

Chapter- IX

The Awakening of the Self

Awakening of the self according to Sri Aurobindo is the widening of the soul. The poem *Electron* reveals his soul's widening.

“Widening his spark to an epiphany
Of the timeless vastness of Infinity.”

In religion we are taught to worship God outside us what we call the theory of emanations. God is outside in his heaven, somewhere far off, unattainable and unachievable. The journey is very far. The travails are many. The renunciations called for are tremendous. This is the sort of worship that we are taught. From that external worship of divinity which we put into forms of the divine, we have now to transfer it to the concept that God is within us too. If God is omnipotent and omnipresent there is no reason why God should not be in us, as he is in everything else. So religion leaves and says good-bye, and mysticism must now take over.

In mysticism we have the approach to the eternal presence of the ultimate in our own heart as the spark which we call consciousness. This is the spark or the voice of God present in us. In most cases, unfortunately, that spark seems not to exist, for the simple reason that it has been covered over by ignorance not

conductive to its development. When we remove the covering of ignorance of all conduct, the light begins to glow again. So spirituality means first the concept that God is in us, to be approached by the inward practice. Our communion with the ultimate should be an inner communion with Him rather than an external communion that exists outside us. Spirituality does not say that God does not exist outside us. Spirituality says when He is inside why you take all trouble and all expense to go to all those places of worship.

“The science of spirituality is mysticism in the west and we call *yoga* in the east. *Yoga* means the union of the individual human consciousness with the ultimate or divine consciousness.”¹

The awakening of the transcendental consciousness from the psychological point of view appears to be an intense form of the much-discussed phenomenon of ‘conversion’. Particularly it is closely akin to those deep and permanent conversions of the adult type which some religious psychologists call ‘sanctification.’ It is a disturbance of the equilibrium of the self, which results in the shifting of the field of consciousness from lower to higher levels.

Conversion is primarily an unselfing. The first birth of the individual is his own little world. He is controlled by the deep seated instincts of the self- preservation and self-enlargement. The

universe is organized around his own personality as a centre. Conversion is the larger world- consciousness now pressing in on the individual consciousness. Often it breaks in suddenly and becomes a great new revelation. This is the first aspect of conversion. The person emerges from a smaller limited world of existence into a larger world of being. His life becomes in a larger whole.

Sometimes the emergence of the mystical consciousness is gradual, unmarked by any definite crises. The self slides gently, almost imperceptibly from the old universe to the new. Conversion and purification go hand in hand, finally shading of into the serenity of the illuminated state. In this state the teasing mists are swept away. In most cases, the onset of this new consciousness seems to be the self so sudden, so clearly imposed from without rather than developed from within, as to have a supernatural character. When, however the subconscious intuitions, long ago quickened, are brought to birth and the eyes are opened on new light. It is significant that an actual sense of blinding radiance is a constant accompaniment of this state of consciousness. The storm and stress, the vague cravings and oscillations of the past life are forgotten. In this abrupt recognition of reality 'all things are made new'. From this point the life of mystic begins. Conversion of this

sort may be defined as a sudden, intense, and joy's perception of God, immanent in the universe. It is of the divine beauty and unutterable splendour of that larger life in which the individual life is immersed, and of a new life to be lived by the self in correspondence with this now dominant fact of existence. In that glorious moment all is beauty and knowing this is love, and love is duty.

In a poem *Trance* Sri Aurobindo experiences delight.

“My mind is awake in stirless trance,
Hushed my heart, a burden of delight,”

In this state mystics feel a profound wound which is full of delight and of love—a wound so sweet that mystics desire that it might never heal. It is an orison of joyous possession in the will, where the taste for God is so great, pure and simple that it attracts and absorbs the power of the soul in a profound recollection without action or speech.

This new consciousness in mystics is in its full development. It seems to be extended not in one but in two directions. These directions are the two fundamental ways of apprehending Reality- eternal and temporal, transcendent and immanent and absolute and dynamic. They comprise twofold knowledge of a God Who is both being and becoming, near and far.

These are pairs of opposites which ecstasy will carry of into a higher synthesis. Mystical conversion tends to belong to one of two distinctive types. It directs its expression to follow that temperamental inclination to objectivise Reality as a place, a person and a state which we found to govern the symbolic systems of the mystics.

Lust is the possessive case, the very food of selfhood. It poisons the relation between the self and the eternal world and immediately fatigues the soul. Dividing the world into mine and not mine unreal standards are setup. Its claims and cravings begin to fret the mind. We are the slaves of our own property. We drag with us not a treasure, but a chain. *Theologia Germanica* says on this sort we must cast all things from us and strip ourselves of them. We must refrain from claiming anything for our own. When we do this, we shall have the best, fullest, clearest, and noblest knowledge that man can have, and also the noblest and purest love and desire.

Poverty is the match maker between God and the spirit of man. Never will the union to which that spirit tends take place without her good offices, her drastic separation of the unreal from the real. Silence, high thoughts and union with the God bring us to the perfection in poverty also.

“The mystics have a profound conviction that becoming transcendent is a painful process at the best. Those amongst them who are Christians point to the passion of Christ as a proof that the cosmic journey to perfection is the way of the Cross. The old dreadful law of the inner life sounds so fantastic and yet is so bitterly true—‘no progress without pain’. It declares that birth pangs must be endured in the spiritual as well as in the material world. This adequate training must always hurt the athlete. Hence it is that the mystics’ quest of the Absolute drives them to an eager and heroic union with the reality of suffering as well as the reality of joy.”²

Mortification is to be understood as the positive aspect of purification. It is the remaking in relation to reality of the permanent elements of character. These elements have subserved the interests of the old self and worked for it in the world of sense. They must be adjusted to the needs of the new self and to the transcendent world. Their focal point is the old self, the lower centre of consciousness. The object of mortification is to kill that old self remove that lower centre, in order that the higher centre in the new man may live and breathe. In psychological language the process of

mortification is the process of setting up new paths of neural discharge.

That is to say the mystic life has got to express itself in action. The old paths left to themselves, must fade and at last die. When they are dead, and the new life has triumphed, Mortification is at an end. The mystic is always known when this moment comes. An inner voice warns them to lay their active penances aside.

The mystic is stronger and more stubborn in character. Turning of energy from the old and easy channels to the new is often a stormy matter. It is a period of actual battle between the inharmonious elements of the self and its lower and higher springs of action. Nevertheless, in spite of its etymological associations, the object of mortification is not death but life. It is the production of health and strength of human consciousness. "The stronger the death the more powerful and through is the corresponding life. The more intimate the death, the more inward is the life."³

Notes

1. Revered Master P.RajaGopalachari *Yatra* vol-1,(pub-1998),pp.134,135.
2. .Evelyn UnderHill *A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*,(pub-1911),pp.214, 217,223,235,250.
3. Evelyn Under Hill *Ibid* ,p. 262.