

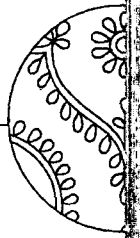
SADHANA

THE REALIZATION OF LIFE

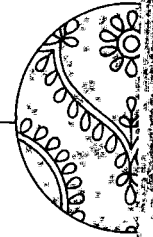
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REALIZATION IN LOVE



We come now to the eternal problem of the coexistence of the infinite and the finite, of the supreme being and our soul. There is the sublime paradox that lies at the root of existence. We never can go around it, because we never can stand outside the problem and weigh it against any other possible alternative. But the problem exists in logic only; in reality it does not offer us any difficulty at all. Logically speaking, the distance between two points, however near, may be said to be infinite, because it is infinitely divisible. But we *do* cross the infinite at every step, and meet the eternal in every second. Therefore some of our philosophers say there is no such thing as finitude; it is but a *maya*, an illusion. The real is the infinite, and it is only *maya*, the unreality, that causes the appearance of the finite. But the word *maya* is a mere name, it is no explanation. It is merely saying that with truth there is this appearance which is the opposite of truth, but how they come to exist at one and the same time is incomprehensible.

We have what we call in Sanskrit dvandva, a series of opposites in creation, such as the positive pole and the negative, the centripetal force and the centrifugal, attraction and repulsion. These are also mere names, they are no explanations. They are only different ways of asserting that the world in its essence is a reconciliation of pairs of opposing forces. These forces, like the left and the right hands of the creator, are acting in absolute harmony, yet acting from opposite directions.

There is a bond of harmony between our two eyes, which makes them act in unison. Likewise there is an unbreakable continuity of relation in the physical world between heat and cold, light and darkness, motion and rest, as between the bass and treble notes of a piano. That is why these opposites do not bring confusion in the universe, but harmony. If creation were but a chaos, we should have to imagine the two opposing principles as trying to get the better of each other. But the universe is not under martial law, arbitrary and provisional. Here we find no force that can run amok or go on indefinitely in its wild road, like an exiled outlaw, breaking all harmony with its surroundings; each force, on the contrary, has to come back in a curved line to its equilibrium. Waves rise, each to its individual height in a seeming attitude of unrelenting competition, but only up to a certain point; and thus we know of the great repose of the sea, to which they are all related and to which they must all return in a rhythm that is marvelously beautiful.

In fact, these undulations and vibrations, these risings and fallings, are not due to the erratic contortions of disparate bodies; they are a rhythmic dance. Rhythm never can be born of

the haphazard struggle of combat. Its underlying principle must be unity, not opposition.

This principle of unity is the mystery of all mysteries. The existence of a duality at once raises a question in our minds, and we seek its solution in the One. When at last we find a relation between these two, and thereby see them as one in essence, we feel that we have come to the truth. And then we give utterance to this most startling of all paradoxes, that the One appears as many, that the appearance is the opposite of truth and yet is inseparably related to it.

Curiously enough, there are men who lose that feeling of mystery, which is at the root of all our delights, when they discover the uniformity of law among the diversity of nature—as if gravity is not more of a mystery than the fall of an apple, as if the evolution from one scale of being to the other is not something that is even more shy of explanation than a succession of creations. The trouble is that we very often stop at such a law as if it were the final end of our search, and then we find that it does not even begin to emancipate our spirit. It only gives satisfaction to our intellect, and as it does not appeal to our whole being, it only deadens in us the sense of the infinite.

A great poem, when analyzed, is a set of detached sounds. The reader who finds out the meaning, which is the inner medium that connects these outer sounds, discovers a perfect law all through, which is never violated in the least: the law of the evolution of ideas, the law of the music and the form.

But law in itself is a limit. It only shows that whatever is can never be otherwise. When a man is exclusively occupied with

the search for the links of causality, his mind succumbs to the tyranny of law in escaping from the tyranny of facts. In learning a language, when from mere words we reach the laws of words, we have gained a great deal. But if we stop at that point and only concern ourselves with the marvels of the formation of a language, seeking the hidden reason for all its apparent caprices, we do not reach the end—for grammar is not literature, prosody is not a poem.

