

Spirituality

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SPIRITUALITY is a path which transcends logic, the senses and ritual; the royal way to evolution and elevation for all individuals. Even more, it brings about the evolution and elevation of everything which has an existence: mineral or biological, visible or invisible. Beginning before the atom it is a long voyage towards infinite knowledge, the long march which is a return to origins from whence spring all expression.

Spirituality is infinite, precisely because it is the infinite spirit which dwells in each of us, but which for the most part, lies hidden under the hard crust of a multitude of desires.

The spiritual state can be there in all its glory – this is extremely rare. It can appear occasionally, brushing the surface of consciousness – this is less rare. In general, it must be cultivated, freed through one of the different systems of education or discipline like Yoga, Meditation, Mantras, Art and others, in order to be brought to the surface of the being. But everyone is not ready for this process, or adapted to it. A mental maturing brought about by a long transmigration of experiences develops the state in which the being unconsciously feels him or herself ready to follow this way.

The individual will then seek, consciously or unconsciously, through chance contacts established providentially according to the exactness of the co-ordinates determining his life and total environment or according to his maturity - the discipline and the master necessary for his education. His new-born faith will enable him to see more profoundly and, henceforth, he will be able to discover the guides who were always around him. He is blind like a baby who only discovers his parents and their teaching after certain preliminary experiences in the night of the senses.

I have tried to reply succinctly to the question: "What is spirituality?" by using affirmation. In truth this is very difficult. Spirituality is infinite, the affirmation finite and opinions illusory. That is why I now intend to use the way of negation which is not limited since there is no reply to it; all it does is to leave doors open.

And so spirituality is not a ritual act.

Nor is it following a certain religion or sect.

It is not being non-violent, kind, charitable. Spirituality has nothing to do with, magic, occult practices or mysteries.

It is not creating an atmosphere of calm, deliberate gestures, wise, composed answers adequate to the moment.

It is not adoring God, or gods.
It is not dreaming of being the past or the future. It is none of all these things yet spirituality includes everything. One word, perhaps, can approach the vision of spirituality, a word linked to its mechanism - and here we are touching on the embryo of the profoundest teaching. The word is fluidity. Fluidity in actions and gestures, physical fluidity, mental fluidity.

Why?

Because, if a being is fluid in his body and spirit, this automatically establishes a state of non-hesitation and thus of instinctive confidence, harmony and limitless intuitive knowledge, as opposed to ignorance which is rigidity, limitation and death. Nothing can act directly, instantaneously or adequately without possessing a freedom of mental and physical movement, more or less limited according to the entity that is evolving and directing these movements. And so the harmony of the individual depends on his intuitive adaptation to the movement of the infinite harmony. It goes without saying that this state excludes self-serving, aggressive and jealous criticism, aggressiveness, combativeness, the spirit of revenge, imposition of opinions on others, negative judgments, discrimination and lies.

If fluidity of physical movement is truly expressed in the bodily perfection of an athlete motivated by the desire for victory, either in the stadium or over his body - this becomes all the more evident for the spiritual athlete who, detached from all desire to win, brings about the union of psychophysical elements or, I prefer to say, the *re-union* because, in fact, these elements were only ever separated by the idea of fear or lack of self-confidence.

The individual's insecurity stems from an intense desire to be superior and a desire to possess. This puts in a concrete form, before the senses, a dream of greatness that supposedly can put an end to death, the natural evolution never accepted by man because of his eternal desire for pleasure.

But, how can the body of an athlete be free, harmonious, detached and, at the same time, be guided by a mind which is limited, fearful and blocked? It is impossible because the body and mind are mutually dependent on one another. Care must be taken not to confuse athletic records and athletic harmony.

The fluidity of which I speak is the spirit of discipline of the potential Yogin, whatever school he belongs to. Can we accept a being, physically and intellectually accomplished, who wishes to stay outside the spiritual way? That is equally impossible and is like a stream flowing on nothing. The total fluidity of an individual is in constant progression and does not evolve separately but acts in close communion with the fluidity of all elements of creation, both visible and invisible. Creation itself is the essence of the physical and spiritual movement of life, latent and infinite.

In the depths of this movement, like waves on water moving out from the point of origin, lies movement motionless, without beginning or end, yang or yin, the unique mind, infinite spirituality.

