

The Process of Evolution

THE END of a stage of evolution is usually marked by a powerful recrudescence of all that has to go out of the evolution. It is a principle of Nature that in order to get rid of any powerful tendency or deep-seated association in humanity, whether in the mass or in the individual, it has first to be exhausted by *bhoga* or enjoyment, afterwards to be dominated and weakened by *nigraha* or control and, finally, when it is weak, to be got rid of by *samnyama*, rejection or self-dissociation. The difference between *nigraha* and *samnyama* is that in the first process there is a violent struggle to put down, coerce and, if possible, crush the tendency, the reality of which is not questioned, but in the second process it is envisaged as a dead or dying force, its occasional return marked with disgust, then with impatience, finally with indifference as a mere ghost, vestige or faint echo of that which was once real but is now void of significance. Such a return is part of the process of Nature for getting rid of this undesirable and disappearing quantity.

Samnyama is unseasonable and would be fruitless when a force, quality or tendency is in its infancy or vigour, before it has had the enjoyment and full activity which is its due. When once a thing is born it must have its youth, growth, enjoyment, life and final decay and death; when once an impetus has been given by Prakriti to her creation, she insists that the velocity shall spend itself by natural exhaustion before it shall cease. To arrest the growth or speed unseasonably by force is *nigraha*, which can be effective for a time but not in perpetuity. It is said in the Gita that all things are ruled by their nature, to their nature they return and *nigraha* or repression is fruitless. What happens then is that the thing untimely slain by violence is not really dead, but withdraws for a time into the Prakriti which sent it forth, gathers an immense force and returns with extraordinary violence

ravering for the rightful enjoyment which it was denied. We see this in the attempts we make to get rid of our evil *samskāras* or associations when we first tread the path of Yoga. If anger is a powerful element in our nature, we may put it down for a time by sheer force and call it self-control, but eventually unsatisfied Nature will get the better of us and the passion return upon us with astonishing force at an unexpected moment. There are only two ways by which we can effectively get the better of the passion which seeks to enslave us. One is by substitution, replacing it whenever it rises by the opposite quality, anger by thoughts of forgiveness, love or forbearance, lust by meditation on purity, pride by thoughts of humility and our own defects or nothingness; this is the method of Rajayoga, but it is a difficult, slow and uncertain method; for both the ancient traditions and the modern experience of Yoga show that men who had attained for long years the highest self-mastery have been suddenly surprised by a violent return of the thing they thought dead or for ever subject. Still this substitution, slow though it be, is one of the commonest methods of Nature and it is largely by this means, often unconsciously or half-consciously used, that the character of a man changes and develops from life to life or even in the bounds of a single lifetime. It does not destroy things in their seed and the seed which is not reduced to ashes by Yoga is always capable of sprouting again and growing into the complete and mighty tree. The second method is to give *bhoga* or enjoyment to the passion so as to get rid of it quickly. When it is satiated and surfeited by excessive enjoyment, it becomes weak and spent and a reaction ensues which establishes for a time the opposite force, tendency or quality. If that moment is seized by the Yogin for *nigraha*, the *nigraha* so repeated at every suitable opportunity becomes so far effective as to reduce the strength and vitality of the *vṛtti* sufficiently for the application of the final *samīyama*. This method of enjoyment and reaction is also a favourite and universal method of Nature, but it is never complete in itself and, if applied to permanent forces or qualities, tends to establish a see-saw of opposite tendencies, extremely useful to the operations of Prakriti but from the point

