

ALL INDIA MAGAZINE

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Path of the Buddha

He neared the still consciousness sustaining all.
The voice that only by speech can move the mind
Became a silent knowledge in the soul;
The strength that only in action feels its truth
Was lodged now in a mute omnipotent peace.
A leisure in the labour of the worlds,
A pause in the joy and anguish of the search
Restored the stress of Nature to God's calm.

Savitri 32-33: p.32

Sri Aurobindo

*The figure of the Buddha achieves the expression of
the infinite in a finite image,... the illimitable calm of
Nirvana in a human form and visage.*

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Path of the Buddha

Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face. — Sri Aurobindo

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Editorial: Buddha lived nearly 2500 years ago or even more, yet his strong influence continues to act upon earth and mankind. The Mother Herself had Her inner acquaintance with the Buddha beautifully described in one of Her experiences documented in Prayers and Meditations. She was already an adept in the Buddhist Yoga and the Yoga of the Gita before coming to Pondicherry where, along with Sri Aurobindo, She would develop and give the Integral Yoga to mankind. Still, some of the practices of these early yogas does help lay a strong base upon which the greater Yoga of Sri Aurobindo can be developed, It is no mere coincidence that the Mother actually took up portions of the Dhammapada for classes during the early period of the Ashram life. Though the teachings took a different colouring with passage of time as indeed all spiritual teachings suffer this distortion. It is with this thought that we are dedicating this issue to the noble truths set into motion by the wise and mighty Buddha.



The Mother was an adept in the Buddhist yoga and the yoga of the Gita even before she came to India. Her yoga was moving towards a grand synthesis. After this, it was natural that she should come here. She has helped and is helping to give a concrete form to my yoga. This would not have been possible without her co-operation.

One of the two great steps in this yoga is to take refuge in the Mother. ¹

1. When Sri Aurobindo was asked, on a later occasion, what the second great step is, he replied, "Aspiration of the sadhak for the divine life." —Ed.

CWSA 32: 36

The Buddha

The perfect man, the Siddha or the Buddha, becomes universal, embraces all being in sympathy and oneness, finds himself in others as in himself and by so doing draws into himself at the same time something of the infinite power of a universal energy. That is the positive ideal of Indian culture.

CWSA 20: 254

The strong impulse to remove the sufferings of men out of sorrow for their sufferings is called compassion. To feel a sense of helpless weakness at the sight or thought of others' sufferings is known as pity. Weak helplessness is not compassion, it is pity. Compassion is the way of the strong, pity the manner of the weak. Moved by compassion the Lord Buddha left his wife and child, parents and friends and relatives to pine for him in sorrow with everything taken away, and set out to remove the sufferings of the world. Maddened by intense compassion, Kali went about the worlds killing the titans and flooded the earth with their blood in order to free all from sorrow.

Writings in Bengali, Sri Aurobindo, P. 153

The passage through sattwa is the ordinary idea of Yoga, it is the preparation and purification by the yama-niyama of Patanjali or by other means in other Yogas, e.g., saintliness in the bhakti schools, the eightfold path in Buddhism etc., etc. In our Yoga the evolution through sattwa is replaced by the cultivation of equanimity, *samatā*, and by the psychic transformation.

CWSA 28: 424

Buddha as an Avatar

Avatarhood would have little meaning if it were not connected with the evolution. The Hindu procession of the ten Avatars is itself, as it were, a parable of evolution. First the Fish Avatar, then the amphibious animal between land and water, then the land animal, then the Man-Lion Avatar, bridging man and animal, then man as dwarf, small and undeveloped and physical but containing in himself the godhead and taking possession of existence, then the rajasic, sattwic, nirguna Avatars, leading the human development from the vital rajasic to the sattwic mental man and again the overmental superman. Krishna, Buddha and Kalki depict the last three stages, the stages of the spiritual development — Krishna opens the possibility of Overmind, Buddha tries to shoot beyond to the supreme liberation but that liberation is still negative, not returning upon earth to complete positively the evolution; Kalki is to correct this by bringing the Kingdom of the Divine upon earth, destroying the opposing Asura forces. The progression is striking and unmistakable.

*

Krishna opened the possibility of Overmind with its two sides of realisation, static and dynamic. Buddha tried to shoot from mind to Nirvana in the Supreme, just as Shankara did in another way after him. Both agree in overleaping the other stages and trying to get at a nameless and featureless Absolute. Krishna on the other hand was leading by the normal course of evolution. The next normal step is not a featureless Absolute, but the Supermind. I consider that in trying to overshoot, Buddha like Shankara made a mistake, cutting away the dynamic side of the liberation. Therefore there has to be a correction by Kalki.

CWSA 28: 487-488

The renunciation of Buddha

The vision of the One Self dispels all differences; an infinite calm, an infinite love, an infinite charity, an infinite tolerance, is the very nature of the strong soul that has seen God. The sin, the stain, the disease, the foulness of the world cannot pollute his mind nor repel his sympathy; as he stoops to lift the sinner from the dung heap in which he wallows, he does not shrink from the ordure that stains his own hands; his eyes are not bedimmed by tears, when he lifts up the shrieking sufferer out of his pit of pain; he lifts him as a father lifts his child who has tumbled in the mire and is crying; the child chooses to think he is hurt & cries; the father knows he is not really hurt, therefore he does not grieve, but neither does he chide him, rather he lifts him up & soothes the wilful imaginary pain. Such a soul has become God, mighty & loving to help and save, not weak to weep and increase the ocean of human tears with his own. Buddha did not weep when he saw the suffering of the world; he went forth to save. And surely such a soul will not grieve over the buffets the outward world seems to give to his outward self; for how can He grieve who is all this Universe? The pain of his petty personal Self is no more to his consciousness than the pain of a crushed ant to a king as he walks musing in his garden bearing on his shoulders the destiny of nations. He cannot feel sorrow for himself even if he would, for he has the sorrow of a whole world to relieve; his own joy is nothing to him, for he has the joy of the whole Universe at his command.

CWSA 17: 146

The creative impulse in Buddhism

Buddhism itself, the philosophy which first really threw doubt on the value of life, did so only in its intellectual tendency; in its dynamic parts, by its ethical system and spiritual method, it gave a new set of values, a severe vigour, yet a gentler idealism to human living and was therefore powerfully creative both in the arts which interpret life and in society and politics. To realise intimately truth of spirit and to quicken and to remould life by it is the native tendency of the Indian mind, and to that it must always return in all its periods of health, greatness and vigour.

CWSA 20: 24

Buddhism was not solely a cloudy sublimation of Nirvana, nothingness, extinction and the tyrannous futility of Karma; it gave us a great and powerful discipline for the life of man on earth. The enormous positive effects it had on society and ethics and the creative impulse it imparted to art and thought and in a less degree to literature, are a sufficient proof of the strong vitality of its method. If this positive turn was present in the most extreme philosophy of denial, it was still more largely present in the totality of Indian culture.