We are the intellect of the body of this infinite, spiritual state which escapes our logic, and its actions inasmuch as we are its human materialisation. And so we are infinite, like the billions of cells which are born, act and die and which make up our body, a whole moving with the same fluid movement, because each infinitely small

part of our biological form is animated by the infinite fluidity.

We are born with this spirituality but as we grow our desires develop along with our suffering and we more or less lose sight of it as we busy ourselves trying to realise our desires. We grow older and, disappointed by the life we have made for ourselves, seek increasingly but vainly to recover the lost paradise of our childhood in ways which bring only ridicule and suffering.

Often we do not seek well, because we want to vanquish, to possess, we do not want to give anything up. Our eyes are fixed on ourselves, isolated entities, frustrated, disappointed and sometimes angry. We are alone. But if, very tired, we take the time to listen to our inner voice, give up a little of the time considered so precious in the quest for power and forget fear to consider others, we become more supple and then more fluid. We offer no more resistance; we gain more assurance, better physical health, understanding and a certain harmony. Finally we no longer fight so fiercely, nor criticize so jealously, we possess more inner joy. We have rediscovered the simple fluidity of our childhood, we are saved because we can give instead of trying to always take.

Once this light has been glimpsed, we can never forget it. We have rediscovered the spiritual path and, from that moment on, although the same person, all our actions and thoughts will be influenced by it. Those around us, however negative they may be, will also be influenced like dried moss which swells and lives again when it rains.

We can be invaded in a second by spirituality and feel it like an inner fire. It is not the superficial exuberance of uncontrolled emotion from desires in the process of being materialised, but love, the emotional expression of spirituality. Years can pass before we find spirituality; it can happen in a flash at the moment of dying. That is of no importance because spirituality knows nothing of time. The ego and its army of desires, passions, material and intellectual attachments (falsely spiritual) are subject to the oppression of time since they create this convenience and misuse it. Time is a social comfort not a spiritual progress.

One fact is certain: man cannot live without spirituality, however limited, sporadic, embryonic it may be, without transformation into a vegetative state where aggression and suffering, chaos and destruction alone are supreme. A man's logic, possessions, diplomas and intellectual development are of little importance. Without spirituality he is poor, limited, blind; suffering and engendering ignorance around himself.

Naturally with time, in other lifetimes, he will come to achieve transcendent knowledge. Every man has his own compass which leads him to the royal road. Suffering teaches, it is the ultimate lesson. Our experiences of suffering are fundamental ordeals through which we are purified of attachments. For some, these ordeals can be long. For others, short, dreadful or benign. The pitfall of fatalism must be avoided, believing that one will be saved whatever happens. In one sense salvation must come, but man has his word to say in this evolution, a word which can retard or hasten this illumination. He must choose one or more disciplines. But ultimately, the best one is self-discipline.

What is discipline? Discipline is the agent of spirituality provided that it is not imposed by force, provided that it contains the sincere joy which comes from

acceptance. Suffering also becomes a discipline once it is seen independent of any concept of positive or negative.

Confronted by aggressiveness caused by fear, lack of confidence or an inability to adapt, suffering is horrible. Mental suffering cannot be neutralized unless we dare to look it in the face and accept it as our own creation. Such self-analysis can very often reduce suffering to little or nothing, exposing as it does imagination, the driving force of the intellect, which develops any situation - comfortable or uncomfortable - out of all proportion, causing disappointment and suffering.

But suffering activated in the heart of spiritual discipline engenders happy, harmonious periods which function like dynamic charges of energy permitting us to confidently face up to other ordeals destined to develop our spirituality and knowledge.

Suffering is infinite, sometimes inconceivable. It acts in the long term, every second, and is paradoxically pleasant sometimes. It is the strategist of spirituality. Any discipline obviously includes an element of severity, of austerity even, which is more or less apparent; otherwise it would be useless.

This austerity and severity are at the root of what is called sacrifice or self-sacrifice. Sacrifice is the gift of oneself, the key to all suffering. It is also a gift of love which is the key to the suffering of others and produces shared joy –the final door opening onto spirituality. No sacrifice is too small if it is completely detached from a spirit of personal pride (that false conception of spirituality, that purely intellectual possession). But even in the heart of this spirit of sacrifice the ego sets a trap; the great excuse we offer ourselves: self-sacrifice in the interests of other egos. This is the moment for discernment, the pure vision of the inner being – if the student in spirituality maintains his watchfulness and knows how to observe the evolutions of the ego amongst others and keep it under control.

