

مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ فَقَدْ عَرَفَ رَبَّهُ

*Know Thyself That Ye May
Know God*

Whither
Ye
Sadhu

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PREFACE

“WHITHER YE SADHU” is a terse allegory. The symbolism utilised (specially in the 1st Chap.) is that of the Semitic Schools of Thought, though the Sadhu himself is an Aryan. Every word in the whole narrative is pregnant with meaning and there is not only a perfect sequence but there are currents and undercurrents and echoes just as in any of the great Musical Symphonies. Also like great music, the charm of the essay will unfold itself, the more the reader reads it and ponders and meditates over it. Here and there the theme wears the cloak of Pantheistic expression. This is done not only to make it less prosaic but because the only reality we can comprehend in the objective or Phenomenal World is the Pantheistic Reality. The Hills, the Rivers and the Ocean, the little, seemingly insignificant details and the interpolated stories are all in a plan—the unfolding of the True Self—the perception of Reality and the attainment of Truth. While encompassing the past, present and future the theme itself is above Time.

Chapter I: The Symphony deals with the quest which ends in finding the guide.

Chapter II: The Grand Symphony is the portrayal of the days of communion and rapture.

Chapter III: The Sonata is the description of the Lonely travel afterwards.

There could be a IVth Chapter about the “Return”, for the good of humanity. But that concerns one man in a thousand years and we need not speak of it.

ARAKU HILLS

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FOREWORD

By

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THE quest for the Real, the Truth, the great personal cause of this World is an old Story. Many answers have been offered for the How and What of this great mystery, some false, some half true. It is an attempt by the lifeless paintings to understand the living painter, by the finite to comprehend the Infinite. The Creator Himself has given His first and last word by declaring, "Love created the World, love sustains it, and love alone justifies" IT.

The human brain is like a Sluice Valve and behind the Sluice Valve is the infinite Universe. The Sluice Valve lets in only an infinitesimally small portion of the infinite to pass on to the Intelligence of man. But there are men who are so ordained as to trespass the barriers imposed by the Sluice Valve and obtain a direct and immediate glimpse of the vast and beauteous Infinite. Such people are called mystics and their cult is not scientific and objective but Intuitive and Subjective.

This unique experience is the transmission of the message of Love, Guidance and Light from the Creator to His subjects. It is like there flection of a person holding a mirror to his own face to behold himself. The likeness is in proportion to the purity of the mirror-soul. This soul in his turn transmits his experience to other souls of his own likeness and affinity. The method followed is mystic discipline.

The present essay is the personal experience of a mystic who has tried to pour out his soul into words, a most difficult and hazardous task indeed. Allegory is the only form best suited to this purpose which is calculated to benefit the few for whom it is meant, "A Book for all and none".

**Dedicated to
HIM
WHO IS MANIFEST**

WHITHER YE SADHU

(PRELUDE)

LONG long ago—of the misty past, but one Stone remaineth as a landmark on the map of memory. Up, on to it, I climbed by the hillside.

Aye—but before going there, yet on the plains beyond the ravine is a way leading to a garden, where under the trees, respite from the blazing sun somehow was so stabilising—so unconsciously balmy. And there were trees of all sorts—mango trees just sprouting out their summer bloom; and amlas—ripe and laden. There were sapotas also and by the well was a green citrus tree—Aye, four fruits from the tree. But, ah! how the thorn pricks and the finger bleeds. Then, the nectar comes in a silver cup, whiter than milk and sweeter than honey; and all refreshed, we await the morrow. On the morrow we proceed, under the midday Sun, past the ravine to the rock yonder—milestone on the map of memory, memory of the quest since Time began.

Sacred ground thou art treading, O Sadhu!—leave thy sandals behind. Keep your feet firm, lest thou slip.

There on the rock, facing West, even as the rising Sun we stand. There lies before us the vast panorama of hills and rivers and lakes and lagoons, roads and stations and, Oh! all the diversity of human thought and endeavour.

There the finger points—far, far away in the dreamy mists of the fading horizon to the left, is the hill of Simhachalam. There resides a deity and many a pilgrim goes there and returns with fishes¹—fishes of all sorts fit for the most discriminating of storks.

Out there yonder is the small hill four paces away from which flows the river we trudged along the other day. The grit in the river bed is sharp

1. Fishes : The childless couples go there and pray for progeny,

and the waters are so cool to the feet. How they clear up the vision!

In the foreground is the road that passes between the two stretches of water and there—look, yonder is the railway track to Calcutta. You have heard, in Calcutta many kinds of caps¹ and crowns can be had—yes for a price to the one who reaches there. Travelling in thought is easy but tramping the road is weary and only the one who knows reaches Calcutta. It may take six months to accomplish the journey. Of course the train² runs faster. No, there is no train passing just now.

Also here and there we see tall chimneys. Some smoking and the others silent.

Right in front is the Abode of Light³ with its huge banyan trees—all green and fresh and resplendent.

To the extreme right is the great quagmire and just by its side is the barren hill with a diamond in it. You cannot mistake it. It is all so barren in contrast to the emerald green hills all around. Surveying the panorama once again, having followed with recurring emphasis the pointing finger, all the various marks and paths, the midday sun still blazing hot, we come down, put on our sandals and down through the thorny way.

Ah this bush of thorns—Oh yes we shall set fire to it. With the greatest labour and industry we gather fuel, some dry leaves and twigs and set the fire alight. But the blaze of leaves dies down, and the tree scorched and scarred, yet does not burn. "Never mind, some other day. It is probably not quite dry as yet."

We saw all that we saw from the Mount, yet to know it was truth, there was the need for this fire.

Thus, Oh Sadhu, thou hast been given the Law⁴—the law of action and the way. The rock there on the mound is the point from where you

1. Caps: Symbol of spiritual assignment.

2. Train: Submission to the will and direction of the Guru.

3. Abode of Light—The Ashram of the Guru.

4. The Ten Commandants of Moses.

can see All and which rock can be seen from everywhere—even from the hill of Simhachalam, though in a misty haze

The Symphony of the Cubic Rock

Oh Sadhu! I am all but dazzled and yesterday seems like today. History, the history of human quest seems to have marched past the drum beats of my pounding heart.

But before we proceed, let me tell you of a dream I had while I was dozing in the shade. Was it a vision or a sign?

I was sitting on the brink of a well and I was told that from the ant-hill opposite comes a huge King Cobra who has destroyed many a life. I squatted there on the rim of the well. A little doze or a push would have landed me into the well. After a long wait, there arose from the ant-hill a huge cobra with an enormous hood. The hood was most peculiar. On either side of the main hood were two smaller projections which looked like smaller hoods. The cobra rose straight from the opening till it reached about the height of a man's waist. Then it transformed itself into a most dazzling woman dressed in a red sari. She walked towards me and I noticed that besides her two arms which were crossed across the waist, there were two others, smaller ones, the palms of which were joined together in an attitude of salutation. I asked her who she was, and she told me, she was "Shakti"¹. I asked her why she was destroying people in the neighbourhood. She told me, "It is true I have been killing people, I have done wrong. Henceforth I will not do it. I will go away" I asked her to give me a guarantee of assurance. She said, "Your presence is the surest guarantee." Then she transformed herself into a huge pig and hurried through the bushes by the sea-side.

I woke up, I wonder whether I slept at all?

1. Shakti—the Hindoo Goddess of Power.

Well, it is all the same. Oh Shakti, who is sought by one and all, by the ordinary to overcome the ordinary troubles of life and by the extraordinary to build Empires—Oh Shakti, you come like a snake and go like a pig. Glad I am that you are gone.

Let us proceed.

