means accompanied by or bringing the rays of light and is an image of the dawn of illumination in the human mind. Therefore aśvatī also cannot refer merely to the physical steed; it must have a psychological significance as well. A study of the Vedic horse led me to the conclusion that go and aśva represent the two companion ideas of Light and Energy, Consciousness and Force, which to the Vedic and Vedantic mind were the double or twin aspect of all the activities of existence.

It was apparent, therefore, that the two chief fruits of the Vedic sacrifice, wealth of cows and wealth of horses, were symbolic of richness of mental illumination and abundance of vital energy. It followed that the other fruits continually associated with these two chief results of the Vedic karma must also be capable of a psychological significance. It remained only to fix their exact purport.

(S15: 42-44)

Thought development is not absent in the Vedic hymns

A certain principle of thought-development also has not been absent from the arrangement of these Vedic hymns. The opening Mandala seems to have been so designed that the general thought of the Veda in its various elements should gradually unroll itself under the cover of the established symbols by the voices of a certain number of Rishis who almost all rank high as thinkers and sacred singers and are, some of them, among the most famous names of Vedic tradition. Nor can it be by accident that the tenth or closing Mandala gives us, with an even greater miscellaneity of authors, the last developments of the thought of the Veda and some of the most modern in language of its Suktras. It is here that we find the Sacrifice of the Purusha and the great Hymn of the Creation. It is here also that modern scholars think they discover the first origins of the Vedantic philosophy, the Brahmavada.

(S15: 60)
Four verses in which the psychological sense comes out with force and clarity

There are four verses in the Hymn to Agni, the fifth to the eighth, in which the psychological sense comes out with a great force and clearness, escaping from the veil of the symbol.

\begin{verbatim}
Agnir hota kavikratuh, satyaś citaśravastamaḥ;
devo deverbīr ā gamat.
Yad anāga dāśuše tvam, agne bhadram kariṣyasi;
tavet tat satyam aṅgirah.
Upa tvāgne dive dive, dośāvastar dhiyā vayam;
namo bharanta emasi.
Rājantam adhvarāṇāṁ, gopāṁ rītasya dīdivim;
vardhamānaṁ sve dame.
\end{verbatim}

In this passage we have a series of terms plainly bearing or obviously capable of a psychological sense and giving their colour to the whole context. Sayana, however, insists on a purely ritual interpretation and it is interesting to see how he arrives at it. In the first phrase we have the word kavi meaning a seer and, even if we take kratu to mean work of the sacrifice, we shall have as a result, “Agni, the priest whose work or rite is that of the seer”, a turn which at once gives a symbolic character to the sacrifice and is in itself sufficient to serve as the seed of a deeper understanding of the Veda. Sayana feels that he has to turn the difficulty at any cost and therefore he gets rid of the sense of seer for kavi and gives it another and unusual significance. He then explains that Agni is satya, true, because he brings about the true fruit of the sacrifice. Śravas Sayana renders “fame”, Agni has an exceedingly various renown. It would have been surely better to take the word in the sense of wealth so as to avoid the incoherency of this last rendering. We shall then have this result for the fifth verse, “Agni the priest, active in the ritual, who is true (in its fruit) — for his is the most varied wealth, — let him come, a god with the gods.”

To the sixth Rik the commentator gives a very awkward and abrupt construction and trivial turn of thought which breaks entirely the flow of the verse. “That good (in the shape of varied wealth) which thou shalt effect for the giver, thine is that. This is true, O Angiras,” that is to say, there can be no doubt about this fact, for if Agni does good to the giver by providing him with wealth, he in turn will perform fresh sacrifices to Agni, and thus the good of the sacrificer becomes the good of the god. Here again it would be better to render, “The good that thou wilt do for the giver, that is that truth of thee, O Angiras,” for we thus get at once a simpler sense and construction and an explanation of the epithet, satya, true, as applied to the god of the sacrificial fire. This is the truth of Agni that to the giver of the sacrifice he surely gives good in return.
The seventh verse offers no difficulty to the ritualistic interpretation except the curious phrase, “we come bearing the prostration.” Sayana explains that bearing here means simply doing and he renders, “To thee day by day we, by night and by day, come with the thought performing the prostration.” In the eighth verse he takes ṛtasya in the sense of truth and explains it as the true fruit of the ritual. “To thee shining, the protector of the sacrifices, manifesting always their truth (that is, their inevitable fruit), increasing in thy own house.” Again, it would be simpler and better to take ṛtam in the sense of sacrifice and to render, “To thee shining out in the sacrifices, protector of the rite, ever luminous, increasing in thy own house.” The “own house” of Agni, says the commentator, is the place of sacrifice and this is indeed called frequently enough in Sanskrit, “the house of Agni”.

We see, therefore, that with a little managing we can work out a purely ritual sense quite empty of thought even for a passage which at first sight offers a considerable wealth of psychological significance. Nevertheless, however ingeniously it is effected, flaws and cracks remain which betray the artificiality of the work. We have had to throw overboard the plain sense of kavi which adheres to it throughout the Veda and foist in an unreal rendering. We have either to divorce the two words satya and ṛta which are closely associated in the Veda or to give a forced sense to ṛta. And throughout we have avoided the natural suggestions pressed on us by the language of the Rishi.