CWSA 20: 239

The Spiritual sense of Buddhist Art

If we look long, for an example, at the adoration group of the mother and child before the Buddha, one of the most profound, tender and noble of the Ajanta masterpieces, we shall find that the impression of intense religious feeling of adoration there is only the most outward general touch in the ensemble of the emotion. That which it deepens to is the turning of the soul of humanity in love to the benignant and calm Ineffable which has made itself sensible and

human to us in the universal compassion of the Buddha, and the motive of the soul moment the painting interprets is the dedication of the awakening mind of the child, the coming younger humanity, to that in which already the soul of the mother has learned to find and fix its spiritual joy. The eyes, brows, lips, face, poise of the head of the woman are filled with this spiritual emotion which is a continued memory and possession of the psychical release, the steady settled calm of the heart's experience filled with an ineffable tenderness, the familiar depths which are yet moved with the wonder and always farther appeal of something that is infinite, the body and other limbs are grave masses of this emotion and in their poise a basic embodiment of it, while the hands prolong it in the dedicative putting forward of her child to meet the Eternal. This contact of the human and eternal is repeated in the smaller figure with a subtly and strongly indicated variation, the glad and childlike smile of awakening which promises but not yet possesses the depths that are to come, the hands disposed to receive and keep, the body in its looser curves and waves harmonising with that significance. The two have forgotten themselves and seem almost to forget or confound each other in that which they adore and contemplate, and yet the dedicating hands unite mother and child in the common act and feeling by their simultaneous gesture of maternal possession and spiritual giving. The two figures have at each point the same rhythm, but with a significant difference. The simplicity in the greatness and power, the fullness of expression gained by reserve and suppression and concentration which we find here is the perfect method of the classical art of India. And by this perfection Buddhist art became not merely an illustration of the religion and an expression of its thought and its religious feeling, history and

legend, but a revealing interpretation of the spiritual sense of Buddhism and its profounder meaning to the soul of India.

CWSA 20: 309 – 311

The gist of Buddha's teaching

This possibility of an entire motionless impersonality and void Calm within doing outwardly the works of the eternal verities, Love, Truth and Righteousness, was perhaps the real gist of the Buddha's teaching, — this superiority to ego and to the chain of personal workings and to the identification with mutable form and idea, not the petty ideal of an escape from the trouble and suffering of the physical birth. In any case, as the perfect man would combine in himself the silence and the activity, so also would the completely conscious soul reach back to the absolute freedom of the Non-Being without therefore losing its hold on Existence and the universe. It would thus reproduce in itself perpetually the eternal miracle of the divine Existence, in the universe, yet always beyond it and even, as it were, beyond itself.

CWSA 21: 34

Sri Aurobindo

Buddhism has done no doubt immense good to the country, yet no less harm, because of asceticism spreading everywhere and the warrior class (Kshatriya) renouncing their appointed function; and in the end, itself was banished from the country. In the new age the new dispensation must not admit this error.

Writing in Bengali, pp. 82 - 83

Sri Aurobindo

Nirvana

What is Nirvana

What then is Nirvana? In orthodox Buddhism it does mean a disintegration, not of the soul — for that does not exist — but of a mental compound or stream of associations or *saṃskāras* which we mistake for ourself. In illusionist Vedanta it means not a disintegration but a disappearance of a false and unreal individual self into the one real self or Brahman; it is the idea and experience of individuality that so disappears and ceases, — we may say a false light that is extinguished (*nirvāṇa*) in the true Light. In spiritual experience it is sometimes the loss of all sense of individuality in a boundless cosmic consciousness; what was the individual remains only as a centre or a channel for the flow of a cosmic consciousness and a cosmic force and action. Or it may be the experience of the loss of individuality in a transcendent being and consciousness in which the sense of cosmos as well as the individual disappears. Or again, it may be in a transcendence which is aware of and supports the cosmic action. But what do we mean by the individual? What we usually call by that name is a natural ego, a device of Nature which holds together her action in the mind and body. This ego has to be extinguished, otherwise there is no complete liberation possible; but the individual self or soul is not this ego. The individual soul is the spiritual being which is sometimes described as an eternal portion of the Divine but can also be described as the Divine himself supporting his manifestation as the Many. This is the true spiritual individual which appears in its complete truth when we get rid of the ego and our false separative sense of individuality, realise our oneness with the transcendent and cosmic Divine and with all beings. It is this which makes

possible the Divine Life. Nirvana is a step towards it; the disappearance of the false separative individuality is a necessary condition for our realising and living in our true eternal being, living divinely in the Divine. But this we can do in the world and in life.

CWSA 29: 395 – 396

Buddhist Nirvana

Buddhist teaching does not recognise any inner self or soul — there is only a stream of consciousness from moment to moment — the consciousness itself is only a bundle of associations — it is kept moving by the wheel of Karma. If the associations are untied and thrown away (they are called *sanskaras*), then it dissolves; the idea of self or a persistent person ceases; the stream flows no longer, the wheel stops. There is left, according to some, *Sunya*, a mysterious Nothing from which all comes; according to others a mysterious Permanent in which there is no individual existence. This is Nirvana. Buddha himself always refused to say what there was beyond cosmic existence; he spoke neither of God nor Self nor Brahman. He said there was no utility in discussing that — all that was necessary was to know the causes of this unhappy temporal existence and the way to dissolve it.

*

The Buddhist Nirvana and the Adwaitin's Moksha are the same thing. It corresponds to a realisation in which one does not feel oneself any longer as an individual with such a name or such a form, but an infinite eternal Self spaceless (even when in space), timeless (even when in time). Note that one can perfectly well do actions in that condition and it is not to be gained only by Samadhi.

*

It [*the Nirvana of Buddha*] is the same [*as the Nirvana of the Gita*]. Only the Gita describes it as Nirvana in the Brahman while Buddha preferred not to give any name or say anything about that into which the nirvana took place. Some later schools of Buddhists described it as Sunya, the equivalent of the Chinese Tao, described as the Nothing which is everything.

CWSA 29: 428-29, 431

Sri Aurobindo and Nirvana

Now to reach Nirvana was the first radical result of my own Yoga. It threw me suddenly into a condition above and without thought, unstained by any mental or vital movement; there was no ego, no real world — only when one looked through the immobile senses, something perceived or bore upon its sheer silence a world of empty forms, materialised shadows without true substance. There was no One or many even, only just absolutely That, featureless, relationless, sheer, indescribable, unthinkable, absolute, yet supremely real and solely real. This was no mental realisation nor something glimpsed somewhere above, — no abstraction — it was positive, the only positive reality — although not a spatial physical world, pervading, occupying or rather flooding and drowning this semblance of a physical world, leaving no room or space for any reality but itself, allowing nothing else to seem at all actual, positive or substantial. I cannot say there was anything exhilarating or rapturous in the experience, as it then came to me, — the ineffable Ananda I had years afterwards, — but what it brought was an inexpressible Peace, a stupendous silence, an infinity of release and freedom. I lived in that Nirvana day and night before it began to admit other things into itself or modify itself at all, and the inner heart of

experience, a constant memory of it and its power to return remained until in the end it began to disappear into a greater Superconsciousness from above. But meanwhile realisation added itself to realisation and fused itself with this original experience. At an early stage the aspect of an illusory world gave place to one in which illusion¹ is only a small surface phenomenon with an immense Divine Reality behind it and a supreme Divine Reality above it and an intense Divine Reality in the heart of everything that had seemed at first only a cinematic shape or shadow. And this was no reimprisonment in the senses, no diminution or fall from supreme experience, it came rather as a constant heightening and widening of the Truth; it was the spirit that saw objects, not the senses, and the Peace, the Silence, the freedom in Infinity remained always with the world or all worlds only as a continuous incident in the timeless eternity of the Divine.

1. In fact it is not an illusion in the sense of an imposition of something baseless and unreal on the consciousness, but a misinterpretation by the conscious mind and sense and a falsifying misuse of manifested existence.

CWSA 35: 249 – 250

The realisation of this Yoga is not lower but higher than Nirvana or Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

CWSA 29: 433

Sri Aurobindo

The Buddha always categorically refused to answer any metaphysical question on the origin or the end of the universe, saying that only one thing matters: to advance on the Way, that is, to purify oneself inwardly, to destroy in oneself all egoistic desire.