The pilgrim's progress is slow and the climb is steep. There is a way but I see no beaten path. From a shepherd a staff is loaned to me to ease the weight on my back. But the midday Sun,¹ is invigorating, is inspiring, though my head is bent down and I do not see the Sun. I look ahead now and then. There are hills all around and thick thorny forests. We cross three deep ravines. In some places, it seems, these ravines are so deep that only the midday Sun gives any light there. It is in these ravines I am told that tigers and other beasts of prey drag their victims to enjoy an undisturbed meal. We cross each one of them, each one having a peculiarity of its own. Now we come to the real ascent, very exhausting, but here and there comes a cool fresh breeze that urges us on. Now and again I would pant for breath but one effort of will and in joyous enthusiasm we journey on. Many a one is left behind. Oh, they will come later. We proceed on.

There to the right you see those two tall trees, like the minarets of a clean structure. I breathe a sigh of relief, the goal is in sight. All fatigue seems to have gone.

On and on we triumph, prickly is the path, overgrown with thorns.

On the slope of a hill in front there is an elevation and, upon it, by the side of the two tall palm trees, is a cubic rock² perched again on a big flat rock, so very nicely placed, as though by a human hand. The rock is so very symmetrically

1. The Sun—Symbol of Truth; God.

2. The Sacred Black Stone of Ka'ba at Mecca.

shaped that it looked as though it had been carved out for some purpose. There is no such rock in all the neighbourhood. We climb upon the rock—just we, there is no space for more. We face the West again even as the rising Sun. Behind and to the right and to the left are hills, and hills, and more hills. But the front is wide and open and we see far beyond. Upon the hills are huge clusters of bamboos¹

Tall hollow bamboos and short solid ones, each clump tightly interwoven with its own twigs and thorns. On the hill behind there are some people who are cutting bamboos for their own use or for sale. We can hear the sound of the wielded axe. On the hill to the right is a big clump—all dried up and bleached, yet standing firm on the slope, supported by its own entanglements.² There is also a tree there it seems which bears round yellow fruit.

In the front to the right on the elevation are two lively palms³—one of them is short and young. It will be ten more years before it reaches the stature of its neighbour. The other is fresh and firm and, it seems, twenty-two years old. Now having rested we look ahead. Down there is the great quagmire and by its side is a vast expanse of green—the tops of crores and crores of palms. And just beyond you can see the hill. Yes, the same brown hill with the diamond in it. We rest and drink and feel content and happy. How like the Black Stone is this cubic rock upon which we are standing. “Nay, nay, this is short of it by two cubic lengths. That Black Stone yes, yes, there is none like it in the neighbourhood. And who was it (H) that sat upon it and prayed for 150 years and the stone rose above the ground? And monkeys tried to pull it down with chains tied to it and with machines, but they abandoned their efforts.”

1. Schools of thought.

2. Dead faiths and philosophies.

3. Disciples.

Beyond the hill to the right is a great lake with lakhs and lakhs of palms growing there.

Oh, do you see men walking along the ridge there? Just below it flows a little stream which is never dry. There is the dhoby ghat.¹ Do you see that stone wall fencing off a large acreage to the left and a portion of the hillside? The wall is quite high, though it looks flat from here and is overgrown with bramble. That enclosure was for the deer² to roam in. That was some time back when Rajas ruled. We hear a whistle—probably a train on the line to Calcutta. Oh no, it is no time for the mail or the passenger may be, it is a goods train. We wait but no train comes. It was probably the whistle from the mill by the river side. Coming down we look back and there, just above the line of hills, is the young moon, all too pale and apologetic in the searching light of the day.

Coming down to the grassy slopes, the staff is returned to the shepherd³ Oh Shepherd! my heart goes out to thee. What load is it on your shoulders that is bearing you down?

We come down. History is slipping by, faster than the water of a mountain stream.

(INTERMEZZO)

PART I

Again, another day we start off under the midday Sun for the river.⁴ There we walk on the sands—firm here with the soaked water and loose there, wherein our feet sink and our legs seem leaden. In all the wide river there is only a cubit-wide flow of water. There are small tiny fish⁵ here and there where the water has collected. In some raised patches of ground on the bed, where the soil is loamy there are signs of some cultivation. There are many oyster shells⁶ lying about iridescent in the clear sunshine.

1. Washerman's outdoor laundry.

2. Poets

3. Symbol for Jesus Christ.

4. Channel of Spiritual Knowledge.

5. Seekers of Truth.

6. Shells—that once held the pearls of wisdom.

When pointed out, I picked up four of them, two of them still joined together. We walk on till we see the river bend round a hill and return back. Walking in sand is so tiring. As we were returning we heard a train whistle. It was not the time for the usual trains. May be it is a goods train but it sounded like the mail. Probably the mail is late, very late. The train after stopping for some reason about a mile away from us came on. It was a special train bound for Calcutta. Coming back we could see the deer park and also the location of the two palm trees from a depression in the hills to the right. Now, Sadhu, let me tell you a story before we proceed further.

Once there lived a crazy man known as Okey.¹ He was not mad; he was in love. He always used to roam about the jungles and sing and chant the name of his beloved. Once he heard that his beloved lost a tooth through an injury received from enemies. This grieved him so much that he wept and wept and taking a stone knocked out all his front teeth, not knowing which it was exactly that the beloved had lost.

His mouth got all inflamed and swollen. So he could not talk. Then his face all swelled up, so his eyes were closed and he could not even see. And the wounds in his mouth became putrid and there were worms falling from his mouth. No one even went near him. He was in a pitiable condition. As he lay there all too absorbed with the vision of his beloved, there came into the town nearby an angel in the garb of a wayfarer and inquired as to where Okey could be found. Some did not know and some who knew told the stranger that Okey was very ill and dying somewhere in the desert away from the town. The angel went there with three gifts and gave to Okey the water of grace. *It was whiter than milk and sweeter than honey.* The stricken man some-

1. Owais Kharni.

how drank it and felt better. Then the angel gave him seven bananas¹ out of the eleven brought for him. He ate the seven and felt still better. Then Okey beseeched the wayfarer to take him to his beloved. The Angel moved on a little way and then disappeared.

Come Sadhu, it is time for dinner. Let us eat and there is a banana, one for each one of you.

PART II

We start off in another direction to the river, by the road which passes between the two stretches of water on either side. In the cool of the evening we start and the tenth moon is shedding its hesitant lustre all around.

The road is long and after crossing a few villages and some crossroads we reach the river. It is a very much wider than the one we had last visited. Oh! it is the same river much farther below. And here the water is much purer and wider and deeper. We waded through and cross over to the other bank. There we see the remains of a bridge² that was washed away even before it was declared open to the public. There was no provision in the design for the mighty forces of the gushing torrents coming down the sides of the hills. Returning with a torch³ in hand we see a big fish⁴ swimming away from us. And dipping down, four hermit shells⁵ are picked up and placed in my hand. And we walk back in in the cool silence of the tenth moon.

FINALE

Sadhuji, shall I tell you another story before we proceed along.

Shah Zafar, the last Mogul king of India was a prisoner in Burma. Two of his sons were killed, the third one had escaped to Russia. The Czar

1. Definite stages in the evolution of the soul.

2. Wordly ways which cross over the River of Spiritual Knowledge.

3. Learning acquired through the sensual world.

4. Seeker of truth.

5. Results of schools of religious pursuit which ended in blind alleys and progressed no further like yogism, etc.

told this fugitive, that if he brought the signet ring of his father for identification, he could marry the princess of Russia and live happily there. So the Prince dressed himself as a scavenger and landed in Burma from a trading vessel. He gave a plateful of sovereigns to the scavenger of the prison, asking him to be allowed to do the scavenging duties for a day or two. Thus arranged, the prince put a slip of folded paper in the latrine mentioning his arrival and purpose. Then he presented himself before his father. There were many others there. The Shah failed to recognise his own son, the shabby dress and the unshaven face had concealed him so well. Then the prince made signs with his fingers and the king recognised him and was overcome with emotion but restrained himself on account of the presence of so many aliens.

The next day—no, the same day—the prince met his father once again and left for Russia by a trading vessel. There the story ends but the end may be a beginning.

It was the thirteenth of the moon or was it the fourteenth. The moon¹ was all but full. Just about its lower edge was a slight shade of paleness making the onlooker's heart throb with the vision of the full face—yet to be. We were proceeding towards the Ocean²—whose depth, whose vastness and whose silence and roar are all too profound.

