The Unseen Power

A WAR has ended, a world has perished in the realm of thought and begun to disappear in the order of outward Nature. The war that has ended, was fought in physical trenches, with shell and shot, with machine-gun and tank and aeroplane, with mangling of limbs and crash of physical edifices and rude uptearing of the bosom of our mother earth; the new war, or the old continued in another form, that is already beginning, will be fought more with mental trenches and bomb-proof shelters, with reconnaissances and batteries and moving machines of thought and word, propaganda and parties and programmes, with mangling of the desire-souls of men and of nations, crash of many kinds of thrones and high-built institutions and strong uptearing of the old earth of custom which man has formed as a layer over the restless molten forces of evolutionary Nature. The old world that is shaken outwardly in its bases and already crumbling in some of its parts, is the economic and materialistic civilisation which mankind has been forming for the last few centuries from once new materials now growing rapidly effete pieced out with broken remnants of antiquity and the middle ages. The period of military conflict just at an end came to breach that which thought had already been sapping, an era of revolutions has opened which is likely to complete the ruin and prepare the building of a new structure. In this struggle the question arises to the thinking man, what Power or what Powers are expressing their will or their strivings in this upheaval? and we, what power or powers shall we serve? to what thing inward or superhuman, since outward thrones and systems are but as leaves driven before the storm-wind of the breath of Time, shall we owe allegiance? what or whom is it that we shall fight to enthrone?
Men fight for their personal or communal or national interests or for ideas and principles of which they make watchwords and battle-cries. But the largest human interests are only means and instruments which some Force greater than themselves breaks or uses in its inconscient impulse or else for its conscious purposes; ideas and principles are births of our minds which are born, reign and pass away and they are mere words unless they express some power of our being and of world-being which finds in them a mental self-expression. Something there is greater than our thoughts and desires, something more constant and insistent which lasts and grows beyond and yet by their changings. If no such thing were, then all this human effort would be a vain perturbation, the life of man only the busy instinctive routine of the hive and the ant-hill on a little higher scale, but with more useless suffering in it and less economy and wisdom, and our thought a vain glittering of imaginations weaving out involuntarily a web like that of old legend that is spun and respun only to be undone and again undone and of reasonings that build a series of intellectual and practical conventions which we represent to ourselves as the truth and the right, making the fallacies of our minds a substitute for wisdom and the fallacies of our social living a substitute for happiness. For this is certain that nothing we form and no outward system we create can last beyond its appointed or else its possible time. As this great materialistic civilisation of Europe to which the high glowing dawn of the Renaissance gave its brilliant birth and the dry brazen afternoon of nineteenth-century rationalism its hard maturity, is passing away and the bosom of earth and the soul of man heave a sigh of relief at its going, so whatever new civilisation we construct after this evening of the cycle, yuga-sandhya, on which we are entering, — for those are surely mistaken who think it is already the true dawn, — will also live its time and collapse fiercely or decay dully, — unless indeed there is that eternal Spirit in things and he should have found in its keynote the first sounds of the strain of his real harmony, in which case it may be the first of an ascending series of changes to the creation of a greater humanity. Otherwise, all this vast clash
and onset of peoples and world-wide bloodshed would be only a fortuitous nightmare, and the happiest known age of nation or mankind only the pleasant dream of a moment. Then the old-world gospel which bade us look upon human life as a vanity of vanities, would be the only wisdom.

But with that creed the soul of man has never remained contented and still less can we at the present day live in it, because this intuition of a greater Power than our apparent selves in the workings of the world is now growing upon the race and the vast sense of an unaccomplished aim in the urge of life is driving it to an unprecedented effort of human thought and energy. In such a moment even the hugest calamities cannot exhaust the life or discourage its impetus, but rather impel it to a new élan of endeavour; for the flames of thought rise higher than the flames of the conflagration that destroys and see in it a meaning and the promise of a new creation. In the destruction that has been effected, in the void that has been left the mind sees only more room for hope to grow and a wide space that the Spirit who builds in Time has cleared for his new structure. For who that has eyes at all to see cannot see this, that in what has happened, immense Powers have been at work which nourish a vaster world-purpose than the egoistic mind of individual or nation could mete with their yard-measure of narrow personal idea or communal interest and for which the motives and passions of governments and peoples were only tools or opportunities? When the autocrats and the war-lords of the east and the centre resolved to dare this huge catastrophe in order to seize from it the crown of their ambitions, when they drove madly to the precipice of an incalculable world-conflict, they could have no inkling that within four years or less their thrones would have fallen, themselves be slain or flee into exile and all for which they stood be hastening into the night of the past; only that which impelled them foresaw and intended it. Nor were the peoples who staggered unwillingly over the brink of war, more enlightened of the secret purpose: defence of what they were and possessed, wrath at a monstrous aggression which was a menace to their ordered European civilisation, drove their will and inflamed their
resolution. Yet to convict that civilisation of error and prepare another era of humanity was the intention of the Force that has given them victory, its voice echoed confusedly in their thought and growing clearer in the minds of those who entered later with a deliberate and conscious will into the struggle.