When we come to literature, we find that though it conforms to rules of grammar, it is yet a thing of joy, it is freedom itself. The beauty of a poem is bound by strict laws, yet it transcends them. The laws are its wings; they do not keep it weighed down, they carry it to freedom. Its form is in law, but its spirit is in beauty. Law is the first step toward freedom, and beauty is the complete liberation that stands on the pedestal of law. Beauty harmonizes in itself the limit and the beyond, the law and the liberty.

In the world-poem, the discovery of the law of its rhythms, the measurement of its expansion and contraction, movement and pause, the pursuit of its evolution of forms and characters, are true achievements of the mind, but we cannot stop there. It is like a railway station, but the station platform is not our home. Only he who knows that the whole world is a creation of joy has attained the final truth.

This leads me to think how mysterious the relation of the human heart with nature must be. In the outer world of activity nature has one aspect, but in our hearts, in the inner world, it presents an altogether different picture.

Take an instance: the flower of a plant. However fine and

dainty it may look, it is pressed to do a great service, and its colors and forms are all suited to its work. It must bring forth the fruit, or the continuity of plant life will be broken and the earth will be turned into a desert ere long. The color and the smell of the flower are all for some purpose, therefore; no sooner is it fertilized by the bee, and the time of its fruition arrives, than it sheds its exquisite petals and a cruel economy compels it to give up its sweet perfume. It has no time to flaunt its finery, for it is busy beyond measure. Viewed from without, necessity seems to be the only factor in nature for which everything works and moves. There the bud develops into the flower, the flower into the fruit, the fruit into the seed, the seed into a new plant again, and so forth, the chain of activity running on unbroken. Should there crop up any disturbance or impediment, no excuse would be accepted, and the unfortunate thing thus choked in its movement would at once be labeled as rejected, and be bound to die and disappear posthaste. In the great office of nature there are innumerable departments with endless work going on, and the fine flower that you behold there, gaudily attired and scented like a dandy, is by no means what it appears to be, but rather is like a laborer toiling in sun and shower, who has to submit a clear account of his work and has no breathing space to enjoy himself in playful frolic.

But when this same flower enters the heart of men, its aspect of busy practicality is gone, and it becomes the very emblem of leisure and repose. The same object that is the embodiment of endless activity without is the perfect expression of beauty and peace within.

Science here warns us that we are mistaken, that the pur-

pose of a flower is nothing but what is outwardly manifested, and that the relation of beauty and sweetness which we think it bears to us is all our own making, gratuitous and imaginary.

But our heart replies that we are not in the least mistaken. In the sphere of nature the flower carries with it a certificate that recommends it as having immense capacity for doing useful work, but it brings an altogether different letter of introduction when it knocks at the door of our hearts. Beauty becomes its only qualification. At one place it comes as a slave and at another as a free thing. How, then, should we give credit to its first recommendation and disbelieve the second one? That the flower has got its being in the unbroken chain of causation is true beyond doubt, but that is an outer truth. The inner truth is, *Verily from the everlasting joy do all objects have their birth.**

A flower, therefore, has not its only function in nature, but has another great function to exercise in the mind of man. And what is that function? In nature its work is that of a servant who has to make his appearance at appointed times, but in the heart of man it comes like a messenger from the King. In the *Ramayana*, when Sita, forcibly separated from her husband, was bewailing her evil fate in Ravana's golden palace, she was met by a messenger who brought with him a ring of her beloved Ramchandra himself. The very sight of it convinced Sita of the truth of the tidings he bore. She was at once reassured that he came indeed from her beloved one, who had not forgotten her and was at hand to rescue her.

* Anandahyeva khalvimani bhutani jayante.

Such a messenger is a flower from our great lover. Surrounded with the pomp and pageantry of worldliness, which may be likened to Ravana's golden city, we still live in exile, while the insolent spirit of worldly prosperity tempts us with allurements and claims us as its bride. In the meantime the flower comes across with a message from the other shore, and whispers in our ears, "I am come. He has sent me. I am a messenger of the beautiful, the one whose soul is the bliss of love. This island of isolation has been bridged over by him, and he has not forgotten thee, and will rescue thee even now. He will draw thee unto him and make thee his own. This illusion will not hold thee in thralldom forever."