CWM 2: 88

The Mother

Buddhism

Buddha and Buddhism

Buddha retired from the world, sat down in meditation and discovered a way out of earthly suffering and misery, out of all this illness and death and desire and sin and hunger. He saw a Truth which he endeavoured to express and communicate to the disciples and followers who gathered around him. But even before he was dead, his teaching had already begun to be twisted and distorted. It was only after his disappearance that Buddhism as a full-fledged religion reared its head founded upon what the Buddha is supposed to have said and on the supposed significance of these reported sayings. But soon too, because the disciples and the disciples' disciples could not agree on what the Master had said or what he meant by his utterances, there grew up a host of sects and sub-sects in the body of the parent religion — a Southern Path, a Northern Path, a Far Eastern Path, each of them claiming to be the only, the original, the undefiled doctrine of the Buddha. The same fate overtook the teaching of the Christ; that too came to be made in the same way into a set and organised religion. It is often said that, if Jesus came back, he would not be able to recognise what he taught in the forms that have been imposed on it, and if Buddha were to come back and see what has been made of his teaching, he would immediately run back discouraged to Nirvana! All religions have each the same story to tell. The occasion for its birth is the coming of a great Teacher of the world. He comes and reveals and is the incarnation of a Divine Truth. But men seize upon it, trade upon it, make an almost political organisation out of it. The religion is equipped by them with a government and policy and laws, with its creeds and dogmas, its rules and

regulations, its rites and ceremonies, all binding upon its adherents, all absolute and inviolable. Like the State, it too administers rewards to the loyal and assigns punishments for those that revolt or go astray, for the heretic and the renegade.

CWM 3: 76 – 77

The Mother

Different Kinds of Buddhism

Buddhism is of many kinds and the entirely nihilistic kind is only one variety. Most Buddhism admits a Permanent as beyond the creation of Karma and Sanskaras. Even the Sunya of the Sunyapanthis is described like the Tao of Lao Tse as a Nothing which is All. So as a higher “above mental” state is admitted which one tries to reach by a strong discipline of the consciousness, it may be called spirituality.

CWSA 29: 433

Sri Aurobindo

Types of Buddhism

What is the “Little Vehicle” (Hinayana) and the “Great Vehicle” (Mahayana)?

These are Buddhist terms. This is the translation of a Pali word, I believe. It is said that the religion of the North is the “Great Vehicle” and the religion of the South the “Little Vehicle”. The Little Vehicle abides by quite a strict teaching according to what has been preserved or is believed to have been preserved of the words of the Buddha.

You know the Buddha used to say that there was no God, there was no persistence of the ego, there were no beings of higher worlds who could incarnate here, there were no... He denied almost every possible thing. The religion of the South is like that, it is extremely nihilistic, it says no, no, no to everything; while in the religion of the North, which has

been practised in Tibet, and spread from Tibet into China and from China to Japan, one finds the Bodhisattvas (who stand for saints as in all other religions), all the previous Buddhas who are also like some sort of demigods or gods. I don't know if you have ever had a chance to visit a Buddhist temple of the North (I saw them in China and Japan), for you enter halls where there are innumerable statuettes — all the Bodhisattvas, all the disciples of those Bodhisattvas, all the forces of nature deified, indeed you are overwhelmed by the number of gods! On the other hand, if you go to the South, there is nothing, not a single image. I believe they speak of the “Great Vehicle” because there are lots of things inside, and the “Little Vehicle” because there are few! I don't know exactly the origin of the two terms.

CWM 4: 257 – 258

Northern and the Southern Paths

(Nolini) *There are several texts. There is one text in the North and another in the South.*

Ah! as for Buddhism. The people of the South and the North have different kinds of imagination. The southern people are generally more rigid, aren't they?... I don't know, but for Buddhism, the Buddhism of the South is quite rigid and doesn't allow any suppleness in the understanding of the text. And it is a terribly strict Buddhism in which all notion of the Godhead in any form whatsoever, is completely done away with. On the other hand, the Buddhism of the North is an orgy of gods! It is true that these are former Buddhas, but still they are turned into gods. And it is this latter that has spread into China and from China gone to Japan. So, one enters a Buddhist temple in Japan and sees... There is a temple where there were more than a thousand Buddhas,

all sculptured — a thousand figures seated around the central Buddha — they were there all around, the entire back wall of the temple was covered with images: small ones, big ones, fat ones, thin ones, women, men — there was everything, a whole pantheon there, formidable, and they were like gods. And then too, there were little beings down below with all kinds of forms including those of animals, and these were the worshippers. It was... it was an orgy of images. But the Buddhism of the South has the austerity of Protestantism: there must be no images. And there is no divine Consciousness, besides. One comes into the world through desire, into a world of desire, and abandoning desire one goes out of the world and creation and returns to Nirvana — even the nought is something too concrete. There is no Creator in Buddhism. So, I don't know. The Buddhism of the South is written in Pali and that of the North in Sanskrit. And naturally, there is Tibetan Buddhism written in Tibetan, and Chinese Buddhism written in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism in Japanese. And each one, I believe, is very very different from the others.

CWM 5: 325 – 326

The Mother's communication with Buddha

(Communication received at 5.30 in the evening after meditation.)

“As thou art contemplating me, I shall speak to thee this evening. I see in thy heart a diamond surrounded by a golden light. It is at once pure and warm, something which may manifest impersonal love; but why dost thou keep this treasure enclosed in that dark casket lined with deep purple? The outermost covering is of a deep lustreless blue, a real mantle of darkness. It would seem that thou art afraid of showing thy splendour. Learn to radiate and do not fear

the storm: the wind carries us far from the shore but shows us over the world. Wouldst thou be thrifty of thy tenderness? But the source of love is infinite. Dost thou fear to be misunderstood? But where hast thou seen man capable of understanding the Divine? And if the eternal truth finds in thee a means of manifesting itself, what dost thou care for all the rest? Thou art like a pilgrim coming out of the sanctuary; standing on the threshold in front of the crowd, he hesitates before revealing his precious secret, that of his supreme discovery. Listen, I too hesitated for days, for I could foresee both my preaching and its results: the imperfection of expression and the still greater imperfection of understanding. And yet I turned to the earth and men and brought them my message. Turn to the earth and men — isn't this the command thou always hearest in thy heart? — in thy heart, for it is that which carries a blessed message for those who are athirst for compassion. Henceforth nothing can attack the diamond. It is unassailable in its perfect constitution and the soft radiance that flashes from it can change many things in the hearts of men. Thou doubtst thy power and fearest thy ignorance? It is precisely this that wraps up thy strength in that dark mantle of starless night. Thou hesitatest and tremblest as on the threshold of a mystery, for now the mystery of the manifestation seems to thee more terrible and unfathomable than that of the Eternal Cause. But thou must take courage again and obey the injunction from the depths. It is I who am telling thee this, for I know thee and love thee as thou didst know and love me once. I have appeared clearly before thy sight so that thou mayst in no way doubt my word. And also to thy eyes I have shown thy heart so that thou canst thus see what the supreme Truth has willed for it, so that thou mayst discover in it the law of thy being. The thing still seems to

thee quite difficult: a day will come when thou wilt wonder how for so long it could have been otherwise.”

CWM 1: 332 – 333

The Mother

[In her prayer of 20 December 1916, the Mother wrote out a long “communication” she received in her evening meditation from Çakya-Mouni (pp. 366 – 67). A disciple asked who this was.]

Çakya-Mouni is a name of Buddha — “the sage of the Çakyas” — the clan to which Buddha belonged by birth and of which his father was the “king”.