It was a long journey. As we passed along we saw all the familiar objects about us. They looked real and yet unreal as though seen through the dewy eyes of the lover. The curtains between reality and illusion seem to have been lifted for once, and we were on the threshold between the dream state and the waking. The silvery light, the pearly sheen spread out by the beloved was so tender, so kind, so all-understanding that there

1. The Pir—the spiritual guide and preceptor.

2. The ultimate expanse of spiritual knowledge.

was neither any desire nor need for any desire. There were neither any memories nor any longings. There was neither any struggle nor need for rest. The softness of the enchanting light had removed all sense of separation and even the hills and the waters,—why even the light itself—they all somehow appeared to be the same. I was fully alive, there was a joy, a happiness, a bright silent laughter—bubbling in my heart. When I say “I”, it is with the greatest effort, like that of a diver cutting himself away from the air, that I have to, with doubt and hesitation say “I”. Otherwise it was all the same. I wonder is it not this what is called peace, what is called Islam. It is through the sunshine of *Iman*¹ that one reaches the moonlit expanse of Islam. Is that why there is the need of a moon?

Thus we proceed. Lo! there before us is the outline. The sky bowing down to meet the earth in all the grandeur of humility. And we proceed on. Ah what a lovely scene it is. It can be truly said—It is the land of the beloved.

So romantic—so charming is this coast. With a line of hills to the left and a crag here and a crag there projecting into the sea and a perfect beach of lovely sands extending to the right.

We step on the edge. The sea is full and calm. Only on the skirts is it heaving with emotion at being bounded by a coastline. It is silent except on the shores where it seems to be all too eager to speak out its profundities. We play for a while with the playful waves and walk over a crag. It is wonderful how the shapeless, egoless waters have eaten away and into the hard granite of the rocks. (Even such is Aryan wisdom) It is surprising how wave after wave dashes on to the rocks and raises a cascade of spray and foam all iridescent in the moonlight. Is it the peal of laughter or the crash of fury? It is probably the rhythm of nature which has created the All. We come

1. Faith.

back and squat on the sands facing the sea. Silence—Silence—Silence—‘Om Mani Padmi Om.’

Well, well Sadhu, now that you are tuned up, you will hear of the grand symphony next time. In the meantime see for yourself if the ferment is of good wine and let it not sour.

Thus I came along walking through the streets with a bundle of clothes suspended from a stick on my shoulders; and as I was walking along I heard some one shout at me “Oh Fakir, I presume you are taking these clothes to the dhoby ghat. Will you wash mine also?” I replied “Yes, yes, certainly, and if you like, I will also dye them for you. What colour do you like? Saffron or Green, Red or Yellow?” Anything you please. I put his clothes into the bundle and as I was starting to walk, he said unto me, “Pray Fakir, do you ever wash the clothes you are wearing? They are so dirty, they almost look the colour of the dust you are walking upon.” I just grunt a “hunh” and walk along.

EPILOGUE

I have told thee, Oh friend, all that can be told. How shall I speak of that which cannot be told, It is buried in the *womb* of my heart. “Aye, what is it you say—‘*tomb* of my heart’—nay—nay—the dead rise only on the day of resurrection. I am already resurrected. People only look at the mirror² and not into the mirror. Look and then shalt thou see. Drink and thou shalt live. March and thou shalt reach.

1. The four schools of Sufism—Chistyā, Quadriyā, Nakhshhandiyā and Soharwardiyā.

2. The purified heart.

CHAPTER II

THE GRAND SYMPHONY

SADHUJI, let us be cool and clear-headed and try to understand what it is all about. What is it that makes a Budha relinquish all that this world can bestow and take up the beggar's bowl, what is it that makes a Hitler out of a soldier to build a society of robots and shake the very foundations of empires, and what is it that makes Valmeeki, an illiterate man write the Ramayana? Sadhuji, let us not deceive ourselves by accepting such loose terms as destiny, personality, an unknown urge and so on for an explanation. You are the one who has shed all the leaves of preconceived notions and broken away all the shackles of accumulated knowledge and conventions. You have started with a clean slate, and, indeed, how can you at all accept such loose explanations which are mere names, substituted for other names?

I may tell you this also that it is neither hope nor an unshaken confidence in victory, nor is it the inborn spirit of adventure, nor again is it an escape of a suffering heart that has made the great luminaries of all times so great. In order to understand what is the truth behind it all you must not only have a clean slate but must clean the very fibre of the slate, so that it looks like clear glass; clean it of all the instincts of fear and superstition, of the desire for security and the will to power. This can be done by subjecting your slate to the blast of a tremendous love. But, remember, even the flame of love is but the transmitter and is not gold.

Do you know, brother, why there have always been wars between nations and there will always be? Human nature, nay, nature is such that it is the sword that ultimately decides. The sword may be backed by a lifetime or more of training and skill, it may be supported by a keen eye and a supple foot, it may even be helped by cunning and surprise, but it is the sword which ultimately wins.

It is the sword which definitely convinces and it is the sword which produces phenomenal changes in the history of a nation or that of an individual.

Many an anaemic scholar has acclaimed reason and knowledge to be the sword which cuts through ignorance and darkness and leads you on into light and glory but that is not even a part of the truth. It is said that a great love and 'Ahimsa' is the sword which exalts man and transforms this sordid world into the kingdom of heaven. This is only part of the truth and therefore cannot be the whole truth.

Sadhuji, since you must be fed up with these empty fruits of nothingness, let me tell you a story. Once there lived a great sage and many disciples from distant lands came to him. There was also a farmer who having given away his lands to his grown-up children had nothing to do, so he came to this sage to serve him, and thus pass his time without care or trouble. He observed that all manner of people came to this sage. Scholars and soldiers, merchants and priests; but in a short time they were all reduced to the same level and would serve the sage just as he himself did. Thus he spent a long time, sixteen or twenty years. He also observed that the people who came stayed there for various lengths of time, some only a few days, some a few months, and some a year or two or more; and while going away, each one of them would be dressed in new clothes and sent away as though a kingdom had been bestowed upon him. The farmer thought to himself, "This is rather strange. I have served longer and more ardently than any others, but, strangely enough, I have been given nothing in return, whereas the others, even the lazy, good-for-nothing, have taken away something. I do not know what that something is but I am sure that it must be something very good and grand!" So one day he made up his mind and approached the sage and laid his grievance before him. The sage listened to him and said,

"Certainly I will give you what I have given to the others." The farmer was dressed in new clothes and a mantra¹ was whispered in his ear and he was instructed to go out into the world repeating the mantra.

The farmer accordingly left the sage, humming the mantra, as he went along deeply absorbed in dreams of the future. His pace quickened with the pleasure of his dreams and his foot knocked against a stone and he fell down. With the agonising pain all his dreams vanished. All the same he got up, repeating to himself, "Foot and stone, foot and stone." He even forgot that he had forgotten the mantra and humming "Foot and stone, foot and stone," he walked on. After many many days he came across a river. He spread his towel over the water still saying to himself, "Foot and stone," and skipped over the river and kept on walking, humming to himself, "Foot and stone, foot and stone."

After some years of wandering he happened to join the sage who was on a journey. A river came in the way. The sage and his disciples were discussing the best means of crossing the river. The farmer, interrupting them, said, "It is very simple. Spread your towel and say, "Foot and stone, foot and stone" and you will cross the river. The sage looked at him and said, "Are you a fool who wishes to drown us all?" But the farmer replied, "Come with me and I will show you how to do it." So he approached the water, the others following behind him, spread the towel on the water, said "Foot and stone," and all of them crossed the river.

Now Sadhuji, supposing this story to be true, is it will power? Is it the power of the mantra, or the man's faith in the mantra which made him walk over the water and also lead many others along with him.