of view of self-mastery useless and inconclusive. It is only when this method is followed up by the use of *saṁyama* that it becomes effective. The Yogin regards the *vr̥tti* merely as a play of Nature with which he is not concerned and of which he is merely the spectator; the anger, lust or pride is not his, it is the universal Mother's and she works it and stills it for her own purposes. When, however, the *vr̥tti* is strong, mastering and unspent, this attitude cannot be maintained in sincerity and to try to hold it intellectually without sincerely feeling it is *mīthyācāra*, false discipline or hypocrisy. It is only when it is somewhat exhausted by repeated enjoyment and coercion that Prakriti or Nature at the command of the soul or Purusha can really deal with her own creation. She deals with it first by *vairāgya* in its crudest form of disgust, but this is too violent a feeling to be permanent; yet it leaves its mark behind in a deep-seated wish to be rid of its cause, which survives the return and temporary reign of the passion. Afterwards its return is viewed with impatience but without any acute feeling of intolerance. Finally supreme indifference or *udāsīnatā* is gained and the final going out of the tendency by the ordinary process of Nature is watched in the true spirit of the *saṁyamī* who has the knowledge that he is the witnessing soul and has only to dissociate himself from a phenomenon for it to cease. The highest stage leads either to *muk̥ti* in the form of *laya* or disappearance, the *vr̥tti* vanishing altogether and for good, or else to another kind of freedom when the soul knows that it is God's *līlā* and leaves it to Him whether He shall throw out the tendency or use it for His own purposes. This is the attitude of the Karmayogin who puts himself in God's hands and does work for His sake only, knowing that it is God's force that works in him. The result of that attitude of self-surrender is that the Lord of all takes charge and according to the promise of the Gita delivers His servant and lover from all sin and evil, the *vr̥ttis* working in the bodily machine without affecting the soul and working only when He raises them up for His purposes. This is *nirliptatā*, the state of absolute freedom within the *līlā*.

The law is the same for the mass as for the individual. The process of human evolution has been seen by the eye of inspired

observation to be that of working out the tiger and the ape. The forces of cruelty, lust, mischievous destruction, pain-giving, folly, brutality, ignorance were once rampant in humanity, they had full enjoyment; then by the growth of religion and philosophy they began in periods of satiety such as the beginning of the Christian era in Europe to be partly replaced, partly put under control. As is the law of such things, they have always reverted again with greater or less virulence and sought with more or less success to reestablish themselves. Finally in the nineteenth century it seemed for a time as if some of these forces had, for a time at least, exhausted themselves and the hour for *samyama* and gradual dismissal from the evolution had really arrived. Such hopes always recur and in the end they are likely to bring about their own fulfilment, but before that happens another recoil is inevitable. We see plenty of signs of it in the reeling back into the beast which is in progress in Europe and America behind the fair outside of Science, progress, civilisation and humanitarianism, and we are likely to see more signs of it in the era that is coming upon us. A similar law holds in politics and society. The political evolution of the human race follows certain lines of which the most recent formula has been given in the watchwords of the French Revolution, freedom, equality and brotherhood. But the forces of the old world, the forces of despotism, the forces of traditional privilege and selfish exploitation, the forces of unfraternal strife and passionate self-regarding competition are always struggling to reseat themselves on the thrones of the earth. A determined movement of reaction is evident in many parts of the world and nowhere perhaps more than in England which was once one of the self-styled champions of progress and liberty. The attempt to go back to the old spirit is one of those necessary returns without which it cannot be so utterly exhausted as to be blotted out from the evolution. It rises only to be defeated and crushed again. On the other hand the force of the democratic tendency is not a force which is spent but one which has not yet arrived, not a force which has had the greater part of its enjoyment but one which is still vigorous, unsatisfied and eager for fulfilment. Every attempt to coerce it

in the past reacted eventually on the coercing force and brought back the democratic spirit fierce, hungry and unsatisfied, joining to its fair motto of “Liberty, Equality and Fraternity” the terrible addition “or Death”. It is not likely that the immediate future of the democratic tendency will satisfy the utmost dreams of the lover of liberty who seeks an anarchist freedom, or of the lover of equality who tries to establish a socialistic dead level, or of the lover of fraternity who dreams of a world-embracing communism. But some harmonisation of this great ideal is undoubtedly the immediate future of the human race. On the old forces of despotism, inequality and unbridled competition, after they have been once more overthrown, a process of gradual *samyama* will be performed by which what has remained of them will be regarded as the disappearing vestiges of a dead reality and without any further violent coercion be transformed slowly and steadily out of existence.