CWSA 32: 607

Sri Aurobindo

Usefulness of Buddha’s teachings

Everything that helps humanity to make progress is a help, and all that prevents it from making progress is an obstacle!

In fact, you are asking this because we study and meditate on the Dhammapada.... Naturally, I took this text because I consider that at a particular stage of development it can be very useful. It is a discipline which has been crystallised in certain formulas and if one uses these formulas profitably, it can be very helpful, otherwise I wouldn’t have taken it. How helpful depends on each one. It depends on whether one knows how to profit from it or not.

CWM 9: 197

The Mother

With best compliments of:

DEORAH SEVA NIDHI

(Founder Trustee: Late Shri S.L. Deorah)

25, Ballygunge Park, Kolkata - 700019



Buddha, Sarnath

Balance is indispensable, the path that carefully avoids opposite extremes is indispensable, too much haste is dangerous, impatience prevents you from advancing; and at the same time, inertia puts a drag on your feet.

So for all things, the middle path as the Buddha called it, is the best.

CWM 8: 285

The Mother

The Buddhist Way and Other Yogas

One of the biggest mental difficulties of this age

I have brought you the exact text of that sentence on Sri Aurobindo I told you about the other day. It was in reply to a letter....

You know this mental habit (which people take for mental superiority!) of lumping everything together on the same level: all the teachings, all the prophets, all the sects, all the religions. You know the habit: 'We are not prejudiced, we have no preferences — it's all the same thing.' A dreadful muddle!

It's one of the biggest mental difficulties of this age.

Anyway, in reply to this nonsense, I have said: 'Your error, to be precise, is that you go to the Theosophical Society, for example, with the same opening as to the Christian religion or to the Buddhist doctrine or with which you read one of Sri Aurobindo's books — and as a result, you are plunged into a confusion and a muddle and you don't understand anything about anything.'

And then the reply came to me very strongly; something took hold of me and I was, so to say, obliged to write: *What Sri Aurobindo represents in the world's history is not a teaching, not even a revelation; it is a decisive action direct from the Supreme.*

It's not from me. It came from there (*gesture upwards*). But it pleased me.

Agenda: February 28, 1961

Three Conceptions of the World

1. Buddhist and Shankarite:

The world is an illusion, a field of ignorance and suffering due to ignorance. The one thing to do is to get out of it

as soon as possible and to disappear into the original Non-Existence or Non-Manifestation.

2. The Vedantic as very commonly understood:

The world is essentially divine, for the Divine is omnipresent there. But its exterior expression is distorted, obscure, ignorant, perverted. The one thing to do is to become conscious of the inner Divine and remain fixed in that consciousness without troubling about the world; for this external world cannot change and will always be in its natural state of unconsciousness and ignorance.

3. Sri Aurobindo's view:

The world as it is, is not the divine creation it is meant to be, but an obscure and perverted expression of it. It is not the expression of the divine consciousness and will, but this is what it is meant to become; it has been created to develop into a perfect manifestation of the Divine under all His forms and aspects — Light and Knowledge, Power, Love and Beauty.

This is our conception of it and the aim we follow.

CWM 14: 33

The Mother

The two goals of yoga

The object of our Yoga is self-perfection, not self-annulment.

There are two paths set for the feet of the Yogin, withdrawal from the universe and perfection in the Universe; the first comes by asceticism, the second is effected by tapasya; the first receives us when we lose God in Existence, the second is attained when we fulfil existence in God. Let ours be the path of perfection, not of abandonment; let our aim be victory in the battle, not the escape from all conflict.

Buddha and Shankara supposed the world to be radically false and miserable; therefore escape from the

world was to them the only wisdom. But this world is Brahman, the world is God, the world is Satyam, the world is Ananda; it is our misreading of the world through mental egoism that is a falsehood and our wrong relation with God in the world that is a misery. There is no other falsity and no other cause of sorrow.

CWSA 12: 96

The Two paths

To escape from grief, death and limitation we must renounce the world, to enjoy bliss, freedom & immortality we must possess ourselves in the Lord; but since His object in manifesting is habitation of the universe and not its destruction, the bliss must be enjoyed in this universe, through the Lord, and not in the Lord apart from and exclusive of life in the universe.

This is the difference, the capital difference between the Buddhistic solution — with all those later solutions affected & governed by Buddhistic thought, such as Mayavada & monastic Christianity — and the ancient answer of Hinduism to the problem put to man by life. These say, “Abandon life, put away all possession & enjoyment; absolute asceticism is your only salvation”; that said “Abandon the world that you may possess and enjoy it.” One is an escape, the other a recoil and an aggression; one is a divorce, the other a reconciliation. Both solutions are heroic; but one is a mighty heroism of difficult retreat and flight; the other a mightier heroism of self-perfection and conquest. The one is the retreat of the Ten Thousand; the other is Caesar’s movement from Dyrrhachium to [Pharsalus]. One path culminates in Buddha, the other in Janaka and Srikrishna.

CWSA 17: 450

Sri Aurobindo

Way of the Buddha and the path of the Rishis

Then, Mother why do all the spiritual schools in India have as their doctrine escape from action?

Yes, because all this is founded upon the teaching that life is an illusion. It began with the teaching of the Buddha who said that existence was the fruit of desire, and that there was only one way of coming out of misery and suffering and desire; it was to come out of existence. And then this continued with Shankara who added that not only is it the fruit of desire but it is a total illusion, and as long as you live in this illusion you cannot realise the Divine. For him there was not even the Divine, I think; for the Buddha, at least, there wasn't any. ...

If we go back to the teaching of the Rishis, for example, there was no idea of flight out of the world; for them the realisation had to be terrestrial. They conceived a Golden Age very well, in which the realisation would be terrestrial. But starting from a certain decline of vitality in the spiritual life of the country, perhaps, from a different orientation which came in, you see... it is certainly starting from the teaching of the Buddha that this idea of flight came, which has undermined the vitality of the country, because one had to make an effort to cut oneself off from life. The outer reality became an illusory falsehood, and one had no longer to have anything to do with it. So naturally one was cut off from the universal energy, and the vitality went on diminishing, and with this vitality all the possibilities of realisation also diminished.

CWM 7: 288-90

Truth does not lie in escape but in transformation

Sri Aurobindo does not belong to history; he is outside and beyond history.

Till the birth of Sri Aurobindo, religions and spiritualities were always centred on past figures, and they were showing as “the goal” the negation of life upon earth. So, you had a choice between two alternatives: either — a life *in* this world with its round of petty pleasures and pains, joys and sufferings, threatened by hell if you were not behaving properly, or — an escape *into* another world, heaven, nirvana, moksha....

Between these two there is nothing much to choose, they are equally bad.

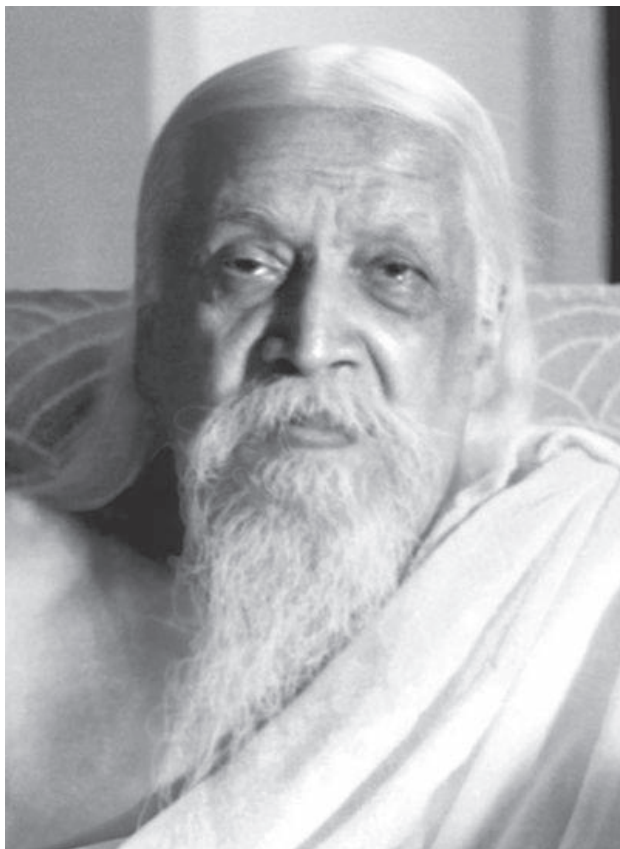
Sri Aurobindo has told us that this was a fundamental mistake which accounts for the weakness and degradation of India. Buddhism, Jainism, Illusionism were sufficient to sap all energy out of the country.

