



THE SUFI MESSAGE
OF
HAZRAT INAYAT KHAN

VOLUME VI

THE ALCHEMY OF HAPPINESS

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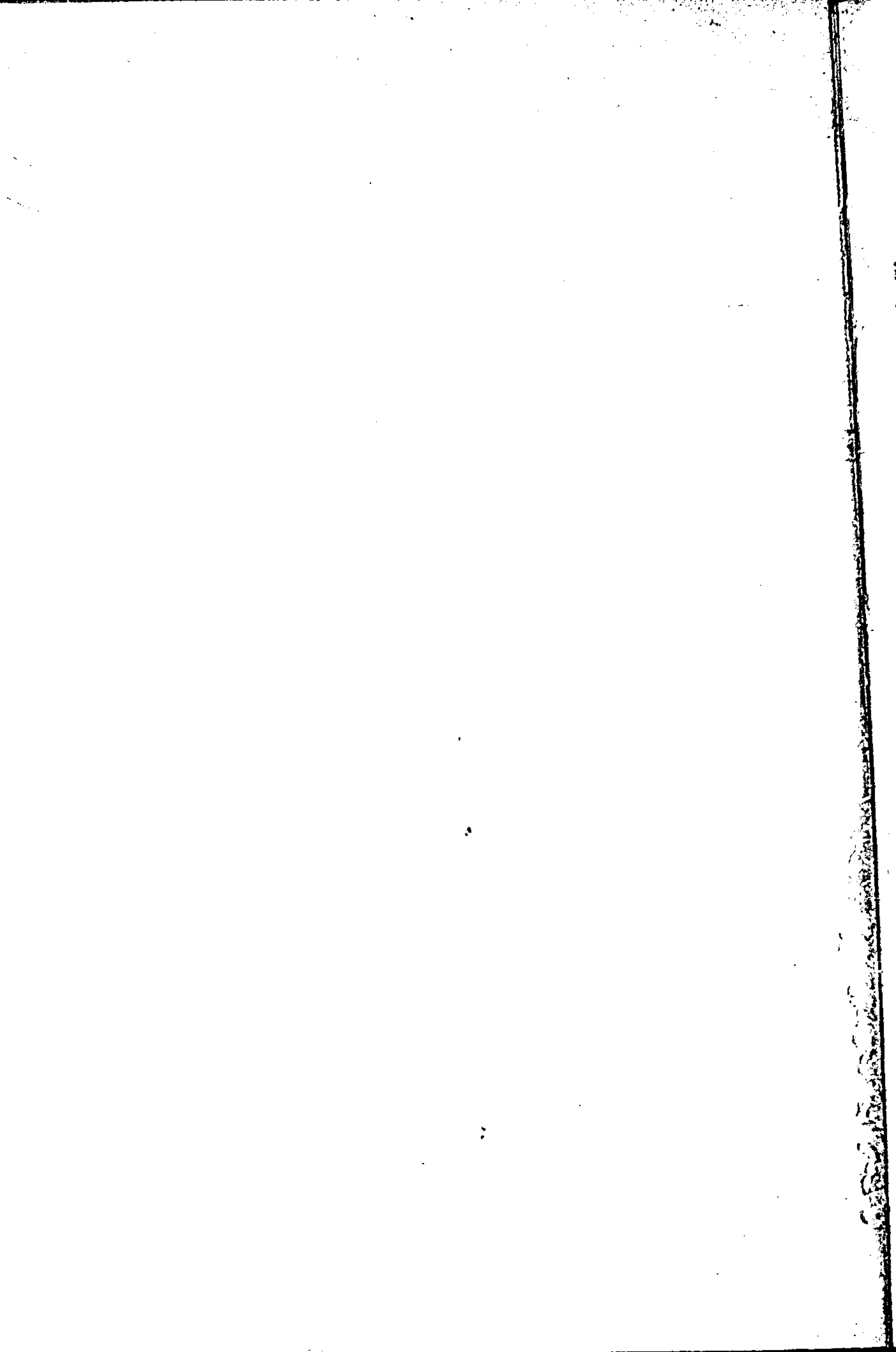
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PREFACE

The Alchemy of Happiness was the title of one of the lectures delivered by Hazrat Inayat Khan in the early 'twenties. It appeared first in the former quarterly *Sufism* in December 1922 and was later published separately. In the present volume it forms the first chapter.

Inayat Khan's teaching covered practically every aspect of human existence. On the one side there are its metaphysical aspects: the relationship between God and man, the different planes and phases of existence, the place of man in creation, and many others; on the other hand he delves deeply into man's earthly life itself, analysing it, probing into its problems and possibilities, and showing the way towards a more balanced, fruitful, and happy life.

However important and interesting may be the study and practice of the metaphysical side of Inayat Khan's message, we are constantly reminded by him that such study or practice is in vain if our everyday life is not in harmony with these metaphysics. Real understanding does not come by grasping an aspect of truth intellectually; it comes by living it.

This is the continually recurrent theme of the lectures forming this book. As these were not delivered with the composition of a book in mind, but at different times and generally for different audiences, the reader will find that the subject-matter sometimes overlaps; but a closer study will always reveal that a new light has been thrown on the problems with which Inayat Khan dealt.

THE ALCHEMY OF HAPPINESS

THE SOUL in Sanskrit, in the terms of the Vedanta, is called *Atman*, which means happiness or bliss itself. It is not that happiness belongs to the soul; it is that the soul itself is happiness. Today we often confuse happiness with pleasure; but pleasure is only an illusion, a shadow of happiness; and in this delusion man may pass his whole life, seeking after pleasure and never finding satisfaction. There is a Hindu saying that man looks for pleasure and finds pain. Every pleasure seems happiness in outward appearance; it promises happiness, for it is the shadow of happiness, but just as the shadow of a person is not the person though representing his form, so pleasure represents happiness but is not happiness in reality.

According to this idea one rarely finds souls in this world who know what happiness is; they are constantly disappointed in one thing after another. That is the nature of life in the world; it is so deluding that if man were disappointed a thousand times he would still take the same path, for he knows no other. The more we study life, the more we realize how rarely there is a soul who can honestly say, 'I am happy'. Almost every soul, whatever his position in life, will say he is unhappy in some way or another; and if you ask him why, he will probably say that it is because he cannot attain to the position, power, property, possessions, or rank for which he has worked for years. Perhaps he is craving for money and does not realize that possessions give no satisfaction; perhaps he says he has enemies, or that those whom he loves do not love him; there are a thousand excuses for unhappiness that the reasoning mind will make.

But is even one of these excuses ever entirely correct? Do you think that if these people gained their desires they would be happy? If they possessed all, would that suffice? No, they would still find some excuse for unhappiness; all these excuses are only like covers over a man's eyes, for deep within is the yearning for the true happiness which none of these things can give. He

who is really happy is happy everywhere, in a palace or in a cottage, in riches or in poverty, for he has discovered the fountain of happiness which is situated in his own heart; as long as a person has not found that fountain, nothing will give him real happiness.

The man who does not know the secret of happiness often develops avarice. He wants thousands, and when he gets them they do not satisfy him and he wants millions, and still he is not satisfied; he wants more and more. If you give him your sympathy and service he is still unhappy; even all you possess is not enough, even your love does not help him, for he is seeking in a wrong direction, and life itself becomes a tragedy.

Happiness cannot be bought or sold, nor can you give it to a person who has not got it. Happiness is your own being, your own self, that self that is the most precious thing in life. All religions, all philosophical systems, have in different forms taught man how to find it by the religious path or the mystical way; and all the wise ones have in some form or another given a method by which the individual can find that happiness for which the soul is seeking.

Sages and mystics have called this process alchemy. The stories of the Arabian Nights which symbolize mystical ideas are full of the belief that there is a philosopher's stone which will turn metals into gold by a chemical process. No doubt this symbolic idea has deluded men both in the East and West; many have thought that a process exists by which gold can be produced. But this is not the idea of the wise; the pursuit of gold is for those who as yet are only children. For those who have the consciousness of reality gold stands for light or spiritual inspiration. Gold represents the colour of light, and therefore an unconscious pursuit after light has made man seek for gold. But there is a great difference between real gold and false. It is the longing for true gold that makes man collect the imitation gold, ignorant that the real gold is within. He satisfies the craving of his soul in this way, as a child satisfies itself by playing with dolls.

This realization is not a matter of age. One man may have reached an advanced age and still be playing with dolls, his soul may be involved in the search for this imitation gold; while

another may have begun in youth to see life in its real aspect. If one studied the transitory nature of life in the world and how changeable it is, and the constant craving of everyone for happiness, one would certainly endeavour at all costs to find something one could depend upon. Man placed in the midst of this ever-changing world yet appreciates and seeks for constancy somewhere. He does not know that he must develop the nature of constancy in himself; it is the nature of the soul to value that which is dependable. But is there anything in the world on which one can depend, which is above change and destruction? All that is born, all that is made, must one day face destruction; all that has a beginning has also an end; but if there is anything one can depend upon it is hidden in the heart of man, it is the divine spark, the true philosopher's stone, the real gold, which is the innermost being of man.

A person may follow a religion and yet not come to the realization of truth; but of what use is his religion to him if he is not happy? Religion does not mean depression and sadness. The spirit of religion should give happiness. God is happy. He is the perfection of love, harmony, and beauty. A religious person should be happier than one who is not religious. If a person who professes religion is always melancholy, his religion is disgraced; the form has been kept, but the spirit lost. If the study of religion and mysticism does not lead to real joy and happiness, it may just as well not exist, for then it does not help to fulfil the purpose of life. The world today is sad and suffering as the result of terrible wars; the religion which answers the demand of life today is one which invigorates and gives life to souls, which illuminates the heart of man with the divine light which is already there; not necessarily by any outer form, though for some a form may be helpful, but by showing that happiness which is the desire of every soul.

As for the question of how this method of alchemy is practised, the whole process was explained by the alchemists in a symbolical way. They said gold is made out of mercury; the nature of mercury is to be ever-moving, but by a certain process the mercury is first stilled, and once stilled it becomes silver; then the silver has to be melted, and the juice of a herb is poured on to

the molten silver, which is thereby turned into gold. This of course gives only an outline, but one can find detailed explanations of the whole process. Many childlike souls have tried to make gold by stilling mercury and melting silver, and they have tried to find the herb; but they were deluded, and they had better have worked and earned money.

The real interpretation of this process is that mercury represents the nature of the ever-restless mind. Especially when he tries to concentrate does a person realize that the mind is ever-restless. The mind is like a restive horse: when it is ridden it is more restive than when it is in the stable. Such is the nature of mind: it becomes more restless when one desires to control it; it is like mercury, constantly moving.

When by a method of concentration one has mastered the mind, one has taken the first step in the accomplishment of a sacred task. Prayer is concentration, reading is concentration, sitting and relaxing and thinking on one subject are all concentration. All artists, thinkers, and inventors have practised concentration in some form; they have given their minds to one thing, and by focusing on one object have developed the faculty of concentration; but for stilling the mind a special method is necessary which is taught by the mystic, just as a singer is taught by the teacher of voice-production.

The secret of this is to be learnt in the science of breath. Breath is the essence of life, the centre of life, and the mind may be controlled by a knowledge of the proper method of breathing. For this, instruction from a teacher is a necessity; for since the mystical cult of the East has become known in the West books have been published, and teaching which had been kept as sacred as religion has been discussed in words; but these can never truly explain the mystery of that which is the centre of man's very being. People read these books and begin to play with breath, and often instead of benefiting they injure both mind and body; there are also those who make a business of teaching breathing exercises for money, thus degrading a sacred thing. The science of breath is the greatest mystery there is, and for thousands of years it has been kept as a sacred trust in the schools of the mystics.

When the mind is under perfect control and no longer restless,

one can hold a thought at will as long as one wishes. This is the beginning of phenomena. Some abuse these privileges and by dissipating the power thus obtained they destroy the silver before turning it into gold. The silver must be heated before it can melt, and with what? With that warmth which is the divine essence in the heart of man, which comes forth as love, tolerance, sympathy, service, humility, unselfishness, in a stream which rises and falls in a thousand drops, each drop of which could be called a virtue, all coming from that one stream hidden in the heart of man: the love element; and when it glows in the heart, then the actions, the movements, the tone of the voice, the expression, all show that the heart is warm. The moment this happens a man really lives; he has unsealed the spring of happiness which overcomes all that is jarring and inharmonious, and the spring has established itself as a divine stream.

After the heart is warmed by the divine element, which is love, the next stage is the herb, which is the love of God. But the love of God alone is not sufficient; knowledge of God is also necessary. It is the absence of the knowledge of God which makes a man leave his religion, for there is a limit to man's patience. Knowledge of God strengthens man's belief in God, throws light on the individual and on life. Things become clear; every leaf on a tree becomes as a page of a holy book to one whose eyes are open to the knowledge of God. When the juice of the herb of divine love is poured on the heart, warmed by the love of his fellow-men, then that heart becomes the heart of gold, the heart that expresses what God would express. Man has not seen God, but man has then seen God in man, and when this happens, then verily everything that comes from such a man comes from God Himself.

THE AIM OF LIFE

THE MAIN object of life can only be one object, though there may be as many external objects as there are things and beings. There is one object of life for the reason that there is only one life, and this in spite of the fact that it appears outwardly to be many lives. It is in this thought that we can unite and it is from this thought that true wisdom is learned. No doubt that main object of life cannot be understood at once, and therefore the best thing for every person is first to pursue his object in life; for in the accomplishment of his personal object he will arrive some day at the accomplishment of that inner object. When man does not understand this he goes on thinking there is something else to accomplish, and he thinks of all that is before him that is not yet accomplished; that is why he remains a failure.

The person who is not definite about his object has not yet begun his journey on the path of life. One should therefore first determine one's object for oneself, however small that object is; once it is determined one has begun life. We find with many people that somehow they never happen to find their life's vocation. And what happens then is that in the end they consider their life a failure. All through their life they go from one thing to another, yet as they do not know their life's object they can accomplish so little. When people ask why they do not succeed, the answer is: because they have not yet found their object. As soon as a person has found his life's object he begins to feel at home in this world, where before he had felt himself in a strange world. No sooner has a person found his way than he will prove to be fortunate, because all the things he wants to accomplish will come by themselves. Even if the whole world were against him, he will get such a power that he can hold on to his object against anything. He will get such a patience that when he is on the way to his object no misfortune will discourage him. There is no doubt that as long as he has not found it he will go from one

thing to another, and again to another; and he will think that life is against him. Then he will begin to find fault with individuals, conditions, plans, the climate, with everything. Thus what is called fortunate or successful is really having the right object. When a person is wearing clothes which were not made for him, he says they are too wide or too short, but when they are his clothes he feels comfortable in them. Everyone should therefore be given freedom to choose his object in life; and if he finds his object one knows that he is on the right path.

Also when a person is on the path there are certain things to be considered. When a person has a knot to unravel, and he is given a knife to cut it, he has lost a great opportunity in his life. It is a small thing, but by not accomplishing it he has gone backward. This is a minor example, but in everything one does, if one has not that patience and confidence to go forward, then one loses a great deal. However small the job a person has undertaken, if he completes it he has accomplished something great. It is not the work that a person has accomplished, it is the very fact of accomplishing which gives him power.

As to what is the main object of every soul, that object may be called spiritual attainment. A person may go through his whole life without it, but there will come a time in his life when although he may not admit it he will begin to look for it. For spiritual attainment is not only acquired knowledge, it is the soul's appetite; and there will come a day in life when a person will feel the soul's appetite more than any other appetite. No doubt every soul has an unconscious yearning to satisfy this soul's appetite, but at the same time one's absorption in everyday life keeps one so occupied that one has no time to pay attention to it.

The definition of spiritual attainment can be found in the study of human nature. For the nature of man is one and the same, be he spiritual or material. There are five things that man yearns for: life, power, knowledge, happiness, and peace, and the continual appetite which is felt in the deepest self yearns for one or other of these five things.

In order to fulfil the desire to live man eats and drinks and protects himself from all dangers of life; and yet his appetite

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will never be fully satisfied, because though he may escape all dangers, yet the last danger, which man calls death, he cannot escape.

In order to obtain power, which is the next thing, a man does everything to gain physical strength, influence, or rank; he seeks every kind of power. And he always runs up against disappointments, because he will find that wherever there is a power of ten degrees, there will always be another power of twenty degrees to run up against. Just think of the great nations whose military power was once so immense that one could never have believed that they would suddenly collapse. One would have thought that it would take them thousands of years to fall, so great was their power. We need not look for it in history, we have just seen this happen in the last few years; we have only to look at the map.

Then there is the desire for knowledge. This desire promotes a tendency to study. A man might study and study all through his life, but even if he read all the books in all the great libraries there would still remain the question, 'why?' That 'why' will not be answered by the books he studies, by exploring the facts which belong to outer life. In the first place nature is so profound that man's limited life is not long enough to probe its depths. Comparatively or relatively one may say that one person is more learned than another, but no one reaches true satisfaction by the outer study of life.

The fourth kind of appetite is happiness. Man tries to satisfy it by pleasures, not knowing that the pleasures of this world cannot make up for that happiness which his soul really seeks after. Man's attempts are in vain; he will find in the end that every effort he made for pleasure brought greater loss than gain. Besides that which is not enduring, which is not real in its nature, is never satisfactory.

Lastly there is the appetite for peace. In order to find peace one leaves one's environment which troubles one, one wants to get away from people, one wants to sit quietly and rest. But he who is not ready for that peace would not find it even if he went to the caves of the Himalayas, away from the whole world.

When considering these five appetites, which are the deepest

man has, one finds that all the efforts man makes to satisfy them seem to be in vain. They can only be satisfied by spiritual attainment; that is the only answer to them. Thus the desire to live can only be satisfied when the soul realizes its eternal life. For mortality exists in conception rather than in reality. From a spiritual point of view mortality is the lack of the soul's understanding of its own self. It is like a person who had lived all his life in the conception that his coat was himself, and when that coat was torn from him he believed that he would die. One experiences the same in life. The soul gets from this physical body a kind of illusion and identifies itself with this mortal being; wise people of all times have practised meditations to give the soul a chance to realize its independence of the physical body. Once the soul has begun to feel itself, its own life, independently of its outer garb, it begins to have confidence in life and is no longer afraid of what is called death. As soon as this phenomenon takes place a person no longer calls death 'death'; he calls death a change.

If one makes a study of the desire to live one finds that one cannot have a desire if it is not in one's nature. If there is a desire there is an answer for it. Desire to live continually is a desire of the spiritual person as well as of the material person. A spiritual person will perhaps hope for the next life, and the pessimism of a material person works against his own desire; but the desire is there all the same. How does one attain to this continuity of life? It does not only depend upon a belief, although belief may help some to realize that experience, and those who have no belief will not be able to find the way. Nevertheless, the continuity of life is possible logically since every man desires to live. For it is natural that no one will desire what is not possible, and where there is a natural desire the possibility of its fulfilment is already there. If there were no possibility there would be no desire.

Naturally this does not apply to an unbalanced person; such a person can desire anything. But a person with reason will only desire what is possible to accomplish.

The secret of this question can be found by analysing oneself. By studying the self one will find that the body is only a cover

over one's real self. But by a still more profound study one will find that even one's mind is a cover over one's real self. As soon as one finds this out, one will become independent of the body as a means to live. Also, one will become independent of the mind to live. 'But', one might ask, 'if there is no body, then what is life?' One asks this because man has limited himself by experiencing life through the body, and has not tried to experience life without its help. When man is not conscious of his body, then he is conscious of his mind. When the eyes are open he is looking at things before him. When his eyes are closed then he is pondering upon what his mind has gained. In both cases he is dependent either upon his body or upon his mind to live, and this dependence makes the soul limited. It not only limits it, but it makes the soul mortal. In reality the soul is not mortal, but if the soul believes in mortality it is just like being mortal.

The teaching of Jesus Christ, from beginning to end, is to rise above mortality, to find out about life, to learn the art, the science, of living. All the scriptures, every philosopher and mystic, teach this. And why do they teach this? Because if there is one thing undesirable it is mortality, death. No sane person would ask for death. Desire for death is not a natural desire, and even when the mind is craving for death the soul is longing for life.

The soul is living; it is life itself. Death is something foreign to it; it does not know death. That is why even the smallest insect protects itself in every way; it does not wish to die.

What we call death is our impression of a change. Life is subject to change, and death is only a change of life. But making people believe in immortality and making them rise above the fear of death should be done gradually and not suddenly, for otherwise this knowledge would frighten a person more than death itself. It is for that reason that the knowledge of this truth was made a mystical, secret science. Otherwise there would have been no reason for withholding something as precious as that knowledge from one's fellow-men. When a person is awakened suddenly he suffers a great shock; physically and mentally, and it takes him a long time to recover. It is the same with all spiritual truths; this is why there are initiations and a vow of secrecy.

One cannot place a dinner before a new-born infant; he must first be fed with milk.

Then there is the desire for power. Man desires power, because it is natural for him to gain. Somewhere a power is hidden in him, he cannot help it; but man is powerless in spite of the power which is hidden in him. The powerlessness, the experience of being powerless, is his ignorance of the power within him. In order to open the doors, in order to see the power he has in store, it is necessary to seek the kingdom of God, as it is said in the Bible, for then he will find his divine heritage which is all power.

True power is not in trying to gain power; true power is in becoming power. But how to become power? It requires an attempt to make a definite change in oneself, and that change is a kind of struggle with one's false self. When the false self is crucified, then the true self is resurrected. Before the world this crucifixion appears to be lack of power, but in truth all power is attained by this resurrection.

As to knowledge, it has two aspects. One knowledge is what one gathers by learning the names and forms of this life. That cannot satisfy this appetite; it is only a stepping-stone to it. This outer learning only helps one to come to the inner learning, but the inner learning is quite different from the outer learning. How is it learned? It is learned by studying the self. One finds that all the knowledge one strives after and all that exists to study, is all in oneself. Therefore one finds a kind of universe in oneself, and by the study of the self one comes to that spiritual knowledge for which the soul hungers.

In order to get that knowledge one must try to meditate and to dive into the sea of knowledge which cannot be taught by study. In this way one distinguishes two aspects of knowledge: one aspect of knowledge is intellect, the other aspect is wisdom. Therefore a wise man is not necessarily a clever man, nor a clever man a wise man.

Then there is the question of happiness. A person thinks that when his friends are kind to him, when people respond to him, or when he gets money, then he will be happy. But that is not the way to become happy: sometimes it proves the opposite. For

lack of happiness makes him blame others, believing they are standing in the way of his becoming happy; in reality that is not so. True happiness is not gained, it is discovered. Man's way itself is happiness, that is why he longs for happiness. What keeps happiness out of one's life is the closing of the doors of the heart, and when the heart is not living, then there is no happiness there. Sometimes the heart is not fully alive but only partly; at the same time it expects life from the other heart. But the real life of the heart is to live independently in its own happiness; and that is gained by spiritual attainment, by digging deep into one's own heart.

The one who has found his peace within himself may be in a cave of the mountain or among the crowd, yet in every place he will experience peace. What generally happens is that in order to get peace we blame the other person who jars upon our nerves. But in reality the true peace can come only by being so firm against all influences around us that nothing can disturb us.

Now the question is how these five things can be gained. As I have said, the first thing needed is to accomplish the object which is standing before one immediately; however small it is, it does not matter. It is by accomplishing it that one gains power. As one goes further in this way through one's life, always seeking for the real, one will at the end come to reality. Truth is attained by the love of truth. When a person runs away from truth, truth runs away from him. If he does not run away, then truth is nearer to him than that which is without truth. There is nothing more precious in life than truth itself; and in loving truth and in attaining to the truth one attains to that religion which is the religion of all Churches and of all people. It does not matter then to what Church a man belongs, what religion he professes, to what race or nation he belongs; when once he realizes the truth he is all, because he is with all. The obstacle is the disagreement and the misunderstanding before he has attained to the truth. When once he has attained to the truth, there is no more misunderstanding. It is among those who have learned only the outer knowledge that disputes arise, but those who have attained to the truth, whether they come from the North or the South, from whatever

country, it does not matter; for when they have understood the truth they are in at-one-ment.

It is this thought that we should keep before us in order to unite the divided sections of humanity, for the real happiness of humanity is in that unity which can be gained by rising above the barriers which divide men.

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE (1)

EVERY living being has a purpose in life and it is the knowing of that purpose which enables every soul to fulfil it. As it is said in the Gayan, 'Blessed is he who knoweth his life's purpose.'

Be not surprised if you find many groping in darkness all through life, doing one thing or another, going from one thing to the other, always dissatisfied, always discontented; and everything they undertake remains without result. The reason is the absence of that knowledge, the knowledge of the purpose of life.

Individuals apart, every object has its purpose. The mission of science is to discover the purpose in objects, and it is for this that science has come into being. Be it medical science or philosophy, all the various aspects of science are the result of the desire to discover the purpose of things. But the aim of mysticism is to find the purpose in the lives of human beings—the purpose in one's own life and the purpose in the lives of others. So long as a man has not found this purpose, though he may have success or failure, though he may seem to be happy or unhappy, in reality he does not live; for life begins from the moment a person finds the purpose of his life.

One finds people of great wealth, people who have position and every comfort and convenience; and yet who are missing something, missing the main thing which alone can make them happy: knowledge of the purpose of their life. This is the very thing they miss. And yet at the same time mankind is ignorant of this. A man will be interested in a thousand things, he will be interested first in one thing and then pass on to another, and so on, but he seems never to come to that point where he finds the purpose of his life. Why? Because he does not look for it.

Coming to children's education, to the education of youth, very often the parents do not think about this problem. Whatever seems to them beneficial for the child to do, that it must do. They do not pay attention to the fact that it is in one's childhood that one has to find the purpose of one's life. How many lives

have been ruined for this reason! A child may have been brought up with every facility and yet kept away from the purpose of his life.

However unhappy a man may be, the moment he knows the purpose of his life a switch is turned and the light is on. He may not be able to accomplish anything at once, but the very fact of knowing the purpose gives him all the hope and vigour and inspiration and strength to wait for that day. If he has to strive after that purpose all his life, he does not mind so long as he knows what the purpose is. Ten such persons have much greater power than a thousand people working from morning till evening not knowing the purpose of their life.

Besides, what we call wrong or right, good or bad, differs according to the purpose of life. The more one studies life, the more one realizes that it is not the action but the purpose that makes things right or wrong, good or bad. And as we progress we become more wide awake, and the greater becomes the purpose before us.

Beyond this is the purpose of all, the ultimate purpose. We begin our lives with an individual purpose, but we come to a stage where the purpose of every soul is one and the same. And that can be studied by studying the inclinations of men. Every man has five inclinations hidden in the depths of his heart. Being absorbed in the life of the world he may forget that ultimate purpose, but at the same time there is a continual inclination towards it. That shows that the ultimate purpose of the life of all is one and the same.

The first of these five inclinations is the love of knowledge. It is not only intellectual and intelligent beings who seek after knowledge. Even an infant wishes to know what every little noise is. Every child seeing a beautiful colour or line in a picture inquires about it. And therefore in greater or less degree every individual is striving after knowledge. No doubt in life as it is today many are placed in a situation where they never have a moment in which to gain that knowledge which they seek after. From morning till evening they have their duty to perform; they are so absorbed in it that after some time that hunger for knowledge is lost and their mind becomes blunted. There are many

thousands of people whom life has placed in a situation where they cannot help but concentrate on some particular work and never have time to think about things that they would like to think about, that they would like to know. We have made this life. We call it progress, freedom, but it is not freedom of mind. The mind is imprisoned in a limited horizon and we call it a sphere.

If all thought, all life, consists in studying something only in order to earn one's bread and butter, then when can one give one's thought and mind to what one's soul is seeking after? Among those who have a little freedom in life, who have time to think about gaining some knowledge, there are many who seek only after novelty. They think that to learn means only to get to know something they did not know before. There are very few seekers who discover that from every idea, however simple, a revelation comes when they give their mind to it, and that it then begins to teach them more and more things which they had never known. I have experienced this myself. There was a couplet of a Persian verse I had known for twelve years. I liked it, it was a simple everyday conception, but after twelve years one day a glimpse of inspiration came and that very couplet became a revelation. It seemed as if there had been a seed and then a seedling sprang from it and turned into a plant which produced fruit and flowers.

The difficulty that so-called truth-seeking people experience is that when they have a little time to look for truth they are restless. One thing does not satisfy them and so they go from one thing to another. Thus instead of coming to the real notion of truth, they only get into confusion.