Let us now follow instead the opposite principle and give their full psychological value to the words of the inspired text. Kratu means in Sanskrit work or action and especially work in the sense of the sacrifice; but it means also power or strength (the Greek kratos) effective of action. Psychologically this power effective of action is the will. The word may also mean mind or intellect and Sayana admits thought or knowledge as a possible sense for kratu. Śravas means literally hearing and from this primary significance is derived its secondary sense, “fame”. But, psychologically, the idea of hearing leads up in Sanskrit to another sense which we find in śravaṇa, śruti, śruta, — revealed knowledge, the knowledge which comes by inspiration. Drṣṭi and śruti, sight and hearing, revelation and inspiration are the two chief powers of that supra-mental faculty which belongs to the old Vedic idea of the Truth, the Ritam. The word śravas is not recognised by the lexicographers in this sense, but it is accepted in the sense of a hymn, — the inspired word of the Veda. This indicates clearly that at one time it conveyed the idea of inspiration or of something inspired, whether word or knowledge. This significance, then, we are entitled to give it, provisionally at least, in the present passage; for the other sense of fame is entirely incoherent and meaningless in the context. Again the word namas is also capable of a psychological sense; for it means literally “bending down” and is applied to the act of adoring submission to the deity rendered physically by the prostration of the body. When therefore the Rishi speaks of “bearing obeisance to Agni by the thought” we can hardly doubt that he gives to namas the psychological sense of the inward
prostration, the act of submission or surrender to the deity.

We get then this rendering of the four verses: —

“May Agni, priest of the offering whose will towards action is that of the seer, who is true, most rich in varied inspiration, come, a god with the gods.

“The good that thou wilt create for the giver, that is that truth of thee, O Angiras.

“To thee day by day, O Agni, in the night and in the light we by the thought come bearing our submission, —

“To thee who shinest out from the sacrifices (or, who governest the sacrifices), guardian of the Truth and its illumination, increasing in thy own home.”

The defect of the translation is that we have had to employ one and the same word for *satyam* and *rātam* whereas, as we see in the formula *satyam rātam brhat*, there was a distinction in the Vedic mind between the precise significances of the two words.

Who, then, is this god Agni to whom language of so mystic a fervour is addressed, to whom functions so vast and profound are ascribed? Who is this guardian of the Truth, who is in his act its illumination, whose will in the act is the will of a seer possessed of a divine wisdom governing his richly varied inspiration? What is the Truth that he guards? And what is this good that he creates for the giver who comes always to him in thought day and night bearing as his sacrifice submission and self-surrender? Is it gold and horses and cattle that he brings or is it some diviner riches?

It is not the sacrificial Fire that is capable of these functions, nor can it be any material flame or principle of physical heat and light. Yet throughout the symbol of the sacrificial Fire is maintained. It is evident that we are in the presence of a mystic symbolism to which the fire, the sacrifice, the priest are only outward figures of a deeper teaching and yet figures which it was thought necessary to maintain and to hold constantly in front.

(Agni is the divine will perfectly inspired by divine Wisdom)

Agni in the Veda is always presented in the double aspect of force and light. He is the divine power that builds up the worlds, a power which acts always with a perfect knowledge, for it is *jātavedas*, knower of all births, *viśvāni vayunāni vidvān*, — it knows all manifestations or phenomena or it possesses all forms and activities of the divine wisdom. Moreover it is repeatedly said that the gods have established Agni as the immortal in mortals, the divine power in man, the energy of fulfilment through which they do their work in him. It is this work which is symbolised by the sacrifice.

Psychologically, then, we may take Agni to be the divine will perfectly inspired by divine Wisdom, and indeed one with it, which is the active or effective power of the Truth-consciousness. This is the obvious sense of the word *kavikratuḥ*, he whose..
active will or power of effectivity is that of the seer, — works, that is to say, with the knowledge which comes by the truth-consciousness and in which there is no misapplication or error. The epithets that follow confirm this interpretation. Agni is satya, true in his being; perfect possession of his own truth and the essential truth of things gives him the power to apply it perfectly in all act and movement of force. He has both the satyam and the rtam. Moreover, he is citraśravastamaḥ; from the Ritam there proceeds a fullness of richly luminous and varied inspirations which give the capacity for doing the perfect work. For all these are epithets of Agni as the hotṛ, the priest of the sacrifice, he who performs the offering. Therefore it is the power of Agni to apply the Truth in the work (karma or apas) symbolised by the sacrifice, that makes him the object of human invocation. The importance of the sacrificial fire in the outward ritual corresponds to the importance of this inward force of unified Light and Power in the inward rite by which there is communication and interchange between the mortal and the Immortal. Agni is elsewhere frequently described as the envoy, dūta, the medium of that communication and interchange.