1. A spiritual formula which is sometimes repeated with a rosary of beads.

Here again, I tell thee, it is that double-edged sword which, on the one side cuts doubt and hesitation and the weeds of accumulated dross, and with the other cuts through the charm of this seeming reality which we call the phenomenal world. But thou wilt again ask me, "Pray tell me, What is that sword? You have told me a lot about what it is not, but you have not told me what it is." I will tell thee by and by.

Excuse a little digression, if it be, and let me tell you a little bit of mathematics. Mathematics, as you know, is the most impersonal of all branches of knowledge. As a matter of fact it is ideally so. Let us start with a study of geometry. Geometry begins with the definition of a "point." A point is defined as, "That which occupies no space." Now, Sadhuji, you will object, "How can there be anything which occupies no space?" And I say, quite right, that is just what a point is. It has no dimensions but it exists. Not only that, extend the point and it becomes a straight line. Curve the line round and make a circle and the circle covers an area. Revolve the circle about its diameter and it makes a sphere and you would not say that a sphere does not occupy space or that it is not real. You are puzzled, how is it possible for reality to spring up from something which is really nothing? Being a wanderer, probably, this static example does not appeal to you. Let me give you a moving illustration. Take the potter's wheel. The farther you are from the centre of the axis, the greater will be your speed; conversely, the nearer you are to the axis, the less will be your speed, till ultimately, when you are at the axis itself, your speed is zero. Now is this not wonderful that while the wheel is moving with a tremendous speed, the axis upon which the wheel is moving is itself stationary? Incidentally, this illustration can be extended to the wheel of destiny or the wheel of law, or the cycle of life itself. If you withdraw within yourself to the very pivot of your

being, then you are free both from the workings of destiny and the law as well as the tide of events.

That is all very well, but what is this point? Is it what you call 'I'? No. 'I' is not this point, though the point is the nucleus and core of 'I'.

Sadhuji, I had once started and joined the procession of a festival. The festival was that of the marriage of gods. It was the marriage of Shiva¹ and Parvati. Parvati lay hidden in the womb of nature but had given her consent to this marriage and as yet nobody had seen her. The procession was proceeding to the appointed place from whence it would receive the token of the bride's consent and come to the bridegroom. It had started in the morning but I joined it about eventide when it was coming from the appointed place and reaching the bridegroom's abode. I saw from a long distance a white elephant and, upon it, in a golden 'ambari' were seated three persons in a line. All the three were very old men and each one of them was holding in his right hand a silver tumbler covered with the left hand. The procession was a very long one and it was very noisy. There were groups and groups of show men. There were groups of swordsmen displaying their skill with the sword. There were wrestlers and athletes exhibiting their feats of strength; there were armed knights who would charge at each other and show their valour and chivalry. And also there were groups and groups of musicians and dancers, each one giving out its best. As evening came on, from both sides of the procession, most brilliant and dazzling fireworks were exhibited and also some mock cannons were fired which boomed and thudded on your bowels. Disturbed by all this noise and din, I ran to the bridegroom's abode.

It was indeed a sight worth seeing. In the open, on a high pedestal, he was seated on the ornamented chair. He was dressed in pure white and had a garland of roses about his neck. The

1. Third God of the Hindu Trinity.

headdress was the most peculiar of all. It was a square piece of green silk and was tightly bound over his head in such a way that his forehead and both ears were covered with it. The cloth was ornamented with stars and flowers, worked out in gold. His left hand was on the arm of the chair and in his right hand he held a rose which he kept smelling now and then. There were also bracelets of jasmin flowers on his wrists. I was afraid of the approaching procession and so I caught hold of one of the legs of the chair and stood there reassured.

The procession approached headed by the white elephant. The elephant knelt down and gave a most graceful salutation with its trunk. Someone received and welcomed the three old men and led them into a chamber.

The bridegroom sat there while each of the show parties in turn came into a cleared space before the chair and showed their skill with such enthusiasm and zeal that it looked as though ten new lives were pumped into each one of them. The offerings that were made, it is impossible to describe them. Flowers of every kind enough to bury an elephant if they were piled up. Fruits, of season and out of season and varieties that would astonish and please. Clothes of taste and value, and vegetables and grain and spices and delicacies by the cart-load enough to feed every one that came there.

The bridegroom looked so thoughtful that when he talked, it appeared as though in all this tremendous pageantry and glamour, while he enjoyed it all, his mind was somewhere else.

It was about midnight and the processionists were returning back group after group. It was the night of the second moon. There was a delicacy about the moon, like the emotions of a maiden. I had seen it just after sunset for a while, when, in close company with the sun, it had vanished below the horizon. The bridegroom, though tired, came down the steps of the dais with a supple step and went into the chamber. The door was closed. I walked back to the

dais. The music of the musicians, the tempo of the drummers and the movements of the dancers were no more there. Though it was the great day of the greatest happiness, yet a deep and heavy sadness was creeping into my heart. I walked over to the hall of audience where to my surprise I saw a number of wild-looking Fakeers standing in a ring beating their flat drums in a strange rhythm and swaying their bodies to the rhythm. Their long, loose hair was strewed all over their faces and shoulders and yet I could see the reflection of the smoking torches that illuminated the hall gleaming in their eyes and piercing through the masses of black hair swaying before their eyes. I sat down in a dark corner and closed my eyes. I felt very uncomfortable when I noticed that my heart was thumping in exact resonance to the thud of the flat drum and the tempo went on growing faster and faster. The fakeers started to dance a wild dance with the tempo, the chains on their legs were jingling and the sound was cutting into my heart like the sudden thrust of a sharp knife. As though this was not enough they started to chant a mantra.¹ It was in an unknown language, but I grasped the significance and meaning of each syllable and the whole of it. They kept on repeating the same thing over and over again, and every repetition had the effect of the full striking of a sledge-hammer which was crushing and compressing and twisting and squeezing my heart. I wanted to struggle out of it. I could not bear it, but the ever-faster rhythm gave me no respite. I, at least wanted to burst into a flood of tears but my eyes were burning and my throat and tongue were parched and stiff like dry hide and my breath—I was panting for life.

Brother, how can I describe to you the feelings of a man when his body, all too alive, is thrown into a huge funeral pyre? The singeing of the flesh, the cramping and twitching of the limbs, only flames to breathe in and red hot embers that have already

1. La Ilaha Illallah, There is no God but God.

eaten their way into the bowels. Brother, this is not imagination, only language is inadequate to describe what passing through the fires of annihilation means. I must have swooned or I may have been dead, I do not know.

It was the early hours of the morn and my eyes opened to the faint melody of a shahanai¹. It sounded far, very, very far away, and it was so lonesome, so terribly lonesome. It appeared as though it was coming from the vast icy deserts of the Polar regions. The music seeped drop by drop, into me and I felt life coming back. When, after a long time, I felt I was fully awake it appeared as though I was like a hollow reed-pipe and some breath warm and sweet was being filled into me.

I got up and sat down wondering where I was and what had happened to me. My old friend, the policeman, came to me with a beaming face. He gave me a glass of very refreshing drink which I slowly sipped. He asked me to get ready for the great feast wherein everybody is invited.

I got up, and on my way to the feast I saw the white elephant² standing under a banyan tree and with its trunk plucking and placidly chewing away some twigs and leaves on the banyan tree. I went close to it as I was attracted by its indescribably drunken eyes. Brother, you may have seen the large and heavy eyes of a woman drunk with the best draught of love. You may have seen the shy drunkenness of the gazelle's eye or the tearful drunkenness of the Nargis flower. I cannot tell thee, brother, the quality or the nature of the wine that is manifest in the elephant's eyes. There is a sadness in it but no sorrow, there is a memory in it but no regret, there is a hope in it but no dreams and there is a calm in it but no sleep. There is wisdom which is far above intelligence and there is an understanding which is far above reason. It

1. Shahnani—a reed flute.

2. Elephant—The physical vehicle of the soul. Adam's Vehicle is supposed to be the Bull. That of Jesus the Ass, that of Mohamed the Camel and of Hazrat Ali the Tiger.

seems this elephant has been left over for the bridegroom to ride whenever he would go out from his abode.