True, India is the only place in the world which is still aware that something else than Matter exists. The other countries have quite forgotten it: Europe, America and elsewhere.... That is why she still has a message to preserve and deliver to the world. But at present she is splashing and floundering in the muddle.

Sri Aurobindo has shown that the truth does not lie in running away from earthly life but in remaining *in* it, to *transform it, divinise it*, so that the Divine can manifest Here, in this Physical World.

CWM 12: 210 – 211

The Mother



A poised serenity of tranquil strength,
A wide unshaken look on Time's unrest
Faced all experience with unaltered peace.
Indifferent to the sorrow and delight,
Untempted by the marvel and the call,
Immobile it beheld the flux of things,
Calm and apart supported all that is:
His spirit's stillness helped the toiling world.

Savitri, p.36

Sri Aurobindo

Gems from the Dhammapada

(Below are some extracts from the Mother's commentaries on the Buddhist teaching of the Dhammapada during Her evening classes between August 1957 and September 1958)

Controlling one's mind

That is to say, ordinary human life, such as it is in the present world, is ruled by the mind; therefore the most important thing is to control one's mind; so we shall follow a graded or "conjugate" discipline, to use the Dhammapada's expression, in order to develop and control our minds.

There are four movements which are usually consecutive, but which in the end may be simultaneous: to observe one's thoughts is the first, to watch over one's thoughts is the second, to control one's thoughts is the third and to master one's thoughts is the fourth. To observe, to watch over, to control, to master. All that to get rid of an evil mind, for we are told that the man who acts or speaks with an evil mind is followed by suffering as closely as the wheel follows the hoof of a bullock that ploughs or draws the cart.

CWM 3: 183

Balance, moderation, loyalty, honesty

What Buddhism means by "impurities" is chiefly egoism and ignorance; because, from the Buddhist standpoint, the greatest of all taints is ignorance, not ignorance of external things, of the laws of Nature and of all that you learn at school, but the ignorance of the deepest truth of things, of the law of the being, of the Dharma.

It is noteworthy that the two defects insisted upon here are lack of self-control and lack of loyalty. Loyalty means

here sincerity, honesty; what the Dhammapada censures most severely is hypocrisy: to pretend that you want to live the spiritual life and not to do it, to pretend that you want to seek the truth and not to do it, to display the external signs of consecration to the divine life — here symbolised by the yellow robe — but within to be concerned only with oneself, one's selfishness and one's own needs.

It is interesting to note the insistence of the Dhammapada on self-control, for according to the Buddhist teaching, excess in all things is bad. The Buddha always insisted on the Middle Path. You must not be too much on one side nor too much on the other, exaggerate one thing or the other. You must have measure, balance in all things, the balance of moderation.

Therefore the qualities that make you worthy of leading the spiritual life are to have an inner balance, a balance in your action, and to be moderate in everything, to be sincere, honest, loyal.

Balance, moderation, loyalty, honesty: this is the subject of our meditation.

CWM 3: 190

Making the mind quiet

There are innumerable small Buddhist sects of all kinds, in China, in Japan, in Burma, and each one follows its own methods; but the most widespread among them are those whose sole practice is to make the mind quiet.

They sit down for a few hours in the day and even at night and quiet their mind. This is for them the key to all realisation — a quiet mind that knows how to keep quiet for hours together without roving. You must not believe however that it is a very easy thing to do, but they have no other object. They do not concentrate upon any thought,

they do not try to understand better, to know more, nothing of the kind; for them the only way is to have a quiet mind and sometimes they pass through years and years of effort before they arrive at this result — to silence the mind, to keep it absolutely silent and still; for, as it is said here in the Dhammapada, if the mind is unbalanced, then this constant movement of ideas following one another, sometimes without any order, ideas contradicting and opposing each other, ideas that speculate on things, all that jostles about in the head, makes holes in the roof, as it were. So through these holes all undesirable movements enter into the consciousness, as water enters into a house with a leaky roof.

However that may be, I believe it is a practice to be recommended to everyone: to keep a certain time every day for trying to make the mind quiet, even, still. And it is an undeniable fact that the more mentally developed one is, the quicker one succeeds; and the more the mind is in a rudimentary state, the more difficult it is.

CWM 3: 194 – 195

To be truly happy

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. ...

To do persistently what one knows should not be done, is at the cost of all peace, all possible tranquillity, all the well-being that one can have. He who lies is constantly uneasy in the fear that his lie may be discovered; he who has acted wrongly is in a constant anxiety at the idea that perhaps he will be punished; he who tries to deceive has no peace lest it should be found out that he deceives.

In reality, even for a purely egoistic reason, to do good, to be just, straight, honest is the best means to be quiet and peaceful, to reduce one's anxiety to a minimum. And if, besides, one could be disinterested, free from personal motives and egoism, then it would be possible to become truly happy.

You carry with you, around you, in you, the atmosphere created by your actions, and if what you do is beautiful, good and harmonious, your atmosphere is beautiful, good and harmonious; on the other hand, if you live in a sordid selfishness, unscrupulous self-interest, ruthless bad will, that is what you will breathe every moment of your life and that means misery, constant uneasiness; it means ugliness that despairs of its own ugliness.

CWM 3: 197–98

We carry our own atmosphere

.....when you are good, when you are generous, noble, disinterested, kind, you create in you, around you, a particular atmosphere and this atmosphere is a sort of luminous release. You breathe, you blossom like a flower in the sun; there is no painful recoil on yourself, no bitterness, no revolt, no miseries. Spontaneously, naturally, the atmosphere becomes luminous and the air you breathe is full of happiness. And this is the air that you breathe, in your body and out of your body, in the waking state and in the state of sleep, in life and in the passage beyond life, outside earthly life until your new life.

Every wrong action produces on the consciousness the effect of a wind that withers, of a cold that freezes or of burning flames that consume.

Every good and kind deed brings light, restfulness, joy — the sunshine in which flowers bloom. CWM 3: 199–200

Vigilance

Vigilance means to be awake, to be on one's guard, to be sincere — never to be taken by surprise. When you want to do sadhana, at each moment of your life, there is a choice between taking a step that leads to the goal and falling asleep or sometimes even going backwards, telling yourself, "Oh, later on, not immediately" — sitting down on the way.

To be vigilant is not merely to resist what pulls you downward, but above all to be alert in order not to lose any opportunity to progress, any opportunity to overcome a weakness, to resist a temptation, any opportunity to learn something, to correct something, to master something. If you are vigilant, you can do in a few days what would otherwise take years. If you are vigilant, you change each circumstance of your life, each action, each movement into an occasion for coming nearer the goal.