We see, then, in what capacity Agni is called to the sacrifice. “Let him come, a god with the gods.” The emphasis given to the idea of divinity by this repetition, devo devebhir, becomes intelligible when we recall the standing description of Agni as the god in human beings, the immortal in mortals, the divine guest. We may give the full psychological sense by translating, “Let him come, a divine power with the divine powers.” For in the external sense of the Veda the Gods are universal powers of physical Nature personified; in any inner sense they must be universal powers of Nature in her subjective activities, Will, Mind, etc. But in the Veda there is always a distinction between the ordinary human or mental action of these puissances, manusvat, and the divine. It is supposed that man by the right use of their mental action in the inner sacrifice to the gods can convert them into their true or divine nature, the mortal can become immortal. Thus the Ribhus, who were at first human beings or represented human faculties, became divine and immortal powers by perfection in the work, suktṛyayā, svapasyayā. It is a continual self-offering of the human to the divine and a continual descent of the divine into the human which seems to be symbolised in the sacrifice.

The state of immortality thus attained is conceived as a state of felicity or bliss founded on a perfect Truth and Right, satyam rtam. We must, I think, understand in this sense the verse that follows. “The good (happiness) which thou wilt create for the giver, that is that truth of thee, O Agni.” In other words, the essence of this truth, which is the nature of Agni, is the freedom from evil, the state of perfect good and happiness which the Ritam carries in itself and which is sure to be created in the mortal when he offers the sacrifice by the action of Agni as the divine priest. Bhadram means anything good, auspicious, happy and by itself need not carry any deep significance. But we find it in the Veda used, like rtam, in a special sense. It is described in one of the hymns (V.82) as the opposite of the evil dream
(duḥṣvapnyam), the false consciousness of that which is not the Ritam, and of 
duritam, false going, which means all evil and suffering. Bhadram is therefore 
equivalent to suvitam, right going, which means all good and felicity belonging to 
the state of the Truth, the Ritam. It is Mayas, the felicity, and the gods who represent 
the Truth-consciousness are described as mayobhuvah, those who bring or carry in 
their being the felicity. Thus every part of the Veda, if properly understood, throws 
light upon every other part. It is only when we are misled by its veils that we find in 
it an incoherence.

In the next verse there seems to be stated the condition of the effective sacrifice. 
It is the continual resort day by day, in the night and in the light, of the thought in 
the human being with submission, adoration, self-surrender, to the divine Will and 
Wisdom represented by Agni. Night and Day, Naktosāsā are also symbolical, like 
all the other gods in the Veda, and the sense seems to be that in all states of conscious-
ness, whether illumined or obscure, there must be a constant submission and reference 
of all activities to the divine control.

For whether by day or night Agni shines out in the sacrifices; he is the guardian 
of the Truth, of the Ritam in man and defends it from the powers of darkness; he is 
its constant illumination burning up even in obscure and besieged states of the 
mind. The ideas thus briefly indicated in the eighth verse are constantly found 
throughout the hymns to Agni in the Rig Veda.

Agni is finally described as increasing in his own home. We can no longer be 
satisfied with the explanation of the own home of Agni as the “fire-room” of the 
Vedic householder. We must seek in the Veda itself for another interpretation and 
we find it in the 75th hymn of the first Mandala.

Yajā no mitrāvaruṇā, yajā devān ūrtāṁ bṛhat; 
agne yakṣī svāṁ damam.

“Sacrifice for us to Mitra and Varuna, sacrifice to the gods, to the Truth, 
the Vast; O Agni, sacrifice to thy own home.”

Here ūrtāṁ bṛhat and svāṁ damam seem to express the goal of the sacrifice and 
this is perfectly in consonance with the imagery of the Veda which frequently 
describes the sacrifice as travelling towards the gods and man himself as a traveller 
moving towards the truth, the light or the felicity. It is evident, therefore, that the 
Truth, the Vast and Agni’s own home are identical. Agni and other gods are frequently 
spoken of as being born in the truth, dwelling in the wide or vast. The sense, then, 
will be in our passage that Agni the divine will and power in man increases in the 
truth-consciousness, its proper sphere, where false limitations are broken down, 
urāv anibādhe, in the wide and the limitless.

Thus in these four verses of the opening hymn of the Veda we get the first
indications of the principal ideas of the Vedic Rishis, — the conception of a Truth-consciousness supramental and divine, the invocation of the gods as powers of the Truth to raise man out of the falsehoods of the mortal mind, the attainment in and by this Truth of an immortal state of perfect good and felicity and the inner sacrifice and offering of what one has and is by the mortal to the Immortal as the means of the divine consummation. All the rest of Vedic thought in its spiritual aspects is grouped around these central conceptions.

(S15: 65-69)

