Chapter XI

The Perfection of Equality

The first necessity for spiritual perfection is a perfect equality. Perfection in the sense in which we use it in Yoga, means a growth out of a lower undivine into a higher divine nature. In terms of knowledge it is a putting on the being of the higher self and a casting away of the darker broken lower self or a transforming of our imperfect state into the rounded luminous fullness of our real and spiritual personality.

In terms of devotion and adoration it is a growing into a likeness of the nature or the law of the being of the Divine, to be united with whom we aspire,—for if there is not this likeness, this oneness of the law of the being, unity between that transcending and universal and this individual spirit is not possible. The supreme divine nature is founded on equality. This affirmation is true of it whether we look on the Supreme Being as a pure silent Self and Spirit or as the divine Master of cosmic existence. The pure Self is equal, unmoved, the witness in an impartial peace of all the happenings and relations of cosmic existence. While it is not averse to them,—aversion is not equality, nor, if that were the attitude of the Self to cosmic existence, could the universe come at all into being or proceed upon its cycles,—a detachment, the calm of an equal regard, a superiority to the reactions which trouble and are the disabling weakness of the soul involved in outward nature, are the very substance of the silent Infinite's purity and the condition of its impartial assent and support to the many-sided movement of the universe. But in that power too of the Supreme which governs and develops these motions, the same equality is a basic condition.

The Master of things cannot be affected or troubled by the reactions of things; if he were, he would be subject to them, not master, not free to develop them according to his sovereign will and wisdom and according to the inner truth and necessity of
what is behind their relations, but obliged rather to act according to the claim of temporary accident and phenomenon. The truth of all things is in the calm of their depths, not in the shifting inconstant wave form on the surface. The supreme conscious Being in his divine knowledge and will and love governs their evolution — to our ignorance so often a cruel confusion and distraction — from these depths and is not troubled by the clamour of the surface. The divine nature does not share in our gropings and our passions; when we speak of the divine wrath or favour or of God suffering in man, we are using a human language which mistranslates the inner significance of the movement we characterise. We see something of the real truth of them when we rise out of the phenomenal mind into the heights of the spiritual being. For then we perceive that whether in the silence of self or in its action in the cosmos, the Divine is always Sachchidananda, an infinite existence, an infinite consciousness and self-founded power of conscious being, an infinite bliss in all his existence. We ourselves begin to dwell in an equal light, strength, joy — the psychological rendering of the divine knowledge, will and delight in self and things which are the active universal outpourings from those infinite sources. In the strength of that light, power and joy a secret self and spirit within us accepts and transforms always into food of its perfect experience the dual letters of the mind’s transcript of life, and if there were not the hidden greater existence even now within us, we could not bear the pressure of the universal force or subsist in this great and dangerous world. A perfect equality of our spirit and nature is a means by which we can move back from the troubled and ignorant outer consciousness into this inner kingdom of heaven and possess the spirit’s eternal kingdoms, rājyam samyddham, of greatness, joy and peace. That self-elevation to the divine nature is the complete fruit and the whole occasion of the discipline of equality demanded from us by the self-perfecting aim in Yoga.

A perfect equality and peace of the soul is indispensable to change the whole substance of our being into substance of the self out of its present stuff of troubled mentality. It is equally indispensable if we aspire to replace our present confused and
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ignorant action by the self-possessed and luminous works of a free spirit governing its nature and in tune with universal being. A divine action or even a perfect human action is impossible if we have not equality of spirit and an equality in the motive-forces of our nature. The Divine is equal to all, an impartial sustainer of his universe, who views all with equal eyes, assents to the law of developing being which he has brought out of the depths of his existence, tolerates what has to be tolerated, depresses what has to be depressed, raises what has to be raised, creates, sustains and destroys with a perfect and equal understanding of all causes and results and working out of the spiritual and pragmatic meaning of all phenomena. God does not create in obedience to any troubled passion of desire or maintain and preserve through an attachment of partial preference or destroy in a fury of wrath, disgust or aversion. The Divine deals with great and small, just and unjust, ignorant and wise as the Self of all who, deeply intimate and one with the being, leads all according to their nature and need with a perfect understanding, power and justness of proportion. But through it all he moves things according to his large aim in the cycles and draws the soul upward in the evolution through its apparent progress and retrogression towards the higher and ever higher development which is the sense of the cosmic urge. The self-perfecting individual who seeks to be one in will with the Divine and make his nature an instrument of the divine purpose, must enlarge himself out of the egoistic and partial views and motives of the human ignorance and mould himself into an image of this supreme equality.

