



# The ethical dilemma of Sacrifice

– A New Perspectives Series, The Luminous Path of Sacrifice



*'What kind of courage is mine that I always try to avoid the fight? What kind of energy is mine, that I am instinctively frightened of the new effort to be made and try, without being aware of it, to go to sleep passively, relying upon the results of previous efforts? In order to act, I have to be compelled and my mute contemplation is partly made of laziness.... All this is becoming more and more clearly apparent to me.*

*All that I have done till now seems to me to be nothing. The poverty and limitations of the instrument I put at Thy service, Lord, are evident to me, and I laugh a little sorrowfully at the idea that at times I could have a good opinion of my being, its efforts and their results. This threshold of the true life that I always think I have reached is like a hope bestowed upon me but never a tangible realisation; it is the toy promised to a child, the reward held out for a moment before the weak.*

*When shall I become a truly strong being, made entirely of courage, energy, valour and calm perseverance; when shall I have forgotten my own person completely enough to be nothing but an instrument moulded solely by the forces it has to manifest? When will my consciousness of unity be no longer tinged with any inertia; when will my feeling of divine love be no longer mixed with any weakness?*

*O Lord, all thought seems dead within me, now that I have asked these questions. I search for my conscious mind and I do not find it; I search for my individuality and I cannot discover it anywhere; I search for my personal will and it is not there. I search for Thee, and Thou art silent.... Silence, silence....*

*Now I seem to hear Thy voice: "Never hast thou known how to die integrally. Always something in thee has wanted to know, to witness, to understand. Surrender completely, learn how to disappear, break the last barrier that separates thee from me; accomplish unreservedly thy act of surrender." Alas, O Lord, for a long time have I wanted it, but I could not. Now wilt Thou give me the power to do so?*

*O Lord, my sweet eternal Master, break this resistance which fills me with anguish... deliver me from myself!*

# An overview of Sacrifice through various lens

Concept	Sri Aurobindo	Vedic Yagya	Gita	Jacob Boehme	Gurdjieff	David Bohm
Sacrifice	Tapas (Self-discipline)	Ahuti (Offerings)	Tyaga (renunciation)	Gellassenheit	Shocks	Implicate Order
	Tapas is the sacrifice for spiritual growth  Outer –Inner Spirit	Offerings align individual energy with the cosmos  Prithvi, Akasha	Leads to self-realization and liberation  Body-Mind-Self	Gellassenheit (Letting go) unites the individual with God Outer-Inner	Shocks help overcome mechanicality, facilitating energy flow. Mi-Fa, Sol- La	Moving from explicate (fragmented) to implicate (holistic) order.
Purpose of Sacrifice	Spiritual growth	Cosmic alignment	Self-realization	Unity with God	Energy flow	Holoflux
Levels of Sacrifice	Physical Vital Mental Spiritual	Bahiranga Antaranga Parama	Karma Buddhi Ahamkara Atma	Natural Spiritual Mystical	Mechanical Emotional Intellectual Essential	Cognitive Intuitive Holistic
Sacrificial element	Ego, Desire, Ignorance	Surrender of personal consciousness	Attachment	Separation	Mechanicality	Fragmentation
Result of Sacrifice	Supermind	Mahat	Turiya, Moksha	Unity with God	Highest Octave	Holoflux

# Yajña - Root meaning

"Ya" (य): Implies quiet, persistent action and mastery through steady application.

"J" (ज): Conveys swiftness, brilliance, and fervent dedication, leading to meanings of love, adoration, and habitual worship.

Yajña encompasses **Yoga (process of mastery)** and **Dharma (manner of mastery)**.

# Yajña or Sacrifice

Yajña (Vedas) symbolizes an inner exchange between gods and humans.

Human Role: Offer what they possess. Divine Response: Gods bestow gifts in return:

- Power
- Light
- Strength

Principal features

- Kindling of the divine flame
- The offering of the ghrta (clarity or brightness of the solar light in the human mentality) and the Soma (immortal delight of existence)
- Chanting of the sacred word (inspired speech expressing the thought – illumination of the truth which rises out of the soul, formed in the heart, shaped by the mind (SA, SV))

# Yajña or Sacrifice (Taittiriya Samhita)

- Adhvara (adhva – path, ra – movement) or journey. From the world of matter to the world of light (svar)

“They climb Indra like a ladder. As one mounts peak after peak, there becomes clear the much that has still to be done. Indra brings consciousness of That as the goal..” - *Rig Veda* (I. 10. 1, 2; IX. 96. 19, 20)

- This journey has seven steps (essence of kanda 4, yajur veda)
  - 4.1 Agni leading our aspiration
  - 4.2 stabilizing this energy in the body to be able to bear the force of Agni.
  - 4.3 how to develop our subtle body to hold the grace of God.
  - 4.4 and 4.5 about inducing new energies and faculties of awareness in the subtle body so that all confusion can be removed.
  - 4.6 involving maturing the body to hold divine energies and
  - 4.7 with the chamaka hymn is the showering of riches (various vital and mental powers) or birth of plenitude.