There are two kinds of vigilance, active and passive. There is a vigilance that gives you a warning if you are about to make a mistake, if you are making a wrong choice, if you are being weak or allowing yourself to be tempted, and there is the active vigilance which seeks an opportunity to progress, seeks to utilise every circumstance to advance more quickly.

There is a difference between preventing yourself from falling and advancing more quickly.

And both are absolutely necessary.

He who is not vigilant is already dead. He has lost contact with the true purpose of existence and of life.

So the hours, circumstances, life pass in vain, bringing nothing, and you awake from your somnolence in a hole from which it is very difficult to escape.

CWM 3: 202-03

Renunciation and Materialism

Throughout this teaching 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!"

CWM 3: 203 – 204

Time lost on the way is a suffering

It is a fact that when one has made an effort not to lose time on the way, any time lost becomes a suffering and one can find no pleasure of any kind in it. And once you are in that state, once this effort for progress and transformation becomes the most important thing in your life, the thing to which you give constant thought, then indeed you are on the way towards the eternal existence, the truth of your being.

Certainly there is a moment in the course of the inner growth when far from having to make an effort to concentrate, to become absorbed in the contemplation and the seeking of the truth and its best expression — what the Buddhists call meditation — you feel, on the contrary, a kind of relief, ease, rest, joy, and to have to come out of that in order to deal with things that are not essential, everything that may seem like a waste of time, becomes terribly painful. External activities get reduced to what is absolutely necessary, to those that are done as service to the Divine. All that is futile, useless, precisely those things which seem like a waste of time and effort, all that, far from giving the least satisfaction, creates a kind of discomfort and fatigue; you feel happy only when you are concentrated on your goal.

Then you are really on the way.

CWM 3: 209

Concentrate on what you want to be

There are some very wise recommendations here, for example, not to concern oneself with what others do nor with the mistakes they make, but to attend to one's own

faults and negligences and rectify them. Another wise counsel is never to utter too many eloquent words which are not effectuated in action — speak little, act well. Beautiful words, they say, that are mere words, are like flowers without fragrance.

And finally, lest you get discouraged by your own faults, the Dhammapada gives you this solacing image: the purest lily can spring out of a heap of rubbish by the wayside. That is to say, there is nothing so rotten that it cannot give birth to the purest realisation.

Whatever may be the past, whatever may be the faults committed, whatever the ignorance in which one might have lived, one carries deep within oneself the supreme purity which can translate itself into a wonderful realisation.

The whole point is to think of that, to concentrate on that and not to be concerned with all the difficulties and obstacles and hindrances.

Concentrate exclusively on what you want to be, forget as entirely as possible what you do not want to be.

CWM 3: 215

True attitude on discovering one's faults

Instead of growing sad and telling yourself, "Oh, there is still another defect", you should, on the contrary, rejoice as if you had made a wonderful acquisition, because you have just caught hold of one of those things that prevented you from progressing. And once you have caught hold of it, pull it out! For those who practise a yogic discipline consider that the moment you know that a thing should not be, you have the power to remove it, discard it, destroy it.

To discover a fault is an acquisition. It is as though a flood of light had come to replace the little speck of obscurity which has just been driven out.

When you follow a yogic discipline, you must not accept this weakness, this baseness, this lack of will, which means that knowledge is not immediately followed by power. To know that a thing should not be and yet continue to allow it to be is such a sign of weakness that it is not accepted in any serious discipline, it is a lack of will that verges on insincerity. You know that a thing should not be and the moment you know it, you are the one who decides that it shall not be. For knowledge and power are essentially the same thing — that is to say, you must not admit in any part of your being this shadow of bad will which is in contradiction to the central will for progress and which makes you impotent, without courage, without strength in the face of an evil that you must destroy.

To sin through ignorance is not a sin; that is part of the general evil in the world as it is, but to sin when you know, that is serious. It means that there is hidden somewhere, like a worm in the fruit, an element of bad will that must be hunted out and destroyed, at any cost, because any weakness on such a point is the source of difficulties that sometimes, later on, become irreparable.

CWM 3: 221

Look at yourself sincerely

You believe you are so good, so kind, so well disposed and always full of good feelings. You wish no harm to anybody, you wish only good — all that you tell yourself complacently. But if you look at yourself sincerely as you are thinking, you notice that you have in your head a collection of thoughts which are sometimes frightful and of which you were not at all aware.

For example, your reactions when something has not pleased you: how eager you are to send your friends,

relatives, acquaintances, everyone, to the devil! How you wish them all kinds of unpleasant things, without even being aware of it! And how you say, "Ah, that will teach him to be like that!" And when you criticise, you say, "He must be made aware of his faults." And when someone has not acted according to your ideas, you say, "He will be punished for it!" and so on.

You do not know it because you do not look at yourself in the act of thinking. Sometimes you know it, when it becomes a little too strong. But when the thing simply passes through, you hardly notice it — it comes, it enters, it leaves. Then you find out that if you truly want to be pure and wholly on the side of the Truth, then that requires a vigilance, a sincerity, a self observation, a self-control which are not common. You begin to realise that it is difficult to be truly sincere.

You flatter yourself that you have nothing but good feelings and good intentions and that whatever you do, you do for the sake of what is good — yes, so long as you are conscious and have control, but the moment you are not very attentive, all kinds of things happen within you of which you are not at all conscious and which are not very pretty.

CWM 3: 231

Always look ahead

There is one thing certain which is not clearly stated here, but which is at least as important as all the rest. It is this, that there is an old age much more dangerous and much more real than the amassing of years: the incapacity to grow and progress.

As soon as you stop advancing, as soon as you stop progressing, as soon as you cease to better yourself, cease to gain and grow, cease to transform yourself, you truly

become old, that is to say, you go downhill towards disintegration.

There are young people who are old and there are old people who are young. If you carry in you this flame for progress and transformation, if you are ready to leave everything behind so that you may advance with an alert step, if you are always open to a new progress, a new improvement, a new transformation, then you are eternally young. But if you sit back satisfied with what has been accomplished, if you have the feeling that you have reached your goal and you have nothing left to do but enjoy the fruit of your efforts, then already more than half your body is in the tomb: it is decrepitude and the true death.

Everything that has been done is always nothing compared with what remains to be done.

Do not look behind. Look ahead, always ahead and go forward always.

CWM 3: 238

A better way to use an unoccupied moment

How often there is a kind of emptiness in the course of life, an unoccupied moment, a few minutes, sometimes more. And what do you do? Immediately you try to distract yourself, and you invent some foolishness or other to pass your time. That is a common fact. All men, from the youngest to the oldest, spend most of their time in trying not to be bored. Their pet aversion is boredom and the way to escape from boredom is to act foolishly.

Well, there is a better way than that — to remember.

When you have a little time, whether it is one hour or a few minutes, tell yourself, "At last, I have some time to concentrate, to collect myself, to relive the purpose of my life, to offer myself to the True and the Eternal." If you took

care to do this each time you are not harassed by outer circumstances, you would find out that you were advancing very quickly on the path. Instead of wasting your time in chattering, in doing useless things, reading things that lower the consciousness — to choose only the best cases, I am not speaking of other imbecilities which are much more serious — instead of trying to make yourself giddy, to make time, that is already so short, still shorter only to realise at the end of your life that you have lost three-quarters of your chance — then you want to put in double time, but that does not work — it is better to be moderate, balanced, patient, quiet, but never to lose an opportunity that is given to you, that is to say, to utilise for the true purpose the unoccupied moment before you.