Great has been the havoc and ruin, immense the suffering, thick the blood-red cloud of darkness enveloping the world, heavy the toll of life, bottomless the expenditure of treasure and human resources, and all has not yet been worked out, the whole price has not yet been paid; for the after-effects of the war are likely to be much greater than its present effects and much that by an effort of concentration has resisted the full shock of the earthquake will fall in the after-tremblings. Well might the mind of a man during the calamity, aware of the Power that stood over the world wrapped in this tempest, repeat the words of Arjuna on the field of Kurukshetra,—

\[
\text{drṣṭvādbhutam rūpam ugram tavedām} \\
\text{lokatrayaṁ pravyathitaṁ mahātman. . . .} \\
\text{drṣṭvā hi tvāṁ pravyathitāntarātmā} \\
\text{dīrṭīṁ na vindāṁ śaṁm ca viśṇo. . . .} \\
\text{yathā nādināṁ bahavoṁbhuvagāḥ} \\
\text{samudram evābhimukhā drivanti,} \\
\text{tathā tavāṁ nara-loka-virā} \\
\text{viśanti vakṛṭyabhijvalanti.} \\
\text{yathā pradīptaṁ jvalanāṁ pataṅgā} \\
\text{viśanti nāśaya samṛḍhadvegāḥ,} \\
\text{tathaiva nāśaya viśanti lokās} \\
\text{tavāpi vakṛṭañi samṛḍhadvegāḥ.} \\
\text{leśhyase grasāmanāḥ samantāl} \\
\text{lokān samagrān vadānair jvaladbhī,} \\
\text{tejobhir āpūrya jagat samagram} \\
\text{bhāsas tavogrāḥ pratapaṁti viśṇo.} \\
\text{ākhyāṁ me ko bhavān ugrariṇo} \\
\text{namoṣtu te devavara prāṣida,} \\
\text{vijñāṇum icchāṁ bhavantam ādyāṁ} \\
\text{na hi prajānāṁi tava pravṛttim.}
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“When is seen this thy fierce and astounding form, the three worlds are all in pain and suffer, O thou mighty Spirit . . . . Troubled and in anguish is the soul within me as I look upon thee and I find no peace or gladness. . . . As the speed of many rushing waters races towards the ocean, so all these heroes of the world of man are entering into thy many mouths of flame. As a swarm of moths with ever increasing speed fall to their destruction into a fire that someone has kindled, so now the nations with ever increasing speed are entering into thy jaws of doom. Thou lickest the regions all around with thy tongues and thou art swallowing up all the nations in thy mouths of burning; all the world is filled with the blaze of thy energies; fierce and terrible are thy lustres and they burn us, O Vishnu. Declare to me who art thou that comest to us in this form of fierceness; salutation to thee, O thou great godhead, turn thy heart to grace! I would know who art thou who wast from the beginning, for I know not the will of thy workings.”

If the first answer might seem to come in the same words that answered the appeal of Arjuna, “I am the Time-Spirit, destroyer of the world, arisen huge-statured for the destruction of the nations,”

\[ kālo'smi loka-kṣaya-kṛt pravṛddho lokān samāḥartum iha pravṛttah, \]