I have followed, and still follow, the disciplines of Zen and Yoga. But there are numerous spiritual disciplines which have evolved in response to different factors and the individual can follow any discipline provided that he is discerning and sincere. He must not allow himself to be mystified by apparently saintly artifices in the form of music, images, gestures, exotic rites, etc. No, these are nothing more than decorative illusions appearing on the way. The student in spirituality is a worker accomplishing a laborious task, passing through different degrees, undergoing different tests (even if he is not always aware of it). That is the very essence of the current ruling his transient earthly life. It is a path without compromises, a choice in which he must persevere with application, a psycho-physical practice since the spirit cannot be studied in isolation. Neither the spirit nor the inner self can be touched without using the body in one way or another as a medium - body and spirit go together, not as part of one becoming part of the other, but possessing the unity of the base, the flower and the water.

Certainly the study of spirituality can be dangerous because it is surrounded with manifestations of the ego: decorum, adoration, mirage-like visions, illusions of greatness, false humanity and, as I said above, these manifestations are not revelations but false guides, dangerous companions like passion, aggressiveness, desire for possessions, fear - all of them naturally incapable of exerting any control over the ego.

By its very nature the ego is the enemy of spirituality. Should we then try to destroy it? Heaven forbid! There is no question of it. Moreover, if the truth be told, it is impossible to destroy the ego and to try to do so would only bring about a mental death and madness.

The ego performs a useful function but the place that we reserve for it with the help of social circumstances and our human weakness must change. For the majority of men the ego is in fact the leading force in their life, in the most insignificant details, and they do not oppose the slightest objection or doubt to it. It is the conductor we follow blindly.

But the ego should be nothing more than the producer and distributor of facts and experiences demanded by the inner self. The inner self must lead the ego, guide the mental processes and inspect the data provided by the senses through the "collector - distributor" ego. This is easier said than done. In reality it is an extremely arduous task because the power of the ego and its means of persuasion and infiltration are great. Its power depends on the combination of three forces: survival, fear and imagination.

When a child or a kitten is born it unconsciously follows the only path it can, that of survival. Survival at any price is natural and demands facts, information, judgment and desires. It is at this point that the ego makes its appearance. In the beginning intuition, the self with its profound knowledge, chooses the right path. Then, slowly, the receiving mechanism for facts and information takes possession of the being. Aided by fear and the imagination it uses any excuse to obtain the existing emotions which it supposes are suitable to sustain its life.

In the name of a certain necessity the ego lays claim to these existing emotions. But the idea of necessity is very dangerous because it can be transformed into attachment by the ego. This attachment binds all living beings and their egos, making them a prisoner; frustrated, suffering from the necessities, fed by the excuses of their reason.

When a child is born, it has very few attachments: breathing, feeding, the warm security of its mother, sleeping and eliminating its excrements. It has not at this stage many weapons it can use to obtain the needs necessary for survival. It can cry, a demonstrative blackmail which, in reality, produces a great effect on the parents because of fear and the conventions of child-rearing.

When the child grows up, the society in which he lives teaches him to designate everything, actions and thoughts, with a label determining whether it is a means of attack (will) or of defence (repulsion).

Later, as an adult, it is very different. No longer is it a question of milk, ice cream and toys ... it is money, sex and a certain social importance dependent on how imaginative his ambition is. Thousands of things, acts and thoughts propel him and bind him. He has learnt to use psychological weapons, physical weapons (his body and his reason) and mechanical arms produced by his imagination. This last device is a psycho-physical result which has brought us to the catastrophic life we now lead; an environment of technological madness we ignorantly pursue, absorbed by our destructive games. And so the ego must bear the main responsibility for the tragedy human beings have been living for some millions of years.

Our life is, up to a certain point, conditioned in advance but we do have a certain free choice, something to say in the process if we do not act it is like the lawyer who sleeps, allowing the suspect to be condemned to death although he is innocent. We have to watch over and improve the present situation, however calamitous it may seem to us. To do this there are religious and philosophical systems and ways of living. But a technique is required for every case, for every being.

You need a technique for everything you decide to study because, when religions and science fail, education still remains (whether it comes from another or from yourself). Starting from zero is like learning anew. Thus there is meditation as a means of education, as a primordial technique.

What is meditation? Is it calmly remaining seated with eyes lowered? That is only the superficial part of it. To meditate is to be guided to the centre (from the latin *meditare*). It is not going to the centre but, I repeat, being guided to the centre. This centre is the essential being, the infinite represented in us, the vital psycho-physical fluid which nourishes our existence.