When you have nothing to do, you become restless, you run about, you meet friends, you take a walk, to speak only of the best; I am not referring to things that are obviously not to be done. Instead of that, sit down quietly before the sky, before the sea or under trees, whatever is possible (here you have all of them) and try to realise one of these things — to understand why you live, to learn how you must live, to ponder over what you want to do and what should be done, what is the best way of escaping from the ignorance and falsehood and pain in which you live.

CWM 3: 250-51

Not to think of oneself but to blossom like a flower

It is an inexpressible joy not to have any responsibility for oneself, no longer to think of oneself. It is so dull and monotonous and insipid to be thinking of oneself, to be worrying about what to do and what not to do, what will be good for you and what will be bad for you, what to shun and what to pursue — oh, how wearisome it is! But when

one lives like this, quite open, like a flower blossoming in the sun before the Supreme Consciousness, the Supreme Wisdom, the Supreme Light, the Supreme Love, which knows all, which can do all, which takes charge of you and you have no more worries — that is the ideal condition.

And why is it not done?

One does not think of it, one forgets to do it, the old habits come back. And above all, behind, hidden somewhere in the inconscient or even in the subconscious, there is this insidious doubt that whispers in your ear: “Oh! if you are not careful, some misfortune will happen to you. If you forget to watch over yourself, you do not know what may happen” — and you are so silly, so silly, so obscure, so stupid that you listen and you begin to pay attention to yourself and everything is ruined.

You have to begin all over again to infuse into your cells a little wisdom, a little common sense and learn once more not to worry.

CWM 3: 256-57

One must be good for the sake of being good

Yes, you must not cherish the illusion that if you want to follow the straight path, if you are modest, if you seek purity, if you are disinterested, if you want to lead a solitary existence and have a clear judgment, things will become easy.... It is quite the contrary! When you begin to advance towards inner and outer perfection, the difficulties start at the same time.

I have very often heard people saying, “Oh! now that I am trying to be good, everybody seems to be bad to me!” But this is precisely to teach you that one should not be good with an interested motive, one should not be good so that others will be good to you — one must be good for the

sake of being good.

It is always the same lesson: one must do as well as one can, the best one can, but without expecting a result, without doing it with a view to the result. Just this attitude, to expect a reward for a good action — to become good because one thinks that this will make life easier — takes away all value from the good action.

You must be good for the love of goodness, you must be just for the love of justice, you must be pure for the love of purity and you must be disinterested for the love of disinterestedness; then you are sure to advance on the way.

CWM 3: 264-65

Attaining the true bliss

“It is neither by moral precepts and observances, nor by a wide knowledge, nor by practising meditation, nor by a solitary life, nor by thinking”, that one attains the true bliss; it is by getting rid of all desires. Certainly it is not easy to get rid of all desires, it sometimes needs a whole lifetime. But to tell the truth, it seems to be a very negative way, although at a certain stage of development, it is a discipline which it is very useful, even indispensable to practise, if one does not want to deceive oneself. Because at first you begin by getting rid of the major desires, those that are most obvious and trouble you so much that you cannot even have any illusions about them; then come subtler desires that take the form of things that have to be done, that are necessary, even at times of commands from within, and it requires time and much sincerity to discover and overcome them; at last it seems as if you had done away with these wretched desires in the material world, in external things, in the world of feelings, in the emotions and sentiments, in the mental world as regards ideas, and then you find them again in

the spiritual world, and there they are far more dangerous, more subtle, more penetrating and much more invisible and covered by such a saintly appearance that one dare not call them desires.

And when one has succeeded in overcoming all that, in discovering, dislodging and getting rid of them, even then one has done only the negative side of the work.

CWM 3: 264-65

The swiftest way to getting rid of the ego

The Buddha said or has been made to say that when one is free from all desire, one necessarily enters into infinite bliss. This bliss may be a little dry and anyway it does not seem to me to be the quickest way.

If at the outset one were to seize the problem bodily, jump into it with courage and determination and, instead of undertaking a long, arduous, painful, disappointing hunt after desires, one gives oneself simply, totally, unconditionally, if one surrenders to the Supreme Reality, to the Supreme Will, to the Supreme Being, putting oneself entirely in His hands, in an upsurge of the whole being and all the elements of the being, without calculating, that would be the swiftest and the most radical way to get rid of the ego. People will say that it is difficult to do it, but at least a warmth is there, an ardour, an enthusiasm, a light, a beauty, an ardent and creative life.

It is true that without desire nothing much remains to sustain the ego and one has the impression that the consciousness becomes so hardened that if the ego crumbles into dust, then something of one's self also falls into dust and one is ready to enter into a Nirvana which is annihilation pure and simple.

But what we consider here as the true Nirvana is the

disappearance of the ego into the splendour of the Supreme. And this way is what I call the positive way, the self-giving that is integral, total, perfect, without reserve, without bargaining.

In the mere fact of not thinking of oneself, not existing for oneself, referring nothing to oneself, thinking only of what is supremely beautiful, luminous, delightful, powerful, compassionate and infinite, there is such a profound delight that nothing can be compared to it.

This is the only thing that deserves... that is worthy of being attempted. All the rest is only marking time.

The difference is between climbing a mountain by going round and round, slowly, laboriously, step by step, for hundreds of years, and spreading invisible wings and soaring straight to the summit.

CWM 3: 268-69

To run away from difficulties is not a solution

It has been noticed that most people who live alone in the forest become friendly with all the animals and plants around them; but it is not at all the fact of being all alone that gives you the power of entering into an inner contemplation and living in communion with the Supreme Truth. Perhaps it is easier, when by force of circumstance you have nothing else to do, but I am not convinced of it. One can always invent occupations and it seems to me, according to my experience of life, that if one succeeds in subduing one's nature in the midst of difficulties, if one endeavours to be all alone within oneself with the eternal Presence, while keeping the same surroundings which the Grace has given us, the realisation which one obtains then is infinitely more true, more profound, more lasting.

To run away from difficulties in order to conquer them

is not a solution. It is very attractive. In those who seek the spiritual life, there is something which says, "Oh! to sit down under a tree, all alone, to remain in meditation, not to have the temptation to speak or act, how fine it must be!" It is because there is a very strong formation in this direction, but it is very illusory.

The best meditations are those that one has all of a sudden, because they take possession of you as an imperative necessity. You have no choice but to concentrate, to meditate, to look beyond the appearances. And it is not necessarily in the solitude of the forest that it seizes you, it happens when something in you is ready, when the time has come, when the true need is there, when the Grace is with you.

It seems to me that humanity has made some progress and the true victory must be won in life itself.

You must know how to live alone with the Eternal and Infinite in the midst of all circumstances. You must know how to be free, with the Supreme as your companion, in the midst of all occupations. That is indeed the true victory.

CWM 3: 276

True sincerity

If you are worried, grieved or even discouraged by the malicious stupidities that men say about you, you will not advance far on the way. And such things come to you, not because you are unlucky or because your lot is not a happy one, but because, on the contrary, the divine Consciousness and the divine Grace take your resolution seriously and allow the circumstances to become a touchstone on your way, to see whether your resolution is sincere and whether you are strong enough to face the difficulties.

Therefore, if anyone sneers at you or says something that is not very charitable, the first thing you should do is

to look within yourself for whatever weakness or imperfection has allowed such a thing to happen and not to be disconsolate, indignant or aggrieved, because people do not appreciate you at what you think to be your true value; on the contrary, you must be thankful to the divine Grace for having pointed out to you the weakness or imperfection or deformation that you must correct.

Therefore, instead of being unhappy, you can be fully satisfied and derive advantage, a great advantage from the harm that was intended against you.