If we happen to be awake then, we question him: "How are we to know that thou art come from him indeed?" The messenger says, "Look! I have this ring from him. How lovely are its hues and charms!"

Ah, doubtless it is his—indeed, it is our wedding ring. Now all else passes into oblivion, only this sweet symbol of the touch of the eternal love fills us with a deep longing. We realize that the palace of gold where we are has nothing to do with us—our deliverance is outside it, and there our love has its fruition and our life its fulfillment.

What to the bee in nature is merely color and scent and the marks or spots that show the right track to the honey is to the human heart beauty and joy untrammelled by necessity. They bring a love letter to the heart written in many-colored inks.

I was telling you, therefore, that however busy our active nature outwardly may be, she has a secret chamber within the

heart where she comes and goes freely, without any design whatsoever. There the fire of her workshop is transformed into lamps of a festival, the noise of her factory is heard like music. The iron chain of cause and effect sounds heavily outside in nature, but in the human heart its unalloyed delight seems to sound, as it were, like the golden strings of a harp.

It indeed seems to be wonderful that nature has these two aspects at one and the same time, and so antithetical—one being of thralldom and the other of freedom. In the same form, sound, color, and taste two contrary notes are heard, one of necessity and the other of joy. Outwardly nature is busy and restless, inwardly she is all silence and peace. She has toil on one side and leisure on the other. You see her bondage only when you see her from without, but within her heart is a limitless beauty.

Our seer says, "From joy are born all creatures, by joy they are sustained, toward joy they progress, and into joy they enter."

Not that he ignores law, or that his contemplation of this infinite joy is born of the intoxication produced by an indulgence in abstract thought. He fully recognizes the inexorable laws of nature, and says, "Fire burns for fear of him (i.e., by his law); the sun shines by fear of him; and for fear of him the wind, the clouds, and death perform their offices." It is a reign of iron rule, ready to punish the least transgression. Yet the poet chants the glad song, "From joy are born all creatures, by joy they are sustained, toward joy they progress, and into joy they enter."

The immortal being manifests himself in joy-form.* His manifestation in creation is out of his fullness of joy. It is the nature of this abounding joy to realize itself in form that is law. The joy, which is without form, must create, must translate itself into forms. The joy of the singer is expressed in the form of a song, that of the poet in the form of a poem. Man in his role of a creator is ever creating forms, and they come out of his abounding joy.

This joy, whose other name is love, must by its very nature have duality for its realization. When the singer has his inspiration, he makes himself into two; he has within him his other self as the hearer, and the outside audience is merely an extension of this other self of his. The lover seeks his own other self in his beloved. It is the joy that creates this separation, in order to realize through obstacles the union.

The *amritam*, the immortal bliss, has made himself into two. Our soul is the loved one, it is his other self. We are separate, but if this separation were absolute, then there would have been absolute misery and unmitigated evil in this world. Then from untruth we never could reach truth, and from sin we never could hope to attain purity of heart; then all opposites would ever remain opposites, and we could never find a medium through which our differences could ever tend to meet. Then we could have no language, no understanding, no blending of hearts, no cooperation in life. But on the contrary we find that the separateness of objects is in a fluid state. Their individualities are ever-changing; they are meeting and merging into each

* Anandarupamamritam yad vibhati.

other, till science itself is turning into metaphysics, matter losing its boundaries, and the definition of life becoming more and more indefinite.

Yes, our individual soul has been separated from the supreme soul, but this has not been from alienation but from the fullness of love. It is for that reason that untruths, sufferings, and evils are not at a standstill, the human soul can defy them, can overcome them, nay, can altogether transform them into new power and beauty.

The singer is translating his song into singing, his joy into forms, and the hearer has to translate back the singing into the original joy; then the communion between the singer and the hearer is complete. The infinite joy is manifesting itself in manifold forms, taking upon itself the bondage of law, and we fulfill our destiny when we go back from forms to joy, from law to the love, when we untie the knot of the finite and hark back to the infinite.