Someone asked an artist if he could make a really new picture. 'Yes,' he said, 'I can.' He put two horns and two wings on the body of a fish, and people said, 'How wonderful, this is something no one has ever seen!' Everyone has seen wings on birds and horns on beasts; but there are many souls who need a novelty of that kind. Many admire it, and few think, like Solomon, that there is nothing new under the sun, especially when we come to the domain of wisdom, of knowledge. For one does not arrive at concentration, contemplation, or meditation by studying many things, nor by going from one idea to another.

The next inclination is the love of life, and not only in human beings for even little insects escape if one tries to touch them; their life is dear to them. What does this show? It shows that every being wishes to live, however unhappy he may be, however difficult life may seem. Perhaps in the sadness of the moment a person might wish to commit suicide, but if he were in his normal condition he would never think of leaving this world. Not because the world is so dear to him, but because the soul's inclination is to live.

It is said in the Gayan, 'Life lives, death dies'. Since life lives, life longs to live, and nobody wishes for one moment that death should ever take him. The great prophets, masters, saints, sages, philosophers, mystics, what was their striving? Their striving was to find some remedy to cure man of mortality. But is his mortality his conception or his condition? It is a condition when seen outwardly; in reality it is a conception. The soul keeps the physical body as its garb only until its purpose is fulfilled and it wishes to leave this garb. For no one wishes always to carry his heavy coat. Even the king feels more comfortable when the crown is put in the cupboard.

The soul's happiness comes when it is freed from its physical burden; it can only be happy when it can be itself. As long as man thinks he is his body, so long is he mortal, being only conscious of his mortal existence. But this, intellectually understood, will not help. The soul must see itself, the soul must realize itself. How does the soul do this? In the scriptures it is said, 'Die before death.' What is this dying? This dying is playing at death. The mystics have all through their life on earth practised playing at death; by playing at it they were able to see what death is. Then it was not only intellectual knowledge; they actually saw that the soul stands independently of this physical garb. Buddha has called it *Jnana*, which means realization. The absence of it is called *Ajnana*, the lack of realization.

Every thoughtful person, when he thinks of the day when he will have to depart from this earth where he has his friends whom he loves and his treasure, feels very sad. Not only that, but it makes him sadder still to feel that once he is gone he will be gone for ever, for life does not wish to become death; life wants to live.

But this shows ignorance and a false conception of life, a conception gained by the senses, by experience through the senses. The one who has realized life and things through the senses does not know life. Life can be very different from this.

The third inclination man shows is to gain power in any way whatever. Every person strives throughout life to gain power. The reason is that the soul strives to exist against the invasion of life, because life's conditions seem to sweep away everything that has no strength. When the leaf has lost its strength it falls from the tree; when the flower has lost its strength it is thrown away. Naturally the soul wishes to keep its strength; therefore every individual seeks for power. But the mistake lies in the fact that however much power a man may have, it is limited. With the increase of power there comes a time when the man sees that another power can be greater than the one he possesses. This limitation makes man suffer; he becomes disappointed. Besides when one looks at the power that man possesses, the power of the world, what is it? Powerful nations which were built thousands of years ago can be crushed in a very short time; then what is their power? If there is any power it is the hidden power, the almighty power. And by getting in touch with that power one begins to draw from it all the power that is needed.

The secret of all the miracles and phenomena of the sages and masters is to be seen in the power that they are able to draw from within. There are faqirs and dervishes who practise jumping into the fire or cutting their body and healing it instantly. But there exists a power even greater than that. Those who can really do such things do not do them openly; but at the same time there is this power which gives proof that spirit has power over matter, though spirit may be buried under matter for some time—which makes one powerless.

The fourth inclination man shows is to be happy. Man seeks happiness in pleasure, in joy, but these are only shadows of happiness. The real happiness is in the heart of man. But man does not look for it. In order to find happiness, he seeks pleasure. Anything that is passing and anything that results in unhappiness is not happiness. Happiness is the very being of man. Vedantists have called the human soul *Ananda*, happiness, because the soul

itself is happiness; that is why it seeks happiness. And because the soul cannot find itself it is always looking for something that will make it happy; but what it finds can never make it really happy, perfectly happy.

Sin and virtue, good and bad, right and wrong, can be distinguished and determined on this principle. Virtue is what brings real happiness. What is called right is that which leads to happiness. What is good is good because it gives happiness; and if it does not do so it cannot be good, it cannot be virtue, it cannot be right. Whenever man has found virtue in unhappiness he has been mistaken; whenever he was wrong he has been unhappy. Happiness is the being of man; that is why he craves for it.

The fifth inclination man shows is for peace. It is not rest or comfort or solitude which can give peace. It is an art which must be learnt, the art of the mystics, by which one comes to experience peace. One may ask why, if it is natural for the soul to experience peace, one must strive for peace by practice, by meditation, by contemplation. The answer is that it is natural to experience peace, but life in the world is not natural. Animals and birds all experience peace, but not mankind, for man is the robber of his own peace. He has made his life so artificial that he can never imagine how far he is removed from what may be called a normal, natural life for him to live. It is for this reason that we need the art of discovering peace within us. We shall not experience peace by improving outside conditions. Man has always longed for peace and he has always brought about wars; at the same time every individual says he is seeking for peace. Then where does war come from? It comes because the meaning of peace has not been fully understood. Man lives in a continual turmoil, in a restless condition, and in order to seek for peace he seeks war; if this goes on we shall not have peace till every individual begins to seek peace within himself first.

What is peace? Peace is the natural condition of the soul. The soul which has lost its natural condition becomes restless. The normal condition of mind is tranquillity, yet at the same time the mind is anything but tranquil; the soul experiences anything but peace.

The question which arises in the mind of every thoughtful

person is, what was the reason, what was the purpose of the creation of this world? The answer is, to break the monotony. Call it God, call it the only Being, call it the source and goal of all; being alone, He wished that there should be something for Him to know. The Hindus says that the creation is the dream of Brahma. One may call it a dream, but it is the main purpose. The Sufis explain it thus: that God, the Lover, wanted to know His own nature; and that therefore through manifestation the Beloved was created, in order that love might manifest. And when we look at it in this light, then all that we see is the Beloved. As Rumi, the greatest writer of Persia says, 'The Beloved is all in all, the lover only veils Him; the Beloved is all that lives, the lover a dead thing.'

Sufis have therefore called God the Beloved. And they have seen the Beloved in all beings. They did not think that God was in heaven, apart, away from all beings. In everything, in all forms, they have seen the beauty of God. And in this realization the main purpose and the ultimate purpose of life is fulfilled. As it is said in the ancient scriptures, when God asked Adam, 'Who is thy Lord?' he said, 'Thou art my Lord.' This means that the purpose of creation was that every soul might recognize his source and goal, and surrender to it and attribute to it all beauty and wisdom and power, so that by doing so he might perfect himself. As the Bible says, 'Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.'

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE (2)

EVERY intelligent person comes to a stage in his life, sooner or later, when he begins to question himself as to what purpose there is in life, in being on earth. 'Why am I here? What am I to accomplish in life?' he asks. No doubt the moment this question has arisen in a person he has taken his first step in the path of wisdom; before, whatever he did, not being conscious of his life's purpose, he remained discontented. Whatever be his occupation, his condition in life, whether he is wise or foolish, learned or illiterate, there is always discontent. He may have success or failure, but the desire that his life's purpose should be accomplished remains, and unless it is accomplished a person cannot be satisfied. That is why many people who are successful in business, doing very well in their profession, comfortable in their domestic life, and popular in society, yet remain dissatisfied because they do not know the purpose of their life.

After knowing the purpose of life we may be handicapped by many things, we may lack means, but the conditions will be favourable to go forward, in spite of all. When someone has found his life's purpose, no matter how difficult life is for him nor how many hindrances he has to contend with, from that moment there is nothing he will not withstand, no sacrifice he will not make, nothing he will not endure. He will wait with patience all his life, and if he does not succeed in this life he will wait even till the hereafter, happy because he is accomplishing his life's purpose. When a person knows, 'I am here for this particular purpose', that knowledge in itself gives a great strength of conviction.

There is a story told of the Prophet Mohammad. At the time when the Prophet, who was born for that particular purpose in life, felt a kind of restlessness, a dissatisfaction with everything in life, he thought he had better go into the forest, into the wilderness, into the mountains and sit there alone to get in touch with himself, to find out why there was that yearning after

something he did not know. He asked his wife if she would allow him that solitude which his soul longed for, and she agreed. Then he went into the wilderness and sat there for days together. And when the vibrations of the physical body and mind, which are always upset and in turmoil in the midst of the world, calmed down, and when his mind became quiet and his spirit was tranquil, when the heart of the Prophet became restful, he began to feel in touch with all nature there, the space, the sky, the earth; and then it seemed as if everything was talking to him, as if the water and the clouds were talking. He was in communication with the whole world, with the whole of life.

Then the word came to the Prophet: 'Cry out in the Name of thy Lord'. This is the lesson of idealism: not only being in touch with nature, but idealizing the Lord. In these days there is the great drawback that when people become very intelligent they lose idealism. If they want to find God they want to find Him in figures. There are many who would rather meditate than worship, than pray. In this way there has always been conflict between the intellectual person and the idealistic person. The Prophet was taught as the first thing to idealize the Lord; and when the ideal he thus made became his conception of God, then in that conception God awakened. And he began to hear the voice saying, 'Now you must serve your people, you must awaken in your people the sense of religion, the ideal of God, the desire for spiritual attainment, and the wish to live a better life.' Then he knew that it was now his turn to accomplish all those things that the prophets who had come before had been meant to accomplish.

We are all born in this world to accomplish a certain purpose, and as long as a man does not know this purpose he remains ignorant of life; he cannot call himself a living being. A machine has no choice, it cannot find its life's purpose, but an individual is responsible to a great extent. Very often out of weakness a man gives in to something which otherwise he would have refused to accept. This weakness comes through lack of patience and endurance, lack of self-confidence, and lack of trust. A person who does not trust in Providence, who cannot have patience, who

cannot endure, will take what comes at the moment; he will not wait till tomorrow. Perhaps the purpose of his life would have opened up before him if he had had more power of endurance, more self-confidence, more trust in Providence. But when he possesses none of these things he is just like a machine. He is not pleased with what comes in life, he is grudging every day, he is confused; and yet he goes on like a horse which is not willing to go on, but is yoked to the cart and has to go on. The first knowledge we must gain is the knowledge of the purpose of our life.

It is a great pity that education as it is today pays very little attention to this question. Children, youths, and grown-ups all go through life toiling from morning till evening, studying or working, and at the same time not knowing what purpose they have to accomplish. Among a thousand persons there may be one exception, but nine hundred and ninety-nine are placed in a situation, whether they desire it or not, where they are working just like a mechanism, a machine put in a certain place which is made for it and where it must work. Out of a hundred perhaps ninety-nine are discontented with the work they are doing. Either it is their environment that has placed them there, or it is because they must work for their living, or because they have the idea that they should first gather what they need. By the time they have gathered the means to be able to do something in life, the desire of accomplishing something is gone.

It is a great drawback that in spite of progress individuals often have no opportunity to accomplish something they desire. Many youths never realize this; they think, 'We must do that work and that is all'; and they have no time to think about the purpose of their particular life. Thus hundreds and thousands of lives are wasted. In spite of all the money they make their hearts are not satisfied, for it is not the wealth one gains that can give that satisfaction.

On hearing from the Prophet that all things and beings were created for a certain purpose, someone said, 'O Prophet, I cannot understand why mosquitoes were created!' And the Prophet answered, 'They were created so that you may get up quickly at

night and engage yourself in prayer!' Everything is created with a purpose, in order that we may use it for its purpose. And so it is with people. Sa'di says, 'Every being is created for a purpose, and the light of that purpose is already kindled in his soul'. As we need blacksmiths and goldsmiths and farmers and others, so we need philosophers and mystics and prophets. That creates the harmony, just as we need sharp and flat in music. If it were not so there would be no beauty, for beauty is created through variety.

When we look at life with a philosopher's view we see that every person is like one note in this symphony of life; that we all make this symphony of life, each contributing the music which is needed in that symphony. But if we do not know our own part in the symphony of life, naturally it is as if one of the four strings on the violin is not tuned, and if it is not tuned it cannot give the music which it should produce. So we must each produce that part for which we are born. If we do not contribute what we are meant to and what we should contribute, we are not in tune with our destiny. It is only by playing that particular part which belongs to us that we shall get satisfaction.

Maybe many people will not think as I do, for instance those who believe strongly in pacifism, in the peace ideal. They will say, 'Is it not madness that anybody should make a war!' But everything one does, though it may look better or worse, yet belongs somewhere in the scheme of life, and we have no right to condemn it. The principal thing for every individual is to become conscious of the duty for which he is born.

There are in reality two purposes of life. One is the minor, the other is the major purpose of life. One is the preliminary, and the other is the final purpose. The preliminary purpose of life is just like a stepping-stone to the final one. Therefore one should first consider the preliminary purpose of life.

In the East there are various stories told about sages and saints who have awakened someone to the purpose of his particular life; and the moment that person was awakened his whole life changed. There is an account in the history of India, of the

life of Shivaji. There was a young robber who used to attack travellers passing along the way where he lived and he robbed from them whatever he could. And one day before going to his work he came to a sage and greeted him and said, 'Sage, I want your blessing, your help in my occupation'. The sage asked what his occupation was. He said, 'I am an unimportant robber'. The sage said, 'Yes, you have my blessing'. The robber was very pleased, and went away and had greater success than before. Happy with his success he returned to the sage and greeted him by touching his feet and said, 'What a wonderful blessing it is to be so successful'. But the sage said, 'I am not yet satisfied with your success, I want you to be more successful. Find three or four more robbers and join together and then go on with your work.' He joined with four or five other robbers who went with him and again had great success. Once more he came to the sage and said, 'I want your blessing'. The sage said, 'You have it. But still I am not satisfied. Four robbers are very few. You ought to form a gang of twenty.' So he found twenty robbers. And eventually there were hundreds of them.

Then the sage said, 'I am not satisfied with the little work you do. You are a small army of young men, you ought to do something great. Why not attack the Moghul strongholds and push them out, so that in this country we may reign ourselves?' And so he did, and a kingdom was established. The next move of the robber would have been to form an empire of the whole country. But he died. Had he lived Shivaji would have formed an empire. The sage could have said, 'What a bad thing, what a wicked thing you are doing. Go in the factory and work!' But the sage saw what Shivaji was capable of. Robbery was his first lesson, his a b c. He had only a few steps to advance to be the defender of his country, and the sage realized that he was going to be a king, to release his people from the Moghuls. The robbers did not see it, the young man did not think about it. He was pushed into it by the sage. The sage was not pushing him into robbery; he was preparing him for a great work.

Why in the East is the greatest importance given to a teacher in the spiritual path? For this reason: as Hafiz has said, 'If your

teacher says, "Sprinkle your prayer-rug with wine", do it'. A prayer-rug is a holy object; wine is considered unwholesome; but Hafiz continues, 'For the knower knows best which way to go'. For instance if a person wishes to collect wealth, his whole mind is absorbed in it. He may be told, 'No, that is not a good thing. What is wealth after all? It is unreal, useless. You ought to be devotional, spiritual!' But his mind will not be there. He cannot be spiritual. He is concentrated on that particular thing, and because he cannot collect the money he wants he is unhappy. If one forces upon him spirituality, religion, devotion, prayer, they will not help him. Very often people in place of food give water, and in place of water give food. That is not good. Spirituality comes in its time. But the preliminary purpose is what a man will contribute to the world as the first step before awakening to spiritual perfection.

All the great teachers of humanity have taught that preliminary purpose of life in their religions. Whatever teachings they have given to their followers, their motive has been to help them to accomplish that first purpose in life. For instance when Christ called the fishermen he said, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men'. He did not say he would make them more spiritual. That was the first step. He wanted them to accomplish the first purpose of life; the next purpose was to become more spiritual. To the teachers of spiritual knowledge who look at it in this way, their first duty is to show someone how to accomplish the first purpose of life. When they have done this, then they show the second purpose.

There are four different ways people take in their lives. One way is the way of material benefit. By profession, by occupation, business, or industry, a person wants to make money. Something is to be said both for and against this ideal. Against it may be said that while working for money one very often loses the right track, thought, and consideration. One easily overlooks the rights of others when one is working for money. And what is to be said for it is this: that it is after all those who possess wealth who can use wealth for the best purpose. All charitable institutions, hospitals, schools, colleges, are raised by charitable people who have given generously to such organizations. There is therefore

nothing wrong in earning money and in devoting one's time to it, as long as the motive is right and good.

Another aspect is duty. One considers that one has a duty to one's community, town, or country; one does some social work, one tries to do good to others and considers it one's duty. It may be that one has a duty towards one's parents; one may be looking after one's mother and sacrifice one's life for her, or for one's wife and children. There is great merit in this also. No doubt what speaks against it is that very often such lives are spoiled, and they have no chance to do anything worth while in the world; but if it were not for the dutiful the world would be devoid of love and affection. If the wife had no sense of duty towards her husband, nor the neighbour towards his friend, then they would be living like creatures of the lower creation. It is the sense of duty that makes man greater than other beings; that is why we admire it. Heroes who give their lives for their country are not doing a small thing. It is something great when a person gives his life for the sake of duty. Besides duty is a great virtue.

At the time of the last war there was a young woman who was always displeased and in disagreement with her husband and she was always wanting a separation. When the call to arms came, her husband went to the battlefield, and he hoped that in his absence she would find someone else. As the war went on she thought that while her husband was fighting she would enrol as a nurse. And it happened that near the place where she was working, the husband was wounded; he lost his eyes, and she became his nurse. When she saw him in that condition she was astonished that it had so come about that she was to be his nurse. She had just received a letter containing a proposal of marriage, but she tore it up and changed her mind in an instant; she said, 'Now that he has lost his eyes and that he is helpless, I shall remain his wife, I shall take care of him all his life'.

Duty, the sense of duty, is a great virtue; and when it is perfected and deepened in the heart of a man it wakens him to a greater and higher consciousness. In that way people have accomplished noble things. The great heroes have lived a life of duty.

The sense of duty comes from idealism. The greater his ideal of duty the greater the man. According to the Hindus the observers of duty are considered religious, because Dharma, the Sanskrit word which means religion, also means duty.

The third purpose one chooses in life is to make the best of the present. It is the point of view of Omar Khayyám who told one to 'Drink the cup of life just now'. There is a quatrain in the *Rubayat* where he says:

O my Beloved, fill the cup that clears
 Today of past regrets and future fears.
 Tomorrow! why, tomorrow I may be
 Myself with yesterday's sev'n thousand years!

It is the point of view of the person who says, 'If I was great in the past, what does it matter? The past is forgotten. And the future who knows what will come out of it? No one knows his future. Let us make the best of this moment, let us make life as happy as we can.' It is not a bad point of view. It is a philosophical point of view. Those who adhere to it are happy and give happiness to others.

No doubt all these different points of view have a wrong side also. But when we look at their right side there is something in it to appreciate.

People nowadays use a phrase: 'He is a jolly good fellow.' In songs and on different occasions this phrase is used to show appreciation for that tendency of mind which tries to make this moment happy. It is difficult, very difficult, and not everyone can manage to do it; for life has so many conflicts, so many troubles. One has to face so many difficulties in life that to be able to keep on smiling is not everyone's achievement. In order to keep smiling a person must either be very foolish and not feel or think about anything, but just close both his eyes and his heart to the world, or a person must be as high as the souls meant by the story of the miracle of Christ walking upon the water. There are some who sink and some who swim, and others who walk over the water. Those who are drowned in life's misery are those who cannot get out of it; they are tied down in the depths of life; they cannot get

out and they are miserable there; they are the ones who sink. Then there are others who are swimming; they are those who strive through the conflicting conditions of life in order some day to reach the shore.

There are, however, others who walk upon life. Theirs is the life which is symbolically expressed in the miracle of Christ walking upon the water. It is like living in the world and not being of the world, touching the world and not being touched by it. It needs a clear perception of life, keen intelligence and thorough understanding, together with great courage, strength, and bravery. By this I do not mean to say that the man who makes the best of each present moment is the same as the man whom we call happy-go-lucky, the simple man. That man is the one who lives in another world; he is not aware of life's conditions, he is not awake to the conflicting influences of life; if he is happy it is not surprising, for he is happiness himself. I mean those who are awakened to life's conditions, those who are tender and sensitive to the thoughts and feelings of others. For them it is very difficult to go on living and at the same time to keep smiling. If a man can do it, it is certainly a great thing.

The fourth aspect is that of those who think, 'What is life on earth after all! Is it not only a few days to pass somehow?' The day ends, the months and the years pass, and so time slips by. One comes to the end of life before one has expected it, and the whole past becomes like a dream in the night. Ask a man who has lived a hundred years, 'What do you think about life on earth?' He will say, 'One night's dream, my child, it is no longer than that.'

If that is all there is to life, then those who consider it thus will realize they should think about the hereafter. Just as some think, 'While we are able to work we must strive in order to make provision for our old age that we may be more comfortable', so those who think of the hereafter say, 'Life is short, it is nothing but an opportunity. We must prepare something so that later we shall have the benefit of it.' Maybe there will be some who have the right understanding, while others make too much of it and have a wrong conception of the hereafter; yet the wise ones who believe that they must use the time and opportunity which is

given to them in this life to prepare for the next one, have accomplished a great deal. It is something to admire.

It is said that the earth and the sky and space do not accommodate a person who does not answer life's demands, although for exceptional souls there are exceptional laws, for the lives of exceptional beings cannot be explained in ordinary terms. One may ask what will be the future of those who have not fulfilled the demand of life; will they have to come back to learn their lesson once more? We must all learn our lesson right now. Life is lived right now, its demand is right now, and we must answer it right now. At every moment we are asked to perform a certain duty, to fulfil a certain obligation; and to become conscious of this and to do it in the most fitting and right manner, that is the true religion.

We understand life's demands by understanding life better. There are some who do not answer life's demands because they do not know what life asks of them; and there are others who do not answer life's demands although they do know. When the demands of the outer life are different from what the inner life asks of us, we should fulfil the demands of the outer life without neglecting those of the inner life, as it is said in the Bible, 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.'

We have to become like the ebb and flow. This is a symbolical expression. A certain thing is accomplished at one time by sympathy, and at another time by indifference; one situation we must meet by taking interest in it, in another situation we must become indifferent, not concerned with it. If in a sea there were always ebb and no flow, or always flow and no ebb, then this would be a dead sea. The living sea is both inhaling and exhaling; thus in everything we do in life, we should be able to meet every situation and event with the manner that the situation demands.

These are the four different ways people take in order to accomplish the purpose of their lives: making wealth, being conscientious in their duty, making the best of every moment of life, and preparing for the future. All these four have their good points. And once one realizes this there is no need to blame

anyone for having taken another path than our own for the accomplishment of life's purpose. By understanding this one becomes tolerant.

And now we come to the ultimate purpose of life which is always one and the same: for every man has in the end to accomplish the same purpose, in whatever way he will. He will come to it either consciously or unconsciously, easily or with difficulty; but he has to accomplish it. That is spiritual attainment. One might wonder if a person who is so material that he never thinks about it and who refuses to consider this question will ever attain to spiritual realization, but the answer is yes; everyone, consciously or unconsciously, is striving after spiritual attainment. Sometimes he does not take the same way as we do, sometimes his point of view and his method differ, and sometimes one person attains to spiritual realization much sooner than another. It may be reached in a day, and another person may have striven for it all his life and yet not have attained to it. What determines it? It is the evolution of a particular soul.

There are stories told in India of how a person was awakened to spiritual consciousness after hearing one word from his Guru. That one word inspired him instantly to touch the higher consciousness. And then again we hear the stories in the East of people who went to the forest or to the mountains, who fasted for days and months, who were hanging by their feet, their head downwards, or who stood erect for years and years. This shows how difficult it is for one person and how easy for another. We make a great mistake today when we consider every man's evolution as the same. There are great differences between people. One is creeping, one is walking, one is running, and another is flying. And yet they all live under the same sun.

It is the custom in the East for those who begin to seek for a spiritual purpose to look for a spiritual teacher. They do not set forth on the spiritual journey by themselves, for thousands of years of experience have taught that to tread the spiritual path it is necessary to have some leader to whom one can give one's confidence and trust in order to follow him to the end. No doubt in the West there is a general awakening. Everyone wishes to know something about the spiritual path; but the difficulty is that

everyone does not stick to one and the same thing. There are many who will go first to one esoteric school and then to another, and so on. In the end they have learnt so much that they do not know what is true and what is false, which is right and which is wrong. It is just like visiting a restaurant and eating so much that one is not able to digest it. Besides when a person takes in all that is false and true, there remains no discrimination between false and true.

To realize the preliminary purpose of our life we must find our natural rhythm. Today people adopt wrong methods. They go to a clairvoyant and ask him about the purpose of their life. They do not know it themselves. Anybody else must tell them except their own spirit, their own soul; they ask others because they do not tune themselves to that pitch where they can feel intuitively what they live for. If another person says, 'You are here to become a carpenter or a lawyer or a barrister', that does not satisfy our need. It is our own spirit that must speak to us. We must be able to still ourselves, to tune our spirit to the universal consciousness in order to know the purpose of our life. And once we know this purpose the best thing is to pursue it in spite of all difficulties. Nothing should discourage us, nothing should keep us back once we know that this is the purpose of our life. Then we must go after it even at the sacrifice of everything, for when the sacrifice is great the gain in the end gives a greater power, a greater inspiration. Rise or fall, success or failure does not matter as long as you know the purpose of your life. If ninety-nine times you fail, the hundredth time you will succeed.

Thus the ultimate purpose for which the soul is seeking every moment of our life, is our spiritual purpose. And you may ask how to attain to that purpose. The answer is that what you are seeking for is within yourself. Instead of looking outside, you must look within. The way to proceed to accomplish this is for some moments to suspend all your senses such as sight, hearing, smell, touch, in order to put a screen before the outside life; and by concentration and by developing that meditative quality you will sooner or later get in touch with the inner self which is more communicative, which speaks more loudly than all the

noises of this world; and this gives joy, creates peace, and produces in you a self-sufficient spirit, a spirit of independence, of true liberty. The moment you get in touch with your self you are in communion with God. It is in this way, if God-communication is sought rightly, that spirituality is attained.

THE ART OF PERSONALITY

SOME believe that art is inferior to nature. But that is not so. Art completes nature; in art there is something divine, for it is God Himself who through man completes the beauty of nature, and this is called art. In other words, art is not only an imitation of nature, art is an improvement upon nature, be it painting, drawing, poetry, or music. But the best of all arts is the art of personality. This must be learned, in order to use it in every walk of life. It is not necessary for every man to become a musician, nor is it necessary to become a painter or an architect. But it is necessary for every man to learn the art of personality. Someone once came to me and said with great pride and satisfaction, 'I was brought up by my parents just like a plant in the forest, growing naturally.' I answered, 'It is a pity. If your parents wanted you to grow naturally they should have kept you in the forest. It is a pity that you are in the midst of the world. The world is made by art; in order to be in the world you need to know the art of personality.'

Very few of us distinguish between individuality and personality. Individuality is that which we brought with us at our birth; we are born as a separate entity. That itself makes us individual. Individuality is the soul's consciousness of its oneness, in spite of its various belongings with which it still identifies itself; and that individuality can be seen in the child which says, 'No, I don't want this toy, I want that other toy'. The moment the soul says 'I' it becomes conscious of an individuality in spite of having different organs in the body and different thoughts which direct these organs. Then the tendency is to attribute to oneself all the different parts while realizing that one is one in spite of being many, or in other words, in spite of being composed of many aspects.

Personality is an improvement on individuality. In becoming a person the beauty which is hidden in an individual develops itself, and it is the development of the individuality which is

personality. Individuality is nature, whereas personality is art; it is something that is acquired or gained. It has not come with us.

Therefore in ancient times people had to learn and practise the art of personality as part of their education. That was the ancient culture. Today a person has to pass examinations and as long as he has got a degree he thinks he is safe, he thinks he can go into the world and will get on. But such an external qualification is not enough. It is the inner qualification, the inner culture that counts and it can only be obtained by the development of personality.