Besides, if you truly want to follow the path and practise yoga, you must not do it for appreciation or honour, you must do it because it is an imperative need of your being, because you cannot be happy in any other way. Whether people appreciate you or do not appreciate you, it is of absolutely no importance. You may tell yourself beforehand that the further you are from ordinary men, foreign to the ordinary mode of being, the less people will appreciate you, quite naturally, because they will not understand you. And I repeat, it has absolutely no importance.

True sincerity consists in advancing on the way because you cannot do otherwise, to consecrate yourself to the divine life because you cannot do otherwise, to seek to transform your being and come out into the light because you cannot do otherwise, because it is the purpose of your life.

When it is like that you may be sure that you are on the right path.

CWM 3: 282-83

The Four Noble Truths

This concerns the Four Truths and the Eightfold Path that lead to the annihilation of suffering. Here are the details given in the text:

The Four Noble Truths are:

(1) Life — taken in the sense of ordinary life, the life of ignorance and falsehood — is indissolubly linked with suffering: suffering of the body and suffering of the mind.

(2) The cause of suffering is desire, which is caused by ignorance of the nature of separative life.

(3) There is a way to escape from suffering, to put an end to pain.

(4) This liberation is obtained by following the discipline of the Eightfold Path which gradually purifies the mind from the Ignorance. The fourth Truth is called the method of the Eightfold Path.

CWM 3: 248

The Eightfold Noble Path

The Noble Path consists in a training in the following eight stages:

(1) *Correct seeing*. To see things as they are, that is to say, a pure, accurate vision, the best vision.

Three conditions characterise existence: pain, impermanence, the absence of a fixed ego. So the Dhammapada says. But it is not quite that, it is rather the absence of a fixed, durable and separate personality in the psychological aggregate, the lack of a true continuity in the personal consciousness. It is for this reason that, for example, in the ordinary state one cannot remember one's past lives nor have the sense of a conscious continuity through all one's lives.

The first point then is to see correctly, and to see correctly is to see that pain is associated with ordinary life, that all things are impermanent and that there is no continuity in the personal consciousness.

(2) *Correct intention or desire*. But the same word "desire" should not have been used, because we have just

been told that we should not have desire. It is rather “correct aspiration”. The word “desire” should be replaced by “aspiration”.

“To be freed from attachments and to have kind thoughts for everything that exists.” To be constantly in a state of kindness. To wish the best for all, always.

(3) *Correct speech that hurts none.* Never speak uselessly and scrupulously avoid all malevolent speech.

(4) *Correct behaviour — peaceful, honest.* From all points of view, not only materially, but morally, mentally. Mental honesty is one of the most difficult things to achieve.

(5) *Correct way of living.* Not to cause harm or danger to any creature. This is relatively easy to understand. There are people Who carry this principle to the extreme, against all commonsense. Those who put a handkerchief to their mouths, for example, so as not to swallow germs, who have the path in front of them swept so as not to step on an insect. This seems to me a little excessive, because the whole of life as it is at present is made up of destruction. But if you understand the text correctly, it means that one must avoid all possibility of doing harm, one must not deliberately endanger any creature. You can include here all living creatures and if you extend this care and this kindness to everything that lives in the universe, it will be very favourable to your inner growth.

(6) *Correct effort.* Do not make useless efforts for useless things, rather keep all the energy of your effort to conquer ignorance and free yourself from falsehood. That you can never do too much.

(7) The seventh principle comes to confirm the sixth: correct vigilance. You must have an active and vigilant mind. Do not live in a half-somnolence, half-unconsciousness—usually in life you let yourself go, come what may!

This is what everyone does. Now and then you wake up and you realise that you have wasted your time; then you make a big effort only to fall back again, a minute later, into indolence. It would be better to have something less vehement but more constant.

(8) *And finally, correct contemplation.* Egoless thought concentrated on the essence of things, on the inmost truth and on the goal to be attained.

CWM 3: 248-50

Liberation from Suffering

There is one thing which is not spoken of here, in the Dhammapada: a supreme disinterestedness and a supreme liberation is to follow the discipline of self-perfection, the march of progress, not with a precise end in view as described here, the liberation of Nirvana, but because this march of progress is the profound law and the purpose of earthly life, the truth of universal existence and because you put yourself in harmony with it, spontaneously, whatever the result may be.

There is a deep trust in the divine Grace, a total surrender to the divine Will, an integral adhesion to the divine Plan which makes one do the thing to be done without concern for the result. That is the perfect liberation.

That is truly the abolition of suffering. The consciousness is filled with an unchanging delight and each step you take reveals a marvel of splendour.

We are grateful to the Buddha for what he has brought for human progress and, as I told you at the beginning, we shall try to realise a little of all the beautiful things he has taught us, but we shall leave the goal and the result of our endeavour to the Supreme Wisdom that surpasses all understanding.

CWM 3: 297

The Mother

A Story of Buddha as retold by the Mother

A young Brahmacharin was clever and knew it. He wished to add to his talents more and more so that everyone would admire him. So he travelled from land to land. With an arrow-maker he learned to make arrows. Further on he learnt how to build and sail ships. In another place he learnt how to build houses. And in other places he acquired various other skills. In this way he visited sixteen different countries. Then he returned home and proudly declared, "What man on earth is as skilful as I?" The Lord Buddha saw him and wanted to teach him a nobler art than any he had learnt before. Assuming the appearance of an old Shramana he presented himself before the young man with a begging bowl in his hand.

"Who are you?" asked the Brahmacharin.

"I am a man who is able to control his own body."

"What do you mean?"

"The archer can aim his arrows," the Buddha replied.

"The pilot guides the ship, the architect supervises the construction of buildings, but the wise man controls himself."

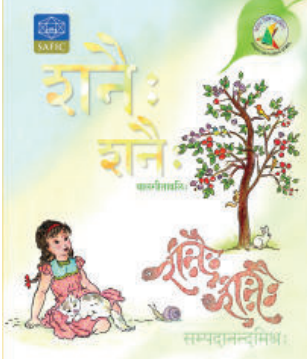
"In what way?"

"If he is praised his mind remains unmoved, if he is blamed his mind remains equally unmoved. He loves to follow the Right Law and he lives in peace."

CWM 2: 177 – 178

The Mother

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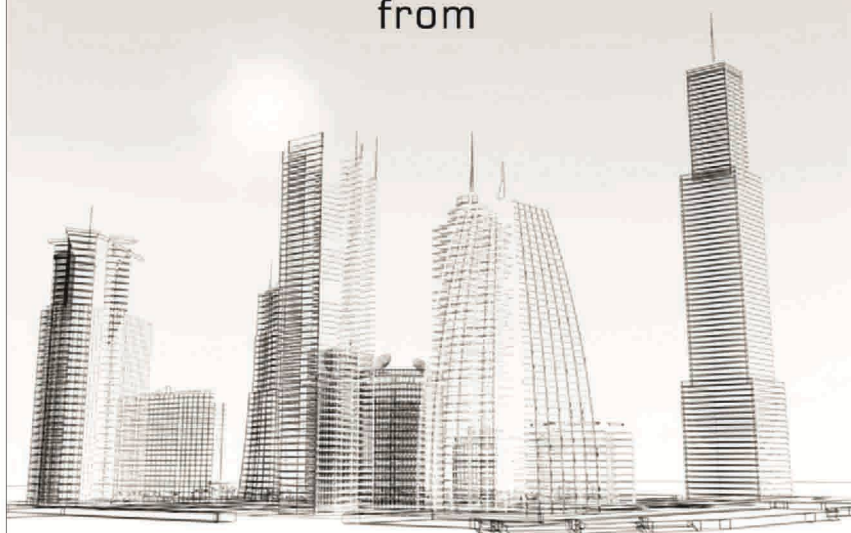
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