A great scripture with a double significance, one exoteric, the other esoteric

But even if an element of high spiritual knowledge, or passages full of high ideas were found in the hymns, it might be supposed that those are perhaps only a small factor, while the rest is a sacrificial liturgy, formulas of prayer and praise to the Gods meant to induce them to shower on the sacrificers material blessings such as plenty of cows, horses, fighting men, sons, food, wealth of all kinds, protection, victory in battle, or to bring down rain from heaven, recover the sun from clouds or from the grip of Night, the free flowing of the seven rivers, recovery of cattle from the Dasyus (or the Dravidians) and the other boons which on the surface seem to be the object of this ritual worship. The Rishis would then be men with some spiritual or mystic knowledge but otherwise dominated by all the popular ideas proper to their times. These two elements they would then mix up intimately in their hymns and this would account at least in part for the obscurity and the rather strange and sometimes grotesque jumble which the traditional interpretation offers us. But if on the other hand a considerable body of high thinking clearly appears, if there is a large mass of verses or whole hymns which admit only of a mystic character and significance, and if finally, the ritualistic and external details are found to take frequently the appearance of symbols such as were always used by the mystics, and if there are many clear indications, even some explicit statements in the hymns themselves of such a meaning, then all changes. We are in the presence of a great scripture of the mystics with a double significance, one exoteric, the other esoteric; the symbols themselves have a meaning which makes them a part of the esoteric significance, an element in the secret teaching and knowledge. The whole of the Rig Veda, a small number of hymns perhaps excepted, becomes in its inner sense such a Scripture. At the same time the exoteric sense need not be merely a mask; the Riks may have been regarded by their authors as words of power, powerful not only for internal but for external things. A purely spiritual scripture would concern itself with only spiritual significances, but the ancient mystics were also what we would call occultists, men who believed that by inner means outer as well as inner results could be produced, that thought and words could be so used as to bring about realisations of every kind, — in the phrase common in the Veda itself, — both the human and the divine.

(S16: 10-11)
either a mystic significance or no coherent meaning at all

He [the seer or mystic poet] is not thinking of the Nature-Power presiding over the outer element of fire or of the fire of the ceremonial sacrifice. Or he speaks of Saraswati as one who impels the words of Truth and awakes to right readings or as one opulent with the thought: Saraswati awakes to consciousness or makes us conscious of the “Great Ocean and illumines all our thoughts.” It is surely not the River Goddess whom he is thus hymning but the Power, the River if you will, of inspiration, the word of the Truth, bringing its light into our thoughts, building up in us that Truth, an inner knowledge. The Gods constantly stand out in their psychological functions; the sacrifice is the outer symbol of an inner work, an inner interchange between the gods and men, — man giving what he has, the gods giving in return the horses of power, the herds of light, the heroes of Strength to be his retinue, winning for him victory in his battle with the hosts of Darkness, Vritras, Dasyus, Panis. When the Rishi says, “Let us become conscious whether by the War-Horse or by the Word of a Strength beyond men”, his words have either a mystic significance or they have no coherent meaning at all.

Kratu interpreted esoterically

The word kratu means ordinarily work or sacrifice but it also means intelligence, power or resolution and especially the power of the intelligence that determines the work, the will. It is in this latter sense that we can interpret it in the esoteric rendering of the Veda.

Our sacrifice is a journey, a pilgrimage and a battle

. . . our life is a battle between the powers of Light and Truth, the Gods who are the Immortals and the powers of Darkness. These are spoken of under various names as Vritra and Vritras, Vala and the Panis, the Dasyus and their kings. We have to call in the aid of the Gods to destroy the opposition of these powers of Darkness who conceal the Light from us or rob us of it, who obstruct the flowing of the streams of Truth, rtasya dhārāh, the streams of Heaven and obstruct in every way the soul’s ascent. We have to invoke the Gods by the inner sacrifice, and by the Word call them into us, — that is the specific power of the Mantra, — to offer to them the gifts of the sacrifice and by that giving secure their gifts, so that by this process we may build the way of our ascent to the goal. The elements of the outer sacrifice in the Veda are used as symbols of the inner sacrifice and self-offering; we give what we are and what we have in order that the riches of the divine Truth and
Light may descend into our life and become the elements of our inner birth into the Truth, — a right thinking, a right understanding, a right action must develop in us which is the thinking, impulsion and action of that higher Truth, \( \text{rtasya pre\-s\-\-a, rtasya dhi\-\-ti} \), and by this we must build up ourselves in that Truth. Our sacrifice is a journey, a pilgrimage and a battle, — a travel towards the Gods and we also make that journey with Agni, the inner Flame, as our path-finder and leader. Our human things are raised up by the mystic Fire into the immortal being, into the Great Heaven, and the things divine come down into us.

(S16: 20)

The image of this sacrifice is sometimes that of a journey or voyage; for it travels, it ascends; it has a goal — the vastness, the true existence, the light, the felicity — and it is called upon to discover and keep to the good, the straight and the happy path to the goal, the arduous yet joyful road of the Truth. It has to climb, led by the flaming strength of the divine will, from plateau to plateau as of a mountain, it has to cross as in a ship the waters of existence, traverse its rivers, overcome their deep pits and rapid currents; its aim is to arrive at the far-off ocean of light and infinity.

(S16: 24)

*Kasmaidevāyahavishavedhema: to what gods shall the sacrifice be offered*

To what gods shall the sacrifice be offered? Who shall be invoked to manifest and protect in the human being this increasing godhead?

Agni first, for without him the sacrificial flame cannot burn on the altar of the soul. That flame of Agni is the seven-tongued power of the Will, a Force of God instinct with Knowledge. This conscious and forceful will is the immortal guest in our mortality, a pure priest and a divine worker, the mediator between earth and heaven. It carries what we offer to the higher Powers and brings back in return their force and light and joy into our humanity.