The human soul is on its journey from the law to love, from discipline to liberation, from the moral plane to the spiritual. Buddha preached the discipline of self-restraint and moral life; it is a complete acceptance of law. But this bondage of law cannot be an end by itself; by mastering it thoroughly we acquire the means of getting beyond it. It is going back to Brahma, to the infinite love, which is manifesting itself through the finite forms of law. Buddha names it Brahma vibhara, the joy of living in Brahma. He who wants to reach this stage, according to Buddha, "shall deceive none, entertain no hatred for anybody, and never wish to injure through anger. He shall have measureless

love for all creatures, even as a mother has for her only child, whom she protects with her own life. Up above, below, and all around him he shall extend his love, which is without bounds and obstacles, and which is free from all cruelty and antagonism. While standing, sitting, walking, lying down, till he falls asleep, he shall keep his mind active in this exercise of universal goodwill."

Want of love is a degree of callousness, for love is the perfection of consciousness. We do not love because we do not comprehend, or rather, we do not comprehend because we do not love. For love is the ultimate meaning of everything around us. It is not a mere sentiment; it is truth; it is the joy that is at the root of all creation. It is the white light of pure consciousness that emanates from Brahma. So, to be one with this *sarvanubhub*, this all-feeling being who is in the external sky as well as in our inner soul, we must attain to that summit of consciousness which is love: *Who could have breathed or moved if the sky were not filled with joy, with love?* It is through the heightening of our consciousness into love and extending it all over the world that we can attain Brahma vibhara, communion with this infinite joy.

Love spontaneously gives itself in endless gifts. But these gifts lose their fullest significance if through them we do not reach that love which is the giver. To do that, we must have love in our own heart. He who has no love in him values the gifts of his lover only according to their usefulness. But utility

* Ko hyevanyat kah pranyat yadesha akaca anando na syat.

is temporary and partial. It can never occupy our whole being; what is useful only touches us at the point where we have some want. When the want is satisfied, utility becomes a burden if it still persists. On the other hand, a mere token is of permanent worth to us when we have love in our heart, for it is not for any special use. It is an end in itself; it is for our whole being and therefore can never tire us.

The question is, in what manner do we accept this world, which is a perfect gift of joy? Have we been able to receive it in our heart, where we keep enshrined things that are of deathless value to us? We are frantically busy making use of the forces of the universe to gain more and more power; we feed and we clothe ourselves from its stores, we scramble for its riches, and it becomes for us a field of fierce competition. But were we born for this, to extend our proprietary rights over this world and make of it a marketable commodity? When our whole mind is bent only upon making use of this world, it loses for us its true value. We make it cheap by our sordid desires, and thus to the end of our days we only try to feed upon it and miss its truth, just like the greedy child who tears leaves from a precious book and tries to swallow them.

In the lands where cannibalism is prevalent, man looks upon man as his food. In such a country civilization can never thrive, for there man loses his higher value and is made common indeed. But there are other kinds of cannibalism, perhaps not so gross, but not less heinous, for which one need not travel far. In countries higher in the scale of civilization we find sometimes man looked upon as a mere body, and he is bought

and sold in the market by the price of his flesh only. And sometimes he gets his sole value from being useful; he is made into a machine, and is traded upon by the man of money to acquire for him more money. Thus our lust, our greed, our love of comfort, result in cheapening man to his lowest value. It is self-deception on a large scale. Our desires blind us to the *truth* that there is in man, and this is the greatest wrong done by ourselves to our own soul. It deadens our consciousness, and is but a gradual method of spiritual suicide. It produces ugly sores in the body of civilization, gives rise to its hovels and brothels, its vindictive penal codes, its cruel prison systems, its organized method of exploiting foreign races to the extent of permanently injuring them by depriving them of the discipline of self-government and means of self-defense.