and the voice the same to those who would shrink back hesitating from participation in the devastating struggle and massacre, “Without thee even all these shall cease to be who stand in the opposing hosts, for already have I slain them in my foreseeing will; know thyself to be an instrument only of an end predestined,” — still in the end it is the Friend of man, the Charioteer of his battle and his journey who appears in the place of the form of destruction and the outcome of all the ruin is the dharmarājya, the kingdom of the Dharma. To humanity as to the warrior of Kurukshetra the concluding message has been uttered, “Therefore arise, destroy the foe, enjoy a rich and happy kingdom.” But the kingdom of what Dharma? It is doubtful enough whether as the nations were blind to the nature of the destruction that
was coming, they may not be at least purblind to the nature of the construction that is to be created. An increase of mechanical freedom to be lavished or doled out according to the needs, interests, hesitations of the old-world forces that still remain erect, a union effected by a patchwork of the remnants of the past and the unshaped materials of the future, a credit and debit account with fate writing off so much of the evil and error of the past as can no longer be kept and writing up as good capital, — with some diminutions by way of acquittance of conscience, part payment of overdue debts, — all that has not been hopelessly destroyed, an acceptance of the change already effected by the tempest or made immediately inevitable and a new system of embankments to prevent the farther encroachments of the flood, is not likely to put a successful term to the cataclysm. Even if a short-sighted sagacity could bring this about for a time by a combined effort of successful and organised egoisms making terms with the powerful Idea-forces that are abroad as the messengers of the Time-Spirit, still it would be only an artificial check leading to a new upheaval in the not distant future. A liquidation of the old bankrupt materialistic economism which will enable it to set up business again under a new name with a reserve capital and a clean ledger, will be a futile attempt to cheat destiny. Commercialism has no doubt its own dharma, its ideal of utilitarian justice and law and adjustment, its civilisation presided over by the sign of the Balance, and, its old measures being now annulled, it is eager enough to start afresh with a new system of calculated values. But a $\text{dharma\text{â}jya}$ of the half-penitent Vaishya is not to be the final consummation of a time like ours pregnant with new revelations of thought and spirit and new creations in life, nor is a golden or rather a copper-gilt age of the sign of the Balance to be the glorious reward of this anguish and travail of humanity. It is surely the kingdom of another and higher dharma that is in preparation.

What that dharma is we can only know if we know this Power whose being and whose thought are at work behind all that we attempt and suffer, conceive and strive for. A former humanity conceived of it as a creative Divinity or almighty Power
high above man and his being and his effort or of a pantheon or hierarchy of universal Powers who looked upon and swayed the labour and passion and thought of the race. But the system of cosmic deities lacked a base and a principle of unity in their workings and above it the ancients were obliged to conceive of a vague and ineffable Divinity, the unknown God to whom they built a nameless altar, or a Necessity with face of sphinx and hands of bronze to whom the gods themselves had to give an ignorant obedience, and it left the life of man at once the victim of an inscrutable fate and the puppet of superhuman caprices. That to a great extent he is so long as he lives in his vital ego and is the servant of his own personal ideas and passions. Later religions gave a name and some body of form and quality to the one unknown Godhead and proclaimed an ideal law which they gave out as his word and scripture. But the dogmatism of a partial and unlived knowledge and the external tendencies of the human mind darkened the illuminations of religion with the confusions of error and threw over its face strange masks of childish and cruel superstitions. Religion too by putting God far above in distant heavens made man too much of a worm of the earth little and vile before his Creator and admitted only by a caprice of his favour to a doubtful salvation in superhuman worlds. Modern thought seeking to make a clear riddance of these past conceptions had to substitute something else in its place, and what it saw and put there was the material law of Nature and the biological law of life of which human reason was to be the faithful exponent and human science the productive utiliser and profiteer. But to apply the mechanical blindness of the rule of physical Nature as the sole guide of thinking and seeing man is to go against the diviner law of his being and maim his higher potentiality. Material and vital Nature is only a first form of our being and to overcome and rise beyond its formula is the very sense of a human evolution. Another and greater Power than hers is the master of this effort, and human reason or human science is not that Godhead, but can only be at best one and not the greatest of its ministers. It is not human reason and human science which have been working out their
ends in or through the tempest that has laid low so many of their constructions. A greater Spirit awaits a deeper questioning to reveal his unseen form and his hidden purpose.

Something of this truth we have begun to see dimly, in the return to more spiritual notions and in the idea of a kingdom of God to be built in the life of humanity. On the old sense of a Power in the universe of which the world that we live in is the field, is supervening the nearer perception of a Godhead in man, the unseen king of whom the outer man is the veil and of whom our mind and life can be the servants and living instruments and our perfected souls the clear mirrors. But we have to see more lucidly and in the whole before we can know this Godhead. There are three powers and forms in which the Being who is at work in things presents himself to our vision. There is first the form of him that we behold in the universe, but that, or at least what we see of it in the appearances of things, is not the whole truth of him; it is indeed only a first material shape and vital foundation which he has offered for the starting-point of our growth, an initial sum of preliminary realisations from which we have to proceed and to transcend them. The next form is that of which man alone here has the secret, for in him it is progressively revealing itself in a partial and always incomplete accomplishing and unfolding. His thoughts, his ideals, his dreams, his attempts at a high self-exceeding are the clues by which he attempts to discover the Spirit, the moulds in which he tries to seize the form of the Divinity. But they too are only a partial light and not the whole form of the Godhead. Something waits beyond which the human mind approaches in a shapeless aspiration to an ineffable Perfection, an infinite Light, an infinite Power, an infinite Love, a universal Good and Beauty. This is not something that is not yet in perfect being, a God who is becoming or who has to be created by man; it is the Eternal of whom this infinite ideal is a mental reflection. It is beyond the form of the universe and these psychological realisations of the human being and yet it is here too in man and subsists surrounding him in all the powers of the world he lives in. It is both the Spirit who is in the universe and the invisible king in man who is the master of his works. It
develops in the universe through laws which are not complete here or not filled in in their sense and action until humanity shall have fully evolved in its nature the potentialities of the mind and spirit. It works in man, but through his individual and corporate ego so long as he dwells within the knot of his present mentality. Only when his race knows God and lives in the Divine, will the ideal sense of his strivings begin to unfold itself and the kingdom be founded, rājyaṃ samṛddham.