# Yajña or Sacrifice (SV)

“The Vedic sacrifice is, psychologically, a symbol of cosmic and individual activity become self-conscious, enlightened and aware of its goal. The whole process of the universe is in its very nature a sacrifice, voluntary or involuntary. Self-fulfilment by self-immolation, to grow by giving is the universal law. That which refuses to give itself, is still the food of the cosmic Powers. "The eater eating is eaten" is the formula, pregnant and terrible, in which the Upanishad sums up this aspect of the universe... “

# “To Be or Not to Be”

‘To Be’ means to live consciously a life connected with the cosmos and the other lives and to follow spiritual paths...’Not to Be’ means to live in the half-darkness of one’s own egoism and not to discover the road to the extraordinary...



Hidden within the act of sacrifice is a shadow, a subtle yet persistent ego that whispers, 'I give, but I also await.'



Can our offerings be  
free from the silent  
bargains we make?  
Can we give with the  
purity of the stars,  
simply for the beauty  
and joy of giving?

# The ethical dilemma

## Key Themes:

**The Value of the Sacrificed -Personal Sacrifice:** The tension between self-loss and purpose.

**Ends Justify the Means?:** When sacrifice is a path to achieve a greater goal.

**Religious or Ritual Sacrifice:** Cultural meaning assigned to sacrifice.

**Cultural and Moral Relativism:** What sacrifice means across diverse beliefs.

**Power Dynamics:** Who benefits? Who sacrifices?

## **Sacrifice and Identity**

The context in which sacrifice is made—whether spiritual, personal, or societal—determines the nature of the dilemma, but the core tension is always between what is gained and what is lost.



# Nature of ethical dilemma

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(implies)Choice -  
Identification

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(creates)Conflict/Confusion

(may create an 'other' projecting the  
shadow)

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(Function of)Lower Mind

# Choices and Conflict

Conflicts often emerge when desires of the ego (personal gain, security, or attachment) clash with higher principles of duty, community welfare, or spiritual growth.

**"One thing is the good and quite another thing is the pleasant, and both seize upon a man with different meanings. Of these who so takes the good, it is well with him; he falls from the aim of life who chooses the pleasant. The good and the pleasant come to a man and the thoughtful mind turns all around them and distinguishes. The wise chooses out the good from the pleasant, but the dull soul chooses the pleasant rather than the getting of his good and its having."**

M.P.Pandit

# Choices and Conflict

At each moment, the Mother points out, the choice is to be made. And the true standard for choosing is always one: what supports and furthers the God ward movement of the being is good; what detracts from it, what weakens that aspiration and drive is bad, however pleasant it may appear to be at the moment. The choice comes as a test of our sincerity, of the reality and intensity of the aspiration and the will behind the effort.

M.P.Pandit

# Delight of Existence: The Problem

‘In other words, **ethics is a stage in evolution. That which is common to all stages is the urge of Sachchidananda towards self-expression.** This urge is at first **non-ethical**, then **infra-ethical** in the animal, then in the intelligent animal even **anti-ethical** for it permits us to approve hurt done to others which we disapprove when done to ourselves. In this respect man even now is only **half-ethical**. And just as all below us is infra-ethical, so there may be that above us whither we shall eventually arrive, which is **supra-ethical**, has no need of ethics..’ P.104

# Delight of Existence: The Solution

‘Delight is existence, Delight is the secret of creation, Delight is the root of birth, Delight is the cause of remaining in existence, Delight is the end of birth and that into which creation ceases. “From Ananda” says the Upanishad “all existences are born, by Ananda they remain in being and increase, to Ananda they depart.” ..’ P.108-109



“But the true essence of sacrifice is not self-immolation, it is self-giving; its object not self-effacement, but self-fulfilment; its method not self-mortification, but a greater life, not self-mutilation, but a transformation of our natural human parts into divine members, not self-torture, but a passage from a lesser satisfaction to a greater Ananda. **There is only one thing painful in the beginning to a raw or turbid part of the surface nature; it is the indispensable discipline demanded, the denial necessary for the merging of the incomplete ego.**”