How does one make use of personality? In business the salesman makes a success according to the power of his magnetism; his influence depends entirely on his personality. It is his personality that attracts, whether he goes to a shop or to other business; it is his personality which stands out and which gives one the idea of buying or selling or dealing with him; and the lack of this makes one go away never to come back. A statesman, a politician, a teacher, a solicitor, a barrister, a lawyer, all require personality. A physician may be a great physician, a highly qualified one, and yet if his personality is not agreeable, if he is rude or unsympathetic, however many patients he may have his medicines will make them feel bad, and his personality will make them feel worse. And very often a doctor with a sympathetic personality, a good manner, and wisdom, can cure a patient by a word of consolation before he has given him any medicine. It is the same with a barrister, a lawyer. He can dishearten a client in one visit; and when a person has lost courage and hope then naturally there is little chance of being successful. Power of mind is needed, and if the power of mind is strong then a lawyer can succeed. In all walks of life what counts is the personality. The one whose personality is against him has the world against him.

There are four categories of personality. The first personality is likened to a date, the next is like a walnut, the third like a pomegranate, and the fourth like a grape.

The date-like personality is soft outside and hard inside. As soon as one puts a date into one's mouth and feels the stone between the teeth one has a horror of it. And then there is another personality which is walnut-like. There is a hard shell,

hard to penetrate, but when you know the person more it is like breaking the shell, and finding a nut which is soft. Thirdly there is a pomegranate personality. It is hard outside and hard inside. The pomegranate is hard, the skin is hard, the seed inside is hard too. Lastly there is the grape-like personality which is soft outside and soft inside. You will always find these four classes of persons.

The one whose personality is soft outside and hard inside will at once attract people; but they will not stay with him. They will stay for some time, but then they leave him. Then they know him and turn away from him.

The personality who is hard outside and soft inside is repellent at first, but in the end you will become his friend. That is why he does not make so many friends; you can only understand this man when you reach his inner being. And the personality who is hard outside and hard inside is isolated in the world. This is no place for him. Everyone will want to keep away from him, and then after some time he will find himself in difficulties. But the one whose personality is soft outside and soft inside will naturally be most magnetic. The grape is the most attractive fruit.

At every stage in the evolution of man there is a different kind of magnetism. There are four different aspects of magnetism: physical magnetism, intellectual magnetism, sympathetic magnetism which is sometimes called personal magnetism, and spiritual magnetism.

Freshness, purity, good health, cleanliness, harmonious movements, regular form, all these help physical magnetism. Every man who is loving, affectionate, kindly, gentle, and who has developed a sympathetic nature will always attract without knowing it; for sympathy has the greatest power, and this magnetism is lasting. In whatever relationship you may be to a person, if there is no link of sympathy there is no attraction.

By the lack of development of the sympathetic nature a blockage is produced in the mind and in the body. In the physical body there are some nerve centres which are awakened by the development of sympathy; otherwise they are closed. It is for this reason that a butcher will seldom be intuitive, as everything that keeps a man away from sympathy robs him of intuition.

Sympathy develops life in the finer centres, and the absence of that sympathy takes away that life. And so it is with the mind; when the heart is not sympathetic there is something missing in the man's mentality. Very often a person may be highly qualified, very intellectual, imposing in appearance, and yet being without feeling he will lack magnetism and in many cases will fail to succeed because of his lack of sympathy.

The fourth kind of magnetism is spiritual magnetism. It can be recognized in the innocence of a man, in his purity, in his simplicity. A spiritual person is considered very evolved, but in his appearance the spiritual person may be the most simple, the most innocent one. He is not ignorant but less complicated, broader in outlook, keener in perception, with lofty ideals, with a high consciousness; and yet humble and democratic in the true sense of the word.

The idea of democracy is wrongly understood by many today. The principle that 'I am as good as you' is a wrong principle of democracy. It takes away humbleness, gentleness, and the high ideal. Besides how childish to think that camphor and bone, chalk and sugar are all equal! It seems a very kind idea that everybody is equal; but when you tune the piano with all the notes at the same pitch there is no more music. This wrong conception of democracy is like tuning the whole piano to the same note; then the music of the soul becomes dull. It is more an obsession with democracy than democracy itself. Real democracy is raising oneself higher by appreciating the ideal one meets. In this way one rises to a higher ideal; but many people do not appreciate a high ideal. Democracy means being equal on a higher plane instead of being ignorant. Pulling a high person down to the earth and then speaking of democracy is wrong democracy; it is the spirit of the revolutionary, of people who are obsessed by one particular idea, regardless of anything else, as has been seen in many places. For instance, when there came a revolt against the Catholic Church, what happened? The revolt was not only against the Church, but against the ideals of the Church. Every good aspect was disregarded. It was not only a revolt against what was not desirable, but against everything connected with it. It is from that time that the sense and depth of religion which existed in the Western

world seem to have been diminishing, and they are diminishing further every day. In spite of the many churches there is less idealism. The ideal which is necessary in some form or other for every soul has been drowned. It is drowned because people have revolted against something regardless of what is good in it.

When a person disregards the God-ideal his tendency is to disregard everything that is related to it. And so the art of personality has been lost in the obsession with democracy, instead of being realized as a higher spiritual evolution. It is the spiritual outlook alone that gives man real democratic feeling; it means that for such a person any other man, be it his enemy or his great friend, is his parent, his brother. The spiritual man sees everyone as himself. He sees his own spirit, his own soul reflected in the other; that is real democracy, when one sees oneself in both a higher and a lower person. That is the highest ideal of spiritual attainment, and that is what makes man really democratic.

One only rises to such an ideal by degrees. And the first degree is gentleness. That is why in the English language the word gentleman was used. Why gentle? Because he had taken the first step towards the art of personality. It is not necessary for a person to be rich, or to be in a good position, or to hold a high rank; that does not necessarily make him gentle. However high the position and rank one may have, one may still not be gentle. Once a person has become thoughtful his first step is to become gentle; as soon as thoughtfulness is developed in him, he takes his first step towards real evolution. Gentleness is the greatest power of all. Gentleness is like the power of water: water is purifying, and if there is a rock in the path of a stream of water it will surround the rock; it will not break it, for water is pliable, and so is the one who is gentle. Gentleness in the long run will always purify everything.

We might imagine that everyone tries to be thoughtful. And yet when we consider two things in our daily life—when silence is needed and when speech—we find that we make a thousand mistakes. Often we speak more than we need to speak; or we give our confidence to someone to whom it would have been better not to have given it, or we have spoken to someone and we should not have done it. But it is too late when we think of it

afterwards. Sometimes in a mood of haste, or opposition, or in a distressed condition, a person might say something hurtful without meaning it. He says it and then he repents. By speaking he has not gained anything, except that it might have been a pastime, it has released a desire to say something. But afterwards it has a result just the same. The heart of man is so delicate; it is just like a fragile glass, and once it is broken is very difficult to mend. Any hurt and harm once given is never really mended. One can apologize and ask forgiveness; but what is done is done; what is said is said. The word is not lost. Every word we speak remains somewhere: in the heart of the one listening, in space or in the ground, it stays and has some result. Moreover, by learning to be thoughtful one develops dignity in one's nature. The more one thinks of others the more dignified one becomes, because dignity springs from thoughtfulness.

Then very often a person makes a habit of being talkative. He wastes his own time, his own thought, and the thought and time of the other person; and very often it ends in confusion. One accomplishes nothing by useless arguments. It is amusing to notice that very often a person argues because he lacks knowledge. He goes on arguing because he does not know, he wants to find out from the other person what he knows about it. Besides, how can one understand by discussing or arguing that which one can only understand by one's own wisdom, by the intuition within? It is very often a loss of time.

Some have a real passion for talking; to them it is an amusement, a pastime. But in the end they exhaust themselves and become nervous, and nothing is gained. Silence seems sometimes very hard to keep, but surely it has great advantages, as disagreement and inharmony can often be avoided by it. Silence is good for both the wise and the foolish. For the wise man it is good because it avoids unnecessary talk; he can keep his precious thought well cherished within himself; and so he rears the good thought which is like a plant. And the foolish one covers up his stupidity as long as he keeps silent, and so much the better. Silence raises the dignity of the wise and hides the stupidity of the foolish. Besides the more one evolves the more one will discover the different grades of people, just like the different keys on the

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piano. One is lower, another is higher; every person has a different grade of evolution. Also, the higher you evolve the more you will find that you cannot drive everyone with the same whip. You have to speak to everyone differently, in fact in his own language. If you speak a language he does not understand, it will be gibberish to him. If he is less evolved he will abuse you for what you have said. If he is highly evolved and you say something which does not reach his state of evolution it will make you small in his eyes. What is the use? Besides you will always find that inharmony is caused unnecessarily by words. On the other hand, however inharmonious the atmosphere created by other persons may be, if you have the words of wisdom you can dissolve the clouds of inharmony.

Once when travelling I met a man of a very dense evolution, a soldier who always lived in military surroundings and who had very fixed ideas of his own. And when we were talking together and it appeared that we thought differently about something, I happened to say in order to preserve harmony, 'Well, we are brothers!' He looked at me with great anger, and said, 'Brothers! How dare you say such a thing!' I said, 'I forgot. I am your servant, Sir.' He was very pleased. I could have argued, but this would have created disharmony without reason. The foolishness of that man blazed up just like fire; I put water on it and extinguished it. I did not diminish myself; we are all servants of one another; and it pleased and satisfied him.

There is a story of a wise healer. A woman went to him and asked, 'Can you tell me what to do? I am having a difficult time with my husband. There is a quarrel at home every day.' He said, 'That is very easy.' She said, 'I would be so grateful.' He said, 'I will give you these lozenges, these sweets. You keep them in your mouth when your husband comes home and all will be well. They are magnetized sweets.' And every day she noticed that there was no quarrel any more. After ten days when the sweets were finished she went back to the healer and said, 'I would give anything if you could let me have some more of those sweets. They were wonderful.' Then the teacher said, 'My friend, you must understand after eating the sweets for ten days, that your husband, having toiled all day, is nervous and tired and

weary when he comes home. Naturally he is not in tune; and you made him worse by talking. By keeping silent you gave him nothing to quarrel about, and your home became more harmonious. This should teach you a lesson: that silence is the key to harmony.'

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONALITY

ANY efforts made in developing the personality or in character-building must be not for the sake of proving oneself superior to others, but of becoming more agreeable to those around one and to those with whom one comes in contact. Conciliation is not only the moral of the Sufi: it is the sign of the Sufi. This virtue is not learned and practised easily, for it needs not only goodwill but wisdom. The talent of the diplomat consists in bringing about such results as are desirable with mutual agreement. Disagreement is easy; among the lower creation one sees it so often; it is agreement that is difficult, for it needs a wider outlook which is the true sign of spirituality. Narrowness of outlook makes man's vision small; the person with a narrow outlook cannot easily agree with another. There is always a meeting-ground for two people, however much they differ in thought; but the meeting-ground may be far off, and when that is so a man is not always willing to take the trouble to go so far in order to come to an agreement. Very often this is due to his lack of patience. What generally happens is that each wants the other to meet him at the place where he is standing; there is no desire on either part to move from the spot.

This does not mean that in order to become a real Sufi one should give up one's own ideas in order to agree with someone else; and there is no advantage in always being lenient towards every thought that comes from another, nor in erasing one's own ideas from one's heart; that is not conciliation. The one who is able to listen to another is the one who will make another listen to him. The one who finds it easy to agree with another will have the power of making another agree easily with him. Therefore in doing so one really gains in spite of the apparent loss which might sometimes occur. When a man is able to see both from his own point of view and from that of another, he has complete vision and a clear insight; he so to speak sees with both eyes.

No doubt friction produces light, but light is the agreement of

the atoms. Two people having their own ideas and arguing about them can be a stimulus to thought, and then it does not matter so much; but when a person argues for the sake of argument, the argument becomes his game; he has no satisfaction in conciliation. Words provide the means of disagreement and reasons become the fuel for this fire; but wisdom is found where the intelligence is pliable, where it understands all things, even the wrong of the right and the right of the wrong. The soul who arrives at perfect knowledge has risen above right and wrong. He knows them and yet knows not; he can say much and yet what can he say? Then it becomes easy for him to conciliate each and all.

There is a story of two Sufis who met after many years, having travelled their different ways. They were glad to meet each other after many years of separation as they were both murceeds of the same murshid. One said to the other, 'Tell me, please, your life's experience. After all this time of study and practice of Sufism I have learned one thing: how to conciliate another; and I can do it very well now. Will you please tell me what you have learned?' The other one said, 'After all this time of study and practice of Sufism I have learned how to master life; and all that there is in this world is for me, and I am the master. All that happens, happens by my will'. Then came the murshid, whose murceeds both of them were, and they spoke to him of their experience during their journey. The murshid said, 'Both of you are right.' In the case of the first it was self-denial, in the right sense of the word, which enabled him to conciliate others; in the case of the second there was no longer any of his will left; if there was any, it was the will of God.

In human beings one finds millions of qualities. Every quality has its origin in the heredity and is in reality a mixture of different qualities, a kind of solution. So every person will have different qualities unlike those of others, and every person is unique in his way; in this lies the secret of the oneness of God. Not only is God one, but man is one too.

One should never be discouraged or disappointed in life. Man has the key of his own life in his hand, if he only knew it. It is absurd to say, 'I have not got that quality'; there is no quality in the world that man has not got, either good or bad; and the

soundest psychology is to say to oneself that one has the quality one thinks most desirable, most attractive; and not that quality which one does not think desirable.

There is infinite variety in personality. The law of variety comes from the nature of manifestation; every current taking a different direction becomes different and manifests differently. Variety is also caused by time and space; every personality differs because of time and space. A person born in one year will be different from a person born in another year. A person born in one month or on a certain day will be different from a person born in another month, or on another day. Every moment makes a difference because of the difference in people's breath. But not only this; the difference of personality comes also through the difference in the direction of one's thought; one's personality depends on the direction in which one's thought goes, and also on one's action, motive, expression. All these things cause difference in personality.

There is a story of a dervish who was standing in the middle of the street when the procession of the king was approaching. First came the pages who ran before the procession and they pushed him and said, 'Don't you see, the king is coming! Go away!' And the dervish smiled and said, 'That is why'; and he remained in the same place. Then there came the horsemen, the bodyguards. They said, 'Get out of the way, the procession is coming!' The dervish smiled and said, 'That is why'. Next the courtiers came and saw the dervish standing there. And instead of telling the dervish to go away, they moved their horses a little away from where he stood. And again the dervish said, 'That is why'. Finally came the king, and when the king saw the dervish standing there, he greeted him first; and the dervish in reply said, 'That is why'. An intelligent young man asked him, 'What is it you mean by this remark?' The dervish answered, 'You can see, that is why he is what he is'.

This ideal people have wiped away from their minds. Where is democracy? The kingliness of greeting the dervish, that is democracy. But the man who is not evolved, who is pulling the most evolved down to his level, has a wrong conception of democracy; it is going downwards instead of upwards. If lack of manners and

consideration can be democracy, it loses its real ideal and true spirit. Democracy is the result of aristocracy. When the spirit of aristocracy has evolved sufficiently, it becomes democracy. Then a person thinks, 'I am the equal of any person in the world; there is no person lower than I'. But if a person says, 'There is no person higher than I', that is not democracy.

In Burma one finds Buddhists of a very wonderful kind. It is the only race which for centuries has believed that there is no religion that is not as good as their own. Imagine, today, when the followers of most religions look down upon the followers of another! These people say, 'Whatever be the religion, Christian or Muslim or Jewish, it is not worse than ours. Perhaps it is better.' They all had this same thought, and even today they still have this belief. That is something wonderful. But when a person says, 'Nobody is better than I am', it is no democracy; it is sinking lower, because it means closing one's eyes to what is greater, higher, and better. If one cannot appreciate or see it one cannot rise to it. One can only rise towards that which one values and towards which one aspires.

If I were to speak before the world today about occult power, psychic power, spirit-communication, breathing practices, people would be glad to listen, but if I say simple things like this, it means nothing to them. Yet suppose one did not develop personality, what about spirituality? A person must be a person first, and spiritual afterwards. If he is not a person, then what is the use of being spiritual? It is going back instead of going forward. Man is born to fulfil the purpose of his life; he is made to be a man, to prove he is a human being; a man who can be relied upon, a man whose word carries authority, who uses thought and consideration, whom one can trust with one's secret; a man who will not humiliate himself under any conditions, who will lose his life rather than humble himself, who will not deceive or cheat anybody, who will never go back on his word; a man who will carry through what he has once undertaken. All these qualities make a man a human being. Today our condition is such that we cannot believe in one another's word. We have to have a stamp on a contract. Why are we in such a condition? Because we are not evolving towards the ideal the ancient people had. That is

why we cannot trust each other individually; that is why nations cannot trust one another.

Human beings live only from day to day, striving and working for a loaf of bread. That is all. But is that all, to earn a loaf of bread? In that case we do no better than the animals in the forest, and even they appear better than we. Rich and poor, all are wretched, in every walk of life whether it be a business, a profession, or politics, because there is nothing but competition between individuals, nations, parties, and communities. We have made our lives wretched. What are we here for? If we were born only to meditate and to be spiritual, then we had better go into the forest and into the caves of the mountains. Then it would not be necessary to be in the world. If we only had to live as the animals do, we could do as the worldly person is mostly doing today, and accomplish nothing. Therefore the first necessity for those who are seeking after truth is to develop the spirit of personality. Gold and jewels are worthless if one has no personality; nothing is valuable then. Personality is more valuable than wealth. How strange it is that there is such a large population in this world and that there are so few personalities! Think of that poet of ancient Rome, who went about with a lighted lantern in daytime. People asked, 'What are you looking for?' He said, 'For a human being.'

Very often when I speak of the development of personality, people ask me 'What about annihilation?' But it depends on what form of annihilation they mean: One can only be a spendthrift if one has wealth; one cannot annihilate what one does not possess. When an individual has no personality he can annihilate nothing; there must be something first. If a person started in life with self-effacement he would never become a self. What would he efface? Effacing comes afterwards. First he must be a self, a real self that is worth being.

One makes one's nature by one's likes and dislikes, by what one favours or disfavors. When a person says, 'I don't like this food', he has built something into his nature; and then that food, when eaten, will often disagree with him. It is not that it was meant to disagree with him, but he made it disagree by disliking it. By control, bravery, endurance, steadiness, by all such qualities one

makes one's nature either agreeable or disagreeable. Either one makes one's nature as hard as a rock, a rock that will not allow anything to pass, or one makes one's nature as pliable as water.

One may ask if it is not conceit to try to be better than others. There are many thorns and few flowers. We should not try to become a flower in order to feel ourselves superior to a thorn, but only for the benefit of others. All that trouble and pain and difficulty should be suffered for others; if among so many thorns we turn into a flower, it should be for others. That must be the idea. Besides it is not an easy task to become a flower; it is far easier to become a thorn; for one is naturally born a thorn and one has to become a flower. It is easy to say, 'You have hurt me, insulted me, disturbed me, troubled me'. But one does better to ask oneself if one has not harmed or disturbed someone else. One never thinks enough about this. Therefore to develop personality one learns self-effacement. It is an annihilation, a continual unconscious annihilation which turns the self from a thorn into a flower.

One may also wonder whether with the development of personality one would not develop self-consciousness. But personality contains all: spirit, mind and thought, and body. A self-conscious person is not necessarily one who has developed his personality, although it does sometimes give a tendency to vanity. But vanity is the power which can lead man to either good or bad. It is the living spark of the ego: the soberness of the ego is divine vanity, and the intoxication of the ego is the conceit of man. Conceit is difficult to conquer; it is almost impossible to get rid of. The reason is that wherever there is light there is darkness; wherever there is a form there is shadow.

The word vanity is generally used in a very ordinary sense; there is no really good expression for the higher form of vanity. It is difficult to express this in any other way. The Hindus call it *Vairagya*, and the Sufis use the word *Kibria* for divine vanity. It is God's satisfaction in the manifestation which He wanted to create; but this is not the same as the satisfaction of the ignorant soul in its limitation. When it is in its proper place it is divine virtue; when it is out of its proper place it is a sin.

The understanding of vanity is the most fascinating vision of

the phenomenon of life. What the Sufi calls wine is the pleasure he derives from it. When this phenomenon is disclosed to him and he sees what activates all the different lives, it is almost like wine. What Omar Khayyám has called wine is the amusement one gets by looking at the phenomena of life, which lifts one above the worries of life. One will always find that the most evolved sages can be amused; that is why they are pleasant to meet and to speak to. Worrying comes from self-pity and fear; and fear is made of the clouds of ignorance; the light will dissolve it. Humour is the sign of light; when the light from above touches the mind it tickles the mind, and it is the tickling of mind which produces humour.

The one who develops his personality enriches and ennobles himself in manner, principle, and ideal. This subject has been much overlooked; it is not that man is not capable of it. Man is more capable of it than ever before because he has to suffer so much. This life as we live it is a most painful life; it crunches and grinds a person and in that way can make him a better man. If he gave his thought to it he would profit by it and become a better person. In ancient times people willingly went through different sufferings, trials, and tests. We today do not need to do so; we have other trials today. We do not need to look for them if we only learn how to profit by them, otherwise this experience is lost. Nowadays man can make use of all the skin and bones and nails of every animal in some way or another, and yet we do not use our own life's experience which is more precious than anything else. When people hear of an oil-well or of a gold-mine they are all interested in it; but they are not interested in this gold- and silver-mine, this mine of jewels and gems, the cultivation of which will produce all that can be produced. What is most valuable they do not even think about.

There is, however, no need to scorn a rich man. Sometimes the rich man is poorer than the poor. With all the money in the bank his condition is sometimes much worse than that of the poor man. It is a mistake to say a person is rich because he has money or high rank; besides the question whether a person is poor or rich has nothing to do with personality. One can develop personality regardless of being rich or poor; neither poverty nor riches

necessarily draw one back from spiritual progress, for all that exists in the world is there for our use. If one has it, so much the better; if one does not have it, it is better still.

The great gurus and teachers of all times have taught that to give one's thought and mind to the development of personality is of the greatest importance for those who wish to seek for truth.

Where does the difference between religious faiths come from? From looking superficially. People argue about things which in essence are the same; the difference is only in words. A keen observation of life in time awakens us to the fact that when once the light is thrown upon life, life begins to reveal itself. As Sa'di has said, 'Even the leaves of the tree become as pages of the sacred Book once the eyes of the heart are open.'

THE ATTITUDE

IT IS very often the attitude of mind which makes right and wrong; at the same time it is the attitude of mind which draws friends to one or gives one a repelling influence; also, it is the attitude of mind which brings happiness or unhappiness. It is true that there is the influence of time; there is a certain time in our life which has an influence for good or bad, for rise or fall, for happiness or unhappiness; yet it is our attitude which either controls it or is controlled by it. If our attitude is controlled by it, then the situation at that time conquers us; but if our attitude is under control then there is a chance of conquering the situation.

Mostly our failure, our unhappiness, and our disagreements with friends come from a wrong attitude. When a person starts an enterprise and doubts whether he will have success or not, doubts whether his partners in business will help him or not, his attitude will create in that situation all that he imagines. His partners in business will act wrongly and perhaps unjustly towards him, and the situation will follow the attitude; for the attitude is the current which moulds the situation. Therefore however promising a business or a work may be, if our attitude is not right it must go wrong; it cannot come right. It is a hidden influence, and yet a most powerful influence underlying all circumstances of life.

It is the same with our attitude towards our friends. Whether we feel that our friend will prove to be kind and faithful and constant, or whether we think, 'I doubt if I can hold his friendship; I feel this friend will one day deceive me; I think he will disappoint me one day', in either case we are creating that thought in the friend, we are inspiring him; and the friend without knowing it will act accordingly. In any enterprise or in anything we wish to accomplish, what is most wanted is the right attitude.

If a person thinks, 'Everything I touch and everything I do and

everywhere I look, it is all wrong', certainly it is wrong, there is no doubt about it; but it is his attitude that is wrong, and therefore whatever he does is wrong. It is just like taking a red lantern and throwing its light upon everything: every object in that light will appear red, and one will become frightened oneself and see danger everywhere. But the danger is in one's own hand; it is the red lantern.

Sometimes a person gets into a wrong attitude out of humbleness. By correcting oneself one can arrive at correcting too much, and then one calls oneself wrong. With every move such a person then makes he thinks that he has done something wrong, something dangerous, and that may result in a great danger too. Very often people do not progress in their lives because of their attitude towards life. They are their own enemies, and they themselves are the hindrance to their progress. They might think that one thing or another is the reason: lack of money, unkindness of friends, lack of acquaintances, a thousand things. They may say that the planets are against them; but what is most against them is themselves. They cannot progress. Once one has analysed and understood attitude, and has controlled oneself so as to be able to take any attitude one wishes, then the latent influence in man naturally begins to manifest.

There are three gifts of God given to some in this world, and these gifts are greater than jewels, gems, wealth, or anything else in the world, and nothing can buy them. One may be born with them, yet not know it. One gift is the influence to progress, another gift is the influence to attract, and the third gift is the influence to make difficult situations easy.

Nothing in the world can keep back a soul who has the gift of progress, in other words of flourishing, of prospering. There is a story about a poor man whose job was to sell empty bottles in Bombay. He came to a merchant and asked a certain salary to do this work for him, and from the day the merchant engaged him he steadily became more prosperous. So one day he thought, 'I have worked for twenty years in this shop, and it is only since this young man has come that I have prospered.' He did not tell this to the young man, but the next day he made him a partner in his business; and from that time he began to flourish a hundred times

more. After six months he was flourishing and prospering in every way, and in the end, as he had no children, he gave his business to this young man, who in time became the wealthiest man in the whole country.

This is not a spiritual influence, and yet it is the influence of spirit, there is no doubt about it. It cannot be a material influence, as influence is never material. An influence that works from within and works towards perfection, in whatever form, is a wonderful influence. Whether people like the man in the story act alone or whether they act with someone else, in whatever they do there is progress. It cannot be helped; whatever they touch flourishes.

The effect of the next influence is that a person will never be without friends. If he left the whole of humanity and went to live among lions, tigers, bears, and rhinoceroses, they would be his friends. Let him go among the educated, illiterate, wise, or foolish, wherever this person goes he will attract friends. He will never be alone, in riches, in poverty, in health, in sickness; at all times he will attract friends from every side. This person is born with that gift. Other people may have perhaps three or four or five or six relations or friends, but when a person possesses this influence, every man is his friend.

Not only human beings, but even animals such as cats, dogs, wolves, or foxes will all come to him. Very often dervishes without one penny, wandering here and there, have that influence; and if they sit in a place, in the desert, in a forest, or somewhere in the country, people are attracted to them. Maybe at first after having been away for six months or one year or two years only the animals of the country know such a man, only the birds recognize him; but then the time comes when human beings begin to come, when they too are attracted.

Sometimes people say that a certain place has an attraction because of its beautiful nature, splendid mountains, rivers, sea-shores, forests; but man has a greater influence than all these places. The Prophet Mohammad was born in Mecca, a place in the Hejaz of no special interest. There was no industry, there were no gold-mines, there was no coal and no oil; even nature was not

beautiful, there was nothing to be had from that country, no art, no science, no literature; there was nothing. There was only a soul which was interesting—a soul which was a magnet and attracted the people of the whole world. And after the Prophet had passed away, then the tomb of the Prophet attracted. It attracted millions. In his lifetime thousands were attracted and after his death millions, to this same spot without any interest.

Then there is a third influence, and through this influence, however difficult a situation may be, when a certain person handles it, it becomes easy. For instance there may be a strike going on of thousands of miners and workmen, and after everyone has tried to make peace without success one man comes along who has some of that influence given to him by God; it is neither intellect, nor knowledge, nor psychology, but with this influence he goes among them and puts everything right.

If one wanted to develop this influence one could not do it; it is God's gift. A man who has it is called 'the man of the day'. That man may be in politics or in industry or business, it does not matter in what form of activity; the influence is there. But no doubt any of these three great gifts may belong to a person, and yet if his attitude is not right it is just like a lantern which is burning dimly. It could burn much better if the attitude were right.

There are many examples of those who are born with this influence; the gift is there for anyone to see and yet they never use it, they do not know they possess it. The reason may be that their attitude is wrong; a person may have the greatest opportunities to progress in life and to flourish, and yet in spite of this and in spite of having all the power to make things easy for himself, he may fail because of his wrong attitude.

One might wonder what is meant by the right attitude, and how it can be acquired. One can have the right attitude by right thinking, and by keeping one's mind focused on what is just and true. Wrong always attracts wrong, and right always attracts right. What is right and what is wrong? What you think to be

right at the moment is right for you; and what you think to be wrong at the moment is wrong for you. It does not mean that what another person says is wrong for you is wrong, or that what another person says is right for you is right; the real basis is what you are thinking yourself at the moment. Never for one moment think that those who do wrong believe it to be right. It is not true; they do not believe it. They know it is wrong and yet they do it, out of weakness, lack of power, or lack of discrimination. They are not clear in their minds. There are not many who do wrong thinking that it is right. But the one who thinks that it is right today, may tomorrow think that it is wrong. Well then, tomorrow it will be wrong, though it is right today.