Of course man is useful to man, because his body is a marvelous machine and his mind an organ of wonderful efficiency. But he is a spirit as well, and this spirit is truly known only by love. When we define a man by the market value of the service we can expect of him, we know him imperfectly. With this limited knowledge of him it becomes easy for us to be unjust to him and to entertain feelings of triumphant self-congratulation when, on account of some cruel advantage on our side, we can get out of him much more than we have paid for. But when we know him as a spirit, we know him as our own. We at once feel that cruelty to him is cruelty to ourselves, to make him small is stealing from our own humanity, and in seeking to make use of him solely for personal profit we merely gain in money or comfort what we pay for in truth. X

One day I was out in a boat on the Ganges. It was a beautiful evening in autumn. The sun had just set, the silence of the sky was full to the brim with ineffable peace and beauty. The vast expanse of water was without a ripple, mirroring all the changing shades of the sunset glow. Miles and miles of a desolate sandbank lay like a huge amphibious reptile of some antediluvian age, with its scales glistening in shining colors. As our boat was silently gliding by the precipitous riverbank, riddled with the nest holes of a colony of birds, suddenly a big fish leapt up to the surface of the water and then disappeared, displaying on its vanishing figure all the colors of the evening sky. It drew aside for a moment the many-colored screen behind which there was a silent world full of the joy of life. It came up from the depths of its mysterious dwelling with a beautiful dancing motion and added its own music to the silent symphony of the dying day. I felt as if I had a friendly greeting from an alien world in its own language, and it touched my heart with a flash of gladness. Then suddenly the man at the helm exclaimed with a distinct note of regret, "Ah, what a big fish!" It at once brought before his vision the picture of the fish caught and made ready for his supper. He could look at the fish only through his desire, and thus missed the whole truth of its existence.

But man is not entirely an animal. He aspires to a spiritual vision, which is the vision of the whole truth. This gives him the highest delight, because it reveals to him the deepest harmony that exists between him and his surroundings. It is our desires that limit the scope of our self-realization, hinder our

extension of consciousness, and give rise to sin, which is the innermost barrier that keeps us apart from our God, setting up disunion and the arrogance of exclusiveness. For sin is not one mere action, but it is an attitude of life that takes for granted that our goal is finite, that our self is the ultimate truth, and that we are not all essentially one but exist each for his own separate individual existence.

So I repeat, we never can have a true view of man unless we have a love for him. Civilization must be judged and prized not by the amount of power it has developed but by how much it has evolved and given expression to, by its laws and institutions, the love of humanity. The first question and the last that it has to answer is whether and how far it recognizes man more as a spirit than as a machine. Whenever some ancient civilization fell into decay and died, it was owing to causes that produced callousness of heart and led to the cheapening of man's worth; when either the state or some powerful group of men began to look upon the people as a mere instrument of their power; when, by compelling weaker races to slavery and trying to keep them down by every means, man struck at the foundation of his greatness, his own love of freedom and fair play. Civilization can never sustain itself upon cannibalism of any form, for that by which alone man is true can be nourished only by love and justice.

As with man, so with this universe. When we look at the world through the veil of our desires, we make it small and narrow and fail to perceive its full truth. Of course, it is obvious that the world serves us and fulfills our needs, but our relation

to it does not end there. We are bound to it with a deeper and truer bond than that of necessity. Our soul is drawn to it; our love of life is really our wish to continue our relation with this great world. This relation is one of love. We are glad that we are in it; we are attached to it with numberless threads, which extend from this earth to the stars. Man foolishly tries to prove his superiority by imagining his radical separateness from what he calls his physical world, which, in his blind fanaticism, he sometimes goes to the extent of ignoring altogether, holding it as his direst enemy. Yet the more his knowledge progresses, the more it becomes difficult for man to establish this separateness, and all the imaginary boundaries he has set up around himself vanish, one after another. Every time we lose some of our badges of absolute distinction, by which we conferred upon our humanity the right to hold itself apart from its surroundings, it gives us a shock of humiliation. But we have to submit to this. If we set up our pride on the path of our self-realization to create divisions and disunion, then it must sooner or later come under the wheels of truth and be ground to dust. No, we are not burdened with some monstrous superiority, unmeaning in its singular abruptness. It would be utterly degrading for us to live in a world immeasurably less than ourselves in the quality of soul, just as it would be repulsive and degrading to be surrounded and served by a host of slaves, day and night, from birth to the moment of death. On the contrary, this world is our compeer; nay, we are one with it.