The Sacrifice, The Triune path, and the Lord of the Sacrifice

## The dilemma – the journey - The Triune Path

Dimension	Lower Vital, Physical, and Mental Levels	Higher Mental and Psychic Levels	Vijnana (Gnosis) and Beyond
<b>Thought</b>	<b>Thoughtless Impulse</b> - Actions are mindlessly impulsive, driven by ego or desire (e.g., Duryodhana)	<b>Thought-Full Reflection</b> - Actions are carefully considered, balancing duty and ethics (e.g., Arjuna).	<b>Thoughtless Wisdom</b> - Actions arise from spontaneous, intuitive knowledge beyond thought (e.g., Krishna).
<b>Choice</b>	<b>Instinctual Choice</b> - Actions are driven by impulses and desires.	<b>Conscious Choice</b> - Guided by deliberate values and ethics.	<b>Choiceless Awareness</b> - Actions flow from divine intuition, beyond personal choice.
<b>Ethics</b>	<b>Infra-Ethical</b> - Behavior is governed by self-interest and basic needs.	<b>Ethical</b> - Decisions are guided by societal norms and morals, aiming for goodness.	<b>Supraethical</b> - Actions stem from an alignment with cosmic principles, transcending conventional morality. <b>(No need for ethics)</b>
<b>Motivation for Action</b>	<b>Desire-Driven</b> - Actions are motivated by personal desires and aversions.	<b>Purpose-Driven</b> - Actions are aligned with higher ideals or devotion, with a growing sense of selflessness.	<b>Cosmic Dharma</b> - Dharma becomes cosmic, expressing the Divine order without individual ego or compulsion.
<b>Purpose of Sacrifice (Yajña)</b>	<b>Selfish Gain</b> - Sacrifices made for personal benefit or immediate reward.	<b>Selfless Offering</b> - Actions are dedicated to a higher purpose, with a sense of self-sacrifice.	<b>Divine Union</b> - Sacrifice as a natural expression of unity with the Divine, offering all actions to the Supreme.

a complex dance of giving and taking ...



...a look at other wisdom traditions

# Gurdjieff (1866–1949)

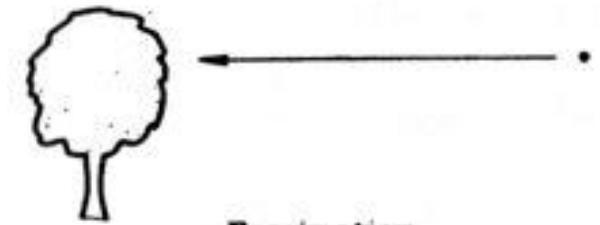
## Key Teachings:

Man as machine....No real 'I'

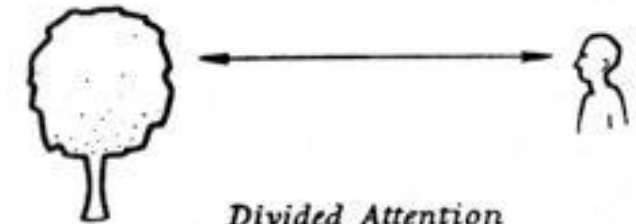
Self-Remembering

Conscious effort & Intentional Suffering

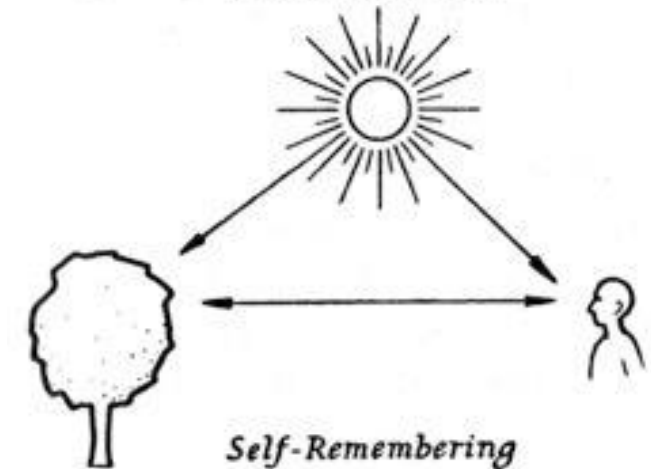
Letting Go of False Identity: Sacrifice in Gurdjieff's view often meant surrendering one's illusions and superficial identities.