Indra, the Puissant next, who is the power of pure Existence self-manifested as the Divine Mind. As Agni is one pole of Force instinct with knowledge that sends its current upward from earth to heaven, so Indra is the other pole of Light instinct with force which descends from heaven to earth. He comes down into our world as the Hero with the shining horses and slays darkness and division with his lightnings, pours down the life-giving heavenly waters, finds in the trace of the hound, Intuition, the lost or hidden illuminations, makes the Sun of Truth mount high in the heaven of our mentality.

Surya, the Sun, is the master of that supreme Truth, — truth of being, truth of knowledge, truth of process and act and movement and functioning. He is therefore
the creator or rather the manifestor of all things — for creation is out-bringing, expression by the Truth and Will — and the father, fosterer, enlightener of our souls. The illuminations we seek are the herds of this Sun who comes to us in the track of the divine Dawn and releases and reveals in us night-hidden world after world up to the highest Beatitude.

Of that beatitude Soma is the representative deity. The wine of his ecstasy is concealed in the growths of earth, in the waters of existence; even here in our physical being are his immortalising juices and they have to be pressed out and offered to all the gods; for in that strength these shall increase and conquer.

Each of these primary deities has others associated with him who fulfil functions that arise from his own. For if the truth of Surya is to be established firmly in our mortal nature, there are previous conditions that are indispensable; a vast purity and clear wideness destructive of all sin and crooked falsehood, — and this is Varuna; a luminous power of love and comprehension leading and forming into harmony all our thoughts, acts and impulses, — this is Mitra; an immortal puissance of clear-discerning aspiration and endeavour, — this is Aryaman; a happy spontaneity of the right enjoyment of all things dispelling the evil dream of sin and error and suffering, — this is Bhaga. These four are powers of the Truth of Surya.

(S16: 26-27)

* *

The Supreme is the sole reality

Sri Aurobindo says:

“In whatever form and with whatever spirit we approach him, in that form and with that spirit he receives the sacrifice.”

_The Synthesis of Yoga_, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 102

What does this mean?

It means that all we offer, we necessarily offer to the Supreme, because He is the sole Reality behind everything.

(M16: 241)

A seat of sacrifice spread, arranged and purified for a celestial session

The soul of man is a world full of beings, a kingdom in which armies clash to help or hinder a supreme conquest, a house where the gods are our guests and which the demons strive to possess; the fullness of its energies and wideness of its being make a seat of sacrifice spread, arranged and purified for a celestial session.

(S16: 30)
An invocation to the Gods

Be wide in me, O Varuna; be mighty in me, O Indra; O Sun, be very bright and luminous; O Moon, be full of charm and sweetness. Be fierce and terrible, O Rudra; be impetuous and swift, O Maruts; be strong and bold, O Aryama; be voluptuous and pleasurable, O Bhaga; be tender and kind and loving and passionate, O Mitra. Be bright and revealing, O Dawn; O Night, be solemn and pregnant. O Life, be full, ready and buoyant; O Death, lead my steps from mansion to mansion. Harmonise all these, O Brahmanaspati. Let me not be subject to these gods, O Kali.

(*S12: 429*)

Why does Sri Aurobindo give more importance to Kali?

It is good and necessary to possess all the divine qualities that these gods represent and symbolise; that is why Sri Aurobindo invokes them and asks them to take possession of his nature. But for one who wants union with the Supreme, for one who aspires for the supreme Realisation, this cannot be sufficient. This is why at the end he calls upon Kali to give him the power to go beyond them all.

For Kali is the most powerful aspect of the universal Mother and her power is greater than that of all the gods in her creation. To unite with her means therefore to become more vast, more complete, more powerful than all the gods together and that is why Sri Aurobindo places union with her above and beyond all the others.

(*M10: 84-85*)
SECTION FIVE

God’s giving of himself . . .

All this manifold universe comes into birth and is constantly maintained by God’s giving of himself and his powers and the lavish outflow of his self and spirit into all these existences; universal being, says the Veda, is the sacrifice of the Purusha. All the action of the perfected soul will be even such a constant divine giving of itself and its powers, an outflowing of the knowledge, light, strength, love, joy, helpful shakti which it possesses in the Divine and by his influence and effluence on all around it according to their capacity of reception or on all this world and its creatures.

(S19: 491)

O soul of India . . .

O soul of India, hide thyself no longer with the darkened Pandits of the Kaliyuga in the kitchen & the chapel, veil not thyself with the soulless rite, the obsolete law and the unblessed money of the dakshina; but seek in thy soul, ask of God and recover thy true Brahmnhhood & Kshatriyahood with the eternal Veda; restore the hidden truth of the Vedic sacrifice, return to the fulfilment of an older & mightier Vedanta.

(S12: 471)

The true sacrifice

It is neither sacrifice nor renunciation nor weakness which can bring the victory. It is only Delight, a delight which is strength, endurance, supreme courage. The delight brought by the supramental force. It is much more difficult than giving everything up and running away, it demands an infinitely greater heroism — but that is the only way to conquer.

(M9: 5)

* 

Generally speaking, when a man starts building yogic theories on his own particular work, one should always be wary.

All work can and should be done in a yogic spirit. But the “sacrifice” should be made to the Supreme Divine and not to a human being.

(M14: 61)
I am asking only for the sacrifice of ignorance, unconsciousness and the limits of the ego — but for what a marvellous and incomparable gain!