This equal poise in action is especially necessary for the sadhaka of the integral Yoga. First, he must acquire that equal assent and understanding which will respond to the law of the divine action without trying to impose on it a partial will and the violent claim of a personal aspiration. A wise impersonality, a quiescent equality, a universality which sees all things as the manifestations of the Divine, the one Existence, is not angry, troubled, impatient with the way of things or on the other hand excited, over-eager and precipitate, but sees that the law must be
obeyed and the pace of time respected, observes and understands
with sympathy the actuality of things and beings, but looks also
behind the present appearance to their inner significances and
forward to the unrolling of their divine possibilities, is the first
thing demanded of those who would do works as the perfect
instruments of the Divine. But this impersonal acquiescence is
only the basis. Man is the instrument of an evolution which
wears at first the mask of a struggle, but grows more and more
into its truer and deeper sense of a constant wise adjustment
and must take on in a rising scale the deepest truth and signifi-
cance — now only underlying the adjustment and struggle — of
a universal harmony. The perfected human soul must always be
an instrument for the hastening of the ways of this evolution.
For that a divine power acting with the royalty of the divine
will in it must be in whatever degree present in the nature. But
to be accomplished and permanent, steadfast in action, truly
divine, it has to proceed on the basis of a spiritual equality, a
calm, impersonal and equal self-identification with all beings,
an understanding of all energies. The Divine acts with a mighty
power in the myriad workings of the universe, but with the
supporting light and force of an imperturbable oneness, freedom
and peace. That must be the type of the perfected soul’s divine
works. And equality is the condition of the being which makes
possible this changed spirit in the action.

But even a human perfection cannot dispense with equality
as one of its chief elements and even its essential atmosphere.
The aim of a human perfection must include, if it is to deserve
the name, two things, self-mastery and a mastery of the sur-
roundings; it must seek for them in the greatest degree of these
powers which is at all attainable by our human nature. Man’s
urge of self-perfection is to be, in the ancient language, svarāt
and samrāt, self-ruler and king. But to be self-ruler is not possible
for him if he is subject to the attack of the lower nature, to the
turbulence of grief and joy, to the violent touches of pleasure
and pain, to the tumult of his emotions and passions, to the
bondage of his personal likings and dislikings, to the strong
chains of desire and attachment, to the narrowness of a personal
and emotionally preferential judgment and opinion, to all the hundred touches of his egoism and its pursuing stamp on his thought, feeling and action. All these things are the slavery to the lower self which the greater “I” in man must put under his feet if he is to be king of his own nature. To surmount them is the condition of self-rule; but of that surmounting again equality is the condition and the essence of the movement. To be quite free from all these things,—if possible, or at least to be master of and superior to them,—is equality. Farther, one who is not self-ruler, cannot be master of his surroundings. The knowledge, the will, the harmony which is necessary for this outward mastery, can come only as a crown of the inward conquest. It belongs to the self-possessing soul and mind which follows with a disinterested equality the Truth, the Right, the universal Largeness to which alone this mastery is possible,—following always the great ideal they present to our imperfection while it understands and makes a full allowance too for all that seems to conflict with them and stand in the way of their manifestation. This rule is true even on the levels of our actual human mentality, where we can only get a limited perfection. But the ideal of Yoga takes up this aim of Swarajya and Samrajya and puts it on the larger spiritual basis. There it gets its full power, opens to the diviner degrees of the spirit; for it is by oneness with the Infinite, by a spiritual power acting upon finite things, that some highest integral perfection of our being and nature finds its own native foundation.

