

14 TRUTH

1. That society is the greatest, where the highest truths become practical. That is my opinion, and if society is not fit for the highest truths, make it so, and the sooner, the better. Stand up, men and women, in this spirit, dare to believe in the Truth, dare to practise the Truth!
2. Who knows which is the truer ideal? The apparent power and strength, as held in the West, or the fortitude in suffering, of the East? The West says: "We minimise evil by conquering it." India says: "We destroy evil by suffering, until evil is nothing to us, it becomes positive enjoyment." Well, both are great ideals. Who knows which will survive in the long run? Who knows which attitude will really most benefit humanity? Who knows which will disarm and conquer animality? Will it be suffering, or doing? In the meantime, let us not destroy each other's ideals. We are both intent upon the same work, which is the annihilation of evil. You take up your method, let us take up our method. Let us not destroy the ideal. I do not say to the West: "Take up our method". Certainly not. The goal is the same, but the methods can never be the same. And so, after hearing about the ideals of India, I hope that you will say in the same breath to India: "We know the goal, the ideal, is all right for us both. You follow your own ideal. You follow your method in your own way, and God speed you! My message in life is to ask the East and West not to quarrel over different ideals, but to show them that the goal is the same in both cases, however opposite it may appear. As we wend our way through this mazy vale of life, let us bid each other God- speed.
3. The work of ethics has been, and will be in the future, not the destruction of variation and the establishment of sameness in the external world, which is impossible, for it would bring death and annihilation-but to recognise the unity in spite of all these variations, to recognise the God within, in spite of everything that frightens us, to recognise that infinite strength as the property of everyone in spite of all apparent weakness, and to recognise the eternal, infinite, essential purity of the soul in spite of everything to the contrary that appears on the surface.
4. Coming to ethics, we find a tremendous departure. It is, perhaps, the only science which makes a bold departure from this fight. For ethics is unity; its basis is love. It will not look at this variation. The one aim of ethics is this unity, this sameness. The highest ethical codes that mankind has discovered up to the present time, know no variation, they have no time to stop to look into it; their one end is to make for that sameness. The Indian mind, being more analytical-1 mean the Vedantic mind-found this unity as the result of all its analysis, and wanted to base everything upon this one idea of unity.
5. Karma-Yoga, therefore, is a system of ethics and religion intended to attain freedom through unselfishness, and by good works. The Karma- Yogi need not believe in any doctrine whatever. He may not believe even in God, may not ask what his soul is, not think of any metaphysical speculation. He has got his own special aim of realising selflessness; and he has to work it out himself. Every moment of his life must be realisation because he has to solve by mere work, without the help of doctrine or theory,

the very same problem to which the Jnani applies his reason and inspiration and the Bhakta his love.

6. In modern times this millennial aspiration takes the form of equality-of liberty, equality and fraternity. This is also fanaticism. True equality has never been and never can be on earth. How can we all be equal here? This impossible kind of equality implies total death.

7. Yet this idea of realising the millennium is a great motive power. Just as inequality is necessary for creation itself, so the struggle to limit it is also necessary. If there were no struggle to become free and get back to God, there would be no creation either. It is the difference between these two forces that determines the nature of the motives of men. There will always be these motives to work some tending towards bondage and others towards freedom.

8. That some will be stronger physically than others, and will thus naturally be able to subdue or defeat the weak, is a self-evident fact, but that because of this strength they should gather unto themselves all the attainable happiness of this life, is not according to law, and the fight has been against it. That some people through natural aptitude, should be able to accumulate more wealth than others, is natural; but that on account of this power to acquire wealth they should tyrannise and ride roughshod over those who cannot acquire so much wealth, is not a part of the law, and the fight has been against that. The enjoyment of advantage over another is privilege, and throughout ages, the aim of morality has been its destruction. This is the work which tends towards sameness, towards unity, without destroying variety.

9. Change is always subjective. All through evolution you find that the conquest of nature comes by change in the subject. Apply this to religion and morality, and you will find that the conquest of evil comes by the change in the subjective alone. That is how the Advaita system gets its whole force, on the subjective side of man. To talk of evil and misery is nonsense, because they do not exist outside. If I am immune against all anger, I never feel angry. If I am proof against all hatred, I never feel hatred.

10. Good and evil are only a question of degree: more manifested or less manifested. Just take the example of our own lives. How many things we see in our childhood which we think to be good, but which really are evil, and how many things seem to be evil which are good! How the ideas change! How an idea goes up and up! What we thought very good at one time we do not think so good now. So good and evil are but superstitions, and do not exist. The difference is only in degree. It is all a manifestation of that Atman; He is being manifested in everything; only, when the manifestation is very thick we call it evil; and when it is very thin, we call it good.

11. Ethics always says, "Not I, but thou. Its motto is, "Not self, but non-self" The vain ideas of individualism to which man clings when he is trying to find that Infinite Power, or that Infinite Pleasure through the senses, have to be given up, say the laws of ethics. You have to put yourself last, and others before you. The senses say, "Myself first."

Ethics says, "I must hold myself last." Thus, all Codes of ethics are based upon this renunciation; destruction, not construction, of the individual on the material plane. That Infinite will never find expression upon the material plane, nor is it possible or thinkable.

12. The great error in all ethical systems, without exception, has been the failure of teaching the means by which man could refrain from doing evil. All the systems of ethics teach, "Do not steal!" Very good; but why does a man steal? Because all stealing, robbing, and other evil actions, as a rule, have become automatic. The systematic robber, thief, liar, unjust man and woman, are all these in spite of themselves! It is really a tremendous psychological problem. We should look upon man in the most charitable light. It is not so easy to be good. What are you but mere machines until you are free? Should you be proud because you are good? Certainly not. You are good because you cannot help it. Another is bad because he cannot help it. If you were in his position, who knows what you would have been? The woman in the street, or the thief in the fail, is the Christ that is being sacrificed that you may be a good man. Such is the law of balance. All the thieves and the murderers, all the unjust, the weakest, the wickedest, the devils, they all are my Christ! I owe a worship to the God Christ and to the demon Christ! That is my doctrine, I cannot help it. My salutation goes to the feet of the good, the saintly, and to the feet of the wicked and the devilish! They are all my teachers, all are my spiritual fathers, all are my Saviours. I may curse one and yet benefit by his failings; I may bless another and benefit by his good deeds. This is as true as that I stand here. I have to sneer at the woman walking in the street, because society wants it! She, my Saviour, she, whose street-walking is the cause of the chastity of other women! Think of that! Think, men and women, of this question in your mind. It is a truth-a bare, bold truth! As I see more of the world, see more of men and women, this conviction grows stronger. Whom shall I blame? Whom shall I praise? Both sides of the shield must be seen.