All one says, does, and thinks comes from an impulse; one end of it is in one's own mind and the other end is in the mind of God. Therefore whatever people think about it, whether they think it right or wrong, one end of every impulse is in the heart of God. It is the spark that manifests in the heart of God first; then it manifests outwardly.

One might say, 'God cannot guide a person wrongly, because God is just and good and perfect.' God's justice and goodness and perfection cannot be compared with what we consider just and good and right. It may be that God's justice and what is considered right and perfect by God is thought imperfect and unjust by man, for the horizon of his vision is very narrow. He cannot imagine what God means by every action that takes place. In the Qur'an it is said that there is not one atom that moves without the command of God.

All things are wrong or right, perfect or imperfect from our point of view. But our point of view is a narrow, small, limited point of view; we see and hear according to our eyes and ears; our ears cannot hear more than they can, our eyes cannot see farther than they can. If from our limited point of view we judge God's right and wrong, it is the greatest pity. On the other hand we cannot say that we should let everything happen as it does because everything happens according to God's right point of view; as individuals we have a certain responsibility, towards ourselves and towards others. And since the idea of justice and of

what is right is given to us, we are responsible for acting in accordance with that idea. It may be that tomorrow there will be a greater light given to us so that we shall act still better; and in this way, by acting thus every day, we shall prove a better instrument for the work of God.

THE SECRET OF LIFE

MAN'S attitude is the secret of life, for it is upon man's attitude that success and failure depend. Both man's rise and fall depend upon his attitude. By attitude I mean that impulse which is like a battery behind the mechanism of thought. It is not man's thought which is man's attitude; it is something behind man's thought pushing it to the fore; and according to the strength of that impulse the thought becomes realized. Behind every word one speaks, the attitude is the most important factor in bringing what one says to its successful accomplishment.

There are three different aspects of this subject which one should observe. One aspect is one's attitude towards oneself: whether one treats oneself as a friend or as an enemy, whether one is in harmony with oneself or in disharmony. Not everyone is in harmony with himself, and not everyone treats himself as a friend, although he may think so. For man is generally his own enemy; he does not know it, but he proves it in his doings. One reads in the Qur'an, 'Verily, man is foolish and cruel.' Foolish because he does not even know his own interest, and cruel because he very often proves to be his own enemy. Apart from cruelty to others, man begins by being cruel to himself, and that cruelty is the cause of foolishness. Man may consider himself very practical and clever, yet he often proves to be his own enemy.

As Sa'di says, 'My cleverness, very often thou provest to be my worst enemy.' Worldly cleverness without faith and strength and trust is usually nothing but a delusion. It is the development of trust in the heart, the development of faith, that first gives a man a friendly attitude to himself; and he becomes his own friend by bringing his external being into harmony with his inner being. For it is when the inner being seeks one thing, and the external being does something else, that there is disharmony in the self. When the higher self desires to go one way, and the lower self another way, then there is disharmony, the result of which is like a volcanic eruption. The two parts of his own being which

should unite together in love, clash together and the result is fire. What causes people to commit suicide? What brings illness and depression and despair? Very often the conflict which exists within oneself, and therefore the attitude towards oneself must first be friendly, kindly, and harmonious. Even in spiritual matters one should not go against oneself. I remember that when beginning to get interested in spiritual matters I once asked my teacher, 'Murshid, do you approve of my staying up most of the night for my vigils?' 'Whom do you torture?' said my murshid, 'Yourself? Is God pleased with it?' I had not another word to say.

When one thinks about one's dealings with friends, with relatives, with those with whom one comes in contact in everyday life, one will see that one attracts them or repulses them according to one's attitude. Whether a person is in business, in commerce, or in any other walk of life, he either repulses or attracts them, and on that depends his success or failure in life. The secret of magnetism depends on whether one considers oneself to be a friend or an enemy, a stranger; to him who considers everyone else to be a stranger, even a friend is a stranger, while to him who considers everyone else to be a friend, even a stranger is a friend. If one is afraid of someone who may harm one, then one inspires that person to do harm. If one distrusts someone, and thinks that one day that person will deceive one, he will certainly be inspired to do so; but if one has trust, the power of that trust may some day turn even an enemy into a friend.

Honesty and dishonesty are reflected in the same way in everything one does. If the attitude is not right then this wrong attitude is reflected upon whatever work one does or whom-ever one sees, and that person will respond in the same way. Therefore right and wrong doing is not only a religious teaching, something forced upon people; it is a scientific and logical truth. For with a wrong attitude nothing right can be accomplished, and with the right attitude nothing can go wrong, even if there are difficulties.

There is hidden in our heart a wonderful power. It is a divine power, a sacred power, and it can be developed and cherished by keeping our attitude right. No doubt it is not always easy to keep

our attitude right. The influence of this life on earth, so full of changes, of temptations and of falsehood, continually upsets the steadiness of our attitude. Nevertheless the strength still lies in the steadiness of the attitude, and any lack of steadiness is the cause of every failure and disappointment. There is a Hindustani saying, 'A steady attitude secures success', and when we enter the spiritual realm the same rule applies. It is not the prayer that a man says, it is not the house where he prays, it is not the faith that he claims, it is the attitude that counts in religion. It is just like the ticket one is asked to show at the railway barrier. They do not ask what position one has, what property or what ancestors. No, they say, 'Ticket please!' and if one has it one is admitted. That ticket is man's attitude. In order to enter into the spiritual spheres that right attitude is needed, and it shortens the path.

Now the question is how to know the right attitude from the wrong. To know the right attitude from the wrong is as easy as seeing things when the eyes are open. When one does not realize the attitude is wrong it means that at that time one closes one's eyes. The eyes do not fail one; one closes them. Man does not like to admit his wrong attitude to himself; he is afraid of his own faults. But the man who looks his own error in the eye, the man who criticizes himself, has no time to criticize others. It is that man who will prove to be wise. But human nature is generally such that one does something quite different. Everyone seems to be most interested in criticizing another. If one would criticize oneself, there are endless faults, however saintly or wise one may be; there are no end of faults in a human being; and the consciousness of correcting one's faults, of making oneself better, of taking hold of the right attitude, is the only secret of success, and by it one attains to that goal which is the object of every soul.

According to the Sufi point of view there is only one teacher, and that teacher is God Himself. No man can teach another man. All one can do for another is to give him one's own experience in order to help him to be successful. For instance if a person happens to know a road, he can tell another man that it is the road which leads to the place he wishes to find. The work of the

spiritual teacher is like the work of Cupid. The work of Cupid is to bring two souls together; and so is the work of the spiritual teacher: to bring together the soul and God. But what is taught to the one who seeks after truth? Nothing is taught. He is only shown how he should learn from God. For no man can ever teach spirituality; it is God alone who teaches it. And how is it learned? When these ears which are open outwardly are closed to the outside world and focused upon the heart within, then instead of hearing all that comes from the outer life one begins to hear the words within. Thus if one were to define what meditation is, that also is an attitude: the right attitude towards God.

The attitude should first be to seek God within; and after seeking God within, then to see God outside. In the story of Aladdin in the *Thousand and One Nights* we read that Aladdin went to look for a lantern; that lantern is the divine light within, and it is very difficult to find. Once a person has found that lantern the next thing is to throw that light on the outer life, in order to find God both within and without. Prayer, night vigil, any form of worship, all these things are helpful; but if a man is not inclined to make peace with his brother, to harmonize with his fellow-men, to seek to please those around him, then he has not performed his religious duties. For what can a man give to God who is perfect? His goodness? His goodness is very little. His prayers? How many times will he pray? The whole day he spends for himself. If he prays two or three times, it is not much. If a man can do anything to please God, it is only to please His creatures, to seek their pleasure. There cannot be a better prayer and a greater religion than being conscientious in regard to the feelings of other men, being ready to serve them, to please them in every way, to forgive them, to tolerate them. And if when doing wrong he would realize that he was doing wrong to God, and in doing right that he was doing right to God, then his attitude would be right.

The end and the sum total of all mysticism, philosophy, and meditation, of everything one learns and develops, is to be a better servant to humanity. Everything from the beginning to the end in the spiritual path is a training to be able to serve

mankind better, and if one does not do it with that intention, one will find in the end that one has accomplished nothing. There are many who seek wonder-working or great power to accomplish things. They may perhaps try and gain some power or other; but their soul will never be satisfied. The true satisfaction of the soul is in honest, humble service to another. If there were two people before me, one with great power of wonder-working who could perform miracles, and another humble and kind and gentle and willing to do anything he could for his fellow-men, I would prefer this last man. I would say: the first is wonderful; but the other is a sage.

The soul of man is goodness itself, if only he begins to love goodness. This is not something which is acquired; it springs up of itself. Right attitude towards God is a direct response to God. For His voice is continually coming as an answer to every call. The ears of the heart should be open and focused on that source whence the voice is coming. When that is done then the teacher within is found; then there is continual guidance, and one is guided to the extent that one keeps close to it. Then one needs no other guidance; but first the guidance of a spiritual teacher is necessary in order to come nearer to it.

Attitude forms a channel for an effort, and a right attitude makes a channel for a right effort. The world is the place of tests and trials. If one did not live in the world one would have no chance of doing good or bad; and even if one lived a very spiritual life in the wilderness it would do no good to anybody, not even to oneself; for one would not have gone through the tests and trials of the world. One can neither praise the life of a hermit, nor can one condemn it. If he is happy it is good. Everyone knows his own life, and if he is happy he will give happiness to others also.

Sometimes a man is born to live a hermit's life. In living that life he will not find any torture or trouble; let him live it; in that way he will prove to be his own friend. At the second step he takes he will be the friend of another. If someone asked me if the hermit's life is ideal, I would say it may be ideal for him, but you need not follow it. Is a hermit's life selfish then? If we observe life it is very difficult to say who is selfish and who is not. The life of

a hermit is not a life for which one should sacrifice everything in order to follow it. I would be the last to recommend it to anyone. But if one followed it for one's own pleasure and found happiness in it, I would not prevent it; for a Sufi maintains from first to last the freedom of the soul.

WHAT IS WANTED IN LIFE?

IF THIS question were asked of several people each would perhaps make out a list of not less than a thousand things that he wanted in life. And yet even after writing them all down one rarely knows what one really wants. What one apparently wants in life is not what one really wants, for the nature of the outer life is illusion. As soon as one feels that one wants this or that, then the world of illusion will answer, 'Yes, you want me, this is the particular thing you want in life', but when a person thinks he lacks something in life he only sees the outer lack; he does not find the lack which is within himself.

There is no doubt that what we lack most in life is to be tuned with the infinite and to be in rhythm with the infinite; in other words to be in rhythm with the conditions of life and to be in tune with the source of our existence. Our perpetual complaints against all things in life come from our not being in rhythm with the diverse conditions of life that we have to face. And then we think that if these conditions would only change into something that we wish, it would make our life easier; but that is an inexperienced expectation. If we were placed in the very conditions that we had just desired, believing them to be the best, we would not even then say that we were quite satisfied; we would surely find something lacking in that condition also. For with all the errors and mistakes and shortcomings we find in our external life, we see a perfect hand working behind it all. And if we looked at life a little more closely than we generally do we would certainly find that all the lacks and errors and mistakes and faults add up to something, making life as complete as the wise hand which is working behind it wishes it to be.

There is a Persian saying, 'The Gardener of this garden of the world knows best which plant to rear and which to remove.' One might say that this comes close to fatalism, but I do not wish to take you further in that direction; we come now into the

sphere of action. No doubt man has it in his power to improve his life's conditions greatly if only he does not lose patience before a desirable condition is brought about, if his courage has not been exhausted, and if his hope has endured.

And now the question is how can one become at one with the rhythm of life, in other words with the conditions of life? One's condition of life and one's own desire are generally two conflicting things. If desire gives in to the condition, then the condition gets the upper hand; and if the condition is mastered, then no doubt desire has the upper hand. But the condition is not always master when there is a conflict, a struggle; only one needs caution in fighting a condition in life. If harmony can be established peacefully it is better to avoid battling, though it is a fact that those who complain most about life and those who are most disappointed and troubled with life are the ones who struggle most with life's conditions. Therefore in achieving at-one-ment with the conditions of life one need not always use a weapon; one should first try to harmonize with a particular condition of life. The great heroes who have really fought through life and gained life's victory in the real sense of the word, have not been those who have fought against conditions; they made peace with the conditions of life. The secret of the lives of the great Sufis, in whatever part of the world they have been, was that they met conditions, whether favourable or unfavourable, with the aim of becoming at one with the rhythm of life.

A desire is sometimes our friend and sometimes our own enemy. Sometimes in unfavourable conditions desire becomes agitated and loses its patience, and wishes to break the condition; and instead of breaking the conditions it breaks itself. The great souls have extended their hand first to their worst enemy, because the one who makes his enemy his friend will make a friend of his own self. A condition as bitter as poison will be turned into nectar if we can get into rhythm with that condition, if we can understand it, if we will endure that condition with patience, with courage, with hope. When there is a favourable condition we are very often afraid that it may pass, but when there is an adverse condition we do not generally think that it will pass; we think

that it will last for ever. This comes from fear, from agitation, from the desire to get out of this condition, and thus we lose even hope, the only source that keeps us alive. When we see the nature of life, and how from morning till evening everything changes, why should we not keep the hope that an unfavourable condition will change and turn into a favourable condition? A person gets into the habit of expecting the worst. He who has had some bad experiences in his life always thinks that whatever comes to him will not be good; that nothing good will come to him because he has once gone through bad times. He thinks anybody else can have a better time than he because he is born under an unfavourable star.

In the same way there are many imaginative and intelligent people who day after day read the newspapers and always come to the conclusion that there will be a war. Every insignificant struggle they read about gives them the idea that the world must go to pieces. There are other people interested in astrology who have gone further and are expecting the end of the world year after year, month after month. It gives people a topic to speak about at the dinner table, and at the same time it gives a shock to those who wish to live a little longer than the world's end. Many such threats of the world's destruction have passed, but the prophecy and expectation still remain and will continue. Therefore the best thing is to go through every condition that life presents with patience, with understanding, with open eyes, and so try to rise above it with every little effort we can make.

Tuning ourselves to the infinite is achieved by the way of silence, by the way of meditation, by the way of thinking of something which is beyond and above all things of this mortal world; by giving some moments of our life to the thought of getting in tune with that which is the source and goal of all of us, realizing that in that source alone is the secret of our happiness and peace.

The nature of being in tune with the infinite is this: comparing our soul to a string of an instrument, it is tied at both ends; one is the infinite, and the other is the finite. When a person is conscious all the time of the finite then he is tuned to the finite,

while the one who is conscious of the infinite is tuned to the infinite. Being in tune with the former makes us limited, weak, hopeless, and powerless; but by being in tune with the latter we obtain the power and strength that will pull us through life in whatever adverse conditions may arise.

The work that a Sufi considers to be his sacred task has nothing to do with any particular creed, nor has it to do with any particular religion; it is only this simple thing: to be in rhythm with life's conditions and to be in tune with the infinite. And when one asks how one can arrive at being in accord with life instead of being frightened by life's conditions, the answer is: by meeting it and observing it keenly, and then by trying to harmonize oneself for the time being with that condition, while the next effort is to rise above it if it is an adverse one.

Once a young Arab was sleeping in a field and a serpent happened to crawl over his palm, and in his sleep he held the serpent with all his might. The serpent was helpless and could not bite, but as soon as the young man awoke from his sleep he was frightened at the sight of a snake in his hand and at once let it go. And when the serpent was out of his hand the first thing it did was to bite. One can manage a condition better when it is in one's hand than when it has been lost; then the situation is out of one's hand. For instance, if a person is cross, if he has lost his temper, the natural tendency is to pay him back in the same coin that he deals out. The outcome is a struggle, which will culminate in disappointment. But when a person is cross and has lost his temper, then he is the weak one, and that is the time that you can manage him. That is the time that the situation is in your hand, when he is weak and you are strong.

In our life in this world we are dependent on one another, and wealth, however powerful it seems to be, is in the end not so powerful as it appears. Its power is limited and it does not always take away the dependence of one person upon another. The point is to meet one's condition with understanding and with complete resignation. Thus the first thing is to meet the condition as it is and the second is to better the condition. The more one can avoid conflict the better; at the same time we cannot always avoid a conflict, and we must not turn our back on it if it comes to us.

After all, life is a struggle and we must be ready to struggle. Only, struggle must not make us drunk so that we lose the way of peace which is the first thing to consider. We must not be like a boxer who is always looking for another person to box with.

LIFE, A CONTINUAL BATTLE (1)

BECAUSE life means a continual battle one's success, failure, happiness, or unhappiness mostly depends upon one's knowledge of this battle. Whatever be one's occupation in life, whatever be one's knowledge, if one lacks the knowledge of the battle of life one lacks the most important knowledge of all.

The question arises, of what does this knowledge of life's battle consist? It comprises the knowledge of warfare, how to fight and how to make peace. Human nature very often makes the mistake of taking sides, either the side of war or the side of peace. But if one studies the history of nations and races one will find that it was this mistake which often caused their failure. There have been times when nations and races have developed in their character the knowledge of peace, for instance people such as the Hindus with their most ancient civilization; but it could not bring them complete satisfaction as one side of human nature was neglected and misunderstood.

War comes from God in the same way that peace comes from God. A fruit has to go through many processes in order to become ripe and sweet. Sunshine and rain are both needed to make the fruit ripe; and that shows that war and peace both have their place. But with our limited understanding we do not always comprehend the justice of what is done to us. For instance, if a man had lived through all civilizations, he would think very differently from the ordinary man of today; and so it is with God in regard to His knowledge of the entire world. We are too limited to understand.

In this present age it seems that the knowledge of warfare has developed; but on the other hand the knowledge of peace is absent; for the full knowledge of warfare is both the knowledge of battle and the knowledge of peace. This can be learned according to the mystics by battling with oneself, and by bringing about peace with one's own soul. The life of an individual being is not very different from the life of the world. An individual person's

home is not different from the world. An individual's body and mind and spirit form the whole universe. An individual life can fill the gap between the dawn of creation and the last day. Man does not realize how important is his own life, his self; and the study of his own life and his own self is a study of the greatest importance.

A healthy person has waiting at his door several illnesses, several diseases, waiting for the opportunity when they can attack him. A person with wealth has many who wait at his door for the chance to take away from him what he possesses. A person about whom good is said, has many awaiting a moment when something bad may be said about him. A person who has power or position, how many are not waiting for the opportunity to pull him down and see him slide down from the place where he stands! And what does this show? Why is it so? One may give a thousand reasons, and yet no proper reason. The best explanation one can give is that life is a continual battle.

The process of creation began like this. According to science light comes from friction. It is one power against the other power, fighting; and from these two different forces striking upon each other comes an effect, and that effect in reality may be called life.

In this lies the secret of both love and hate. One sees in the animal kingdom that the first tendency of the animals is instinctively to fight one another. This tendency becomes modified; and it is its modification and its reduced force that produce in them what we call virtues. As it is said in the Qur'an that the world was created out of darkness, so wisdom comes out of ignorance. And the best knowledge is not only the knowledge of all that is good and beautiful, all that is harmonious and peaceful, but also the knowledge of the causes that are behind all the conflicts and all the battles that one has to face in life. The reason why man generally lacks this knowledge is because when he is faced with a battle he wants to fight, instead of first wanting to learn how to fight. And the one who goes into life's battle without first acquiring the knowledge of warfare loses in the end. But one who learns about this warfare of life first, learns its reason and its causes, becomes more capable of fighting the battle of his life.

Christ pointed to this secret when he said, 'Resist not evil.' This means that if one resists or wants to fight a battle every time something in another person appears wrong or unjust, one will lose one's power. For the competent general is not the one who always attacks. The competent general is the one who stands firm in defence. His success is more secure than the one's who is continually attacking. Very often in everyday life one sees that by losing one's temper with someone who has already lost his, one does not gain anything but only sets out upon the path of stupidity. He who has enough self-control to stand firm at the moment when the other person is in a temper, wins in the end. It is not he who has spoken a hundred words aloud who has won, it is he who has perhaps spoken only one word.

For this battle in life the first thing that is necessary is to keep the army in order. And what is this army? It is one's nervous power. Whatever be one's occupation, profession, walk in life, if one has no control over one's own nerves one will be unable to control that walk in life. Today people study political economy or various other kinds of economy, but the most essential economy is economizing the forces which make one healthy and strong through life. This army must be drilled and made to work at command. And one will find the proof of this when one can sleep at will, when one can rest and eat and work at will; then that army is really at one's command.

The officers of this army are the faculties of the mind. These faculties are five: the faculty of retaining thought, the faculty of thinking, the faculty of feeling, the faculty of reasoning and judging, and that faculty in man which is the principal one, the faculty of 'I', or ego. Even in a body with strong nerves, when these five faculties which work as the generals of the army are not in working order, not clear, one cannot expect success in life's warfare. One should further study or practise the art of training these generals of the army in one's own body.

Even with an army and with competent generals one must, however, have the knowledge of what one is battling against. For very often man is battling with his own real interest. During the battle it is an intoxication; he is battling but he does not know

where he is going, and at the end of the battle, even if he is victorious, he will find that his victory is a loss.

Today there seems to be a great seeking and enthusiasm everywhere; a new kind of urge seems to be aroused in humanity to understand life and truth. A very large number of people are looking for the best way of gaining the power needed to battle through life; and a small number again are looking for some way of bringing peace to themselves and to others. But both of these in their pursuit lack that balance which can only be brought about by understanding, by studying, and by practising the knowledge of war and peace together. Without knowing about war one cannot thoroughly know about peace; without understanding peace one cannot thoroughly know about war. What is necessary at the present time is the study of life in general, and that means the knowledge of such questions as what is the purpose of life, what is really beneficial, what is nature, and where is the goal. It is no use practising something before studying it. What does worldly wise mean? It means expert in this warfare of life; to know how to battle, how to make peace, why to battle, and what aim is accomplished by peace.

But it should be clearly understood that the battle with oneself means peace, and the battle with another war. If a person has not practised this on himself he cannot be competent to battle with others. When one discovers what is the secret behind this creation, one finds that out of one life, the origin and the goal of all, this life of variety has come. That is why the nature of the life from which this world of variety has come is peace, and the nature of this life of variety is war. One can neither be without war nor without peace. One might say that all war in life should end, but this has no meaning; one might just as well say that the world of variety should not exist. Where there is plurality there must be conflict; and although conflict seems a tragedy, the true tragedy is ignorance. Instead of wanting to end the battle of life, or instead of opposing peace, one should gather knowledge of life and thereby attain to the wisdom which is life's purpose.

LIFE, A CONTINUAL BATTLE (2)

IN THIS continual battle of life the one who stands firm through it all comes out of it victorious in the end. Even with all power and understanding, if one gives up through lack of hope and courage, one has failed. What brings bad luck in this life, in this battle, is a pessimistic attitude; and what helps man to conquer in the battle of life, however difficult, is an optimistic attitude. There are some in this world who look at life with a pessimistic view, thinking that it is clever to see the dark side of things. To some extent it is beneficial to see the difficult side also, but the psychological law is such that once the spirit is impressed with the difficulty of the situation it loses its hope and courage. Once a person asked me if I looked at life with a pessimistic attitude or if I was an optimist. I said, 'An optimist with open eyes'. Optimism is good as long as the eyes are open, but once the eyes are closed then optimism can be dangerous.

In this battle drill is necessary. And that drill is the control over one's physical organs and over the faculties of mind. For if one is not prepared for this battle, however courageous and optimistic one may be, one cannot succeed. Another thing is to know something about this warfare; to know when to retreat and when to advance. If one does not know how to retreat and wishes always to advance, one will continually be in danger and become a victim of life's battle. There are many people who in the intoxication of life's battle go on battling, go on fighting; in the end they will meet with failure. Young people, strong and hopeful, who have had fewer difficulties, may think of nothing else but battling against all that stands in their way. They do not know that it is not always wise to advance. What is necessary is first to fortify the position and then to advance. One can see the same thing in friendship, in business, or in one's profession. A person who does not understand the secret of the law of warfare cannot succeed.

Besides one must protect one's own on all sides. Very often what one does in the intoxication of the battle, is to go on and on without protecting what belongs to one. How many people in the courts and in law cases, for perhaps a very little thing, go on spending and spending money! In the end the loss is greater than the success. Again, how many in this world will perhaps lose more than they gain only because of their fancy or pride! There are times when one must give in; there are times when one must relax things somewhat; and there are times when one must hold fast the reins of life. There are moments when one must be persistent, and there are moments when one must be easy.

Life is such an intoxication that although everybody thinks that he is working in his own interest, hardly one among thousands is really doing so. And the reason is that people become so absorbed in what they are trying to get that they become intoxicated by it, and they lose the track that leads to real success. Very often people, in order to get one particular benefit, sacrifice many other benefits because they do not think of them. The thing to do is to look all around, not only in one direction. It is easy to be powerful, it is easy to be good, but it is difficult to be wise—and it is the wise who are truly victorious in life. The success of those who possess power or of those who perhaps have goodness, has its limitations. One would be surprised if one knew how many people bring about their failures themselves. There is hardly one person in a hundred who really works for his true advantage, although everyone thinks that he does.

The nature of life is illusive. Under a gain a loss is hidden; under a loss a gain is hidden; and living in this life of illusion it is very difficult for man to realize what is really good for him. Even with a wise person, much of his wisdom is demanded by life and by its battle. One cannot be gentle enough, one cannot be sufficiently kind; the more one gives to life, the more life asks of one. There again is a battle.

No doubt the wise gain most in the end, although they have many apparent losses. Where ordinary people will

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not give in, the wise will give in a hundred times. This shows that their success is very often hidden in apparent failure. But when one compares the success of the wise with that of ordinary people, the success of the wise is much greater.

In this battle a battery is needed. And that battery is the power of will. In this battle of life arms are needed. And these arms are the thoughts and actions which work psychologically towards success. For instance a person says to himself every morning, 'Everybody is against me, nobody likes me, everything is wrong, everywhere is injustice, all is failure for me, there is no hope.' When he goes out he takes that influence with him. Before he arrives anywhere, at his business, profession, or whatever he does, he has sent his influence before him, and he meets with all wrongs and all failure; nothing seems worth while, there is coldness everywhere. And there is another person who knows what human nature is, who knows that one has to meet with selfishness and inconsideration everywhere. But what does he think of it all? He thinks it is like a lot of drunken people. He thinks they are all falling upon each other, fighting each other, offending each other; and naturally a sober person who is thoughtful will not trouble with those who are drunk. He will help them, but he will not take seriously what they say or do. In this world of drunkenness a person who is drunk naturally has to fight more than he who is sober, for the latter will always avoid it. He will tolerate, he will give in, he will understand; for he knows that the others are drunk, and he cannot expect better from them.

Besides this, the wise know a secret, and that secret is that human nature is imitative. For instance, a proud person will always revive the tendency of pride in his surroundings; before a humble person even a proud man will become humble, for the humble one revivifies the humbleness in him. From this one can see that in life's battle one can fight the proud with pride, but also with humility and sometimes gain by it.

From the point of view of the wise human nature is childish. If one stands in the crowd and looks at it as a spectator, one will

see a lot of children playing together. They are playing and they are fighting and they are snatching things out of each other's hands, and they are bothering about very unimportant things. One finds their thoughts small and unimportant, and so is their pursuit through life. And the reason for life's battle is often very small when it is looked at in the light of wisdom. This shows that the knowledge of life does not always come by battling. It comes by throwing light upon it. He is not a warrior who becomes impatient immediately, who loses his temper suddenly, who has no control over his impulses, who is ready to give up hope and courage. The true warrior is he who can endure, who has a great capacity for tolerance, who has depth enough in his heart to assimilate all things, whose mind reaches far enough to understand all things, whose very desire is to understand others and to help them understand.

One may ask, how can one distinguish between the wisdom of the warrior and his lack of courage in the battle of life? Everything is distinguished by its result. There is a well-known saying in English that all is well that ends well. If at the end of the battle the one who was apparently defeated has really conquered, doubtless it was through wisdom and not through lack of courage. Very often apparent courage leads to nothing but disappointment in the end. Bravery is one thing; the knowledge of warfare is another. The one who is brave is not always victorious. The one who is victorious knows and understands; he knows the law of life.