A perfect equality not only of the self, but in the nature is a condition of the Yoga of self-perfection. The first obvious step to it will be the conquest of our emotional and vital being, for here are the sources of greatest trouble, the most rampant forces of inequality and subjection, the most insistent claim of our imperfection. The equality of these parts of our nature comes by purification and freedom. We might say that equality is the very sign of liberation. To be free from the domination of the urge of vital desire and the stormy mastery of the soul by the passions is to have a calm and equal heart and a life-principle governed by the large and even view of a universal spirit. Desire is the impurity of the Prana, the life-principle, and its chain
of bondage. A free Prana means a content and satisfied life-soul which fronts the contact of outward things without desire and receives them with an equal response; delivered, uplifted above the servile duality of liking and disliking, indifferent to the urgings of pleasure and pain, not excited by the pleasant, not troubled and overpowered by the unpleasant, not clinging with attachment to the touches it prefers or violently repelling those for which it has an aversion, it will be opened to a greater system of values of experience. All that comes to it from the world with menace or with solicitation, it will refer to the higher principles, to a reason and heart in touch with or changed by the light and calm joy of the spirit. Thus quieted, mastered by the spirit and no longer trying to impose its own mastery on the deeper and finer soul in us, this life-soul will be itself spiritualised and work as a clear and noble instrument of the diviner dealings of the spirit with things. There is no question here of an ascetic killing of the life-impulse and its native utilities and functions; not its killing is demanded, but its transformation. The function of the Prana is enjoyment, but the real enjoyment of existence is an inward spiritual Ananda, not partial and troubled like that of our vital, emotional or mental pleasure, degraded as they are now by the predominance of the physical mind, but universal, profound, a massed concentration of spiritual bliss possessed in a calm ecstasy of self and all existence. Possession is its function, by possession comes the soul’s enjoyment of things, but this is the real possession, a thing large and inward, not dependent on the outward seizing which makes us subject to what we seize. All outward possession and enjoyment will be only an occasion of a satisfied and equal play of the spiritual Ananda with the forms and phenomena of its own world-being. The egoistic possession, the making things our own in the sense of the ego’s claim on God and beings and the world, parigraba, must be renounced in order that this greater thing, this large, universal and perfect life, may come. Tyaktena bhunjithāḥ, by renouncing the egoistic sense of desire and possession, the soul enjoys divinely its self and the universe.

A free heart is similarly a heart delivered from the gusts and
storms of the affections and the passions; the assailing touch of grief, wrath, hatred, fear, inequality of love, trouble of joy, pain of sorrow fall away from the equal heart, and leave it a thing large, calm, equal, luminous, divine. These things are not incumbent on the essential nature of our being, but the creations of the present make of our outward active mental and vital nature and its transactions with its surroundings. The ego-sense which induces us to act as separate beings who make their isolated claim and experience the test of the values of the universe, is responsible for these aberrations. When we live in unity with the Divine in ourselves and the spirit of the universe, these imperfections fall away from us and disappear in the calm and equal strength and delight of the inner spiritual existence. Always that is within us and transforms the outward touches before they reach it by a passage through a subliminal psychic soul in us which is the hidden instrument of its delight of being. By equality of the heart we get away from the troubled desire-soul on the surface, open the gates of this profounder being, bring out its responses and impose their true divine values on all that solicits our emotional being. A free, happy, equal and all-embracing heart of spiritual feeling is the outcome of this perfection.

In this perfection too there is no question of a severe ascetic insensibility, an aloof spiritual indifference or a strained rugged austerity of self-suppression. This is not a killing of the emotional nature but a transformation. All that presents itself here in our outward nature in perverse or imperfect forms has a significance and utility which come out when we get back to the greater truth of divine being. Love will be not destroyed, but perfected, enlarged to its widest capacity, deepened to its spiritual rapture, the love of God, the love of man, the love of all things as ourselves and as beings and powers of the Divine; a large, universal love, not at all incapable of various relation, will replace the clamant, egoistic, self-regarding love of little joys and griefs and insistent demands afflicted with all the chequered pattern of anger and jealousies and satisfactions, rushings to unity and movements of fatigue, divorce and separation on
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which we now place so high a value. Grief will cease to exist, but a universal, an equal love and sympathy will take its place, not a suffering sympathy, but a power which, itself delivered, is strong to sustain, to help, to liberate. To the free spirit wrath and hatred are impossible, but not the strong Rudra energy of the Divine which can battle without hatred and destroy without wrath because all the time aware of the things it destroys as parts of itself, its own manifestations and unaltered therefore in its sympathy and understanding of those in whom are embodied these manifestations. All our emotional nature will undergo this high liberating transformation; but in order that it may do so, a perfect equality is the effective condition.