(M15: 222)

### The rare individuals ready for the yoga of Sri Aurobindo

Then there were some — rare individuals — who were ready to make the necessary effort to prepare for the transformation and to draw the new forces, to try to adapt Matter, to seek means of expression, etc. These are ready for the yoga of Sri Aurobindo. They are very few in number. There are even those who have the sense of sacrifice and are ready for a hard, painful life, if that would lead or help towards this future transformation. But they should not, they should not in any way try to influence the others and make them share in their own effort; it would be altogether unfair — not only unfair, but extremely maladroit, for it would change the universal rhythm and movement, and instead of helping, it would create conflicts and end in a chaos.

(M11: 24-25)

### Sacrifice to Krishna, thy Lord

Limit not sacrifice to the giving up of earthly goods or the denial of some desires & yearnings, but let every thought and every work & every enjoyment be an offering to God within thee. Let thy steps walk in thy Lord, let thy sleep and waking be a sacrifice to Krishna.

(S12: 471)

### Men still in love with grief, with sin

Men are still in love with grief; when they see one who is too high for grief or joy, they curse him & cry, “O thou insensible!” Therefore Christ still hangs on the cross in Jerusalem.

*Men are in love with sin; when they see one who is too high for vice or virtue, they curse him & cry, “O thou breaker of bonds, thou wicked and immoral one!” Therefore Srikrishna does not live as yet in Brindavun.*

(S12: 427)
When Christ came upon earth, he brought a message of brotherhood, love and peace. But he had to die in pain, on the cross, so that his message might be heard. For men cherish suffering and hatred and want their God to suffer with them. They wanted this when Christ came and, in spite of his teaching and sacrifice, they still want it; and they are so attached to their pain that, symbolically, Christ is still bound to his cross, suffering perpetually for the salvation of men.

As for Krishna, he came upon earth to bring freedom and delight. He came to announce to men, enslaved to Nature, to their passions and errors, that if they took refuge in the Supreme Lord they would be free from all bondage and sin. But men are very attached to their vices and virtues (for without vice there would be no virtue); they are in love with their sins and cannot tolerate anyone being free and above all error.

That is why Krishna, although immortal, is not present at Brindavan in a body at this moment.

(M10: 59-60)

**Sacrifice is not for its own sake**

Sacrifice, sacrifice, sacrifice always, but for the sake of God and humanity, not for the sake of sacrifice.

(S12: 455)

**The supreme sacrifice in the Indian scriptures**

The Divine Will actually suffers distortion the moment it touches the hostile forces in the Ignorance. Hence we must never slacken our efforts to change the world and bring about a different order. We must be vigilant to co-operate with the Divine and not placidly think that whatever happens is always the best. All depends upon the personal attitude. If, in the presence of circumstances that are on the point of occurring, you take the highest possible attitude — that is to say, if you put your consciousness in contact with the highest consciousness within your reach — you can be absolutely certain that in such a case what happens is the best that can happen to you. But as soon as you fall from this consciousness and come down into a lower state, then it is evident that what happens cannot be the best, since you are not in your best consciousness. As Sri Aurobindo once said, “What happened had to happen, but it could have been much better.” Because the person to whom it happened was not in his highest consciousness, there was no other consequence possible; but if he had brought about a descent of the Divine, then, even if the situation in general had been inevitable, it would have turned out in a different way. What makes all the difference is how you receive the impulsion of the Divine Will.

You must rise very high before you can meet this Will in its plenary splendour.
of authenticity; not before you open your lower nature to it can it begin to manifest in terms of the Truth. You must, therefore, refrain from applying the merely Nietzschean standard of temporary success in order to differentiate the Divine from the undivine. For, life is a battlefield in which the Divine succeeds in detail only when the lower nature is receptive to its impulsions instead of siding with the hostile forces. And even then the test is not so much external as internal: a divine movement cannot be measured by apparent signs — it is a certain kind of vibration that indicates its presence — external tests are of no avail, since even what is in appearance a failure may be in fact a divine achievement. . . . What you have to do is to give yourself up to the Grace of the Divine; for, it is under the form of Grace, of Love, that it has consented to uplift the universe after the first involution was established. With the Divine Love is the supreme power of Transformation. It has this power because it is for the sake of Transformation that it has given itself to the world and manifested everywhere. Not only has it infused itself into man, but also into all the atoms of the most obscure Matter in order to bring the world back to the original Truth. It is this descent that is called the supreme sacrifice in the Indian scriptures. But it is a sacrifice only from the human point of view; the human mind thinks that if it had to do such a thing it would be a tremendous sacrifice. But the Divine cannot really be diminished, its infinite essence can never become less, no matter what “sacrifices” are made. . . . The moment you open to the Divine Love, you also receive its power of Transformation. But it is not in terms of quantity that you can measure it; what is essential is the true contact; for, you will find that the true contact with it is sufficient to fill at once the whole of your being.

(M3: 170-72)

The great Sacrifice of the Divine in Matter is the sacrifice of involution which must culminate in the total revelation of the Divine in Matter itself

That part of humanity, of human consciousness, which is capable of uniting with the supermind and liberating itself, will be completely transformed — it is advancing towards a future reality which is not yet expressed in its outer form; the part which is closest to Nature, to animal simplicity, will be reabsorbed into Nature and thoroughly assimilated. But the corrupted part of human consciousness which allows perversion through its misuse of the mind will be abolished.

