Chapter Four

Sentimentalism, Sensitiveness, Instability, Laxity

Sentimentalism

It is not a question of feeling sorrow or joy or any other emotion, everybody does that who has not overcome the ordinary Nature. That is not sentimental but emotional. Sentimentalism comes in when you take a pleasure either in indulging or in displaying the feelings or when you have them for no reason or without sufficient reason.

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It is a sentimental part of the vital nature that quarrels with people and refuses to speak to them and it is the same part in a reaction against that mood that wants to speak and get the pleasure of the relation. So long as there is either of these movements, the other also is possible. It is only when you get rid of this sentimentalism and turn all your purified feelings towards the Divine, that these fluctuations disappear and a calm goodwill to all takes their place.

Sensitiveness

It [sensitiveness] is a matter of temperament. Some are psychically and vitally sensitive and responsive to all that comes from anywhere; others are solid of nerve and walled against invasion. It is not at all a question of strength or weakness. The first have a greater sense of life and answer to life; they suffer more from life and get more from it. It is the difference between the Greek and the Roman. Even without egoism the difference remains because it is of the temperament. In Yoga the first type are more able to feel everything directly and know everything in detail by
close experience; it is their great advantage. The others have to use the mind to know and their grasp is less intimate.

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It [vital sensitiveness] is neither good nor bad. It comes like that in the course of the development. Some are incapable of consciously or visibly opening to others because they are insensitive. On the other hand to be too open is troublesome.

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There can be no transformation of the being in an insensitive consciousness.

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Most sensitiveness is the result or sign of ego.

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It was indeed a microscopically small cause for so strong an upsetting, but really it is the whole difficulty of this raw and unreasonable sensitiveness which cropped up with this very infinitesimally small excuse — and that sensitiveness is one of the most persistent obstacles of many sadhaks here. There are two remedies for it — the psychic’s confidence in the Mother and the surrender that goes with it, i.e. “whatever she wills is best for me”, and the vastness which you feel now, — it is the wideness of the true self, of the true mental, vital, physical being also, from which such things fall off like dust, for they are of no importance to it whatever.

It is the one thing to do, to get permanently into the widthness, peace and silence and let the ego dissolve in it and the attachments fall away.

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The portion below the navel is the lower vital, — in your case it has become very sensitive to the condition of the same part in others or perhaps even to their general condition — so that it gives a sort of reflection or an appropriate reaction to that. It is a
phase in the development that must be overpassed, because the lower vital must get a perfect peace in it and even if it feels the condition of others do it as an act of perception or knowledge without any reaction or reflection.

* One has not to cure oneself of one’s sensitiveness, but only acquire the power to rise to a higher consciousness taking such disenchantments as a sort of jumping-board. One way is not to expect even square dealings from others, no matter who the others are. And besides, it is good to have such experiences of the real nature of some people to which a generous nature is often blind, for that helps the growth of one’s consciousness. The blow you wince at seems to you so hard because it is a blow the world of your mental formation has sustained. Such a world often becomes a part of our being. The result is that a blow dealt to it gives almost physical pain. The great compensation is that it makes you live more and more in the real world in contradistinction to the world of your imagination which is what you would like the real world to be. But the real world is not all that could be desired, you know, and that is why it has to be acted upon and transformed by the Divine Consciousness. But for that, knowledge of the reality, however unpalatable, is almost the first requisite. This knowledge often enough is best brought home to us through blows and bleedings. True, idealistic people, sensitive people, refined natures smart under such disillusionments more than do others who are somewhat thick-skinned, but that is no reason why fine feelings should be deprecated and the keen edge of fine susceptibilities be blunted. The thing is to learn to detach oneself from any such experience and learn to look at such perversions of others from a higher altitude from where one can regard these manifestations in the proper perspective—the impersonal one. Then our difficulties really and literally become opportunities. For knowledge, when it goes to the root of our troubles, has in itself a marvellous healing-power as it were. As soon as you touch the quick of the trouble, as soon as you, diving down and down, get at what really ails you, the
pain disappears as though by a miracle. Unflinching courage to reach true Knowledge is therefore of the very essence of Yoga. No lasting superstructure can be erected except on a solid basis of true Knowledge. The feet must be sure of their ground before the head can hope to kiss the skies.

**Shyness**

As for shyness, there are two kinds: one is egoistic, being ashamed of expressing the Truth or showing allegiance to it in ways which would not be understood by others — the other is a certain reserve, an unwillingness to expose one’s deeper feelings to the gaze of others, the wish to keep sacred and secret the relations of love with the Divine — that is a psychic feeling.

**Indecision and Instability**

The first [case] is vital indecision — the other is vital instability. Those who can’t choose, have the vital indecision and it is usually due to a too active physical mind, seeing too many things or too many sides at a time. The other rises from a lack of control and too much impulse.

*It failure in whatever one tries to do* usually comes from a certain instability in the lower vital which does not give a consistent support to the Will, but is restless and fluctuates from one interest to another. It does not mean an incapacity for success — usually one who has that could succeed in many directions, but the fluctuation prevents sustained success in any. It is a defect that has to be got over and can be got over.

*The failure in studies and in sadhana* is due not to want of capacity but to want of steadiness — a restlessness in the vital

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1 The correspondent wrote: “There are people who cannot come to a definite decision when the situation demands it. There are others who are constantly changing their decisions. Are both of these cases of vital indecision?” — Ed.
and a sort of ardent hastiness that lacks in care of detail and in perseverance. What you need is the inner silence and the solid strength and force that can act through this inner silence, making the vital its instrument but not allowing it to condition the action by its defects.

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There are some who are solid and tenacious in their vital, it is they who can be steady — others are more mercurial and easily moved by impulses, it is these who are sometimes enthusiastic, sometimes drop into fatigue. It is a matter of temperament. On the other hand the mercurial people are often capable of a quicker ardour, so that they can progress fast if they want in their own way. In any case the remedy for all that is to find one’s true self above mind and vital and so not bound by temperament.

**Laxity**

The rigidity was in the obstinacy with which your mind and vital clung to their own ideas and vital habits and did not want to change. But the result was rather laxity, a general looseness which did not want to tune the nature to the spiritual endeavour, but let all sorts of things wander over its strings at their pleasure. Plasticity of the consciousness is necessary, but plasticity to the true touch of the Power, not to any ordinary touch of the forces in Nature. To tune all to the Higher should be your aim — then there will be the full poetry of the spirit not in writing only but in life.