In Zen it is said that every man is a potential Buddha because Buddha is not the gilded demi-god of adoring history but the representative of infinite knowledge, of the awakening to truth with the help of intuition and intellect working together, that infinite psycho-physical energy that we all possess. From this energy compassion bursts forth.

We must open the door to the inner self. This door is guarded by the ego which does not allow man to penetrate into this room at the centre of his being. In certain circumstances of extreme suffering or the ultimate in fear the ego loses all its force, exhausts its capacity in a moment, loses interest, its future reality, its reason for existence; because at this ultimate moment no possession can help it survive. The inner self flourishes then, emerges and takes control. Sometimes it is too late, if the absurdity of the ego has kept the physical body moving in the wrong direction for too long. In this case physical activity ceases. It is naturally better to realise the error in direction well before the extreme suffering of the catastrophe.

Every being is conditioned originally to receive the realization, even without working on it for a given time, by virtue of a certain procedure which may be extremely lengthy and painful. But as I have already said, man also has the possibility of choosing and if he is suffering inordinately, it is only because he is afraid of suffering and so prefers to allow himself to be dragged along the easy path of the promising mirages of the ego. There are infinite laws governing the harmonious functioning of the infinite mechanism; not to conform to them is equivalent to mental or physical suicide.

Suffering is a natural process; there is nothing in the life of the ego but suffering. Every joy in a life based on the ego is suffering. Superior suffering presents inferior suffering as a relaxation, a joy. This joy, however imperceptible it may be, is the product of a showy masquerade wrought by the ego, when interesting itself in displacing a warning of danger. For suffering also serves as a warning which tends to prepare us for physical or psychic dangers when we are on the wrong path.

"Everything is suffering" said the Buddha 2,500 years ago. Throughout our lives we pursue a series of experiences with more or less severe consequences for the ego. It reacts against certain of these experiences because they are contrary to its will and desires. In truth there is no suffering as such; there are acts stemming from the ego which we find more or less comfortable and which we decide to name suffering and

joy, good luck and bad luck, punishment and recompense. For the individual who has gained profound knowledge, these terms do not exist, since he knows only love and compassion.

And so truth is the reply to suffering, truth seen through suffering and arrived at by detachment from the suffering. Infinite truth is not suffering, it is love or infinite joy, it is the infinite gift.

To conceive of suffering as being the motor of our human entity is not negative. Zen is not negative, it is outside the field of such appellations and when you consider your experience in the context of its discipline, nothing is positive or negative any longer. There are only experiences. Once again it is the ego which attaches the labels: good or bad.

You need not fear the lack of labels which appears to frustrate your attempts to grasp your reality or your status which, while being so comforting, is still powerless to protect you from the daily losses of possession.

"Fear fuels our desires and humanity slakes its thirst with fear"

We are born - that is, so it seems, to a point of departure. We soon learn what death is, this death which is transmitted to us as the end point of our life. Then we become uneasy and all our actions, conscious or unconscious, are centred around this supposed point which is approaching. But we die and are born constantly and that does not touch us.

Naturally we can rise above this fear with the help of certain emotions called heroism, stoicism, duty and nobility. But such emotions are almost worthless, nothing more than temporary gesticulations gaily clad in illusions. In reality birth or death do not exist. They are conventions established by the ego which, as always, attaches itself from fear to seek a continuing existence or selfish pleasure.

Death is a life process just like birth. Where is the beginning of a wave and its end? The scientist would perhaps like to reply to this question but his reply will be incomplete, always followed by another question and answer. No reply can ever define the infinite. The evolution is constant, to infinity and in the infinity of its infinite expressions.

And so, in truth, there is no place for fear to establish itself. It is enormously difficult to learn not to fear and that can only be realised with the aid of the mental group: reason and logic. In order to learn how not to know fear you must learn to know the inner self. One can learn to know the infinite, love and God, by descending into the very depths of our being.

In this life we are only children, students at the infinite university of spirituality. We enter this school, pass our tests, we have our failures, our examinations, our successes. We leave this school and enter another, and this process continues during an infinity of past and future times. But what is time separated from the blind ego? Time is, perhaps, a temporary convention applied to matter for practical purposes and reserved for certain biological expressions such as mankind.

At a certain point in our existence we must relearn everything, starting again from zero; this is, in a certain way, the approach to spirituality adopted by the disciplines of Yoga and Zen.

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