This type of humanity is part of an unfruitful attempt — which must be eliminated — just as there have been other abortive species which have disappeared in the course of universal history.

Certain prophets in the past have had this apocalyptic vision but, as usual, things were mixed, and they did not have together with their vision of the apocalypse the vision of the supramental world which will come to raise up the part of humanity which consents and to transform this physical world. So, to give hope to those who
have been born into it, into this perverted part of human consciousness, they have taught redemption through faith: those who have faith in the sacrifice of the Divine in Matter will be automatically saved, in another world — by faith alone, without understanding, without intelligence. They have not seen the supramental world nor that the great Sacrifice of the Divine in Matter is the sacrifice of involution which must culminate in the total revelation of the Divine in Matter itself.

(M9: 300-01)

The sacrifice of the Divine Mother

_Mother, suffering comes from ignorance and pain, but what is the nature of the suffering and pain the Divine Mother feels for her children — the Divine Mother in Savitri?_

It is because she participates in their nature. She has descended upon earth to participate in their nature. Because if she did not participate in their nature, she could not lead them farther. If she remained in her supreme consciousness where there is no suffering, in her supreme knowledge and consciousness, she could not have any contact with human beings. And it is for this that she is obliged to take on the human consciousness and form, it is to be able to enter into contact with them. Only, she does not forget: she has adopted their consciousness but she remains in relation with her own real, supreme consciousness. And thus, by joining the two, she can make those who are in that other consciousness progress. But if she did not adopt their consciousness, if she did not suffer with their sorrow, she could not help them. Hers is not a suffering of ignorance: it is a suffering through identity. It is because she has accepted to have the same vibrations as they, in order to be able to enter into contact with them and pull them out of the state they are in. If she did not enter into contact with them, she would not be felt at all or no one could bear her radiance. . . . This has been said in all kinds of forms, in all kinds of religions, and they have spoken very often of the divine Sacrifice, but from a certain point of view it is true. It is a voluntary sacrifice, but it is true: giving up a state of perfect consciousness, perfect bliss, perfect power in order to accept the state of ignorance of the outer world so as to pull it out of that ignorance. If this state were not accepted, there would be no contact with it. No relation would be possible. And this is the reason of the incarnations. Otherwise, there would be no necessity. If the divine consciousness and divine force could work directly from the place or state of their perfection, if they could work directly on matter and transform it, there would be no need to take a body like man’s. It would have been enough to act from the world of Truth with the perfect consciousness and upon consciousness. In fact that acts perhaps but so slowly that when there is this effort to make the world progress, make it go forward more rapidly, well, it is necessary to take on human nature. By taking the
human body, one is obliged to take on human nature, partially. Only, instead of losing one’s consciousness and losing contact with the Truth, one keeps this consciousness and this Truth, and it is by joining the two that one can create exactly this kind of alchemy of transformation. But if one did not touch matter, one could do nothing for it.

(M5: 387-88)

The Mother’s prayers at the time of World War I, the great holocaust

August 4, 1914

O Lord, O eternal Master!

Men, driven by the conflict of forces, are performing a sublime sacrifice, they are offering their lives in a bloodstained holocaust. . . .

O Lord, O eternal Master, grant that all this may not be in vain, grant that the inexhaustible torrents of Thy divine Force may spread over the earth and penetrate its troubled atmosphere, the struggling energies, the violent chaos of battling elements; grant that the pure light of Thy Knowledge and the inexhaustible love of Thy Benediction may fill men’s hearts, penetrate their souls, illumine their consciousness and, out of this obscurity, out of this sombre, terrible and potent darkness, bring forth the splendour of Thy majestic Presence!

My being is laid before Thee in a holocaust conscious and complete, that their unconscious holocaust may by it be made effective.

Accept the offering, answer our call: *Come*!

(M1: 216)

*

August 5, 1914

O Eternal Master, Thou art in all things like a vivifying breath, a sweet peace, a sun of luminous love piercing the clouds of darkness.

Grant that we may be Thy vivifying breath, Thy sweet peace, Thy luminous love upon the earth amidst our ignorant and sorrowful human brothers.

O divine Master, accept the offering of all myself as a holocaust that Thy work may be accomplished and the time may not pass by in vain.

In a serene ecstasy I give myself to Thee, that Thou mayst once again become the Master of what is Thine, the possessor of Thyself in each one of the countless atoms and in the consciousness that is synthetic and one.

O divine Master, accept this offering, this complete holocaust that the time may not have come in vain.
My whole being is transformed into a living flame, a flame of sacrifice of pure love.

Become once again the king of Thy kingdom, deliver the earth from the heavy weight which is crushing it, the weight of its own inert, ignorant, and obscure ill will.

O my sweet Master, my being is ablaze with the ardent flame of the sacrifice of love: accept my offering that the obstacle may be overcome.

(M1: 217)

Myself and My Creed

I belong to no nation, no civilisation, no society, no race, but to the Divine.

I obey no master, no ruler, no law, no social convention, but the Divine.