What is sensitiveness? Sensitiveness is life itself. And as life has both its good and evil sides, so has sensitiveness. If one expects to have all life's experiences, these will have to come through sensitiveness. However, sensitiveness must be kept in order if one wants to know, understand, and appreciate all that is beautiful, and not to attract all the depression, sorrows, sadness, and woes of the earth. Once a person has become so sensitive as to be offended with everybody, feeling that everybody is against him, trying to wrong him, he is abusing his sensitiveness. He must be wise as well as sensitive. He must realize before being sensitive that in this world he is among children, among drunken men. And he

should take everything, wherever it comes from, as he would take the actions of children and drunken people; then sensitiveness can be beneficial.

If together with sensitiveness one has not developed one's will-power, it is certainly dangerous. No one can be spiritually developed without being sensitive; there is no doubt that sensitiveness is a human development. But if it is not used rightly it has a great many disadvantages. A sensitive person can lose courage and hope much sooner than another. A sensitive person can make friends quickly, but he can abandon his friends quickly too. A sensitive person is ready to take offence, and ready to take everything to heart, and life can become unbearable for him. Yet if a person is not sensitive he is not fully alive; therefore one should be sensitive, but not exaggeratedly so. The abuse of sensitiveness means yielding to every impression and every impulse that attacks one. There must be a balance between sensitiveness and will-power. Will-power should enable one to endure all influences, all conditions, all attacks that one meets from morning till night. And sensitiveness should enable one to feel life, to appreciate it, and to live in the beauty of life. It is true that by the cultivation of will-power one sometimes persuade oneself wrongly; there is that danger; but there is danger in everything. There is even danger in being healthy; but that does not mean that one must be ill. One must acquire balance between power and wisdom.

If power is working without the light of wisdom behind it, it will always fail, because power will prove to be blind in the end. What is the use of the wise person who has no power of action, no power of thought? This shows that wisdom directs, but that one accomplishes by power; that is why both are necessary for the battle of life.

What is most advisable in life is to be sensitive enough to feel life and its beauty and to appreciate it, but at the same time to consider that one's soul is divine, and that all else is foreign to it; that all things that belong to the earth are foreign to one's soul. They should not touch one's soul. When objects come before the eyes they come into the vision of the eyes; when they are gone the eyes are clear. Therefore one's mind should retain nothing

but beauty, all that is beautiful. For one can search for God in His beauty; all else should be forgotten. And by practising this every day, forgetting all that is disagreeable, that is ugly, and remembering only what is beautiful and gives happiness, one will attract to oneself all the happiness that is in store.

THE STRUGGLE OF LIFE (1)

NO ONE can deny the fact that life in the world is one continual struggle. The one who does not know the struggle of life is either an immature soul, or a soul who has risen above the life of this world. The object of a human being in this world is to attain to the perfection of humanity, and therefore it is necessary that man should go through what we call the struggle of life.

As long as an infant is innocent he is happy; he knows nothing of the struggle of life. The late Nizam of Hyderabad, who was also a great mystic, wrote, 'What were those days, when my eyes had not seen sorrow! My heart had no desire and life had no misery.' This is the first stage. From thence we come to the maturity of the intelligence, and then we see that no one can be trusted, neither the friend nor the relation. None can stand the test when it comes, all are false and none is true; and at first a person believes that this is directed specially against him. A dervish once wrote these lines on the wall of the mosque where he had spent the night, 'The world believes in the ideal of God, yet knows not whether He is friend or foe.'

The waves of the sea go up and down; the atom believes that they rise and fall for it; it thinks, 'The wave raises me, so it is favourable to me', or, 'it lowers me, so it is unfavourable'. In the same way man thinks a friend is favourable or unfavourable to him; but then he realizes that this is the nature of the world. In all of us there is the Nafs, the ego, and every ego fights against the others. There is a sword in every hand, both in that of the friend and in that of the enemy. The friend kisses before he strikes; there is no other difference. And then he realizes that nothing else can be expected of the world.

The great Indian poet Tulsidas has said, 'Everyone does and says as much as he has understood.' Why should a man blame another for what he cannot understand? If he has no more understanding, from whence can the poor man borrow it? Then a person begins to realize that whatever comes he should take it

calmly. If an insult comes he takes it calmly; if a good word comes he accepts it with thanks; if a bad word comes he takes that quietly. If it is a bad word he is only thankful that it is not a blow; if it is a blow he is thankful that it is not worse. He is ready to give his time and his services to all; to the deserving and the undeserving alike, for he sees in all the manifestation of God. He sees God in every form, in the highest, in the lowest, in the most beautiful, in the most worthless.

The Sufi says that if God is separate from the universe, he would rather worship a God who can be seen, who can be heard, who can be tasted, who can be felt by the heart and perceived by the soul. He worships the God who is before him. He sees the God who is in everything.

Christ said, 'I and the Father are one'. That does not mean that Christ laid claim to Godhood for his own person. It is what the dervishes call *Naminaust*, which means all is He and He is all. There is not an atom in the universe that He is not. We must recognize Him, we must respect Him in every face, even in the face of our enemy, of the most worthless. Knowing that all is God by reading a few books on philosophy is not enough; our pity and our spirituality are valueless if we do only this. To read a religious book and feel pious is not enough. To go to some religious place and be pleased that we are religious is not enough. To give to charity and be conceited, believing that we have done something great, is not enough. We must give our services and our time to the deserving and undeserving alike, and we must be thankful to God that He has enabled us to give.

For this is the only opportunity we have of giving. This life is short, and we shall never have the same opportunity to give, to serve, to do something for others. In the Sermon on the Mount it is said, 'Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also'. Someone may say or think that he should hit back; but a Sufi would not hit back. Why? Because he does not want twenty blows instead of one.

It is said that if a man asks you for your coat, you should give him your cloak also. Why? Because neither the cloak nor the coat are yours. If someone thinks, 'This is mine, I should keep it, I should guard it', he will always be watching his goods. If they

are yours, whose were they before? Whose will they be after you? Someone will take them after you, and all that you value so much will be in the hands of others.

Then it is said that if someone asks you to go with him one mile, you should go with him two miles. That means, if someone makes use of our services, let us not think, 'Why should I, such an important person, serve another, give my time to another?' Let us give our services more liberally than we are asked to do. Let us give service, give our time; but when the time for receiving comes, do not let us expect to receive anything. Let us not expect our friend to be as we are to him; that will never be possible. We must then practise renunciation.

We must practise virtue because we like it; do good because we like to do it and not for any return; expect no kindness or appreciation; if we do, it will become a trade. This is the right way for the world in general, and the only way of becoming happy. Its moral is called the moral of renunciation.

There are two different attitudes that people adopt while going through this struggle of life. One struggles along bravely through life; the other becomes disappointed, heart-broken, before arriving at his destination. As soon as a man loses the courage to go through the struggle of life, the burden of the whole world falls upon his head. But he who goes on struggling through life, he alone makes his way. The one whose patience is exhausted, the one who has fallen in this struggle, is trodden upon by those who walk through life. Even bravery and courage are not sufficient to go through the struggle of life; there is something else which must be studied and understood.

One must study the nature of life, one must understand the psychology of this struggle. In order to understand this struggle one must see that there are three sides to it: struggle with oneself, struggle with others, and struggle with circumstances. One person may be capable of struggling with himself, but that is not sufficient. Another is able to struggle with others, but even that is not sufficient. A third person may answer the demands of circumstance, but this is not enough either; what is needed is that all three should be studied and learnt, and one must be able to manage the struggle in all three directions.

And now the question is: where should one begin and where should one end? Generally one starts by struggling with others, and then one struggles all through life, and never finishes. The one who is somewhat wiser struggles with conditions, and perhaps he accomplishes things a little better. But the one who struggles with himself first is the wisest, for once he has struggled with himself, which is the most difficult struggle, the other struggles will become easy for him. Struggling with oneself is like singing without an accompaniment. Struggling with others is the definition of war, struggling with oneself is the definition of peace. In the beginning, outwardly, it might seem that it is cruel to have to struggle with oneself, especially when one is in the right. But the one who has penetrated deeper into life will find that the struggle with oneself is the most profitable in the end.

What is the nature of the struggle with oneself? It has three aspects. The first is to make one's thought, speech, and action answer the demands of one's own ideal, while at the same time giving expression to all the impulses and desires which belong to one's natural being. The next aspect of the struggle with oneself is to fit in with others, with their various ideas and demands. For this a man has to make himself as narrow or as wide as the place that one asks him to fill, which is a delicate matter, difficult for all to comprehend and to practise. And the third aspect of the struggle with oneself is to give accommodation to others in one's own life, in one's own heart, large or small as the demand may be.

When we consider the question of the struggle with others there are also three things to think about, of which the first is to control and govern people and activities which happen to be our duty, our responsibility. Another aspect is how to allow ourselves to be used by others in various situations in life; to know to what extent one should allow others to make use of our time, our energy, our work, or our patience, and where to draw the line. And the third aspect is to fit in with the standards and conceptions of different personalities who are at various stages of evolution.

Regarding the third aspect of this struggle, there are conditions which can be avoided, and there are conditions which cannot be helped, before which one is helpless. And again there are

conditions that could be avoided, and yet one does not find in oneself the capability, the power, or the means to change the condition. If one studies these questions of life, and meditates in order that inspiration and light may fall on them, so that one may understand how to struggle through life, one certainly will find help and arrive at a stage where one finds life easier.

The Sufi looks upon the struggle as unavoidable, as a struggle through which he has to go. He sees from his mystical point of view that the more he takes notice of the struggle the more the struggle will expand; and the less he makes of it the better he will be able to pass through it. When he looks at the world what does he see? He sees everybody with his hands before his eyes, looking only at his own struggles, which are as big as his own palm. He thinks, 'Shall I also sit down like this, and look at my struggles? That will not answer the question.' His work therefore is to engage in the struggle of others, to console them, to strengthen them, to give them a hand; and through that his own struggle dissolves and this makes him free to go forward.

How does the Sufi struggle? He struggles with power, with understanding, with open eyes, and with patience. He does not look at the loss; what is lost is lost. He does not think of the pain of yesterday; yesterday is gone for him. Only if a memory is pleasant does he keep it before him, for it is helpful on his way. He takes both the admiration and the hatred coming from around him with smiles; he believes that both these things form a rhythm within the rhythm of a certain music; there is one and two, the strong accent and the weak accent. Praise cannot be without blame, nor can blame be without praise. He keeps the torch of wisdom before him, because he believes that the present is the echo of the past, and that the future will be the reflection of the present. It is not sufficient to think only of the present moment; one should also think where it comes from and where it goes. Every thought that comes to his mind, every impulse, every word he speaks, is to him like a seed, a seed which falls in this soil of life, and takes root. And in this way he finds that nothing is lost; every good deed, every little act of kindness, of love, done to anybody, will some day rise as a plant and bear fruit.

The Sufi does not consider life as different from business, but

he sees how real business can be achieved in the best manner. The symbol of the mystics of China was a branch laden with fruit in their hand. What does it mean? It means that the purpose of life is to arrive at that stage where every moment becomes fruitful. And what does fruitful mean? Does it mean fruits for oneself? No, trees do not bear fruit for themselves, but for others. True profit is not that profit which one makes for oneself. True profit is that which one makes for others. After attaining all that one wants to attain, be it earthly or heavenly, what is the result of it all? The result is only this, that all that one has attained, that one has acquired, whether earthly or heavenly, one can place before others. *Propkar*, which, in the language of the Vedanta, means working for the benefit of others, is the only fruit of life.

THE STRUGGLE OF LIFE (2)

THE ONLY difference between spiritual attainment and the continual struggle of life is that in worldly life one struggles in another direction. In worldly life, be it in business or politics or industry or whatever be life's path, if a person proves to be lacking in that power which enables him to struggle along, he meets nothing but failure. He may be a good person, a saintly person, a spiritual person, but that does not count. It is for this reason that many in the world lose faith in goodness and in spirituality, when they see that this goodness does not seem to count in life. It is absurd for a spiritual person to say that by spirituality, goodness, and piety one's worldly struggle will be helped. One should have the inspiration and power to answer life's demands in life's struggle. The seeker on the spiritual path should not forget that floating in the air is no good; standing on the earth is the first thing necessary. There are many who dream, who live in the air, but that does not answer our purpose. When they complain that they are doing spiritual work, yet are in bad circumstances, they forget that the language of these paths is different, the law of these paths is different. That is why I distinguish between these two paths, in order to make it clear that the one has little to do with the other. This does not mean that the wicked person will succeed or that success is gained by evil; if it were so, it would only be a mortal success. Nevertheless one should not blame the spirit for failure in worldly things, for worldly things belong to another inspiration; if it were not so all great sages would be millionaires.

The worldly struggle is outward struggle. The struggle on the spiritual path is inward struggle. No sooner does one take the spiritual direction than the first enemy one meets is one's own self. What does the self do? It is most mischievous. When one says one wants to fight it, it says, 'I am yourself. Do you want to fight me?' And when it brings failure, it is clever enough to put the blame on someone else.

Do all those who have failed in life accuse themselves? No,

they always accuse another person. When they have gained something they say, 'I have done it.' When they have lost something they say, 'This person got in my way'. With little and big things, it is all the same. The self does not admit faults; it always puts the blame on others. Its vanity, its pride, its smallness, and its egotistical tendency which is continually active, keep one blind.

I remember a Persian verse made by my murshid which relates to the self: 'When I feel that now I can make peace with my self, it finds time to prepare another attack.' That is our condition. We think that our little faults, since they are small, are of no consequence; or we do not even think of them at all. But every little fault is a flag for the little self, for its own dominion. In this way battling makes man the sovereign of the kingdom of God. Very few can realize the great power in battling with and conquering the self.

But what does man generally do? He says, 'My poor self, it has to withstand the conflicts of this world; should I also battle with this self?' So he surrenders his kingdom to his little self, depriving himself of the divine power that is in the heart of man. There is in man a false self and a real self. The real self contains the eternal; the false self contains the mortal. The real self has wisdom; the false self ignorance. The real self can rise to perfection; the false self ends in limitation. The real self has all good, the false self is productive of all evil. One can see both in oneself: God and the other one. By conquering the other one, one realizes God. This other power has been called Satan; but is it a power? In reality it is not. It is and it is not. It is a shadow. We see shadow and yet it is nothing. We should realize that this false self has no existence of its own. As soon as the soul has risen above the false self, it begins to realize its nobility.

But then there is the practical aspect. How does it show? What form has it? It rises up in support of its own interest. It defends itself from the attacks of others. It feels exclusive towards everyone. It knows itself as an entity separate from friend and foe. It concerns itself with all that is transitory; it is blind to the future and ignorant of the past. It manifests in the form of self-pity. It expresses itself in the form of vengeance. It lives by

feeding upon bitterness and its life is always spent in obscurity. Its condition is restlessness and discontent. It has a continual appetite for all that is there; it is never satisfied. It has no trust in anyone, no thought for anyone, no consideration for anyone. It lacks conscientiousness and therefore manners. The little self thinks only of its own advantage and its own comfort. Giving to others, giving to those around it is dreadful to the self, for it knows no sacrifice. Renunciation for it is worse than death. That is the little self.

When we blame another person, when we dislike somebody, we overlook the same element in ourselves. There is no soul in the world who can say, 'I have not this in me'. If only he were just! For mostly it is the unjust person who blames another. The more just we become, the more silent will we be in all circumstances. If outwardly we see faults in others, inwardly there is the sum total within ourselves. For instance the little child cannot help loving. If a thief comes, or a robber, the child wants to love him and smiles at him. Why is it? Because a thief is not awakened in the child. The child is from heaven, the thief from the earth. There is no place for him there; that is why he is no thief to the child. We accept something because we already have it in us. If we consider our knowledge, a thousand things we seem to have experienced, we find that other people have told us most of them and we believed them at once. As soon as a person tells us about someone wicked, we think, 'Now we know, we can be quite sure about it'. But when a person comes along and says, 'I have seen a most wonderful thing; this man is so good', everyone thinks, 'Is it really true? Is it possible to be as good as that? Is there not anything bad in him?' Good is unnatural to many people.

One might ask whether the spiritual path is a tyranny over oneself. No, for it is by treading it that one moulds one's character, that one makes one's personality. In this is all religion. When a person begins to think, 'I must not bring harm to or hurt anyone I meet, worthy or unworthy, friend or foe', only then does he begin his work in the spiritual direction. Spirituality is not wonder working. Spirituality is attained by right attitude.

Where is the shrine of God? It is in the heart of man. As soon as one begins to consider the feelings of another, one begins to worship God. One might say that it is difficult to please everyone. No doubt it is. It is more difficult still if one has in oneself the inclination to please everyone. There is a story of a murshid who was going with his mureeds to visit some village. And he was keeping a fast. The mureeds also had taken a vow of fasting. They arrived at the peasants' home where there was great enthusiasm and happiness and where a dinner was arranged for them. When they were invited to the table, the murshid went and sat down; but the mureeds did not dare because they had taken a vow of fasting. Yet they would never mention it to the murshid. They thought, 'Murshid is forgetful; Murshid has forgotten the vow.' After dinner was over and they went out the pupils asked, 'Did you not forget the vow of fasting?' 'No,' was the murshid's answer, 'I had not forgotten. But I preferred breaking the fast rather than the heart of that man who with all his enthusiasm had prepared the food.'

The thirst for life makes us overlook little opportunities of doing good. Every moment of life brings an opportunity for being conscious of human feeling, in prosperity, in adversity, in all conditions. It costs very little; only a little thought is necessary. A person may be good but at the same time not be conscientious about little things. There is no greater religion than love. God is love; and the best form of love is to be conscientious regarding the feelings of those with whom we come in contact in everyday life.

The further one goes, the more difficulties there are; one finds greater faults in oneself as one advances along the spiritual path. It is not because the number of faults has increased; but the sense has become so keen that one regards differently faults which formerly one would not have noticed. It is like a musician: the more he advances and the better he plays, the more faults he notices. He who does not notice his faults is in reality becoming worse. There is no end to one's faults. To think of them makes one humble.

To say, 'God is in me' before one has realized this other, metaphysical aspect of truth, is not humble but profane. God is in the

depth of the heart, but to know this is of no use when the doors of the heart are not open. It is the realization of the innumerable faults which makes one humble and effaces the little self from one's consciousness. And it is in the effacement of the self that real spiritual attainment lies.

REACTION

EVERY circumstance, favourable or unfavourable, in which a man finds himself, and every person, agreeable or disagreeable, in whose presence he is, causes him to react. Upon this reaction depends the man's happiness and his spiritual progress. If he has control over this reaction, it means that he is progressing; if he has no control over it, it shows that he is going backward. When you take two people, a wise and a foolish, the wise person reacts more intensely than the foolish one; also, a fine person naturally reacts more than a dense one, a just person more than an unjust one, and a spiritual person more than a materialist. And yet it is lack of mastery when one has no control over one's reactions. A person who is fine, spiritual, sensitive, wise, and just, but who has no control over his reactions, is incomplete. And this shows that even becoming fine and just and spiritual is not sufficient; for all these qualities, though they make one finer and more sensitive, yet they weaken one in the face of the disturbing influences of the crowd; and when this is the case one will not be perfect.

The balance of life lies in being as fine as a thread and as strong as a steel wire. If one does not show endurance and strength to withstand all the opposing and disturbing influences among which one always has to be in life, one certainly reveals a weakness and lack of development. In the first place this reaction causes the man a certain amount of vanity. He believes he is better than the one who disturbs him, though he cannot with certainty say that he is stronger. When he cannot put up with conditions around him he may think that he is a superior person, but in reality the conditions are stronger than he. If we are born on earth, if we are destined to walk on the earth, we cannot dream of paradise when we have to stand firm in all the circumstances that the earth presents us with. When a person progresses towards spirituality he must bear in mind that together with his spiritual progress he must strengthen himself against disturbing influences. If not he should know that however much he desires to make progress

he will be pulled back against his will by conditions, by circumstances.

There are four different ways in which a person reacts: in deed, in speech, in thought, in feeling. A deed produces a definite result, speech produces effect, thought produces atmosphere, feeling produces conditions. Therefore no way in which a person reacts will be without effect. A reaction will be perceived quickly or slowly, but it must be perceived. Very often a reaction is not only agreeable to oneself, but to others also. A person who answers an insult by insulting the other stands on the same level; the one who does not answer stands above it, and in this way one can rise above things against which one reacts, if only one knows how to fly. It means flying above things instead of standing against them as a material person does. How can one call oneself spiritual if one cannot fly? That is the first condition of being spiritual.

The whole mechanism of this world is action and reaction, in the objective world as well as in the world of men. Only, in man there is the possibility of developing that spirit which is called the spirit of mastery, and that spirit is best developed by trying to gain control over one's reactions. Life offers us abundant occasions from morning till evening to practise this lesson. Every move, every turn we make, we are faced with something agreeable or disagreeable, harmonious or inharmonious, either a condition or a person. If we react automatically we are no better than a machine and no different from thousands and millions of people who do so. The only way to find in ourselves a trace of that divine heritage which is mastery, is by controlling our reactions against all influences. In theory it is simple and easy; in practice it is the most difficult thing there is to master. But when we think of its usefulness we shall find that there is nothing in the world that is more necessary and more important than this development. If there is any strength to be found in the world, that strength is within ourselves; and the fact that we are able to control our reactions is the proof of this. It preserves dignity, it maintains honour; it is this which sustains respect and it is this which keeps men wise; it is easy to think, but it is difficult to continue to be a thoughtful person.

Very often people have asked me if there is any practice, any.

study, anything which one can do in order to develop will-power; and I have answered that yes, there are many practices and many ways, but the simplest and best practice which one can follow without being taught is to have one's reactions always in hand. Such words as 'I cannot endure', 'I cannot stand', 'I cannot sustain', 'I cannot have patience', all mean to me, 'I am weak'. By speaking thus we only admit in other words that we are weak. And can there be anyone in the world who is a worse enemy to us than our own weakness? If the whole world were our friend, that one enemy, our weakness, would be enough to ruin our life; but once this enemy is conquered we can stand against all those who come into conflict with us.

Now the question is how one should set to work in this development. One must also take into consideration one's physical condition. The nervous system must be in a proper condition. It is from nervousness that man goes from bad to worse, and even a good person with good intentions may prove to be otherwise; for he may have good intentions but he cannot carry them out because his nerves are weak. What he needs is the habit of silence, of concentration, of meditation. A person who continually goes on talking or doing things and does not meditate for a while, who does not take a rest, cannot control his nervous system and keep it in order. If there is anything that can control the nervous system it is right breathing; and when that right breathing is done, together with a concentration of thought, then the nervous system is greatly fortified. Besides there are many things which cause unhappiness, and these can often be avoided by keeping the nervous system in hand.

When we look at it from a higher point of view, this can be done by denying the impulses which sometimes arise suddenly and which clamour for an answer. What is called self-denial is really this: that one controls one's thoughts and wishes and desires and passions. But that does not mean retirement from life in the world; it only means taking oneself in hand.

It is never too soon to begin control, and it is never too late to improve it. If that kind of education is given from childhood, wonderful results can be brought about. In ancient times in India, though one sees very little of it now, the youths were trained in

Asana, a certain way of sitting, of walking, of standing; and by that they first achieved control over their muscles and nerves. It would be of immense value if education today adopted both the study of controlling reactions and the practice of it in sports and gymnastics. If a youth of twelve to sixteen years could learn to breathe clearly and rhythmically and deeply enough, that alone would be something.

The control of the reaction will always give a certain amount of pain, but at the same time it is by suffering that one will gain the power to rise above it. But of course if it is not understood rightly one might endanger oneself. There is a danger in both cases; on one side there is a pit, on the other side there is water. There may be a person who by being afraid of getting hurt or oppressed by someone, is always keeping his thoughts and feelings suppressed; if he had expressed them he would have become a very bad man, but by not having been able to express them he has been ruined. Therefore one should develop one's discrimination in order to analyse the reaction, to understand it before it is expressed. One should always ask oneself, "That which is in my hand now, shall I not throw it away? By throwing it away, shall I do something wrong? Where shall I throw it? Will it fall on my head? What will become of it?" A man should know what he has in his hand. If in order to avoid breaking another person's head he has broken his own head, he has done wrong too.

Then what should he do? He should first weigh and measure the impulses that come to him. Instead of throwing the impulse out automatically he should first weigh it, analyse it, measure it, and use it to the best advantage in life. A stone is not only used to break another person's head or to break one's own head, but is also used to build houses. Use everything where it will be most useful, where it will be of some advantage. All such things as passion and anger and irritation one looks upon as very bad, as evil; but if that evil were kept in hand it could be used for a good purpose, because it is a power, it is an energy. In other words evil, properly used, becomes a virtue; and virtue wrongly used becomes an evil. For instance, when a person is in a rage, or when he really feels like being angry, if he controls that thought and does not express it in words, that gives him great power. Otherwise

the expression has a bad effect upon his nerves. His control of it has given him an extra strength which will remain with him. A person who has anger and control is to be preferred to the person who has got neither.

Does not self-control take away spontaneity? Self-control gives a greater spontaneity. It develops thought-power; it makes one think first about every impulse, which otherwise would have manifested automatically. In other words: hold the word between the lips before it drops out.

Is impulse, before it is controlled, wrong in itself, or is it good? When one thinks about the origin of impulse one goes in quite a different direction of thought. Then one has to think in what direction it is facing; also of the direction of the mind, whether it is in illumination or in darkness. The mind is sometimes illuminated, sometimes in darkness. One should think about the condition of the mind at the time. There is another thing to be considered in this connection: a person may have good intentions and his mind may be focused on good ideas; and then another with evil intentions and wrong ideas says or does something which automatically turns the mind of the first person to evil against his own will. There is the word of the Bible, 'Resist not evil'. Sometimes evil will come like fire thrown by a person into the mind of another. A fire then starts in that mind which had been without it, and in reaction it too expresses that fire. To resist evil is to send fire in answer to fire; in other words to partake of the fire that comes from another. But by not partaking of it one casts the fire out and the fire falls on the person who threw it.

THE DEEPER SIDE OF LIFE

WHEN we consider life deeply, we can divide it into two parts and call one the lighter side of life and the other the deeper. The importance of both these sides may at times seem equally great. When a person is thinking of the lighter side of life, at that moment that side is more important, while the other side, of which the person is not conscious, seems to have no great importance. But then there are other moments which come in life, perhaps after suffering, or after a loss or some other experience, when a person suddenly awakens to a different realization of life; and when one is awakened to that the deeper side of life seems to have more importance than the lighter side. No one, neither clergyman nor mystic nor any authority, can say which side is more important. It depends upon how we look at it. If we raise its value, though it may be a small thing, yet we shall attach a greater value to it. There is nothing in this world which has a permanent value attached to it. If there seems to be such a thing, it does not stay in the same position always. If something like money is subject to change, then what is there in this world which does not change in importance?

As it is necessary to have repose after action so it is necessary to have a glimpse of the deeper side of life after having performed one's everyday duties. That is why religions have taught prayers, and why churches were built where people could go every day to be in a right atmosphere and to be silent. Now religion has become a secondary thing and man's life has developed with more struggles; naturally a man has hardly time to go to a solitary place or into a church to sit down in silence. Those few who have the time and who care to continue with their religion go once a week to a service. Therefore if I would suggest a way at the present time, it is the way of esotericism, which means on the one hand studying, on the other hand practising, and also meditating: doing these three things.

One may ask, what should one study? There are two kinds of

studies. One kind is by reading the teachings of the great thinkers and keeping them in mind, the study of metaphysics, psychology, and mysticism. And the other kind of study is the study of life. Every day one has an opportunity for studying; but it should be a correct study. When a person travels in a tramcar, in the train, with a newspaper in his hand, he wants to read the sensational news which is worth nothing. He should read human nature which is before him, people coming and going. If he would continue to do this, he would begin to read human beings as though they were letters written by the divine pen, which speak of their past and future. He should look deeply at the heavens and at nature and at all the things to be seen in everyday life, and reflect upon them with the desire to understand. This kind of study is much superior, incomparably superior, to the study of books.

Then there is practice, the practices which the Yogis and Sufis in the East have performed for many, many years; and they have transmitted their thousands of years of experience as a tradition from teacher to pupil: ways of sitting, ways of standing, of breathing properly, of being in silence, ways of relaxing, of concentrating, of feeling inspired, joyful, or more peaceful. Of course for such practices the help of a teacher is necessary.