Through our progress in science, the wholeness of the world and our oneness with it are becoming clearer to our

mind. When this perception of the perfection of unity is not merely intellectual, when it opens out our whole being into a luminous consciousness of the all, then it becomes a radiant joy, an overspreading love. Our spirit finds its larger self in the whole world and is filled with an absolute certainty that it is immortal. It dies a hundred times in its enclosures of self, for separateness is doomed to die; it cannot be made eternal. But it can never die where it is one with the all, for there is its truth, its joy. When a man feels the rhythmic throb of the soul-life of the whole world in his own soul, then he is free. Then he enters into the secret courting that goes on between this beautiful world-bride, veiled with the veil of the many-colored finiteness, and the *paramatman*, the bridegroom, in his spotless white. Then he knows that he is the partaker of this gorgeous love festival, and he is the honored guest at the feast of immortality. Then he understands the meaning of the seer-poet who sings, "From love the world is born, by love it is sustained, toward love it moves, and into love it enters."

In love, all the contradictions of existence merge themselves and are lost. Only in love are unity and duality not at variance. Love must be one and two at the same time.

Only love is motion and rest in one. Our heart ever changes its place till it finds love, and then it has its rest. But this rest itself is an intense form of activity, where utter quiescence and unceasing energy meet at the same point in love.

In love, loss and gain are harmonized. In its balance sheet, credit and debit accounts are in the same column, and gifts are added to gains. In this wonderful festival of creation, this great

ceremony of self-sacrifice of God, the lover constantly gives himself up to gain himself in love. Indeed, love is what brings together and inseparably connects both the act of abandoning and that of receiving.

In love, at one of its poles you find the personal and at the other the impersonal. At one you have the positive assertion, *Here I am*; at the other the equally strong denial, *I am not*. Without this ego, what is love? And again, with only this ego, how can love be possible?

Bondage and liberation are not antagonistic in love, for love is most free and at the same time most bound. If God were absolutely free, there would be no creation. The infinite being has assumed unto himself the mystery of finitude. And in him who is love the finite and the infinite are made one.

Similarly, when we talk about the relative values of freedom and nonfreedom, it becomes a mere play of words. It is not that we desire freedom alone; we want thralldom as well. It is the high function of love to welcome all limitations and to transcend them. For nothing is more independent than love, and where else, again, shall we find so much of dependence? In love, thralldom is as glorious as freedom.

The Vaishnava religion has boldly declared that God has bound himself to man, and in that consists the greatest glory of human existence. In the spell of the wonderful rhythm of the finite, he fetters himself at every step and thus gives his love out in music in his most perfect lyrics of beauty. Beauty is his wooing of our heart; it can have no other purpose. It tells us everywhere that the display of power is not the ultimate mean-

ing of creation; wherever there is a bit of color, a note of song, a grace of form, there comes the call for our love. Hunger compels us to obey its behests, but hunger is not the last word for a man. There have been men who have deliberately defied its commands to show that the human soul is not to be led by the pressure of wants and threat of pain. In fact, to live the life of man we have to resist its demands every day, the least of us as well as the greatest. But on the other hand, there is a beauty in the world that never insults our freedom, never raises even its little finger to make us acknowledge its sovereignty. We can absolutely ignore it and suffer no penalty in consequence. It is a call to us, but not a command. It seeks for love in us, and love can never be had by compulsion. Compulsion is not indeed the final appeal to man, but joy is. And joy is everywhere: it is in the earth's green covering of grass; in the blue serenity of the sky; in the reckless exuberance of spring; in the severe abstinence of gray winter; in the living flesh that animates our bodily frame; in the perfect poise of the human figure, noble and upright; in living; in the exercise of all our powers; in the acquisition of knowledge; in fighting evils; in dying for gains we never can share. Joy is there everywhere; it is superfluous, unnecessary; nay, it very often contradicts the most peremptory behests of necessity. It exists to show that the bonds of law can only be explained by love; they are like body and soul. Joy is the realization of the truth of oneness, the oneness of our soul with the world and of the world-soul with the supreme lover.