I never saw the three old men again but I saw the bridegroom at breakfast. He affectionately garlanded each one of us and asked us to join him after the breakfast, in the feasting and rejoicings which had again commenced. All the time, till the sun reached the zenith, beautiful enchanting melodies were being played on the shahanai and it appeared as though all that was going on, in and about was on the theme and motif of the Shahanai.¹ I was told that the player was a young man whose parents died when he was still a baby. An orphan deprived of the caressing kindness of his mother and the loving care of his father he had endured the harsh and unsympathetic callousness of his surroundings. There was no one to whom he could go and in whose lap he could weep and ease the burden of his little heart. He was a lonely child and all the cruelty of the selfish world instead of making him bitter and hard, had made him all the more lovely and thus he learnt to play the shahanai. His soul poured out the strains of music which he created. There was a longing in it and a love that transcended complaint as well as desire.

Oh! brother, the strains of his lonesome drunken music pierced my heart as though with red hot shafts, many holes were made in it and I put my fingers on these holes to stop the heart from bleeding, yet the surge of life inside would lift fingers here and there and music, lonesome drunken music, would pour out.

Thus seven days and nights did I pass, each day feeling more nourished, more strengthened; each day feeling something taken away, something that is not me, and each day feeling something added, something which is also not me. On the seventh night, I dreamt a strange dream. I was in

1. Shahanai—A type of Indian flute, symbol for the purified body through which breathes the song of life.

Ceylon and I crossed hundreds of miles of thick jungle in a mountainous country till I reached an outstanding hill with very steep sides all around. There was a spiral staircase all around it. I walked up the stairs and reached the top which was quite flat and all of stone. In the centre, I saw two huge foot-marks like those of a human being¹ but each one a cubit long. I knelt down and kissed the footprints. When I rose I saw the footprints—just the footprints—also rise from the stone and proceed in a certain direction. I followed them and for a long long time I felt I was floating in air along with the footprints. It was night time. There was no moon in the sky but the stars were shining. The footprints ultimately touched the ground and still kept tramping, one after the other, as though they are the impressions of the feet of a man walking along, whom I cannot see. Even in the dim light when I looked carefully into the impressions, I saw the markings of a “Chakram”² in one foot and of a “Sankhu”³ in the other. Further on the soil was very soft and dusty. I saw that as each impression was made, dust rose from the footprints and each particle of dust got lighted up and flew to the sky and became a star. I followed on and the footprints led me to a black cubic stone lying hidden in a thick growth of bushes and trees on a slope among the hills. I ascended up the stone and sat there facing North for a long long time. I felt a little cold. I opened my eyes. I was bewildered to find that I was actually sitting on a cubic stone in the centre of a thick jungle among the mountains. I thought, I must have suffered from somnambulism and walked in my sleep. But I was placed in grave doubt, when after a while I saw my old friend the policeman come to me with bread and a jug of water. I asked him how he knew my whereabouts. He smiled and answered, “All roads lead to Rome, and there is but one way for those who do not get

1. They are supposed to be the footprints of Adam.

2. Chakram—Wheel.

3. Sankhu—Couch shell.

distracted." He left me there and walked away. I stayed there till the sun became too hot for me and returned to my place.

Sadhuji, I started to tell you what that point is which is the nucleus of Truth "I" is at best a zero and it should be so. When this perfect zero is attached to any identity the whole thing becomes real. The nothingness of the zero becomes the ten-fold greatness of the one you are attached to. And believe me, Sadhuji, there is only one "I" just as there is only one infinity. There is nought but One and all is One.

Man through time immemorial has gone in search of Truth, of God, I say unto him, "God is unknown, is unknowable. Therefore, Oh man, search for the 'Man' who is known and who is knowable. On the point of his being, you can construct the geometry and the order of the universe. On the strength of the rope that ties you to his being you can ascend to the seventh heaven and you can walk with joy on the path which is narrower than the hair and sharper than the edge of a sword. Once you have "It," there is no failing, there is no faltering and there is no turning back. In joyous splendour with all the glory of the heavens surging in your bosom tramping over untruth, and cutting asunder the weeds of decay you march on to that which is Truth."

Satt Guru, Jai Ho, Jai Ho, Jai Ho.

CHAPTER III

THE SONATA

COMING down the hill of the Diamond mines, I wanted to rest in the valley. It was a strange valley. There were neither any trees there nor any signs of a brook or rivulet. All the same I lay down to rest. I do not know whether I slept or just lay down there, relaxed and content. The climate changed, there were beautiful low clouds all over, there was a slight drizzle too and cool fresh breezes were stirring up some strange happiness in my bosom.

Then, as though in a dream, I heard a cock¹ crow, and it crowed again much nearer to me. And as I lay languid and happy, the cock gave a most piercing call right in my very ear. I jumped up and almost without thinking caught hold of the cock by the legs. He was a huge bird with resplendent plumage and a great crown of a comb. I tied up his legs with my sacred thread, the only string I could lay my hands on. I wondered what I should do with this fine fellow.

To me, it appeared that this valley belonged to a fine lady known as Saraswati,² and methought I should sacrifice this cock as an offering to the beautiful goddess. So I walked along with the cock in my left hand and the staff in my right. As I walked down the valley, I saw signs of vegetation, and further on came into a great forest³. It was so thickly grown that passing through it was impossible, so I tied up the cock to my waist belt and climbed up a tree. There were many creepers⁴ bearing strange fruits. With the help of these creepers I swung from one tree to the other till I crossed the forest and, strangely enough, when I landed down, I found I was holding by the stem in each hand one

1. The inner self. Subject to evolution and changing to goat, etc., finally to the beautiful human form.

2. The goddess of Arts and Learning.

3. Accumulated knowledge.

4. Verses from the Holy Books.

and became a big black serpent which came towards me with its huge hood and swallowed up Laxmi. I felt sorry for her but all the the same I stepped into the water. The water was icy cold and I was shuddering to take the plunge. The serpent then said unto me, "You cannot swim with your hands and feet. You can only swim with your spine¹ and fishes alone do it. Go back to the altar where you sacrificed the cock, you will find a goat with a nice beard, standing. Tie the sacred thread round his neck and bring him down to this place. Sacrifice him here, throw away his meat to the kites and from his guts make the cotton cleaner's instrument. Pick out the four seeds² from the cotton wool you had been gathering and weave a cloth, spread out this cloth in the lake and when you pull it out a great big fish will come and swallow you, poor little fish. And thus you will reach the other shore.

Brother, do you know, when I woke up I found myself on the other shore. I was sitting at a table on the upper storey of a solidly made stone building. A wise old man was feeding me with two gold spoons holding one in each hand.

"Brother, what did you do with the orange,³ I gave you? It is slightly sour but all the same eat it and when you are refreshed and strengthened and the smarting in your eyes caused by sleeplessness has cooled down, I will tell you more about it."

ALCHEMY

Sadhuji, 'God is in His heaven and all is well upon the earth.' There is nothing so real as memories of old times. Once you were so fond of alchemy, to convert copper into gold. Of that also I will tell you later but today let me tell you of the Great Alchemy to convert a clod of earth into sterling gold.

Like all great secrets of nature it is so simple that you will refuse to believe me, yet I say unto you have faith in me and try.

Just three thing are needed—oil, chillies and turmeric. Yes, it is as simple as that.

1. Your 'inside.'
2. Lust, Anger, Desire and Pride.
3. Symbol of spiritual recognition.

Now let me tell the story of the Coconut. I first saw the Coconut¹ when I went to the temple. I went to the temple because I wanted to see what happened ultimately to the Devakanneru flowers which, much as I appreciated when I saw them blossoming in profusion on the awkward looking trees, I appreciated them much more when I saw them spread out on trays, being carried to the temple as an offering by orange-robed kanyas² who looked like the flowers themselves. The awkward looking prohibit³ was breaking away coconuts as though with a vengeance at the feet of the Idol. Every time he banged a coconut on the stone, I felt a rude knock on my head and I walked away thinking that all this has got something to do with my head.