And the third thing is the practice in everyday life; to practise the principles one has esteemed in life, to uphold the ideal one has always held in one's heart. These things and many others besides, such as one's attitude to others, one's manner with others, everything one does from morning till evening, all these things help one's development, till one arrives at a stage when one can see the deeper side of life naturally. There are numberless people, unhappy, depressed, or in great despair, perhaps wanting to commit suicide, who after having done this have eventually realized that life is worth living after all.

We can picture the lighter and the deeper sides of life in our present experience.* We are travelling together, some from one country, some from another country, coming from different parts of the world. Yet we are gathered together. By what? By

* Hazrat Inayat Khan gave this lecture on board the S.S. *Volendam* crossing from New York to Rotterdam, on December 2nd 1925.

destiny, which gave us a common destination where we all wish to go and which brings us together for a few days in this ship.

It is our happy disposition, our favourable attitude to one another, our desire to be kind, friendly, and sociable, which alone makes us understand one another and which will help us to make one another happy; it brings us still closer together than destiny did. It is a little picture of life. When we consider the life of a community, a nation, a race, even of the whole world, what is it? Is it not like a large ship on which all are travelling, whether knowingly or unknowingly, all moving, all changing?

There are two types of traveller. Those who know where they are travelling to, and those who do not know where they are coming from or where they are going. When these open their eyes, they only realize that they are in this ship, that they come from somewhere and that they are in a ship which is moving and is going somewhere. There are many people like this living in the world today. They are so absorbed in their everyday activity that they are ignorant of where they come from and where they are going.

Imagine the difference between these two travellers: the one who knows where he comes from and what his goal is, and the one who only knows where he is, what his present activity is, what the things in his immediate surroundings are. The one who does not know where he is going is not prepared to arrange, to face his destination; he does not know what is in store for him, and that is why he is not prepared for it.

Buddha was asked one day by his disciples what he meant by ignorance. And he answered by describing how a person was once clinging in distress to the branch of a tree in the utter darkness of the night, not knowing whether there was earth or a ditch or water beneath him. All night long he trembled and wept and was clinging fast to that branch. And with the break of day he found he was not one foot away from the earth beneath his feet.

Ignorance can be defined as fear, doubt, passion, confusion. Where do all these come from? They all come from our ignorance of one side of life, its deeper side. We may be clever in making the best of what we call the lighter side of life, but that is not all.

Notwithstanding all our efforts from morning till evening we do not know what we shall arrive at, what we gain by it. If we consider wealth, position, fame, name, or anything else, it only confuses us, for life is moving; it is all moving. We cannot hold it. A person may have riches one day and the next be poor; he may be successful one day and yet perhaps sooner or later he will meet with failure. Such powerful nations as Russia and Germany, who could ever have thought that they would fall down in a moment; nations which took hundreds of years to become strong and to build themselves up? But when their time came their downfall did not take long. If such great powers are subject to falling in a moment and their whole construction can be broken, if that is the nature and character of life, no thoughtful person will deny the fact that there must be some mystery behind it, some secret of which he would like to find the key. At least he would want to know what life is and what is behind it.

Those who have studied life and thought long enough about this subject, have arrived at the same point as the thinkers who lived as much as eight thousand years ago. Buddha has said and has realized the same things that a really wise man would realize and say today. This shows us that wisdom is the same in all ages. We may be evolving or going backward, but wisdom never changes and will always be the same. The same realization will come to all those who think deeply and try to realize what life is. In order to realize life it is not necessary for us to follow a certain religion. It is not necessary for us to be great or good, pious or spiritual. The first and most necessary thing is that we become observant. We should look at life more keenly than we do instead of living superficially. It would cost us nothing. It only takes us away from our everyday occupation for a few minutes. Life always gives an opportunity of thinking, however busy we may be.

It is not necessary for us to leave our occupation, our work in life, and go into the forest and sit in silence and meditate upon life. We can meditate upon life in the midst of life if only we want to. What happens is that a man begins his life by action and the more active he becomes, the less he thinks. Then his action becomes his thought. But if he considered what exists besides the action

and thoughts which are connected with everyday life, if he also gave thought to the deeper side of life, he would have more benefit.

The ideal life is at least to try to live up to one's ideal. But in order to have an ideal one must first awaken to an ideal. Not everyone possesses an ideal; many people do not know of it. It is no exaggeration to say that the wars and disasters we have gone through, the unrest that all feel, and the disagreement among the people which is sometimes seen and sometimes not seen, are all caused by one thing and that is the lack of an ideal. We are progressing commercially, industrially. But in all walks of life progress will be stopped one day or another if the ideal is destroyed. If there is anything which can be said to be the means of saving the world, it is the awakening of idealism. It is the first task that is worth considering.

Besides for the average man to consider even one thing, that he must live a life of balance, would already be of great importance, and it is not very difficult. When a person is working he should realize that recreation is also necessary. When a person tires himself it is necessary to take repose; when a person thinks too much it is necessary to rest the mind at certain times, during which he must try not to think. But life is an intoxication, it is like drink, whatever be man's motive, whether he is compelled and thrown into it or not. It is all an intoxication, going at his object with all his might and thought and feeling, till either he has accomplished what he wants, or he is destroyed. If he used balance in everything he did, he would find the key to a life of greater happiness.

People often fight and argue and discuss. Over what? Over a reason. When two persons dispute, each has a reason. Each thinks his reason the right one. They may dispute for years and yet will arrive nowhere because the reason of each is different. Therefore to think more is to see behind the reason. And the moment we have begun to see behind the reason, we will look at life quite differently. Then we find that behind what we blame the other for there is perhaps something to praise; and where there is something to praise there is perhaps a reason for blame. We shall begin to see what is beyond all appearances and that will give us

the proof that the whole of life is a kind of unfoldment. The deeper we look into life the more it unfolds itself, allowing us to see more keenly. Life is revealing. It is not only human beings who speak; if only the ears can hear even plants and trees and all nature speak, in the sense that nature reveals itself, reveals its secret. In this way we communicate with the whole of life. Then we are never alone, then life becomes worth living.

The thoughtful of all ages have considered the source of creation to be one and the same. A scientist will tell us today that the cause behind creation is motion, vibration. So far he will go. But if from motion and vibration this manifestation has come into our view then that motion is not lifeless. If that motion is life itself, then it is intelligent. It is of course not intelligent in the sense we understand this word. We know the limited side of it; we call the function of the brain intelligence. We say that one thing is intelligent because it is living, and another thing where we do not distinguish life we call unintelligent. But an Indian scientist has pointed out that even trees breathe. If that is true, then the trees are living. And if today it is proved that trees are living, it will also be found that stones are living. Then one will realize that all life comes from one source which is the very life of all things, and not only life but intelligence also; this is what religion calls God. Whatever we call it, it is the same. The difference is only in name.

LIFE, AN OPPORTUNITY

WHEN WE look at the world today and at the condition it is in, we begin to wonder if we understand any better than those who lived before us the idea that life is an opportunity. In spite of our present stage of evolution and the scientific advancement of the world, the war which humanity went through not long ago shows that never in the history of the world was such a great catastrophe caused by mankind. It seems as though the whole evolution of humanity had been intended to prepare and to create such means of destruction that the greater part of humanity has been ruined by it. And when we think of the distrust that exists today among nations and how one nation has allowed another nation to be ruined, we begin to feel that we understand the idea much less than those who lived before us that life is an opportunity.

Regarding education, year by year the study in the schools and colleges is becoming more difficult; to pass their examinations the students have to work so hard that it seems that by the time they have got a degree their nerves and finer forces are shattered, and that they are then unable to make full use of their qualifications.

When we look at the political world we see the same: each political party is striving for its own welfare just as each individual is trying to get the better of another; and nations follow the same principle.

Domestic life seems to be declining every day. Life is becoming more and more a hotel life. Very few in the world today experience and enjoy home life, or are even capable of appreciating it, for they do not know it. Those who lived before us were much happier, for they knew the simplicity and affection of home life and the joy and the pleasure of a home. The pleasures today are not like the enjoyments of the more intelligent and wise in ancient times. They used to enjoy poetry and higher music; today jazz has become more popular. It is the same with all the

other entertainments. When we go to the theatre we find the plays more and more limited in scope; there is no depth, no height, no ideal. They show life as it really is, but that does not inspire or uplift mankind. What is needed is to show life better than it is so that man may follow that example. Besides the tendency of the writer, of the poet, of the artist, of the musician, is now to appeal to the most ordinary person, to the man of the lowest evolution, 'the man in the street'. If everything that should educate man, theatre, books, poetry, and art, pull him down to his lowest stage of evolution, it means going downward instead of upward. When a person writes good music or poetry with more lofty themes, there is no market for it. Whenever a person brings something higher he is told that it is not wanted. It seems that education, higher ideals, everything, is becoming commercialized; and by being commercialized it is lowered. And at the same time, if we stand in the mist of the crowd and look at the people hurrying by, we would think that never before have people tried so hard to make the best of life's opportunity.

But the opportunity of life should be considered from a different point of view. The wiser we become the more our outlook changes. There are four different stages in life: childhood, youth, middle age, and advanced age; and each of these four stages shows a great opportunity. For instance in childhood the consciousness is in paradise. The child living in the same world of woe, treachery, and wickedness as the grown-up is happy because it is not yet awakened to the other aspect of life. It only knows the better side of it, the beauty of life. And therefore that same world is the Garden of Eden for the child till it grows and is exiled from the Garden. Before that it enjoys paradise on earth; it is unaware of the wickedness and the ugliness of human nature. It still maintains in itself the heavenly air and angelic innocence and the tendency to appreciate all beauty and to love every being.

As it grows it begins to lose that tendency; nevertheless the child shows by its words and actions and by every tendency the angelic essence in its soul. This is the opportunity for every child to experience kingliness in life; and this opportunity is taken away by parents who send the child to school too early and burden it with study. We need not be anxious to prepare the child for its

studies so that it will be able to answer in school. That kingliness that God has given to it, that joy and beauty for which it is born and which it longs to have, are thus taken away from it. This period of its life should be made free of anxiety and worry. The parents burden the child with studies, but after all what do these studies lead to? The child's strength and intelligence are only lessened, when it is burdened with unnecessary studies before the mind is developed; and this tendency is increasing more and more.

People also want to teach a child concentration; but they have forgotten that a child is born with concentration. It is the grown-up whose concentration is weak. Every soul is born with concentration; it loses this faculty as it grows up.

Once I was travelling in England and someone invited me to see a school where concentration was taught. They brought before me ten or fifteen children, and each child was asked to look at a blank curtain, and say what was there. One child looked and looked and said, 'A lily'. Another child said, 'A rose'. The teacher asked a third child to tell her what was there. The child answered, 'I don't see anything!' I thought, 'That is much better; at any rate he says what he sees!' And so the teacher asked ten or twelve children questions about what they saw. It was a lesson in hypocrisy, in exciting the imagination. It could never help a child, for the child's concentration is already there; if the child is kept a child that is enough. We want to make the child into a grown-up person, but it is only happy when left to run about or to be cheerful. The child should not have this burden. We have made it for ourselves; it is not born with us.

If life were not so complex there would have been no need of war and of such difficulties as we have today. Because we have spoiled ourselves we want more and more; and yet we make it so difficult to get what we want, that in the end we cannot get it at all. And at the same time by wanting more than is necessary we make life miserable, and the life of others also.

The amount of study with which a youth is loaded, is the greatest wrong done to him today. But the culture of the youth seems to have disappeared and inspiration is lacking. We have not realized what is necessary for young people; they are not given

the inspiration of lofty ideals, nor those impressions which make them do great things. Today there seems to be a kind of uniformity in all youths. Youth has no admiration for a hero; no stimulus is given to youth to become a wonderful or an inspired person, a great poet or musician. Because of this uniform education the child does not get the nourishment for its soul which it needs to become that for which it was born.

Besides youth is an opportunity during which time a beautiful manner, a high aspiration, and lofty ideals can be taught. And it is youth which has the enthusiasm to take everything that comes, assimilate it and express it in return. But when the time of a youth is spent only in working hard all day long and trying to pass examinations, and little time is left for recreation or for other things, that does not suffice for his life's purpose.

Those who understand these ideas realize that youth is the greatest opportunity that comes in life; it never comes again. Life's spring-time never returns; it comes only once; and when that opportunity is taken away and the youth has not been inspired as he should be, it is just like keeping a plant without watering it. For that is the very time it should be watered, that is the time for it to be reared; and that time should not be neglected. There are thousands and millions of young people in the colleges who have had no good manners taught to them, and no inspiration given to them. When they are grown-up they can show that they have passed examinations, that they have gained a lot of knowledge; yet the knowledge which enables the soul to develop, has been neglected during their youth, during the time when the mind is receptive, and when the child with all its enthusiasm and capacity for concentration can grasp everything that is good and beautiful.

The inspiration of the musicians and poets who have done great work in the world was created during their youth. Either they saw an example, a living example which impressed them, or they were told or they studied something that was just like sowing the seed in their heart. For youth is the only time which destines the child to become great in life; and if this time is past it will never come again. Whether a person wants to be a business-man or a politician, a professional man, a scientist or a musician, it is in

youth that he should start and that he should be inspired with that ideal. At that time the ground is fertile. But when that time is gone the chance does not easily come again.

Besides the training for various professions and occupations, there remains another capacity which is neglected in youth: the cultivation of the heart-quality. Today there is hardly one person in a hundred whose heart-quality has been cultivated. Although instinctively the heart-quality is always there, every effort is made to blunt it. What is meant by the heart-quality? There is intuition, there is inspiration, and there is revelation. All these come from the culture of the heart, from the heart-quality. A person may be most cultivated, may have studied much, and yet may not be intuitive. A person may learn all the techniques of music and poetry without having the heart-quality. Heart-quality is something which must be developed within oneself; and when no attention is given at the time of youth to developing that particular quality, what happens when a person is grown-up? He will be selfish, proud, mannerless and not ready to sacrifice. He believes that these characteristics guard his interest best, and one calls such a person a man of common sense or a practical man. But if everybody were like that, what could one expect of life except constant conflict as there is today? Religion or the devotional side of man's nature is also dying out for the reason that the heart-quality is lacking. Even if people go to church or to another place of worship, their piety is intellectual. People can only enjoy something intellectual. When there is a mathematical explanation of something it is wonderful; but when it comes to feeling blessed and uplifted, to feeling the raising of the consciousness towards the higher spheres, that they cannot experience for they live in their intellect.

There are two principal experiences of life: one experience is called sensation and the other exaltation. What is generally known and experienced by the average man today is what is called sensation: all the beauty that one sees, of line or colour, all that one sees with the eyes or that one tastes and touches. It is living in sensation that makes man material, and after some time he becomes ignorant of the spirit.

Exaltation, which is a greater bliss, a higher pleasure, and which

makes man independent of the outer life for his happiness, does not seem to be known by the majority. What is exaltation? The soul can go through four different experiences which are all in reality the longing of the soul. Mistakenly man does not seek those four experiences but instead he experiences something else. For instance it is a constant yearning of the soul to experience happiness, and instead of that it becomes connected with what one calls pleasure; but pleasure belongs to sensation and happiness to exaltation. Pleasure is only the suggestion; happiness is reality.

After that comes knowledge. Every soul yearns for knowledge, that knowledge which will give exaltation. But the soul cannot be satisfied by the knowledge one gathers from books, by learning, or by the study of outside things. For instance the knowledge of science, the knowledge of art, are outside knowledge. They give one a kind of strength, a kind of satisfaction, but this does not last. It is another knowledge that the soul is really seeking. The soul cannot be satisfied unless it finds that knowledge, but that knowledge does not come by learning names and forms. On the contrary it comes from unlearning. Do not be surprised therefore if you read in some books of the East that Mahatmas went into the mountains and sat there for many years. I do not say that we should follow their example, but we can appreciate what they have brought from there. They went there to explore life, that aspect of life which is unseen and remains unexplored. They sat there for years in meditation. They lived on leaves and fruits, on what they could find in the forest. They contemplated. What they have thus gathered is not a knowledge learned from this world, but a greater knowledge which can be learned from within.

One can see pictures of Buddha, with closed eyes, sitting cross-legged. What does that symbol convey to us? That there is a knowledge that can be learnt by closing not only the eyes but also the mind from the outside world. Closing the eyes does not make the concentration any greater. Most people go as far as closing the eyes, and no further; but if the eyes are closed and the mind is pondering over things, that is not concentration. Those who can concentrate can do it without having to close the eyes. I once saw, when travelling in the East, a person working in a telegraph-office; and however busy he was, his concentration

continued. I said, 'It is very wonderful, that with all this work you can go on concentrating.' He smiled and said, 'That is the way of concentration.'

The third thing one experiences in life and for which the soul yearns is happiness. That can be gained also by getting in touch within oneself. And the fourth thing is peace. It cannot be gained by outer means, by outer comfort and rest alone. It can only be gained when the mind is at rest.

After youth comes the stage of middle age. Middle age is the time when one has gathered knowledge, when one has experienced life, when one has gone through joy and sorrow, when one has learnt lessons from one's profession, from one's occupation, from one's home, from every side of life. It is the opportunity to make the best use of what one has gathered by experience. But what generally happens is what Sa'di, the Persian poet says, 'O my self, you have come to middle age, and yet you are no better than a child!' If a person has not learnt by that time all he ought to learn, he has indeed lost life's opportunity. Because it is that age during which he earns not only money, but experience and knowledge; and the more he has learnt, the richer he is at that time, and the better he knows how to make use of what powers he has, the more successful and fruitful he becomes.

Besides that is the age when one begins to know life's obligations, and if one does not know them even then, one has not learnt anything. To know one's obligation towards those who look up to one, who surround one, who expect some help, some advice, some service from one, that is the time when one must be conscious of these things. It is the beautiful age when the tree comes to full maturity, when it begins to give fruit to the world. Not only is this the time for the singer when his voice is in full blossom, not only is this the time for the artist or the thinker when he can express himself fully, but for every person that age is the promise of the ripened mind expressing itself to the best advantage; and if that opportunity is not taken then man has missed a great deal in life.

Advanced age too has its own blessings. People do not appreciate the blessings of every period of life; therefore they appreciate one and dislike another. In the East, especially in India,

great respect is given to age; and it would be good if that ideal were more widespread. Old age is the time when man is the record of his whole life; whether he has been sympathetic, kind, wise, foolish, or whatever he has been, whatever he has done, advanced age brings the record of it. One can read it in his face, in his features, in his atmosphere. He has a greater opportunity to inspire, to bless, and to serve those who want his service or who want to be directed. He can show them a better way of looking at life. But when man does not realize his opportunities, he will act like a child in middle age, while in childhood he was given the work of an old person, and in youth he was burdened like someone of middle age.

If we only understood that every moment in life, every day, every month, and every year, has its particular blessing; if we only knew life's opportunity! But the greatest opportunity that one can realize in life is to accomplish that purpose for which man was sent on earth. And if he has lost that opportunity, then whatever he may have accomplished in the world, whether he has gathered wealth, possesses much property, or has made a great name for himself, he will not be satisfied. Once man's eyes are opened and he begins to look at the world, he will find there is a greater opportunity than he had ever thought before.

Man is as poor as he is, as limited as he is, as troubled as he is; yet there is nothing in this world which could not be accomplished by man if he only knew what thought can do. It is ignorance which keeps him from what he ought to accomplish. Man should know how to operate his thought, how to accomplish certain things, how to focus his mind on the object that should be accomplished. If he does not know then he has not made use of his mind but has lived like a machine. If man knew the power of feeling, and realized that the power of feeling can reach anywhere and penetrate anything, he could achieve whatever he might wish.

There is a Persian story of Shirin and Farhad. Once Shirin, the girl whom Farhad admired, in order to test his love said, 'Farhad, do you love me? If you love me, you will have to make a way through the mountains'. Farhad said, 'Yes, I was waiting for that test.' He went to the mountains full of the feeling of love

he had for her. Every time he broke the rock with his hammer, he said the name of Shirin, and the strength of his hammer became a thousand times greater because it was joined by the feeling of his heart.

Today man has forgotten the great power there is in feeling. It can break rocks. There is nothing that cannot be accomplished by the power of feeling. But generally there is no feeling; feeling has become drowned, it no longer exists. To realize the power of feeling and to express it is a great opportunity which life offers; but a still greater opportunity of life is to free oneself from the captivity of limitations. Every man is a captive in some form or other; his life is limited in some form or other; but one could get above this limitation by realizing the latent power and inspiration of the soul.

Kabir, the great poet of India says, 'Life is a field and you are born to cultivate it. And if you know how to cultivate this field you can produce anything you like. All the need of your life can be produced in this field. All that your soul yearns after and all you need is to be got from the field, if you know how to cultivate it and how to reap the fruit.' But if this opportunity is only studied in order to make the best of life by taking all that one can take and by being more comfortable, that is not satisfying. We must enrich ourselves with thought, with that happiness which is spiritual happiness, with that peace which belongs to our soul, with that liberty, that freedom, for which our soul longs; and attain to that higher knowledge which breaks all the fetters of life and raises our consciousness to look at life from a different point of view. Once a person has realized this opportunity he has fulfilled the purpose of life.

OUR LIFE'S EXPERIENCE

CONSCIOUSLY or unconsciously we call to us that element which makes us what we are. What we experience in life, therefore, has either come from what we have already called to us in the past, or from what we call at the present moment. It is very difficult for a person to hear something for the first time and accept it immediately. No person in this world is desirous of calling for something that he does not wish to have, so, as Emerson has said, think beforehand of what you want.

The principle of the whole of creation is based on this; even the fruits and flowers, the plants and trees, in order to be what they are, call for that element which makes them. If fragrance belonged to all flowers then every flower would have fragrance; but it is only a certain flower which has fragrance; it is that flower which calls for it. Every flower has a different colour. Why? Because each flower calls for it. Every seed or herb which possesses medical value shows that its peculiarity belongs to it, and it calls for it. The life of little insects will also show us proof of the same fact. Their green or blue or red colour, and their beautiful or ugly form, are all based on and controlled by what they have called to themselves. Insects moving among beautiful flowers show beauty in their colour, in their construction; for they live in beauty and so they call for beauty. Insects living in the mud show a different quality again. Why? Because they call for it. The more we study science, be it natural science or chemistry, we shall find that each being and each object with a certain peculiarity shows that it is like that because it has called for that particular element.

One might ask how, if it is true that the flowers and plants call for the element that makes their colour, it happens that there is sometimes little difference in the colours of flowers and leaves, and that all roses have more or less the same scent. The answer is that the rose's past is behind it; and since the seed of the rose had conceived those properties which the rose shows, it has maintained

as its heritage that fragrance and colour. But at the same time it takes from the air and the sun that substance which makes it the perfect rose. In other words, there is perhaps in some garden another plant, a flower which is without fragrance. It has the same sun, it has the same air, it is in the same soil; but it is the rose which calls for the properties that make it a rose. Though that flower is in the same place it does not call for them, it calls only for those properties which keep it as it is. And of people one may say symbolically, that one creeps on this earth, another walks gently, a third runs, and a fourth flies; yet they are all on the same earth and under the same sun. No quality can exist without being maintained by what it attracts every moment of the day. As our physical body depends upon physical sustenance for its existence, and as our mind depends on the sustenance of its own sphere, so each quality has its food, a food which it calls for and on which it lives. As the body would cease to exist if its sustenance were not given to it, so every quality, however great it may appear in a person, would cease to exist if there were no sustenance within reach. If we observe keenly the life around us we will find a thousand proofs of this. How many are there with an inclination to sing, with a desire to do some good, who themselves cannot find their qualities, or whose qualities vanish once they are starved of that food on which they live!

Man who is so to speak the finished product of creation shows this doctrine in its fullness. His success, his failure, his sorrow, his joy, all depend upon what he calls, and what he has called to himself. Many will say, 'But is it not the case that he is experiencing that which he was meant to experience?' That is the idealistic point of view, and a good point of view to take; it is also consoling. Yet when we come to the study of metaphysics we shall find that the secret behind creation is what the Hindus call the dream of Brahma. Since each being represents Brahma, the Creator, so each being in his sphere is a creator of his own life. It is ignorance of this fact which keeps man back from his progress towards perfection; and it is knowledge of this which alone can be called divine knowledge. For if ever anyone attained to a higher realization it was by this knowledge.

There is another side to this question to be considered. One may

say that there are many undesirable things which one should never have desired, but one did not desire them as one sees them now; it was, as one saw them before, in another form, that one desired them. Very often happiness shows itself in the guise of unhappiness, very often pain shows itself in the guise of pleasure. He who does not seek after pain will seek after pleasure; but he does not know that perhaps behind that pleasure the pain was hiding. A seeker after success may not see failure hiding behind it, and at that time the very seeking for success would lead him to failure. For that success was only a success in appearance; in reality it was a failure.

Life is a comedy, and the more you look at it the more you can smile at it; smile not at other people but at yourself. Life is always different from what one thinks it to be, and this applies to pain, pleasure, happiness, success, and failure, everything.

People often wonder why some souls are born in miserable circumstances and others are not. There is a saying in the Qur'an, which even sages have sometimes misinterpreted: 'The creation has come out of the darkness.' The soul does not always come to earth with its eyes open. It generally comes with closed eyes, as is shown by the infant which does not open its eyes immediately. But to compare one condition with another one needs to be familiar with those conditions, and that time comes after being born. If one considered this question more deeply, one would come to a very great realization of the secret of life, and especially of the secret of good and bad fortune. Then one would realize that it is not always by design that a soul is so limited that it cannot get out of a certain condition, but that every soul makes for itself a condition, even after coming to the earth. There are many who live in misery, in bad conditions, because they know no better. If they had known better they could have managed to better themselves.

This rule applies to many people in life. Most of the reasons for their misery are to be found in their own ignorance. If they knew how to fight, how to get out of their misery, there would be many ways of doing so. But whatever be the condition of a person, it is never unfair, for his gains will always equal his losses and his losses his gains. Only, we do not always see what is

the real value of every loss and gain, and outward conditions count little in reality.

Thus one person has difficulties and troubles and another is at peace. But it all evens up. Even when with great difficulty one finds a happy man, it is not easy to prove that he is happy. Happiness consists of one thing only: the realization of God; and to realize God means to lose one's self. No doubt as in the light of the sun the dim candle-light fades, so in the happiness of God-consciousness the longing for minor pleasures falls away. At the same time, finding God does not mean looking for unhappiness and renouncing all the pleasures of life. Life becomes even more pleasant the more one progresses in the realization of God.

All conditions are illusory, and in the end the sum total of every person's difficulties is the same; that is to say the sum total is the horizon, but if we have to point out where the horizon is, we cannot. As we go towards the horizon, however, we find the distinction between cause and effect becoming paler and paler, and everything balances more and more in our life. The further we go the closer we come to that equilibrium which is expressed by the symbol of the serpent with its tail in its mouth. There is neither tail nor mouth; mouth and tail are only there as long as the serpent is straight; they are no longer there when the serpent has curled itself up and put its tail in its mouth.

There was once a man who hated his neighbours and fought and quarrelled with them. This bred much ill-will, until in the end the heart of one person melted, and he said, 'What are we quarrelling about? It is just a misunderstanding about a single word I said'. And their whole world of hatred crumbled from that moment, and they became friends. There comes a time when there is a summing up of the situation or event. That is the end of it; and the further we go the more it disappears. All our disputes, high or low, will pale and fade away; and when no colour is left in them, then that white light comes which is the light of God. It is that attainment which was called by Buddha *Nirvana*. To our ordinary senses colours appear as a reality, but in the realism of truth they fade away, they have no existence.

There are however blessed souls, souls who are really satisfied

and whose hunger is stilled by seeing another person eating; or who are happy seeing another person adorned with beautiful clothes. It might seem to us a great renunciation or self-denial; but they have been given a cross to bear and have risen above it. Sacrifice gives no pain; it only gives pleasure.

The spark of this Nirvana is in every soul. I once said to a child, 'Wouldn't you rather give your toy away to that other poor child?' It had just received the toy and had not even played with it. I added, 'You should not give your toy away if you wouldn't be really glad to see that other child playing with it.' It was just like watching a match bursting into flame. That child consented at once and gave its toy, and you should have seen its face; it was beaming with happiness. Therefore this Nirvana need not be learnt by study; it is in us. It is a star in us whose brilliance consumes all the impurities of life, and it turns them all into purity which is the divine light.