To Him I have surrendered all, will, life and self; for Him I am ready to give all my blood, drop by drop, if such is His Will, with complete joy; and nothing in His service can be sacrifice, for all is perfect delight.

(M2: 170)

Our Lord who has sacrificed himself totally for us

I was painfully shocked when I heard the translation of the leaflet you are distributing here in the Ashram. I never imagined you could have such a complete lack of understanding, respect and devotion for our Lord who has sacrificed himself totally for us. Sri Aurobindo was not crippled; a few hours before he left his body he rose from his bed and sat for a long time in his armchair, speaking freely to all those around him. Sri Aurobindo was not compelled to leave his body, he chose to do so for reasons so sublime that they are beyond the reach of human mentality.

And when one cannot understand, the only thing to do is to keep a respectful silence.

26 December 1950

People do not know what a tremendous sacrifice Sri Aurobindo has made for the world. About a year ago, while I was discussing things, I remarked that I felt like leaving this body of mine. He spoke out in a very firm tone, “No, this can never be. If necessary for this transformation, I might go, you will have to fulfil our Yoga of supramental descent and transformation.”

1950
Lord, we are upon earth to accomplish Thy work of transformation. It is our sole will, our sole preoccupation. Grant that it may be also our sole occupation and that all our actions may help us towards this single goal.

1 January 1951

*

We stand in the Presence of Him who has sacrificed his physical life in order to help more fully his work of transformation.

He is always with us, aware of what we are doing, of all our thoughts, of all our feelings and all our actions.

18 January 1951

*

When I asked Him (December 8, 1950) to resuscitate his body, He clearly answered: “I have left this body purposely. I will not take it back. I shall manifest again in the first supramental body built in the supramental way.”

11 April 1952

*

Sri Aurobindo has given up his body in an act of supreme unselfishness, renouncing the realisation in his own body to hasten the hour of the collective realisation. Surely if the earth were more responsive, this would not have been necessary.

12 April 1953

(M13: 7-9)

The holocaust of the Divine

Is it not, for the Divine, a supreme sacrifice to renounce the beatitude of His unity in order to create the painful multiplicity of the world?

(M15: 8)

The material difficulties are part of the work of transformation and they should be accepted calmly

Sweet Mother,

When You are physically stricken, I always feel very sad. I tell myself that it is not an ordinary illness, that it is an experience leading towards physical transformation. But when I think of Your suffering body, I am sad. And then, is
this not part of the Sacrifice of the Supreme spoken of by Sri Aurobindo? Are we worthy of this Sacrifice?

Sweet Mother, at times like this, how should we be? What is the best attitude on our part?

The best for each one is to progress as sincerely as he can. The material difficulties are part of the work of transformation and they should be accepted calmly.

(M16: 353)

The holocaust of Prakriti

The Mother not only governs all from above but she descends into this lesser triple universe. Impersonally, all things here, even the movements of the Ignorance, are herself in veiled power and her creations in diminished substance, her Nature-body and Nature-force, and they exist because, moved by the mysterious fiat of the Supreme to work out something that was there in the possibilities of the Infinite, she has consented to the great sacrifice and has put on like a mask the soul and forms of the Ignorance. But personally too she has stooped to descend here into the Darkness that she may lead it to the Light, into the Falsehood and Error that she may convert it to the Truth, into this Death that she may turn it to godlike Life, into this world-pain and its obstinate sorrow and suffering that she may end it in the transforming ecstasy of her sublime Ananda. In her deep and great love for her children she has consented to put on herself the cloak of this obscurity, condescended to bear the attacks and torturing influences of the powers of the Darkness and the Falsehood, borne to pass through the portals of the birth that is a death, taken upon herself the pangs and sorrows and sufferings of the creation, since it seemed that thus alone could it be lifted to the Light and Joy and Truth and eternal Life. This is the great sacrifice called sometimes the sacrifice of the Purusha, but much more deeply the holocaust of Prakriti, the sacrifice of the Divine Mother.

(S32: 17)
S. N. Sunderson & Co.
Serving since 1926

1, Deshbandhu Gupta Road
New Delhi - 110 055
E-mail: contact@snsunderson.com    Phone: (011) 43750060/ 23612776

Our Lines of Business:

Limestone and Dolomite
Mining and Manufacturing at
KAHANGAON & NIWAR (MADHYA PRADESH)
Supply to Steel Plants, Cement Plants, Lime etc.

And

Coal Handling Agents
(Coal – Steam & Slack)
For Power Houses, Industries & other Consumers

Branches at:
Katni, Kahangaon, Niwar, Kolkata, Ramgarh, Asansol, Dhanbad,
Singrauli, Anpara, Ranchi, Patna, Ray-Khelari, Manendragarh,
Bilaspur, Nagpur, Lucknow, Guwahati and Puducherry

Completed 94 years on Basant 2020
“Generosity is to find one’s own satisfaction in the satisfaction of others.”

The Mother

Blue Star Diamonds Pvt. Ltd.

Tower “C” 9010, Bharat Diamonds Bourse, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bandra (East) Bombay - 400 051 (India)
The Birth of Suns is the Dawn of Creativity...

AUROSOORYA

www.aurosoorya.com

Deep Order Technologies: Advanced Analytics To Map and Change Deep Order

www.deepordertechnologies.com