Do you know, Oh Brother, the coconut when the outer covering is pulled off, has got a finely trimmed beard. Catch hold of the beard and invert it and it looks like a Gopi with the hair made up on the top of her head. Such is the swinging rhythm of true love. Now you are the bearded, mature, confident lover, possessive and aggressive, dominating and dictating and all-embracing. Now again with the swing of the balance you are the love that surrenders itself without question or hesitation, without reservation or desire, which is all purity and unity, which is cool like the space before creation and full like the ocean when all life will cease to exist. On the fulcrum of an unknown 'I' this balance swings and this is but the conscious part of the reality of love which dawned upon me when the prohibit broke the coconut.

Do you know, Brother, the coconut has three eyes. One of them through which the seedling sprouts has a very thin skin over it, and the other two though seemingly big and bright have a covering of shell and strange, as it may seem, the seeing-eyes are in reality the blind eyes for all that they see is only illusion. The central eye situated between

1. Symbol of the composite personality.

2. Girls.

3. Priest.

and above the other two, in truth belongs to the Kanya; and so long as it was there, it was the custodian of creation, but in the greater rhythm of the Universe the bearded man got it and since then it has become projective and destructive. But Brother, the microscopic swing of the balance on the unknown fulcrum of 'I' is not only symbolic but is the essential grain or nucleus of the macroscopic reality and therefore the truth is neither creation nor destruction but is above both these and is in the fulcrum itself.

You know the coconut, the fibrous covering, the hard shell then the inner shell, and then the kernel and the water,¹ if there be any. When tender, and you break it, what a delicious drink there is in it. It is both food and drink and almost like "Amrith"². I say almost, for there is some similarity, like there is always between illusion and truth. There is a tender cream all around the shell, the like of which food there is none to be had. But Brother, have faith in me, let it ripen, and when ripe, lay it in some forgotten corner. Sadhana³—Yes, the coconut is in Sadhana. When the fires of passion are conserved and they become the comforting warmth of your bosom, when the planning and conquering might of the will is stilled into the light of your eyes, when the emeralds and rubies of desire are thrown into the dust to where they really belong, then the amrith-like water of the coconut becomes the oil of life and permeates into every fibre of its being.

Nay, the story does not end there. The kernel is mercilessly pushed into the squeaking oil-mill⁴ drawn by a blind-folded bullock who goes round and round and thus the oil is crushed out.

Nay, the story does not end there. This oil is put in the shell which is all that is now left of the poor coconut and you wait with patience, with hope and confidence and faith, for indeed, there never has set a sun that has not risen again.

The story could end there but as you are eager

1. The pleasures of life.

2. Nectar.

3. Meditation.

4. The disciplinary practices of the seeker.

and zealous, I will tell you of the future also.

Life has arisen out of life and light has come from light. Such is the law, the Eternal wheel that goes on and on. No matter how pure and seasoned your oil, no matter how bright and polished your lamp, unless the lamp is lit, it will go back to the soil from whence it sprang in the Eternal cycle, till the day when it shall be lit.

Do not take this unlighted lamp to the flame which blinds and dazzles you, lest it catch fire. No, remember, to attain Brahman,¹ to be Brahman and nothing but Brahman, you must march with the majestic pace of evolution, wherein aeons and aeons of so-called time are but an instant in the eyes of Brahman. The higher you climb the more careful you have to be of a slip. Now you must prepare the wick from the texture of your being. It is not the oil permeating every fibre of your being now, but it is your being now which is floating in the oil of life. Search for the fatherly hand that will light you and lead you on, that will protect you from the gales and storms which are beyond your control. This lamp is twice blessed, for it not only lights itself but illuminates without discrimination all those that come within its range. Brother, believe me when I tell you without rhyme or reason, you will discover to your great joy that your wick is floating not in the oil of your lamp but is drawing from the oil of life itself which extends beyond the spaces and which will extend far, far beyond Time and Time over again. May be, one day, as it has to be, the wick will consume itself. It is the fibre, the texture that is burnt away, the oil of life goes on.

Now, Brother, do you understand how to get the first ingredient for the greater Alchemy? Oil.

CHILLIES

Oh! Yogi, for the last twelve years I have been wandering all over the land. I bathed in all the twelve sacred rivers and visited all the holy shrine situated on the tops of high mountains and in th

1. Truth.

sheltered darkness of the caves beyond human approach. I have often asked myself whither am I going and what am I searching for; and as though in answer, sometimes I heard the thunder roar out "Aham Brahman,"¹ "Aham Brahman" and sometimes I heard the heart-rending call of the conch-shell from some distant temple. My heart was weary and I found no answer. With a detached interest, I watched many a market fair where vegetable, and women, and cattle and cloth were brought and sold. I watched the pageant of many a Jatra and festival and wondered what it is that the people are about and rejoicing. Then one morning I saw a shepherd tending his cows, and with crossed legs playing his flute. A lovesome, beautiful melody was breathed into me, it sang and danced, "Ram nam bhajo re,² bhajo re, bhajo re." Rama, the hero who had taken the bow and arrows into his wielding hands, Rama, the king of kings, who had joyfully left behind Seeta—the flower of this unfolding Universe, the mighty river that bears and forbears—and banished himself into the unknown. Ram the compassionate takes up the bow and arrows and steps into the field of life which is always a war, a war against time, a war against destiny and above all a war against ones ownself. I shriek out "Aham Brahman," "Aham Brahman," and run down the slope in wild ecstasy.

Right in front of me I saw an old man standing. His eyes were smiling and there was a smile playing upon his lips. He was breathing hard and quick and his nostrils were quivering like two little bellows. Both his fists were closed and I felt that herein, this old man holds the secret I am after. He opens out his right hand and therein I see two fresh green chillies, one bigger than the other. He says unto me, "May be, you have tasted this before, all the same eat them." He stretches out his hand. I take up the chillies, put them in my mouth and start chewing them

1 Aham Brahman—I am Truth—I am God.

2 Ram Nam Bhajo Re—Chant the name of God—the real.

Bah! they are horrid so very bitter and pungent, I who always lived on bananas and milk. Oh, this is terrible. My whole body begins to tingle and my eyes smart and water is flowing down my eyes as from two open taps. There is a cold perspiration on my forehead and all the ecstasy of "Ahm Brahman" is snuffed out of me. The open palm is still there before me, as though to stay me, and in it I see my own reflection. I see my face all flushed and red and rivers flowing down my eyes. I look at the face of the strange old man who has given me such rotten stuff to eat. He opens up the other fist and therein I see two big red chillies and without stopping to look again, I run for my life. My head is giddy and the bitter burning sensation is running into my very bowels and being. My very finger-tips and every pore in my body is burning and tingling. The smarting is on my skin but the bitter taste seems to be surging in all my veins and arteries, but deeper than that seems to be some cool sensation that is stilling my restless heart. I wail out "Ahm Brahman, Ahm Brahman" and walk down with a bent head and all the hills around are echoing back my wail, "Ahm Brahman, Ahm Brahman"

With the bow and arrows in my hands I enter the city of "Sansaries" (householders). I see everywhere selfishness and greed, everyone lives in terms of 'I', understands in terms of 'I' and dies in terms of 'I'. There is so much of egotism that each one is bullying the other and everyone is trying to outwit the other. The father and the son, the mother and the baby, the husband and the wife, the teacher and the taught, they are all glorifying the wretched littleness of this little 'I'. The really strong man is never a bully and the truly rich is never a miser. Having all the assets of littleness, they cling to the 'I' as dirt clings to a dirty man. "Ahankar" the grandeur, of that 'I' whose greatness has the crown of humility, whose knowledge has the wonderment of a child, whose wisdom accepts reality as it is and whose understanding "passeth all understanding,"

that great 'I' Sansaries never try to unveil and unfold unto themselves. This grand 'I' of which there are not two but only one, just as there can be no two infinities, the first glimpse of it you had when with the dawn of youth, love flapped its gentle wings. The beloved all fresh and radiant came to you in her green garment but instead of absorbing her into your being, you decked her into your button-hole. Since then Oh Sansary, whenever there was a calm after each one of the storms of life, the great 'I' kept gently knocking at your door. It has been so faithful it has never left you, though often you tried to strangle its voice with wine, women, and song. The stars were kind to you and misfortune chased you out of this endless strife. The smiles of children, the comfort which wealth can give, the glory that power can bestow, and even the last plank of being, Health, was snatched away from you. Then this 'I' more from an inner compulsion than from choice, went in search of the thief who was knocking at the door.

