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“If a departure from the world and its activities, a supreme release and quietude were the sole aim of the seeker, the three great fundamental realisations would be sufficient for the fulfilment of his spiritual life: concentrated in them alone he could suffer all other divine or mundane knowledge to fall away from him and himself disencumbered depart into the eternal silence. But he has to take account of the world and its activities, learn what divine truth there may be behind them and reconcile that apparent opposition between the Divine Truth and the manifest creation which is the starting-point of most spiritual experience.”

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 110

I don’t understand the meaning. Why is this opposition the starting-point of spiritual experience?

What is ordinarily called a spiritual experience is the intense need for something other than the life one lives, and most often this awakens after difficulties or disappointments or pain or sorrow, all these things which bring unhappiness and at the same time arouse the aspiration for a better state. It is this that is generally at the root of spiritual experiences: it is something negative.

The positive need to know the Divine and unite with Him usually comes much later. I say usually; there are exceptions, but usually it is at first a flight from the miseries of life which pushes you towards the spiritual life. Very few people, if they were in a state of perfect inner and outer harmony and nothing unpleasant or painful happened to them, very few people would think of

1 Realisation of the Immanent Divine, the Cosmic Divine and the Transcendent Divine or Nirvana.
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the Divine; they would not concern themselves with Him, they would be content with the half-measures of ordinary things and would not seek for an absolute. That is what Sri Aurobindo means.

But, when one has found this spiritual life, one realises that it is everywhere behind all appearances, as well as directly, without appearances. Behind appearances it also exists; this is what he says: we must find and reconcile these oppositions. There is a place or a state of consciousness in which they are reconciled.

But, first, one must go like this (a gesture of ascent), and then one comes back like this (a gesture of descent). There!

Sri Aurobindo writes here: “And yet there is not only in him [the seeker] or before him this eternal self-aware Existence, this spiritual Consciousness, this infinity of self-illumined Force, this timeless and endless Beatitude. There is too, constant also to his experience, this universe in measurable Space and Time, some kind perhaps of boundless finite, and in it all is transient, limited, fragmentary....”

Ibid., pp. 111 – 12

“Boundless finite” — what does that mean?

It is an attempt at formulating something which cannot be formulated. In fact, one could almost say that the details are finite and the whole is infinite, but he doesn’t say “infinite”, he says “boundless” — boundless in space and boundless in time, but still limited in itself. Each detail has its own limit and the whole has none.

Sweet Mother, another thing I haven’t understood: “At times these two states of his spirit [the consciousness of eternity and the consciousness of the world in time]
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*seem to exist for him alternately according to his state of consciousness; at others they are there as two parts of his being, disparate and to be reconciled, two halves, an upper and a lower or an inner and an outer half of his existence. He finds soon that this separation in his consciousness has an immense liberative power, for by it he is no longer bound to the Ignorance, the Inconscience.*

_The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 112_

*I don’t understand this.*

It is because you carry this division within you and can taste of an eternal life that the outer life seems unreal to you; and therefore, because of this opposition, you begin to do what is necessary to pass from the outer life to the divine life. If there were no opposition in the being, if you were a middle term between the two, like that, this could last indefinitely; you would not objectify your difficulty and your need, you would continue to live as you do, without thinking, by force of habit.

Also because of this opposition, one part of the being acquires the habit of watching over the other. Otherwise you would live without even realising what you do, automatically.

(Turning to a disciple) Something over there?

*Why is it that “All the Timeless presses towards the play in Time; all in Time turns upon and around the timeless Spirit”?*

*Ibid., p. 112*

Because it is like that, my child. All that is unmanifested wants to manifest, and all that is manifested tries to return to its Origin.

It is as if you asked me, “Why is the earth round and why are the sun and the planets there?” It is like that, the law of the universe is like that.

Most of these things are simply statements of fact; but there are no explanations, for one can’t give mental explanations. One
can give some, but each thing one wants to explain is explained by another, which has to be explained by another, which has to be explained by another — indefinitely. And you can go right round the universe, and with one thing explaining another, it explains nothing at all.

The only thing one can do is to say, “It is like that.”

That is why it is said that the mind can know nothing: it can know nothing because it needs explanations. An explanation is valuable only to the extent it gives you a power to act on the thing explained, otherwise what’s the good of it? If explaining something does not give you the power to change it, it is absolutely useless, because, as I said, the explanation you give entails another explanation, and so on. But if through an explanation you obtain some power over a thing, to make it different from what it is, then it’s worth the trouble. But this is not the case. So you go on turning round and round in this way, on the surface, instead of springing up into the air towards a new height.

Is that all?

(Turning to a disciple) Yes, yes, you have already asked your question, but still, you may ask it aloud if you like.

Sri Aurobindo speaks of a first realisation where one sees on the one hand the eternal Existence, Brahman, and on the other the existence of the world, Maya, as two contradictions; then there is another realisation, the supramental, and he says, “The once conflicting but now biune duality of Brahman-Maya stands revealed to him as the first great dynamic aspect of the Self of all selves....”

Ibid., p. 113

When this is realised, does it mean that our lower nature has consented to change? At that time, is the duality seen as biune?
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Of course. I don’t understand your question.

So far there is this duality of which he has spoken.

It is an appearance, it is not a fact.

When one realises that the duality does not exist...

That means one has gone behind the appearances, one has established a fact which was always there.

Is that a promise?

But look, after all, when one has made a progress, one has made a progress! I don’t understand your question. If you make a progress, you make a progress; if you perceive a truth behind an illusion, usually this is considered a progress.

But here, he further explains that even the lower nature...

Yes, but as you have realised that it is one and the same thing.... That’s what I was saying a while ago: when you have an explanation, does it suffice to change your outer nature? Has it changed, are you different from what you were in your outer nature?

No.

No. Then something more is required. This is what I meant; an explanation is not enough, something else is needed. Evidently, it is a progress to know something one did not know before, but unless this knowledge becomes dynamic and changes into a power for transformation, it is not much use.

You understand? Good.

(Turning to a child) You want to ask a question? Speak up, take courage.

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_Sweet Mother, how can one increase one's understanding?

One’s understanding? Well, by increasing one’s consciousness, by going beyond the mind, by widening one’s consciousness, deepening one’s consciousness, by reaching regions beyond the mind.

When this talk was first published in 1962, Mother added the following commentary to the last question.

I would add one thing now: experience. Changing knowledge into experience. And experience will automatically lead you to another experience.

But by “experience” I mean something quite different from what it is usually taken to mean. It is not to experience what one knows — that is of course obvious — but instead of knowing and understanding — even a knowledge much higher than mental knowledge, even a very integral knowledge — it is to become the Power which makes _that be_. Fundamentally, it is to become the Tapas of things — the Tapas of the universe.

It is always said that at the beginning of the Manifestation there is Sachchidananda, and it is put in this order: first, Sat, that is to say, pure Existence; then Chit, the self-awareness of this Existence; and Ananda, the delight of Existence which makes it continue. But between this Chit and Ananda, there is Tapas, that is to say, the self-realising Chit. And when one becomes this Tapas, the Tapas of things, one has the knowledge which gives the power to change. The Tapas of things is what governs their existence in the Manifestation.

When one is there, one has the feeling of so tremendous a power! — It is the universal power. One has the feeling of a total mastery over the universe.