When we try to build our outer life in obedience to our ego, our interests, our passions or our vital needs only or else in a form of our vital needs served and enlarged by our intellect, but not enlightened with a greater spiritual meaning, we are living within the law of the first cosmic formulation. It is as insistent Rudra that the unseen Power meets us there, the Master of the evolution, the Lord of Karma, the King of justice and judgment, who is easily placated with sacrifice and effort, for even to the Asura and Rakshasa, the Titan and the giant he gives the fruit of their tapasyā, but who is swift also to wrath and every time that man offends against the law, even though it be in ignorance, or stands stiff in his ego against the urge of the evolution or provokes the rebound of Karma, he strikes without mercy; through strife and stumblings, through passioning and yearning and fierce stress of will and giant endeavour, construction and destruction, slow labour of evolution and rushing speed of revolution Rudra works out the divine purpose. When on the contrary we seek to shape our life by the Ideal, it is the severe Lord of Truth who meets us with his questioning. Then in so far as we work in the sincerity of the inner truth, we shall live in an increasing harmony of the result of a divine working. But if the measures of our ideal are false or if we cast into the balance the unjust weights of our egoism and hypocrisy and self-deceiving or if we misuse the truth for our narrower ends, if we turn it into a lie or a convention or an outward machinery without the living soul of the truth in it, then we must pay a heavy reckoning. For as before we fell into the terrible hand of Rudra, so now we fall into the subtler more dangerous noose of Varuna. Only if we can see the Truth and live in it, shall our aspiration be satisfied.
Then it is the Master of Freedom, the Lord of Love, the Spirit of unity who shall inform the soul of the individual and take up the world's endeavour. He is the great Liberator and the strong and gentle founder of Perfection.

It is the wrath of Rudra that has swept over the earth and the track of his footprints can be seen in these ruins. There has come as a result upon the race the sense of having lived in many falsehoods and the need of building according to an ideal. Therefore we have now to meet the question of the Master of Truth. Two great words of the divine Truth have forced themselves insistently on our minds through the crash of the ruin and the breath of the tempest and are now the leading words of the hoped-for reconstruction, — freedom and unity. But everything depends, first, upon the truth of our vision of them, secondly, upon the sincerity with which we apply it, last and especially on the inwardness of our realisation. Vain will be the mechanical construction of unity, if unity is not in the heart of the race and if it be made only a means for safeguarding and organising our interests; the result will then be only, as it was in the immediate past, a fiercer strife and new outbreaks of revolution and anarchy. No paltering mechanisms which have the appearance but not the truth of freedom, will help us; the new structure, however imposing, will only become another prison and compel a fresh struggle for liberation. The one safety for man lies in learning to live from within outward, not depending on institutions and machinery to perfect him, but out of his growing inner perfection availing to shape a more perfect form and frame of life; for by this inwardness we shall best be able both to see the truth of the high things which we now only speak with our lips and form into outward intellectual constructions, and to apply their truth sincerely to all our outward living. If we are to found the kingdom of God in humanity, we must first know God and see and live the diviner truth of our being in ourselves; otherwise how shall a new manipulation of the constructions of the reason and scientific systems of efficiency which have failed us in the past, avail to establish it? It is because there are plenty of signs that the old error continues and only a minority, leaders perhaps
in light, but not yet in action, are striving to see more clearly, inwardly and truly, that we must expect as yet rather the last twilight which divides the dying from the unborn age than the real dawning. For a time, since the mind of man is not yet ready, the old spirit and method may yet be strong and seem for a short while to prosper; but the future lies with the men and nations who first see beyond both the glare and the dusk the gods of the morning and prepare themselves to be fit instruments of the Power that is pressing towards the light of a greater ideal.