Then, Oh Sanyasin, methought, it is through selfless service and through devotion for the cause of human sufferings, through expanding my ego and making my consciousness that of the race, and my neighbour's suffering my own suffering, that I would attain to happiness which is 'Brahman.' Maintaining my nothingness, I moved with many a king and captain and fought for the righteous cause. I built many a temple and institution wherein thousands were fed and cared for. I espoused the cause of the down-trodden and preached the gospel of brotherhood at the top of my voice. I had forgotten myself in this huge drama of humanity, and in my lonesome nights many a time have a wept for the sins of humanity.

But always the gentle hand kept knocking at my door and asking me "Whither, Oh Sadhu, whither Oh Sadhu." The hand one day shook me violently. I woke up and dropped the green mantle I was wearing, for it was a mantle after all. Instead of

absorbing this de-egotised love into my being, I had worn it as a mantle all these years.

There is nothing so real, Oh Brother, as memories of gold forgotten fires. "God is in His heaven and all is well upon the earth."

The bitter poison of love, have you, Oh Yogin, tasted twice and courted annihilation. Go back to the old man and with determination and a hardened heart chew up and swallow the other two red chillies also. Then you will know the meaning of "Aham" and do not forget "Knowing is Being."

Brother you appear to be hungry, here are four bananas, eat them and nourish yourself, and I will tell you of the secret.

Brother, the scientist and Sansari speak of an objective reality. They say, "Show us the man who can put his finger into the fire and not burn it. He may hypnotise himself and not feel it, that is not the issue. Fire should not burn or char his finger, or again when the mystic says nothing exists but God, show us the mystic who can walk through the wall in front, which indeed is not God." I tell them, the man of truth even objectively is of the essence of nature and as such loathes to deviate from the law. In the history of human search many a prophet and rishi performed miracles but such miracles have never convinced even a single man. Abraham came out unscathed from a huge burning pyre, Moses walked over the Nile and Jesus raised the dead; but history tells you that each one of them was a lonesome traveller whose miracles never convinced anybody. Only the memory of their life and death opened the eyes of man. Even today in this mechanistic-devilish age such men are not wanting. But all that the Sansaries and the Scientists ask of them is this or that worldly petty gain and not the grand miracle of transmuting a clod of earth into sterling gold. Truth is bitter, bitter because it is only the bitter taste that clings to your palate, while all sweetness fades away. Everyone is running away from himself and is asking you to show a way of

escape. Why so again, because of the fear of the Unknown. The darkness of one's own depths is most terrible and they are afraid to take the plunge. They try hard to forget the fact that "Knowing is Being" and in order to 'Be' you must know and in order to know you cannot help to 'Be' and to 'Be' you have to travel the long, long road. There is no short cut to it. And so I tell the Sansaries and Scientists, I will lead you to walk through either the wall or the pyre. My show of the magic is neither good for you nor for me.

One of the essential qualities of life is to persist. On the microscopic scale you see a thousand ways in which nature procreates itself and recreates itself, always remaining fresh and alive. And on the microscopic scale we also see what terrific intelligence and hard struggle is displayed by each individual which is the focal point and eddy in the grand river of life—to persist. The highest price, the highest offering, the highest sacrifice which life can offer is life itself. Thus the evidence of a martyr for any cause is, in fact, the very proof of the truth of the cause itself. What conviction, what will, what dignity and what majesty is needed for a martyr to give evidence through self-annihilation? It is red hot blood flowing through your severed jugular veins that has to dye your mantle red. And if your destiny has it so ordained that you shall bathe in blood, then this alone is enough to transport you into the being of truth. No matter what you are and what you have been, there is no need for the other three. If there has ever been a short cut or a back door into the temple of truth, it is this and this alone.

Oh Scientist and Sansari, to the man who can dare to deny the hardest reality of all realities, which is his own being and prove as such in fact, do you think a mere wall of brick or fire will matter to him?

To him who has dared to bathe in blood but destiny had meant it otherwise, there is as yet a long path to tread. He has to chew and digest the

fourth chilli also. From the star-dust of annihilation, he has to suffer his own re-creation into his own might and being, to become the living evidence of Truth. Of such a man, has it been truly said¹ that his hand is the hand of destiny, and whatever he utters is truth and it shall be. He has attained the stature of the Universe itself, nay, of the cause itself and the will and the purpose which is behind and beyond this Universe. He is so well tuned to himself that he is a mere man; as simple as a child, as innocent as a lamb, and as approachable as God Himself.

Now brother, do you understand what 'Aham' (I am) is. Truth, Oh, there is a long road yet to go. Having digested the bitter pungent stuff, with the lamp in your hand, you have to come down—come down into the world. Now blood and tears do not upset you and the unceasing toil of man does not weary you.

As I was coming down I passed through a village where the Holi festival was in full swing and a naughty girl squirted a syringe full of turmeric water into my face. A little farther on a portly damsel came from the side and biting a part of her lower lip between her teeth, lifted a bucketful, and poured it over me, drenching me and my clothes from head to foot. And much as I would wash it, the yellow tint clung to me and would not leave me. So I reconciled myself to the fact and walked along. I passed through a village which consisted entirely of women and girls. Their faces were all smeared with turmeric paste and as I was wondering what happened to all the men and boys, one of them told me that they all went out in a body in search of the red herb which colours silver into gold and they have never returned since. I asked them on what they live, they said "Devotion." I asked them what did they eat; they said, "Fried liver"; and I asked them what did they drink, they said, "Red wine"; and I asked them why even the sprouting girls were dyed

yellow, and they said, "Don't you know, this colour is impervious to the evil eye, whether it be of jealousy or lust."

Oh brother, humanity has sinned terribly and got enmeshed into the cycle of births and re-births, now born as a pig and now as a dog and now as a buffalo and now as a jackal, all because he has under-rated the woman.

A Menoka may have dashed to the ground sixteen thousand years of Vishwamitra's tapasya. Indeed Jesus may have declared "Begone thou woman, thou art the embodiment of sin." And wisely may the Rushies have prescribed Sannyas. But I say unto thee, Oh brother, there is something to get over. What is it that you will get over? You cannot pass a mountain by running away from the mountain. And indeed is not the seed of woman in the man and that of man in the woman, and, Oh my mad brother, you can run away from everything but how can you run away from yourself? This devotion to a cause, this honesty of purpose, this unknown intuition which directs your will, is not all this the seed of woman within the man?

Man, the possessive, the aggressive, the dominating, the dictating, the hunter in the forest; man who is gasping for freedom and whose essence is free; man the irresponsible child, how can he ever know the meaning of devotion, the meaning of selfless surrender and the meaning of responsibility which embraces within its womb the law of the Universe? Brother, without devotion all the oil in your lamp and the four phases of your life just go to the winds and you are nowhere.

Have you ever meditated on the Devakanya flower? Let me describe it to you. It is a very delicate lily-like flower, not too small nor too big. Its body is white with the softness of milk and moon-light and the petals open out with a spontaneity and frankness which only a woman's heart can know. At its core is a colouring of the most delicate yellow hue which is incomparable with any

but itself in its lustre, in its silence, in its music and in its charm. Its most gentle and unimposing fragrance is comparable only to the beauty and sweetness of its even gentler colouring. Man may think it so trifling and little and may even crush the flower between his fingers without giving a second thought to it. And we see every day thousands of such flowers crushed between the skilled fingers of man. But, believe me, these flowers are most readily acceptable as an offering.