The same equality must be brought into the rest of our being. Our whole dynamic being is acting under the influence of unequal impulses, the manifestations of the lower ignorant nature. These urgings we obey or partially control or place on them the changing and modifying influence of our reason, our refining aesthetic sense and mind and regulating ethical notions. A tangled strain of right and wrong, of useful and harmful, harmonious or disordered activity is the mixed result of our endeavour, a shifting standard of human reason and unreason, virtue and vice, honour and dishonour, the noble and the ignoble, things approved and things disapproved of men, much trouble of self-approbation and disapprobation or of self-righteousness and disgust, remorse, shame and moral depression. These things are no doubt very necessary at present for our spiritual evolution. But the seeker of a greater perfection will draw back from all these dualities, regard them with an equal eye and arrive through equality at an impartial and universal action of the dynamic Tapas, spiritual force, in which his own force and will are turned into pure and just instruments of a greater calm secret of divine working. The ordinary mental standards will be exceeded on the basis of this dynamic equality. The eye of his will must look beyond to a purity of divine being, a motive of divine will-power guided by divine knowledge of which his perfected nature will be the engine, yantra. That must remain impossible in entirety as long as the dynamic ego with its subservience to the emotional
and vital impulses and the preferences of the personal judgment interferes in his action. A perfect equality of the will is the power which dissolves these knots of the lower impulsion to works. This equality will not respond to the lower impulses, but watch for a greater seeing impulsion from the Light above the mind, and will not judge and govern with the intellectual judgment, but wait for enlightenment and direction from a superior plane of vision. As it mounts upward to the supramental being and widens inward to the spiritual largeness, the dynamic nature will be transformed, spiritualised like the emotional and pranic, and grow into a power of the divine nature. There will be plenty of stumblings and errors and imperfections of adjustment of the instruments to their new working, but the increasingly equal soul will not be troubled overmuch or grieve at these things, since, delivered to the guidance of the Light and Power within self and above mind, it will proceed on its way with a firm assurance and await with growing calm the vicissitudes and completion of the process of transformation. The promise of the Divine Being in the Gita will be the anchor of its resolution, “Abandon all dharmas and take refuge in Me alone; I will deliver thee from all sin and evil; do not grieve.”

The equality of the thinking mind will be a part and a very important part of the perfection of the instruments in the nature. Our present attractive self-justifying attachment to our intellectual preferences, our judgments, opinions, imaginations, limiting associations of the memory which makes the basis of our mentality, to the current repetitions of our habitual mind, to the insistences of our pragmatic mind, to the limitations even of our intellectual truth-mind, must go the way of other attachments and yield to the impartiality of an equal vision. The equal thought-mind will look on knowledge and ignorance and on truth and error, those dualities created by our limited nature of consciousness and the partiality of our intellect and its little stock of reasonings and intuitions, accept them both without being bound to either twine of the skein and await a luminous transcendence. In ignorance it will see a knowledge which is imprisoned and seeks or waits for delivery, in error a
truth at work which has lost itself or got thrown by the groping mind into misleading forms. On the other side it will not hold itself bound and limited by its knowledge or forbidden by it to proceed to fresh illumination, nor lay too fierce a grasp on truth, even when using it to the full, or tyrannously chain it to its present formulations. This perfect equality of the thinking mind is indispensable because the objective of this progress is the greater light which belongs to a higher plane of spiritual cognizance. This equality is the most delicate and difficult of all, the least practised by the human mind; its perfection is impossible so long as the supramental light does not fall fully on the upward looking mentality. But an increasing will to equality in the intelligence is needed, before that light can work freely upon the mental substance. This too is not an abnegation of the seekings and cosmic purposes of the intelligence, not an indifference or impartial scepticism, nor yet a stilling of all thought in the silence of the Ineffable. A stilling of the mental thought may be part of the discipline, when the object is to free the mind from its own partial workings, in order that it may become an equal channel of a higher light and knowledge; but there must also be a transformation of the mental substance; otherwise the higher light cannot assume full possession and a compelling shape for the ordered works of the divine consciousness in the human being. The silence of the Ineffable is a truth of divine being, but the Word which proceeds from that silence is also a truth, and it is this Word which has to be given a body in the conscious form of the nature.

But, finally, all this equalisation of the nature is a preparation for the highest spiritual equality to take possession of the whole being and make a pervading atmosphere in which the light, power and joy of the Divine can manifest itself in man amid an increasing fullness. That equality is the eternal equality of Sachchidananda. It is an equality of the infinite being which is self-existent, an equality of the eternal spirit, but it will mould into its own mould the mind, heart, will, life, physical being. It is an equality of the infinite spiritual consciousness which will contain and base the blissful flowing and satisfied waves of a
divine knowledge. It is an equality of the divine Tapas which will initiate a luminous action of the divine will in all the nature. It is an equality of the divine Ananda which will found the play of a divine universal delight, universal love and an illimitable aethestic of universal beauty. The ideal equal peace and calm of the Infinite will be the wide ether of our perfected being, but the ideal, equal and perfect action of the Infinite through the nature working on the relations of the universe will be the untroubled outpouring of its power in our being. This is the meaning of equality in the terms of the integral Yoga.