If there were no pain one would not have the experience of joy. It is pain which helps one to experience joy. Everything is distinguished by its opposite; and the one who feels pain deeply is more capable of expressing joy. If there were no pain, life would be most uninteresting; for it is by pain that penetration takes place, and the sensation after pain is a deeper joy. Without pain the great musicians, athletes, discoverers, and thinkers would not have reached the stage they have arrived at in the world. If they had always experienced joy, they would not have touched the depths of life. For what is pain? Pain in the true sense of the word is the deepest joy. If we have imagination we can enjoy tragedy more than comedy: comedy is for children, and tragedy is for grown-ups. It is by pain alone that somebody becomes what is called an old soul, one who may be young in age but whose thoughts are deep.

If sorrow and sadness have no reality, why then did Christ say, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful?' We must distinguish between the human side of the Master's life and the divine side. If the human side were not human, then what would be human? Why does God send His message to humanity by a man and not by angels? Because only a human being knows human beings. He knows them from having experienced human limitation.

That he felt sadness is the most beautiful side of the Master's life. If he had not, how could he have sympathized with those who are sorrowful? If we were all born perfect there would be no purpose in human life. The purpose of life is that we grow towards perfection; from the greatest limitation we grow towards perfection. Its beauty is in acquiring wisdom, in living at the cost of all our failures, our mistakes. It is all worth while, and it all accomplishes the purpose of our coming to the earth.

Is it perhaps, one might ask, God's way of making us immune to sorrow when He sends us troubles and difficulties? Everything is the way of God: when He sends troubles and sorrows, and when He sends joy and pleasure. If we would see in everything the hand of God, we would be thankful for both. Some people are very much impressed by the doctrine of Karma, and in a way it is a virtue to take everything patiently and call it Karma; but that is not sufficient. We should realize that happiness is our birthright. God does not rejoice in our sorrow, God is not pleased by our pain; and therefore we must do everything in our power to escape from illness and other difficulties, instead of lying patiently waiting, as if under a rock, 'because it is our Karma'.

On the other hand it is good to look for the cause of our sorrows in our own thoughts and actions. Sometimes it is not only the conditions of life which cause us sorrow, but we allow them to create sorrow for us. A part of sorrow comes from life, and a part we make ourselves. Also a part of joy comes from life, and a part we make ourselves. If one helps life to give one a little joy, it will do so; if one does not allow it, life becomes helpless. Out of a hundred things in everyday life that we take too seriously, we should perhaps take only one seriously, and realize that the other ninety-nine matter little.

To some extent there must be attachment and illusion, although as little as possible. For if there were no illusion and attachment, it would be as if it were day all the time and never night. Also in illusion and attachment there is a motive power, and by that motive power a purpose of life is accomplished. And if there were no illusion and attachment, the soul would not be able to hold the body, even to a small extent, because this it can only do through attachment. Many people who are very ill, sometimes

for years and years, continue to be ill without dying; the reason is the attachment of the soul to the body.

But, we may ask, as the world that we see has no reality, as it is an illusion, why do we see that illusion; what is the cause of that illusion which torments us? One uses the word 'illusion' conventionally, but its true meaning is not realized until the reality of life is understood, until the innermost or eternal life is realized. It is when we understand this that everything seems an illusion; illusion is something which seems to exist but yet does not exist in any form. The nature of all things which seem to exist and do not last is like this: their existence is transitory, and to a certain extent the effect produced by them upon our soul is intoxication. We are so hypnotized by all we see, that momentarily we forget it is not lasting. Therefore the way of the mystic is to close his eyes and also his heart to that which is not lasting, in order to have a chance of finding out that there is a life which is not transitory. He practises every kind of meditation and concentration to free his mind of this intoxication which is continually coming over him. Man spends all his efforts to gain this intoxication, and in the end there is only disappointment.

We cannot claim that there is no joy and no pain. In saying so we defeat our own argument. One can say there is nothing but illusion; but putting this idea into words weakens it for those who do not look at it in the same way. It is realization which is needed, not the claim. Real virtue is learnt by the study of reality; then it comes by itself. When a person becomes conscious of reality the light of reality shines before him, the lamp of Aladdin, the guiding light.

There are two ways of calling, of attracting, that which makes up one's self. One way is by calling that which is outside of one's life in order to make one's life complete, be it wealth, power, position, or anything else. But there is another way of calling, and that is to call the very self. By calling one's real self one naturally harmonizes one's spirit, and it may become so harmonized that both with friend and foe one would feel harmony. Once we have communicated with our self, once we have called our self, our real self, we become naturally harmonized with pain and pleasure, and we become contented with success and

failure. For in spite of all the different experiences of our external life, there rises in the depth of our heart a harmony, a peace, and a power which keep us centralized. To avoid being wet in the rain we cannot stop the rain; all that we can do is to have an umbrella which is waterproof. By developing ourselves materially or spiritually we cannot stop the natural consequences of life. When we are in the midst of the world we are exposed to all the agreeable and disagreeable experiences which life gives us. If there is a way of making life easy for ourselves it is only by harmonizing within ourselves so that we can harmonize with all the different conditions and experiences of life.

If we complain, there is no end to our complaints. In order to have no complaints we must not complain. But we should be conscious of the fact that all that we experience is called, is attracted by us, and that all we shall experience will be called by us also. Thus at each step in our life we must be wise, in order to recognize, among all the things that we desire, those that we should call to ourselves and those that we should not. The past has passed, it is no use mourning over it. It is just as well to forget the past except for beautiful impressions and good memories. It is the present for which we are responsible, for it is the present which will be our future. The most essential thing, therefore, is to harmonize in such a way that by centralizing our thought within ourselves, by finding our real self, the future may become harmonized. There is a prayer in the East: 'We thank Thee, God, for all we have experienced; the only thing we ask is make our end the best experience of all.'

COMMUNICATING WITH LIFE

FROM THE point of view of the mystic, life in all its aspects is communicative; if one only knows the secret of communicating with life. As long as one is ignorant of this secret one is deaf though one has ears and blind though one has eyes. There are stories of sages and saints who spoke with trees and plants and rocks, with mountains and with seas. People take these to be legends, but it is as true as anything else in this world of variety. It is not only true of the past but it can always be possible, if one knows how to communicate with life.

In the lower creation we recognize a faculty which we call instinct: the tendency that makes the bird fly and the fish swim without learning. This instinct also appears as intuition among the lower creation. Many scientists today say that animals have no mind, but in reality all creatures have a mind, even plants and trees. Those who live close to nature, those whose life-work is agriculture, those who live in the solitude among animals, know the fact that animals often give a warning of illness or of death, of a storm or a flood. They have intuition. The mechanism of man's body and mind is finer still; man is capable of a greater intuition; and yet it seems that animals perceive some things sooner than man. The reason is that man is so absorbed in his outer life, in his object in life, that it is very difficult for him to believe in intuition, and therefore his intuitive faculty becomes blunted and he proves to be less intuitive than the lower creation.

Those living close to nature in the solitude, or peasants living in the country, have greater intuition than intellectual people who live in the midst of worldly life. This shows that the life we live today in large towns is an unnatural life, lived in an artificial atmosphere, eating artificial food, adopting artificial ways. So one loses that heavenly quality, the divine heritage of man which is shown in the intuitive qualities. Fine persons seem to have more intuition than gross ones, women seem to have greater

intuition than men. The reason is that woman is by nature responsive. It is the receptivity of her more mature being that makes her more intuitive. Sometimes man reasons and argues, but woman says, 'Yes, but I feel it is to be this or that'; and her feeling proves to be right, although she cannot give a reason for it.

In every person there exists to a greater or lesser degree a faculty of perceiving impressions, and that is the first step towards intuition. The finer the person the greater his perception. But everyone at times feels, as an impression, the conditions of a place, the character of the people he meets, their tendencies, their motives, their desire, their grade of evolution. When this happens and one is asked why one feels like this, one cannot always give an explanation. One may say it is from the person's face, or from the atmosphere, or from what he has said. But in reality it is a feeling which is beyond description. A fine, sensitive, intelligent person always gets an impression on seeing someone.

The next stage is intuition. By intuition one receives warning of a coming danger, the promise of success, or the premonition of failure; if any change is to take place in life one feels it. But very often by not having self-confidence one loses that intuitive faculty. One fears that one's intuition is wrong; and in this way one loses self-confidence. One often thinks that perhaps one's intuition is not right; by following one's intuition one will fail, and so one takes another course. That is the way of reasoning, of logic, but naturally one's intuition becomes blunted after some time. If one does not make use of this faculty it disappears, and someone who is capable of perceiving intuitively then loses that faculty.

Another wonderful thing about intuition is that one is blessed with intuition according to one's sincerity. If a person is earnest, sincere, sympathetic, kind, he will be blessed with intuition; but if these qualities are lacking, intuition will be lacking too. Also, those who have no intuition have difficulty in attaining to the spiritual ideal, for spiritual belief does not come from outer experience, it does not come by reason and logic; it is a belief that springs from within in the form of intuition. And if the intuitive faculty is not developed that person's belief is not strong. Someone

who lacks intuition lacks belief too; and if he has a belief, that belief will not be strong enough, for it is not built on a sound foundation.

The next step along the path of intuition is inspiration. Poets, writers, musicians, thinkers, philosophers, are able to make use of this faculty. Others have it but they do not know how to use it. In art, poetry, or music one can create in a few moments through inspiration that which one could not otherwise create in ten years. It is a natural flow; one has no difficulty in working it out. What is inspired comes already arranged beforehand and there is very little to be done by the brain and by the mind. Besides everything that comes through inspiration is living and is most beautiful, most harmonious, compared with the art or poetry or music that is the outcome of the brain. Music of the great musicians of the past such as Wagner or Beethoven is still living. And no matter how often one hears it one always thirsts for it. Modern music has not that appeal.

It is the same thing with ancient art. There is something living in that art, and today with all the progress made in art that something is missing. It is the same with poetry. In Persia there were great poets such as Hafiz, Rumi, and Sa'di, whose works are still studied today and highly esteemed by millions of people in the East; they consider that without these works there would be no human culture. Their work was the foundation of human culture in the East; many later poets have tried to produce the same kind of works, but they have not yet succeeded even after many centuries; it seems that the inspiration is lost. Inspiration whenever it comes is living and life-giving; and it will always last and one will never get tired of it.

What is the theory of inspiration? Where does one find it? Where does it come from? There is one treasure-house where all knowledge collected, experienced, learned, and discovered by human beings is stored; and that treasure-house is the divine Mind, a mind with which all minds are linked. There is no experience we go through that does not remain or that is not recorded in that treasure-house. Every good or bad experience we have, every new thing we learn, every discovery we make, is all stored in that treasure-house. But one might ask, 'How does

one find in it what one wants? If we have a large store, perhaps hundreds and thousands of things, it is difficult to find anything we want at a moment's notice! The power of the mind, the will-power, is such that if one has enough of it one can find anything one wants to find. It is related that someone with great will-power wanted to buy a certain piece of furniture. In the first street he went to after leaving his house he saw exhibited in the show-room the very piece of furniture he desired. He was guided towards it. What one really wants is attracted by one, and one is attracted by what one wants. It is the same with the poet, the musician, the thinker. When he is deeply interested in what he is doing, then he has only to wish; and by the automatic action of the desire his wish becomes a light. This light is thrown on the divine store-house, and it is projected on the object he wants. Such is the phenomenon of will and inspiration, that no sooner is an inspired person moved by the beauty and harmony of life and wishes to express his soul, than the light of his soul shines on that particular object or on that particular knowledge. It comes instantly to his mind, expressing itself outwardly through his mind. All that is brought from within in this way is perfect, harmonious, beautiful, and has a wonderful effect.

In ancient times the Shah of Persia expressed the desire to have a history of Persia written. But he was told that the records were lost, and that it would be very difficult to trace the accounts of the kings who had lived in the past. However, a poet of that time, named Firdausi, said 'I will write the history of Persia.' He was a truly inspired poet. People were amazed; they wondered how he could do it. But Firdausi sent his soul, so to speak, into the past, and his soul became a receptacle of the knowledge of the past, which he expressed in the form of poetry. His book is called *The Shah-Nameh of Persia*.

Many people think that science is based upon the knowledge of facts proved by reason and logic, and very few know that at the beginning there was always intuition. All scientific discoveries spring from intuition; after that reason has its place, and logic helps. The scientists analyse and make their discoveries intelligible to others, but in the beginning these come from intuition. If the great inventors of America such as Edison and

others had been great mechanics only it would not have been sufficient; behind this, however, there was intuition.

Today there is a tendency not to admit that side of life. People believe it is not solid enough to rely upon intuition or inspiration. Once in Paris I was surprised at hearing a famous writer say, 'Is there such a thing as inspiration?' I thought, 'Here is a great writer who has made a name for himself, and yet he does not know if there is such a thing as inspiration!' By continual material strife, and by continual ignoring of the God-spirit, people have become so materialistic that they do not think that such a thing as inspiration exists. This man had become famous without believing in inspiration, and that was all he wanted. But when I learnt more about the work of this writer I found that his works were extremely superficial. There was no depth to them and no height, and that is the kind that is successful these days.

When one goes to see modern plays one finds the same thing. There is hardly a play with depth. And if one asks why it is so, the answer is: in order to please the man in the street. That means, we must keep everybody back in order to please the man in the street!

The next step after inspiration is vision. It is more than inspiration. One need not see a vision only in a dream; one can also have a vision when awake. There is nothing to be frightened of in this. It is only clearness of the inner sight. Knowledge comes in a flash and a problem is solved; a philosophical problem or a certain hidden law of life or nature has become manifest in a very clear form. Or one has got in touch with something or with someone at an unimaginable distance. Many people have misunderstood the real meaning of vision and have often pretended to be visionary; but the development of the true inner vision indicates great progress of the soul.

When one goes still further on the path of intuition one comes to what is called revelation, which means that everything and every being reveals to one its secret. Such a one feels that every leaf has a tongue to tell its legend. He finds that every soul is a living book which reads its own story aloud. He finds that every condition of life is turned inside out before him the moment he looks at it. He feels that he is at home on earth and in heaven and

that both the here and the hereafter become manifest to his soul.

How does it happen that one experiences and perceives intuition or inspiration, and that one sees visions and gets revelations? There is the story of the Apostles who instantly knew many languages. This does not mean that they knew French or English, German or Spanish. It means that they knew the language of every soul, that every soul began to speak to them, that they began to communicate with every person. The meaning of revelation is the understanding of the language of the soul. Every soul is always speaking if one can only hear it. It is not always what one hears in the noise of the world or the voice of man; but even the silent trees and the still mountains speak to us when we are able to hear them. It is a language of vibrations, an imperceptible language, and yet a fine mind can grasp it. The only explanation of it is that it is a music. For a musician music is a language that tells him something. The high and the low note, the flat and the sharp, are all expressive and all tell him something; it all has a meaning. A person who is not a student of music does not know that language. He will enjoy music but he does not know the language.

Then there is the language of life, for life too is music. Each person represents a note in that music, and that makes the symphony of life. One person is in tune, the other person is out of tune, one person is sounding the right note, the other a false one. In this way every person makes or disturbs the music. Revelation comes from the understanding of this music. You cannot learn it; you cannot teach it, but you can tune your heart to that pitch where it begins to live and to enjoy the music of life.

In this way revelation is perceived. It happens when the heart has become awake and living, so that it can perceive the vibrations coming from every soul, and every condition conveys a certain meaning to it. The great prophets and teachers who have brought religion to humanity, who have inspired humanity with a higher ideal, who have guided mankind towards spiritual attainment, they were the souls who had revelations. And what they gave to the world was their interpretation of those revelations, which came from the music of life. But no sooner does a composer put his music on paper than much of it is lost; and when

the prophet gives his teachings in the form of words much is lost too.

There are some who consider their belief as something sacred and are satisfied with that; but there are others who want to know the spirit of it. The words that have come down to us are only the interpretations of the revelations the prophets received.

If all the people in the world knew the spirit of religion, then there would not be so many different religions and creeds. They would all keep to that one truth. That there are so many creeds, so many religions, is because they do not understand religion. If one understood it then there would only be one religion, interpreted differently by the different teachers of humanity. But whether people understood more or less, they have all benefited by the prophet's coming to this earth, though no doubt his message could be better fulfilled if it were understood by more people, and if those who understood it could understand it better.

THE INTOXICATION OF LIFE (1)

THERE ARE many things in life which are intoxicating, but if we considered the nature of life we would realize that there is nothing more intoxicating than our life itself. We can see the truth of this idea when we think of what we were yesterday and compare it with our condition today. Our unhappiness or happiness, our riches or poverty of yesterday are like a dream to us; it is only today's condition that counts.

This life of continual rise and fall and of continual changes is like running water, and man identifies himself with this running water, although in reality he does not know what he is. For instance, if a man goes from poverty to riches and then those riches are taken away from him, he laments; and he laments because he does not remember that before having those riches he was poor, and that from that poverty he came to riches. If one considers what one's fancies through life have been, one will find that at every stage of development one had a particular fancy; sometimes one longed for certain things and at other times one did not care for them. If one can look as a spectator at one's own life, one will find that it was nothing but an intoxication. What at one time gives man great satisfaction and pride, at another time humiliates him; what a person enjoys at one time, troubles him at another time; what at one time he values greatly, at another time he does not value at all.

If a man can observe his actions in everyday life, and if he has an awakened sense of justice and understanding, he will often find himself doing something which he had not intended to do, or saying something that he did not wish to say, or behaving in such a way that he asks himself, 'Why was I such a fool!' Sometimes he allows himself to love someone, to admire someone; it may go on for days, for weeks, for months, even years, although years may be very long; and then perhaps he feels that he was wrong, or something more attractive comes along; then he is on

another road and does not know where he is any more, nor whom he loves. In the action and reaction of his life a man sometimes does things on impulse, not considering what he is doing, and at other times he has, so to speak, a spell of goodness, and he goes on doing what he thinks is good. At other times a reaction sets in and all his goodness is gone. Then in his business or profession he gets an impulse: he must do this, or he must do that, and he seems to be full of strength and courage; sometimes he perseveres and sometimes it lasts only a day or two and then he forgets what he was doing and does something else.

This shows that man in his life in the activity of the world is just like a piece of wood, lifted by the waves of the sea when they rise up, and cast down when they subside. That is why the Hindus have called the life of the world *Bhavasada*, an ocean, an ever-rising ocean. And man is floating on this ocean of worldly activity, not knowing what he is doing, not knowing where he is going. What seems to him of importance is only the moment which he calls the present; the past is a dream, the future is in a mist, and the only thing clear to him is the present.

The attachment and love and affection of man are not very different from the attachment of the birds and animals. There is a time when the sparrow looks after its young and brings grains in its beak and puts them into the beak of its young ones, and they anxiously await the coming of their mother. And this goes on until their wings are grown, and once the young ones have known the branches of the tree and they have flown in the forests under the protection of their mother, they never again remember that mother who was so kind to them. There are moments of emotion, there are impulses of love, of attachment, of affection, but there comes a time when these pass; they pale and fade away. And there comes a time when a person thinks that there is something else he desires and something else he would like to love.

The more one thinks of man's life in the world the more one comes to the understanding that it is not very different from the life of a child. The child takes a fancy to a doll and then it gets tired of that doll and wants another toy. But at the moment when

it takes a fancy to the doll or the toy it thinks it the most valuable thing in the world; and then there comes a time when it throws away the doll and destroys the toy. And so it is with man; his scope is perhaps a little different, but his action is the same. All that man considers important in life, such as the collection of wealth, the possession of property, the attainment of fame, or the rising to a position he may think ideal, all these objects have only an intoxicating effect on him; and after attaining the object he is not satisfied. He thinks that there is perhaps something else he wants, that it was not this that he wanted. Whatever he wants he feels to be the most important of all, but after attaining it he no longer thinks it is important at all; he wants something else. In everything that pleases him and makes him happy, in his amusements, his theatre, his moving pictures, golf, polo, or tennis, it seems that what amuses him is to be puzzled and not to know where he is going; it seems that he only desires to fill his time. And what man calls pleasure is what happens at the moment when he is intoxicated with the activity of life. Anything that covers his eyes from reality, anything that gives him a certain sensation of life, anything that he can indulge in and that makes him conscious of some activity, that is what he calls pleasure.

Man's nature is such that whatever he becomes accustomed to is his pleasure, be it eating, drinking, or any activity. If he becomes accustomed to what is bitter, bitterness gives him pleasure; if he becomes accustomed to what is sour then sourness gives him pleasure; if he becomes accustomed to eat sweets then he will like sweet things. Some men get into the habit of complaining about their life, and if they have nothing to complain about then they look for something to complain of. Others want the sympathy of their fellow-men and want to explain to them that they are badly treated. It is an intoxication.

Then there is the person who has fallen into the habit of theft; he derives pleasure from it and the habit becomes stronger and stronger, and when another source of income is offered to him he is not interested, he does not want it. In this way people become accustomed to certain things in life; these things become a pleasure, an intoxication. There are many who develop the

habit of worrying about things. The least little thing worries them very much. They cherish whatever little sorrow they have; it is a plant they water and nourish. And so many, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, become accustomed to illness, an illness that is more an intoxication than a reality. And as long as a man holds the thought of that illness he sustains it, and the illness settles in his body and no doctor can take it away.

Then a man's environment and condition in life create for him an illusion and an intoxication, so that he no longer sees the condition of the people around him, the people of the city or country in which he lives. And the intoxication not only remains with him when he is awake, but it continues in his dreams, just as the drunkard too will dream of the things that have to do with his drunkenness. If he has joy or sorrow, if he has worries or pleasure, the same will be his condition in his dream; and day and night the dream continues to exist. With some the dream lasts the whole life; with others only a certain time.

Man loves this intoxication as much as the drunkard loves the intoxication of wine. When a person is seeing something interesting in his dream, and somebody tries to wake him, he feels for a moment inclined to sleep on and finish that interesting dream, although he knows that it was a dream and that someone is waking him.

This intoxication can be seen in all the different aspects of life; it manifests even in the religious, philosophical, and mystical aspects. Man seeks after subtlety and wishes to know something that he cannot understand; he is very pleased to be told something that his reason cannot understand. Give him the simple truth and he will not like it. When teachers like Jesus Christ came to earth and gave the message of truth in simple words, the people of the time said, 'This is in our book, we know it already'; but whenever there is an attempt to mystify people, telling them of fairies and ghosts and spirits, they are very pleased; they desire to understand what they cannot understand.

What man has always called spiritual or religious truth has been the key to that ultimate truth which man cannot see because of his intoxication. And this truth nobody can give to another

person. It is in every soul, for the human soul itself is this truth. All that can be given is the means by which the truth can be known. The religions in various forms have been methods by which the inspired souls taught man to know this truth, and to be benefited by this truth which is in the soul of man. But instead of being benefited by a religion in this way, man has accepted only the external part of the religion and has fought with others, saying, 'My religion is the only right one, your religion is false'.

Nevertheless there have always existed some wise ones, like those of whom it is told in the Bible that they came from the East when Jesus Christ was born, to see the child. What does this mean? It means that at different times there have existed wise men, whose life's mission it has been to keep themselves sober in spite of this intoxication all around them, and to help their fellow-men to gain this soberness. Among those who were wise and remained sober there have been some who had great inspiration as well as great power and control over themselves and over life within and without. These are the wise men who have been called saints, sages, prophets, or masters.

But even when following or accepting these wise men, man, through his intoxication, has monopolized one of them as his prophet or teacher and has fought with others; in this way he has shown his intoxication and drunkenness. And just as a drunken man will, without any thought, hit or hurt another person who happens to be different from him, who thinks or feels or acts differently, so for the most part the great people of the world who came to help humanity have been killed, crucified, hurt or tortured. But they have not complained about it; they have taken it as a natural consequence; they have understood that they were in a world of intoxication or drunkenness, and that it is natural that a drunken man should try to hurt or do harm. This has been the history of the world in whatever quarter the message of God has been given.

In reality the message comes from one source and that is God, and under whatever name the wise gave that message it was not their message, but the message of God. Those whose hearts had eyes to see and ears to hear, have known and seen the same

messenger, because they have received the message. And those whose hearts had no eyes or ears have taken the messenger to be important and not the message. But at whatever period that message came and in whatever form the message was given, it was always that one message, the message of wisdom.

THE INTOXICATION OF LIFE (2)

EVERY stimulus that one experiences through food and drink is really a small intoxication. But it is not only the food that one eats, the water that one drinks, and all that one sees and hears and touches that has an influence, an effect, on a man's being and intoxicates him; even the air that he breathes from morning till evening is continually giving him a stimulus and an intoxication. If this is true, is there then one moment when a man is not intoxicated? He is always intoxicated, only sometimes more so than others.

This is, however, not the only intoxication. A man's absorption in the affairs of his life also keeps him intoxicated; and besides the intoxication of his work and affairs in which his mind is absorbed, there is a third intoxication, and that is the attachment that a man has to himself, the sympathy he has with himself. It is this intoxication which makes him selfish, greedy, and very often unjust towards his fellow-men. The effect of this intoxication is that a man is continually feeling, thinking, and acting with the idea in mind of what would be to his interest, what could bring him an advantage; and in this idea his whole life and all his time become fully involved. It is this intoxication that makes him say, 'This one is my friend and that one is my enemy; this one is my well-wisher, but that one is against me'; and it is this intoxication that builds the ego, the false ego of man.

Just as an intoxicated man does not really know what is profitable to him, so a selfish man in his selfishness never knows nor understands what is really to his advantage. In moments of soberness a man wonders, 'If this is intoxication, then what is reality? I would like to know what reality is.' But to know reality not only the eyes and ears are necessary, but soberness too is needed to hear and see better. One might ask why all this should be called intoxication if it seems to be the normal state of every person. It can be called a normal condition only in so far as it is

indeed the condition of everyone; but intoxication remains intoxication; it is not satisfactory. There is an innate longing for a certain satisfaction which man does not know, and this satisfaction he seeks. No active person with any wisdom will deny the fact that often an effort he makes for happiness seems to result in disappointment; this shows that the effort was in the wrong direction. But apart from the making of an effort to find reality one must first realize what this intoxication is; in order to do this the first step on the path of truth is to know that such a thing as intoxication exists.

There is the intoxication of childhood. Imagine what attention, what service, what care the child demands at that time when it still does not know who takes the trouble or who takes care of it! It plays with its toys, it plays with its playmates, it knows not what is awaiting it in the future. What it wants, what it plays with, is what is immediately around it; it does not see further. Nobody in his childhood has ever known the value of his mother or his father or of those who care for him, until he reaches that stage when he begins to see for himself. And when we observe the condition of youth, that again is another intoxication, it is the time of blossoming, of the fullness of energy. The soul in that spring-time never thinks that it can be anything else; the soul never thinks that this is a passing stage. The soul at that time is full of intoxication, it knows nothing apart from itself. How many errors a youth commits, how many faults he has, how many thoughtless, inconsiderate things he does of which he afterwards repents but about which he never thinks at the time! It is not the fault of the soul, it is the intoxication of that time of life. The person who is intoxicated is not responsible for what he does; neither is the child to be blamed for not being responsible or appreciative enough, nor the youth for being blind in his energy; it is natural.

The intoxication remains as a person goes on in life; there is only a change of wine. The wine of childhood is different from the wine of youth, and when the wine of youth is finished some other wine is taken. Then, according to what walk of life a man follows, he drinks that wine which absorbs his life, either collecting wealth or acquiring power or seeking a position; all these

are wines which intoxicate man. And if one goes even further in life, intoxication still pursues one. It may be one is interested in music or fond of poetry, or one may love art or delight in learning; it is all intoxication. If all these different occupations and interests are like different wines, what is there then in the world that can be called a state of soberness? It is wine indeed from beginning to end. Even those who are good and advanced, spiritual and moral, they also have a certain wine. One has to take wine all the way; but there are different wines. A highly advanced artist, a great poet, an inspired musician will admit that there are moments of intoxication which come to him through his art as a joy, as an upliftment, and it makes him exalted; it is as if he were not living in this world.

Soberness is very difficult to find. The intoxicating effect of life is overwhelming and keeps man from a clear understanding. Therefore, however far advanced a person may be in the spiritual life, he can never be too sure that he will not become intoxicated; for he experiences intoxication in everything he does. That is why one cannot be too conscientious, ever. There are many who are confused, who do not know what they are doing; but a conscientious person does not hesitate. He is always wide awake, and he always knows whether he has done right or not. He does what he believes is right, and when that happens to turn out wrong, he will see to it that it is right next time.

The higher intoxication cannot be compared with the lower intoxication of this world, but it is still intoxication. What is joy? What is fear? What is anger? What is passion? What is the feeling of attachment, and what is the feeling of detachment? All these have the effect of wine, all produce intoxication.