*Fascination*



*Divided Attention*



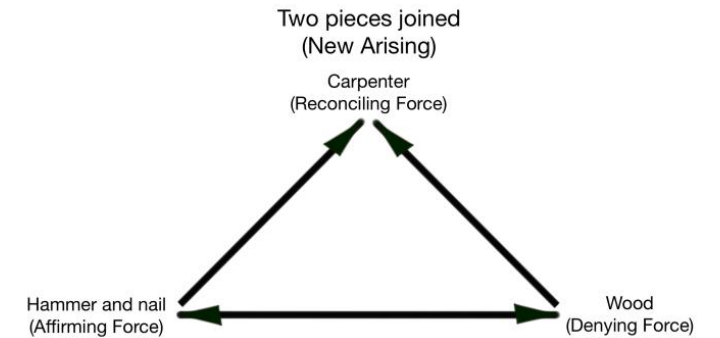
*Self-Remembering*

# Law of Three

A metaphysical principle that describes how three forces work together to **create change and evolution**

1. **Affirming: Active force**
2. **Denying: Passive force**
3. **Reconciling: Neutralizing force**

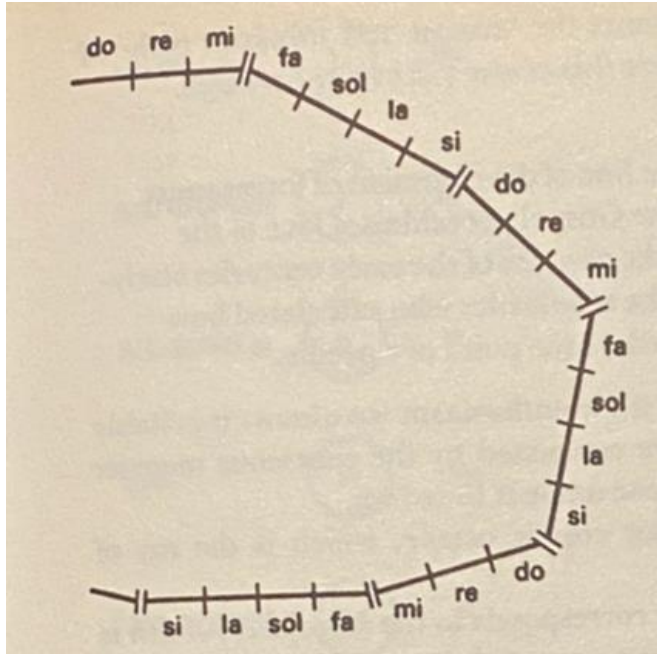
- The interweaving of the three produces a fourth in a new dimension.
- The three are not fixed points
- It is always at the neutralizing point that a new triad emerges
- Learning how to spot and mediate third force – solution to impasses

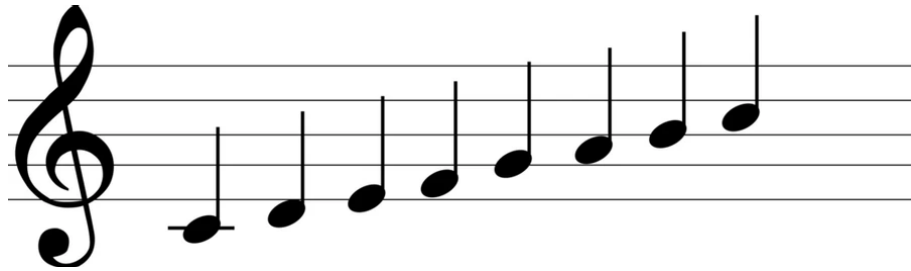


## The law of Seven

All material things fall within the law of 7 (the octave)

- Why nothing in nature occurs in a straight line (ups and downs)
- the universe is a singular wholeness that divides itself into seven degrees of density. These divisions are in turn divided into seven degrees of density, and so on.





Source: P.D.Ouspensy

**Do** Life at street-level.

**Re** Good Intention, the Right Impulse, the arising of the right desire.

**Mi** Decision: This is the stage where rationally the person makes up their mind and can go further. There is no doubt about the Way, intention and conviction are established.

*Interval: filled by the grace of the teacher, or directly by the Absolute.*

**Fa** **Effort:** Certain particles of fine matters now form in the organism which cause the striving for sattva.

**Sol** **The Pull of the Way:** where sattva predominates. Influences from the Way are pulling away from the outside world of sensory impressions and pleasures, so that these begin to lose some of their power.