Love offers to you the key which opens the door to heaven. Love is a fire which consumes everything, the great and the small, the wise and the ignorant, the soldier and the general, the king and the peasant. It steals in like a thief and there is no escape from it. It robs you of everything, so that you may stand pure and naked before your lord. It stills the worst fears and calms the greatest tides of misfortune. It takes you to the level of the sea which is most powerful because it is at the lowest level. Gyana¹ will only lead you into forests and discipline may bestow the sun in your one hand and the moon in the other but Bhagta² will dispel the duality of existence, even as light disperses darkness. Therefore, I say unto thee, Oh Sadhu, if you want the surest way which has no end and which ends in yourself, if you want to be the song that you hear in the stillness of the starry night, if you want to be the glory of the rising sun that clears the mist and unfolds itself as life through the seedling, if you want to be the lustre of the pearl and the quality which has made man, man, then prostrate yourself at the feet of the woman - the maiden, the wife, the mother - and learn from her the secret which is holding the Universe together and preventing it from blowing itself into dust and atoms.

I assure you, Oh Sadhu, without the turmeric you may become a king and rule the world, you may become a Rushi and command the stars to dance at your wish, but you cannot reach Brahman which

1. Knowledge.

2. Love and devotion.

is Truth, and remember, "Anything less than Brahman is not Brahman at all."

Sadhuji, I have told you the recipe of the great alchemy, just three things—oil, chillies and turmeric. Yes, it is as simple as that.

You need not feel diffident. Every man is born with all the three, and potentially he has them all in good measure and due proportion. But generally we find one or two of them hidden and they have to be brought to the surface. If you feel that an untiring vitality, an indomitable courage, a most contagious enthusiasm and the 'dash' and 'go' are wanting in you, then you lack the oil in quantity. If on the other hand you have got all these and there is the smile of confidence and complacency on your lips and you only attract women and crowds, then the oil is poor in quality.

If you have a tremendous self-confidence in yourself and you can challenge and win every fight in the battle of life, and you can fight with your back to the wall; when you can shout and make yourself heard and make the other to follow or obey your bidding; when you can embrace your beloved and crush her ribs with passion and fire; when you can order the environment according to your will and plan, then believe me the chillies are of bad odour and poor in quality. Whereas if you can tune yourself to the law of the Universe so that your dignity is the dignity of God, when you have the patience and forbearance to embrace sin and suffering even as the clothes which nature wears to hide its shame, when like the disinterested sun you can shine and shine on all, then your Aham, your ego, is of good quality.

When you mistake death for peace and sleep for Shanti, when you consider impotent poverty as virtue and weakness as a cloak of defence, when you invite pity and compassion and seek solitude as an escape, when you offer yourself because you are useless and sacrifice yourself because you wish to die, then your turmeric is of poor quality.

But when you have a sweetness and fragrance which attracts but does not compel, which whispers but does not shout, which looks at you but does not ask, which lulls you to sleep but keeps watch over you, which surrenders itself unto you, but, while carrying you one feels lightened and not burdened, then indeed the quality of the turmeric is good.

Man should not judge man but if you wish to take a peep at him and see him as God sees each one of us—see him in his essence—in his essentials that survive after him; if you wish to see him naked, stripped of all the clothes of good manners and wisdom and knowledge and wealth and power, then look for the three ingredients in his character. Look both for quality and quantity and also for the proportion and balance. Look for them in the dynamic aspect because even death is not static in this Universe. I say unto thee, only look out but do not judge. I say, “look at” men because it is frightfully difficult to look at yourself. And if even you happen to look at yourself you will be horrified and like a mad dog you will start barking and biting every one you come across. Look at men and see the drama being enacted and by and by you will realise that it is indeed your own self that you have been looking at. This gentle dawning of the truth will not shock or unhinge you.

Now, brother, let me tell you a little story. A young Sadhu during his wanderings, one evening, came towards the outskirts of a town. He saw a very old garden of huge mango trees and in it a well. He thought he would wash his dusty feet and refresh himself and thus he came to the well. Having refreshed himself, he was starting to go his way when he observed that some people were coming out from a small dilapidated building close by. He walked over there and inside the house he saw an old man sitting and chatting with a few persons seated all around him. This young Sadhu also went in, took his seat and closed his eyes in contempla-

tion. After a while he opened his eyes, felt very pleased and wished good-bye to the old man and was walking away. The old man called him back and asked him, "Sadhuji what did you see?" The Sadhuji replied, "I am very pleased, you are indeed a very good Sidhapursha,¹ good-bye." And again started to walk away. The old man again asked him, "Sadhuji what did you see?" The young Sadhu sat down and said, "I wanted to see what you are and I saw a beautifully polished mirror; only there is a wee bit of a black spot still clinging at its lower edge. But I am confident that it will also disappear in due course." The old man expressed surprise and said, "Though you are so young, you have truly got deep insight. How did you manage to get it?" The Sadhu replied, "It seems my parents had no issue all their life and in old age they prayed to the Lord Shiva and promised that if a son was born, they would dedicate it to Sanyas. In due course I was born and, when four years old, I was given over to a Guru. When I was twelve my Guru-Dev gave me a practical mantra—call it advice or order if you like, and asked me to roam about the world. The mantra is that I should always do the exact opposite of what my ego wants me to do. Thus for the last six years I have un-faillingly carried out the order and that is all." The old man replied, "Indeed I am very pleased; but do you know, what you saw as a mirror with a spot was your own self and not me. And I will also tell you what that little spot is. Surrenderer yourself unto me, and fill yourself with me and surround yourself with me so that nought of ye remaineth but me, and then you will reach perfection." The Sadhu replied, "That is impossible, I cannot do it." The old man reminded, "You are breaking the covenant of your Guru Dey." The young Sadhu was sensible enough and he surrendered. The old man asked him now to look into him again. The Sadhu

1. God realised man.

now saw a spotless brilliant mirror. When he looked again he saw the Universe in it, and he walked away.

EPILOGUE

“Oh Sadhujee—listen.

Whither—where are you going?”

The Sadhu looked around and saw a young lad—almost an adolescent, also dressed like a Sadhu, with an expressionless face but clear and lively eyes. The Sadhu came nearer and then burst out into a peal of the most rippling laughter. It was somehow so contagious that the boy also began to laugh spontaneously and they both joined hands and danced and laughed and laughed till their tears drenched their robes. And then for a while they would gasp for breath and would again burst out into peels of laughter. After a while, however, the Sadhu became serious and repeated the question to himself—“Whither, ye Sadhu, whither”—and said “Listen, Oh, be caution myself—I will tell thee. The IT is without similitude, transcendence or likeness to anything that pertains to this seeming reality. Any words, the most poetic and symbolic that we may use, are like shadows to the real. Shadows are darkness, more an indication of what is not rather than of what IS. Even such seems to be the relationship between the phenomenal world and the IT. Space explodes itself and time becomes so alive that only life is left and no time. As such there is neither any going nor any action, nor any destination. The focus of Brahman that is ‘I’ with which the start was made is no more. There is no name for the Rest; though you may give a thousand names and they will all be true. Thus, baba, There it “IS”.

The boy mused for a while, smiled and said unto the Sadhu, “Why all that trouble and perplexity? What you say, IS SO. It must have been so always. Only I came to know of it when I lost it for a while at the moment, a year ago, when a serpent bit me and I faced death. Only for a moment though. I wish, however, the serpent had not bit

me. And yet it is all right. I have forgotton the whole thing. I really do not know anything. I am ignorant and yet I feel that in our essentials we are the same. Is that So?"

The Sadhu was amazed. He kissed the boy's feet, gave his salutation, threw away his robe, and being a learned physician, became the unofficial doctor of the next town he came to. Often, while ministering to the sick he would mutter unto himself, "The sick, the doctor, the medicine, the effect," and burst out into a contagious, fragrant laughter and all around him would also laugh and feel good.

THAT THOU ART

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