**La** **Insight,** which denotes that the person starts seeing themselves and other things as they really are. They get right values for everything, realising things as they are, how they are constituted and their actual properties.

**Si** **Abundance,** which is the stage where the outward pull is nearly gone, and the person is filled with abundance of sattva, divine love and happiness.

*Interval: filled directly by the Absolute.*

**Do** Turiya is the stage of the fully Realised man (or woman), when he knows himSelf; he knows all that can be known; he knows how to do, and whatever he does is just the right thing – right actions, right feeling, right thought – everything all combined.

‘The important thing is **to be**. If there is no real I, then the ego takes over. Energy cannot be without relationship. If it does not serve I intentionally, then it automatically serves the ego. Watch for the point in working when it is necessary to let go. Something has to be abandoned. **Ego makes the effort, but one comes to a point when the ego has to be passive.**

~ Madame de Salzmänn



# Jacob Boehme (1575-1624)

## Key Teachings:

- spiritual rebirth - "old self" to die in order for the "new self" to be born.
- the human will to merge with greater divine will
- 'creation and the fall' - idea of balance within the universe. Sacrifice (whether of pride, selfishness, or lower desires)—is a means of restoring balance both within the soul and in the greater divine order.
- 'fire' as a metaphor for divine transformation
- 'role of suffering' not about punishment but transformation –transcending ego
- sacrifice leads to gnosis (divine knowledge). inner illumination - gain divine insight and wisdom.
- reconciliation of opposites, such as good and evil, light and darkness..overcoming duality to return to divine unity.

# Seven Properties (Stages) of Creation

These stages describe the process by which "nothingness" becomes "somethingness," through a sequential unfolding of divine properties:

- 1. Desiring (attraction):** The initial compression of divine will, creating a yearning force, likened to the pulling of water down a drain.
- 2. Agitation (Stinging/breaking):** An intensified yearning that becomes aggravated due to unfulfilled desire.
- 3. Anguish:** The friction and turmoil arising from unfulfilled desire, marking the beginning of self-awareness.
- 4. Fire:** A spark is created from the turmoil, producing light and heat, symbolizing the birth of divine reflection.
- 5. Light/Love:** The light enables a mirroring process, where unity can be seen in diversity, embodying God's love as foundational in all of creation.
- 6. Sound:** Creation takes on an energetic vibration or "logos" as a creative stirring.
- 7. Substance:** Represents the divine hologram, where all properties blend to form a cohesive unity in diversity (Sophia/Wisdom).

# David Bohm (1917-1992)

## Key Teachings:

**'To Be' is to be related.**

envisioned dialogue as a process where participants suspend their assumptions

"Real dialogue is where two or more people become willing to suspend their certainty in each other's presence."

Suspending assumptions (Self & others) → Common consciousness → Shared meaning

• Awareness • Participation • Unfolding • Coherence  
(koinonia' – to participate – the idea of partaking of the whole and taking part in it...)



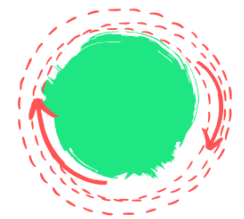
Civility



Debate



Conversation



Collective creativity

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Result of Sacrifice	Supermind	Mahat	Turiya, Moksha	Unity with God	Highest Octave	Holoflux

“Our consciousness is cosmic and immense,  
But only when we break through Matter's wall  
In that spiritual vastness can we stand  
Where we can live the masters of our world,  
And mind is only a means and body a tool.  
For above the birth of body and of thought  
Our spirit's truth lives in the naked self  
And from that height, unbound, surveys the world.”

[Savitri, Book 7, Canto 6 Nirvana and the Discovery of the All-Negating Absolute](#)

“Ego was the helper; Ego is the bar”

# The rule of the Divine Life

‘Enjoyment of the universe and all it contains is the object of world-existence, but renunciation of all in desire is the condition of the free enjoyment of all.

The renunciation demanded is not a moral constraint of self-denial or a physical rejection, but an entire liberation of the spirit from any craving after the forms of things...



This attitude is founded on the perception of unity....’

Isha Upanishad, p 18-19

**“To Be or Not to Be”**

**‘To thine own Self be True’**





“Let me fall if I must fall.  
The one I am becoming  
will catch me.”

— Baal Shem Tov



*Thank You*