Understanding this mystery, the Sufis have founded their culture upon the principle of intoxication. They call this intoxication *Hál*, and *Hál* means literally condition or state. There is a saying of the Sufis, 'Man speaks and acts according to his condition.' One cannot speak or act differently from the wine one has drunk. With the one who has drunk the wine of anger, whatever he says or does is irritating; with the one who has drunk the wine of detachment, in his thought, speech and action you will find nothing but detachment; with the one who drinks the wine

of attachment, you will find in his presence that all are drawn to him and that he is drawn to all. Everything a person does and says is according to the wine that he has taken. That is why the Sufi says, 'Heaven and hell are in the hand of man, if he only knew their mystery.' To a Sufi the world is like a wine-cellar, a store in which all sorts of wines are collected. He has only to choose what wine he will have and what wine will bring him the delight which is the longing of his soul.

I once had an experience in India which was my first impression, and a very deep impression indeed, of this aspect of life. When walking in a district where dervishes lived in solitude I found ten or twelve dervishes together, sitting under the shade of a tree in their ragged clothes, talking to one another. As I was curious to hear and see people of different thoughts and ideas, I stood there watching this assembly to see what was going on. These dervishes, sitting on the ground without a carpet, at first gave an impression of poverty and helplessness, sitting there in disappointment, probably entirely without possessions. But as they began to speak to each other that impression did not remain, for when they addressed one another they said, 'O, King of kings, O, Emperor of emperors'. At first I was taken aback on hearing these words, but after giving some thought to it I asked myself: what is an emperor, what is a king? Is the real king and emperor within or without? For he who is the emperor of the outer empire depends on all that is without. The moment he is separated from that environment he is no longer an emperor. But these emperors, sitting on the bare ground, were real emperors. No one could take away their empire, for their empire, their kingdom, was not an illusion, their kingdom was a real kingdom. An emperor may have a bottle of wine in front of him, but these emperors had drunk that wine and had become real emperors.

Do we not sometimes see in our everyday life a person who says, 'I am ill, I am sorry for myself, I am miserable, I am wretched'? Put him in a palace and surround him with doctors and nurses, he will still be wretched. And another person who may be in great suffering and pain, but yet says, 'No, I am well, I am happy, everything is all right', that person has a right attitude. Does it not show us that we are, that we become, the wine we

drink? The man who is drunk with the wine of success knows no failure; and if circumstances make him fail nine times, the tenth time he will succeed. The one who has drunk the wine of failure may be given all the possibility of success; but he has drunk the wine of failure; he cannot succeed.

There is, however, a subtle feeling which every soul has, a feeling which cannot be explained in words; a feeling which makes a man more comfortable in his armchair at home than when perhaps ten thousand people stand before him paying him homage. A person may be loaded with wealth, but the moment when he sets aside all his pearls and jewels, and sits down alone and takes a rest, that is the time when he breathes freely. And what does this teach us? It teaches us that man may have everything in the world which has the greatest value in his eyes, but there will yet remain something for him to seek. When he has that then he is happy.

One does not want to have a person, however beloved he may be, around one all the time; one sometimes wants to have a moment away from even the dearest person in the world. However proud a man is in his thought, and his thoughts may be great, deep, and good, yet the greatest joy is in the moment when he is not thinking. One may have the finest feelings of love, tenderness, and goodness; but there are moments when there are no feelings, and these moments are the most exalting.

This shows that the whole of life is interesting because it is all intoxicating; but what is really desired by the soul is one thing only, and that is a glimpse of soberness. What is this glimpse of soberness and how does one experience this glimpse of soberness which is the continual longing of the soul? One experiences it by means of meditation, by means of concentration. But if it is a natural thing, why has one to make an effort for it? The reason is that one enjoys this intoxication so much that afterwards one becomes addicted to drink. And that is the condition of every soul in this world; every soul becomes addicted to the wine of life. At the same time there comes a moment, if not in the early part of life, then later, if not when a person is happy, then when he is unhappy, when he begins to look for that soberness which is the continual longing of his soul. The Sufi

culture therefore is a culture designed in order to experience that soberness.

It is no doubt very difficult to explain how this soberness is attained; yet after having explained this subject of intoxication it is less difficult. For it is really as simple as saying that the way to give up drink is to keep the drink away and to remain without drink for a time. There are three principal wines, three principal intoxications: the intoxication of one's self, the intoxication of one's occupation, and the third intoxication which is what the senses feel every moment; and these three wines cannot all be taken away at once. It would be just like taking away his life's sustenance from a person who lives on wine. But one can set a person a certain time and see that during that time he keeps sober and only takes two wines, not three; and that he next tries to take only one, not two. And as a person advances in meditative life he may arrive at that stage where the three wines on which he lives may all be withheld and yet he still feels that he can live; and so he will become convinced that he can exist without these three intoxications. Verily, this conviction of existing independently of these three wines, which bring man the realization of external life, is the essence of the divine message and of all religions.

THE MEANING OF LIFE

WHEN ONE inquires deeply into life one finds that what all souls seek is to know the meaning of life. The scientist looks and searches for it in the realm of science, and the artist finds it in his art. Whatever different interests people may have, their only real inclination is to find the meaning of life. This shows that it is the nature of the soul and that the soul has come here for this purpose, that it may realize and understand the meaning of life. Thus in either a material or a spiritual way every soul is striving for what it longs for all the time, each in its own particular way.

One can see this in the behaviour of an infant. The desire of an infant to look at a thing, to tear it to pieces and see what is inside it, shows that it is the soul's desire to look into life, to understand life. No doubt the effect and the influence of life on earth are intoxicating; and through this intoxication man becomes so absorbed in himself and his own interests that he so to speak loses the way, the way which is inborn in him. Not only in man, but even in the lower creation one finds the same attitude. In animals, in birds, the deepest desire is not looking for food or seeking for a comfortable nest; the deepest tendency is the wish to understand the nature of life; and this tendency culminates in man. A child will continually ask his parents, 'What does this mean?' and this shows a continual longing to know the meaning of life, a longing which continues all through life.

What does this teach us? It teaches us the principle that the source and goal of the universe are one and the same, and that the Creator created it all in order to know His own creation. But how does the Creator see and understand His creation? Not only in its highest and deepest aspect, but also through every thing and every being He is continually knowing and understanding His creation. For instance if a person should ask, 'What is art? Is it not made by man?' I would answer, 'Yes, but made by God also, through man.' And if that is so, then what is this whole

mechanism of the universe doing? It is working. Working for what purpose? Working for the understanding of itself.

And what is this mechanism of the world; is it living or is it dead? All that we call living is living, and all that we call dead is living too. It is for our convenience that we say 'thing' and 'being'. In reality there are no things; they are all beings. It is simply a gradual awakening from the witnessing aspect to the recognizing aspect. And no science, however material, will deny the truth of this; for the truth is to be realized from all things, from religion, from philosophy, from science, from art, from industry. The only difference is that one takes a shorter way and the other takes a longer way; one goes round about and the other takes a straight path. There is no difference in the destination; the only difference is in the journey, whether one goes on foot or whether one drives, whether one is awake or whether one is asleep and is taken blindly to the destination, not knowing the beauties of the way.

Destiny may be divided into two parts; one is the mechanism that activates the destiny, and the other part is the soul which realizes this. Therefore the mechanism is the machine and the soul within it is the engineer who is there to work this mechanism and to produce by it what is to be produced. There are many methods and ways which man adopts in order to know and understand; and the mind is the vehicle, the tool, by the help of which he experiences life in the accomplishment of this purpose. In Sanskrit the mind is called *Mana*, from which the English word *man* is derived; and that means that man is his mind, not his body.

According to the readiness of its tool, the soul experiences and knows life. It is the condition of the mind which enables the soul to see life clearly. The mind can be likened to water; when the water is troubled there is no reflection to be seen; when the water is clear then it shows the reflection. But in the pursuit of material gain, which is what he values most, man has become absorbed in that kind of life and has lost the benefit of life; as it is said in the Bible, 'Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also'.

When, as at the present time, one defines civilization as commercial or industrial progress, that becomes the ideal of every

soul; and it becomes difficult for a soul to retain tranquillity in order to accomplish that purpose for which the soul was born. I do not mean by this that industrial or commercial development is not necessary for the life of man; not at all, as long as it does not ruin or hinder the life's purpose for which man was born. Otherwise in spite of all his progress he will have wasted his life, he will not have attained the purpose for which he was born.

There are superstitions in the East, and also in the West, that animals such as horses, dogs, cats, and birds, give warning when a person is about to fall ill or die, and many have found that there is some truth in these superstitions. Why is it then that man does not understand and perceive life as the animals do? The answer is that the animals live a more natural life; they are nearer to nature than man, who is absorbed in his artificial life.

So many of the things one thinks about and does and says are far from what is true, from what is natural. The more one can be at one with nature and at one with the deeper life, the more one realizes that what man does is to act continually against reality, not only when he does wrong or evil but even when he is doing good. If the animals can know this, man is even more capable of knowing it; and it is this knowledge alone which is the satisfaction of his life, not all the external things; as it is said in the Bible, 'The spirit quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing.'

Where is man's wealth? It is in his knowledge. If his wealth is only in the bank and not in his knowledge he does not really possess it; it is in the bank. All desirable and great things, values and titles, position and possession, where are they? Outside? No, because outside is only that which one knows by the knowledge one has within; therefore the real possession is not without but within. It is the self within, it is the heart which must be developed, the heart which must be in its natural rhythm and at its proper pitch. When it is tuned to its natural rhythm and pitch, then it can accomplish the purpose for which it is made.

There are five different ways by which the knowledge of life is perceived. One way is known to many of us, though to woman perhaps more than to man, and that is impression. Very often we come into a house or we meet a person, and before we have spoken to that person we get a kind of impression, either pleasant

or unpleasant, a certain knowledge of that person's being. Sometimes at the sight of a person we feel like saying, 'Keep away'; sometimes at the first glance we feel drawn to a person without knowing the reason. The mind does not know, but the soul does. It is not only that one gets an impression of a person one meets, but if one is sensitive to impressions one can also feel the impression of a letter that comes to one from a stranger. Many say that they can tell someone's character by physiognomy or phrenology, but if they have not the sense of impression in their heart, even if they were to read a thousand books on physiognomy or phrenology they would never get the true impression. What does this show? It shows that true knowledge, from beginning to end, does not belong to the material realm.

There is another way, and that is the intuitive way, by which one knows before one does something whether it will be a success or a failure. The more intuitive people feel this before doing or undertaking anything.

But then there is a third way, and that is the dream or the vision. Some will say that dreams have a meaning, while others hold that there is no meaning in a dream. But in point of fact there is nothing in this world which has no meaning; there is no situation, no action, no word that has not its meaning. All that is done with intention and all that is done without intention has a meaning behind it, if one can only understand it.

The reason why one should see more clearly in a dream than when awake is that when a person is in a dream his mind is naturally concentrated. For when man is in his waking state all that is perceived through his senses calls his attention at every moment. No doubt the impression or intuition of a true dream is not manifested to every soul, and it is manifested to one soul more than to another; neither does everyone live always in the rhythm in which he can receive impressions and intuitions. At different times his impression differs, and in accordance with his evolution he is able to experience the knowledge of life. The more evolved he is spiritually the more naturally he receives the knowledge of life from within.

The fourth way in which one can receive the knowledge of life is by what may be called inspiration. It may come to an artist, to

a musician or to a poet. At the time when it comes he can write or compose or do something that he will afterwards be surprised at, and he will wonder if he really did it himself, or if it was done by someone else. If it had not been for inspiration that same poet might have striven for months on end and not have been able to write the verse which he then wrote in a few minutes. What is the explanation of it? Is it by the development of his mind that a man receives inspiration? No, it is by the receiving quality of his mind, by the purity of his mind, his absorption in his art, the direction to which he has devoted his life. One might ask what would be the best way for an artist to receive inspiration: by waiting, by praying, or by continuing to work till inspiration comes? He should do all three together: wait for inspiration while working, and pray to God while waiting.

Where have the great souls whose inspirational works have become immortal, got them from? They have got them from inspiration. And how did they get this? They got it by forgetting themselves, by being absorbed in the object of their love. That is the meaning of sacrifice, sacrificing to the beauty of the ideal. One has to place the ideal before one, that is the way to get inspiration.

Souls get inspiration from outer life or from another person; in all names and forms there is a source of inspiration, if one only knew how to tap it. In point of fact, whether inspiration is received from outside or from within, it all comes from God. The only difference is that when it comes from within it is more direct; but the first step is to receive it from the outside.

All those who begin to receive inspiration receive it first from outer life. Man is created in such a way that he first looks outward; and then, when he is disappointed, when he cannot find all he wants in the outer life, he turns within. He wants to see if he can find it in the inner life, and thus he becomes connected with the source of inspiration which is the Spirit of Guidance. And he who has once found the Spirit of Guidance will always be able to find it again if he keeps close to it; but when he goes astray, when the way of his life takes another direction, then he wanders away from the Spirit of Guidance.

And with still another step further there comes the realization

which may be called revelation. When the soul is tuned to that state then the eyes and the ears of the heart are open to see and hear the word that comes from all sides. In point of fact every atom of this world, either in heaven or earth, speaks, and speaks aloud. It is the deaf ears of the heart and the closed eyes of the soul which prevent man from seeing and hearing it. There is a verse of a Hindustani poet which says, 'O self, it is not the fault of the divine Beloved that you do not see Him, that you do not hear Him. He is continually before you and He is continually speaking to you. If you do not hear it and if you do not see it, it is your own fault.'

It is for this purpose that every soul has been created and it is in the fulfilment of this that man fulfils the object of God. When the spark that is to be found in every heart, the spark that may be called the divine spark in man, is blown upon and the flame arises, the whole life becomes illuminated and man hears and sees and knows, and he understands. A Sufi poet says that every leaf of the tree becomes like a page of the sacred book, when the heart is open to read it and when the soul has opened its eyes.

THE INNER LIFE

THERE IS one aspect of life which is known to us, our everyday life in which we are conscious of all that we do, and this aspect may be called the outer life. There is another part of our life of which we are very often unconscious and which may be called the inner life. To be without inner life is like being without an arm or a leg or an eye or an ear; but even that does not really illustrate the idea of the inner life. The reason is that the inner life is much greater and nobler and much more powerful than the outer life. Man gives great importance to the outer life, being absorbed in it from morning till evening and not being conscious of the other aspect. Thus all that matters to man is what happens to him in his outer life, and the occupations of his outer life keep him so absorbed that he has hardly a moment to think of the inner life.

The disadvantage of not being conscious of the inner life is incomparably greater than all the advantages that one can gain by being conscious of the outer life, for the inner life makes one richer, the outer life poorer. With all the riches and treasures that the earth can offer man is poor; and very often the richer he seems the poorer he is, for the greater the riches, the more limitation he finds in his life. The inner life makes one powerful, whereas the consciousness of the outer life makes one weak because it is the consciousness of limitation. The consciousness of the inner life makes one powerful because it is the consciousness of perfection. The outer life keeps one confused; however intellectual or learned a person may be, his mind will never be clear, for his knowledge is based upon reasons which in turn are founded upon the outer things that are liable to change and destruction. That is why, however wise this person may seem to be, his wisdom has limitations.

The inner life makes the mind clear, for it is that part of one's being which may be called divine, the essence of life, the pure intelligence; and wherever the light of pure intelligence is thrown

things become clear. Absorption in the outer life, without that which the inner life can give, makes one blind; all that one says, thinks, or does is based upon outer experiences; and one cannot realize to what extent the power gained by the inner life enables one to see through life. There is such a thing as belief in a third eye; in reality the third eye is the inner eye, the eye that is opened by one's awakening to the inner life.

Inner life may also be called spiritual life. One can see it in the forest where it is the rain from above that makes the forest beautiful; this means that the forest alone does not have all that it needs, but that it needs something that comes from above: the light and the rain. It is the sun and the rain that make the forest complete. In the desert there is no rain, and therefore it is incomplete; there is the earth, but there is no water nor is there water from above. The water that gives life to the forest is not to be found in the desert. The desert is unhappy, and the man in the desert is unhappy too, looking for shade from the hot sun; for the desert is longing, and the man in the desert is longing too for something he cannot find; whereas in the deep forest there is joy, there is inspiration, the heart is lifted up because the forest is a picture of the inner life—not just the earth, not just the trees and plants, but because something which it needs has been sent down to it. And so it is with man: man who is solely occupied with the things of the world is in the midst of the world, but he is in the desert. It is the inner life which produces in him, not artificial virtues and man-made qualities, but those virtues which can only arise from the inner life, and also the insight which makes the eyes see more than mortal eyes can see.

The question is, how are we to be sure that there is an inner life, what proof is there? And the answer is that there is not one moment in our life when we do not see the proof of the inner life; only, we do not look for it. All the different means of communication such as telepathy and telephone and radio, all the new machines and inventions which make people marvel at what mankind has accomplished are, if man would only realize it, nothing but a poor imitation of what this human body is! Man is the centre of joy, of happiness, of peace, of power, of life, and of light. Man is a phenomenon far greater than any

other mechanism, if only he had the patience and perseverance to explore himself. But what we do is to explore others. We think it is very important to analyse things, and the analysis of human nature we call psychology. Man analyses everyone except himself, and therefore true psychology is never reached; because the real psychology is to analyse oneself first, and when one's self is analysed, then one is able to analyse others.

If man only knew that besides what he says or does or thinks, and the effects which are manifest to him, there is another kind of action which also creates things in a person's life and which makes his world! And perhaps in a week or in a month, or perhaps in a year or ten years, that which he has thus created one day comes before him as a world, as a world created by him. Such is the phenomenon of life. How insignificant a human being appears to be, just like a drop in the sea, yet what effects does he create by every thought, by every feeling, by every act! And what influence they spread, what influence they have on the lives of others! If one only realized this one would find that the results of all one thinks, says, or does in the outer life are incomparably smaller than the results produced by what one thinks, says, or does in the inner life. Thus the consciousness of the inner life makes man more responsible than that of the outer life. The responsibilities of the outer life, compared with the responsibilities of the inner life, are much smaller. For the moment they might appear to be heavy burdens, but they are nothing compared with the responsibilities one has in one's inner life. If one sees what one creates, the responsibility becomes much greater. There is a saying in the East that the donkey seems to be much happier than the Chakor, which is supposed to be the most intelligent bird. Man seems quite pleased in outer life, because his responsibilities are less, his outlook small, his horizon narrow, and what he sees of the world is very little; but when the horizon is opened up, when the heart has penetrated through the barrier that divides the here and the hereafter, when he begins to see behind the veil and all that appears on the surface becomes a screen behind which something else is hidden, then he experiences life quite differently.

The view of the one who stands on top of the mountain is

quite different from the view of the one who stands at its foot. Both are human beings, both have the same eyes, but their horizons are different. Inner life, therefore, means the widening of the horizon and the change in direction of seeing. A mystic is often called a seer; and a great Yogi has said, 'In order to see what is before you, you must first see within yourself.' This means that within oneself there is a mirror, and it is that mirror which may be called the inner world, the inner life. It is in this mirror that all that is before one is reflected. When the eyes are looking outward one turns one's back to the mirror which is inside; but when the eyes are turned inward then one sees reflected in this mirror all that is outside. By this process all seeing becomes so clear and manifests to such fullness that compared with it the outer vision is a blurred or confused vision.

Two persons may live together for twenty-five years, for forty or for fifty years, and may still not be able to understand one another because of the lack of inner life; yet the inner life would enable them to understand one another in a moment. When it is said that the twelve Apostles began to understand the language of all nations, did they learn the grammar of all nations at that moment? No, they learned the language of the heart. The language of the heart speaks more loudly than words can speak. If the ears of the heart were open to hear that language, outer words would not be necessary.

Humanity, in spite of all its progress, is still most limited; and the more one sees the limits of this progress the more one finds that it is because of the absence of inner life. When one reads in stories and histories of the past how many thieves and robbers and highwaymen there used to be, and how many murders were committed, one feels that it was a dreadful time. And yet when one thinks more deeply about it one sees that the situation at present is much worse and that the days of robbers and highwaymen were much milder. Then one or two persons in a village were murdered; now towns and countries are swept away. War has swept away a large part of humanity. Imagine if another war comes what will be the result? They say people have progressed, that they are more thoughtful, but with all this thoughtfulness they seem only to have progressed in order to cause destruction

and disasters to a much greater degree. Does it mean that humanity is not progressing? It is progressing, but in which direction? Downward.

It is a condition of taking the path of the inner life that one should first be free. If the feet are pinned and the hands are nailed by beliefs, by preconceived ideas, by one's thoughts, then one stands still; one may have every desire to go on, but one is not going on, because one is holding on to something. When a person is holding on to certain beliefs, he is not going forward. And with many good qualities and high ideals, with religious tendencies, with a devotional temperament, with all the spiritual qualities that one may have, yet one can still remain standing in the same place. Either these ideas are holding the feet as if with nails, or the hands are somewhere holding on to the railing and not letting one go further.

What the inner life requires first is freedom to proceed. The old meaning of freedom is very little understood, although everyone is seeking freedom. So much is said about freedom, but one can be free of everything except one thing, and that is the self—the last thing one thinks about. The conception of freedom is quite different at this time, and although seeking freedom man is anything but free because he is caught in the trap of his own self. This is the greatest captivity there is; there he remains like the jinn in the bottle.

The inner life also requires sacrifice. Man considers that his learning, his qualifications, everything in his life, are there in order that he may gain everything he can in the world—power, possessions, wealth, anything—and believing that sacrifice is quite contrary to gain, he thus develops in himself a nature for gaining instead of sacrificing. Besides sacrifice requires a large mind, it requires deep sympathies, great love; sacrifice is the most difficult thing. Inner life is something which is within oneself; it has been called a chamber of divine light in one's heart. The door remains closed until an effort is made to open it, and that effort is sacrifice. The Bible speaks of self-denial; but this is often misinterpreted. Self-denial according to general belief means denying oneself all that is good and beautiful, all that is worth attaining; but in reality self-denial does not mean denying oneself

all that is good and beautiful, it means denying the self; and that is the last thing one wishes to deny. And the automatic action of this denial is to open the door to the inner life.

The sages who have realized the inner life have realized it by contemplative means. Man from his infancy is unaware of that something in him which is more than a faculty. By experiencing life only through the outer sense this faculty, which is the faculty of inner life, becomes closed through not being used, and this is just as if the door of a chamber of joy and light and life were closed. And as from infancy one has not experienced the joy and life and light of this chamber, which may be called a celestial chamber in the heart of man, one remains unaware of it.

Nevertheless one may sometimes have this feeling unconsciously; and sometimes when one is deeply touched, when one has suffered deeply, when life has shown its hideous side, or after an illness, or by the help of meditation, this feeling which is unconsciously working as a longing to unfold itself, becomes manifest. In what way? In love of solitude, in sympathy for others, in a tendency towards sincerity, in the form of inspiration coming from all that is good and beautiful. It may manifest in the form of emotion, love, affection, in the form of inspiration, of a revelation, of a vision, or as art, poetry, or music; in whatever form one allows it to express itself, or with whatever one happens to be occupied, it begins to manifest in that form.

Everything becomes spiritual once this door of the chamber of the heart is open. If a man is a musician, then his music is celestial; if he is a poet, then his poetry is spiritual; if he is an artist, then his art is a spiritual work; whatever he may do in life that divine spirit manifests. He need not be a religious person, he need not be a philosopher, he need not be a mystic. It is simply that what was hidden in him and thereby was keeping his life incomplete begins to manifest to view, and that makes his life perfect; that enables a man to express life in its fullness. Every attempt made today to better the condition of humanity through politics, education, social reconstruction, and many other ways, all these, however excellently planned, can only be fulfilled if this something which was missing is added to them; but in the absence of this, all the efforts of many, many years will prove to

be futile. For this something which is missing is the most essential of all. The world cannot remain a world without rainfall. The world cannot progress without a spiritual stimulus, a spiritual awakening. It need not be the first thing, it is natural that it should not be so; but it should at any rate be the last thing, and if it is not even the last then it is most regrettable.

How are the meditative souls awakened, how do they experience the inner life? In the first place the adept values his object of attaining the inner life more than anything else in life. As long as he does not really value it, so long he remains unable to attain it. That is the first condition: that man should value the inner life more than anything else in the world, more than wealth, power, position, rank, or anything else. It does not mean that in this world he should not pursue the things he needs; it means he should value most something which is really worth while.

The next thing is that when one begins to value something one thinks it is worth while giving time to it; for in the modern world it is said that time is money, and money today means the most valuable thing. So if a person gives his precious time to what he considers most worth while, more so than anything else in the world, then that is certainly the next step towards the inner life. And the third thing is that the condition of his mind should be relieved of that pressure which is always in a person's heart, when he thinks that he has not done what he ought to have done towards his fellow-men, be it father, mother, child, husband, wife, brother, friend, or whoever it is.

If that pressure is troubling the mind, then that mind is not yet ready. A person may give his valuable time to contemplation, to a spiritual life, yet at the same time his mind is disturbed, his heart is not at rest, for he feels he has not done his duty, he has a debt to pay to someone. It is an essential point that the adept takes care that any debt to be paid in life does not remain unpaid. When we look at life, is it not a market-place? The give and take is to be seen in everything, and if one does not pay now the bill will be presented afterwards. And if one thinks that one has gained something without paying, in the end one will realize that one has to pay with added interest.

Man does not know in what form he has to pay, nor in what

form he does the taking; very often he does not know when he takes or what he gives; but every moment of his life is occupied in give and take, and all the injustice of the world adjusts itself in the end. A clear understanding of this condition will show that it all balances. If there were no balance the world would not exist. This ever-moving world, turning round and round, what holds it, what makes it stable? It is balance. And not only the world, but everything else too: the whole of life in its own way. Being occupied by our worldly life, we are not aware of that balance, but when the inner eye is open and one sees life clearly, one will find that there is a continual balancing process going on, and that we as particles of one mechanism are constantly busy keeping this balance. When once the heart is at rest through the feeling that one has paid, or is paying, one's debts, then one comes to a balanced condition in life. Then the heart, which is likened to the sea, is no longer restless as it is during the storm, but like calm, undisturbed water; and it is that condition which enables man to experience inner life more fully.

Do we not often notice the disturbing presence of people who have not got that tranquillity, that peace, that calmness? It is a terrible influence upon themselves and a disastrous influence upon others. One can realize this in one's everyday life. One may be sitting in an office with someone, one may be standing in a certain place, one may be staying in a house where other people are, and one can realize by their atmosphere whether they have reached a state of balance, tranquillity, calm, and peace, or whether they are out of rhythm, unbalanced. This shows that what we call happiness and unhappiness is a question of a balanced or an unbalanced state. When a person's mind and heart are in the state in which they ought normally to be, he need not seek for happiness; he is happiness itself, he radiates happiness. When that state is disturbed he is unhappy; it is not that unhappiness comes to him, but that he himself is unhappiness.

The Hindu idea is that self means happiness, that the depth of the self is happiness. This means that all this outer structure, the physical body, the breath, the senses of perception, all of which help to make man, are most important; but his inner being can be called by only one name, and that is happiness. It is natural,

therefore, that everyone should be seeking for happiness, though not knowing where to get it and always seeking for it outside himself; and instead of finding the happiness which is his own he tries to get the happiness of another; but what happens is that he can neither get happiness from another nor can he give it. By trying to get it from another he causes sorrow to that one, and the sorrow comes back to him.

The robbers who go into other people's houses to steal are few in number, but there are many robbers of happiness, and they seldom know that they are robbing others of their happiness. The robber of happiness is more foolish than the robbers who go after wealth, for when they are successful they at least get something; but the robber of happiness never gets anything. He only gives sorrow to others.

Inner life therefore, must not be considered, as many have thought it to be, a life which is spent in the forest or in a cave of the mountain or in retirement. Naturally certain people need to seek solitude—those who prefer to be away from the turmoil of the world, whose inspiration is stimulated and who find themselves by being alone; but it is not a necessity for attaining happiness. One can be in the midst of the world and yet stand above the world. Life has many woes, and the only way to get rid of them is to stand above them all; and this can be attained by one thing and one thing only—by the discovery of the inner life.

THE INNER LIFE AND SELF-REALIZATION

IT IS by the inner life that self-realization is achieved. Life can be divided into two parts. One part is attending to our worldly needs, toiling, earning money, serving in different capacities in order to live ourselves and to provide for our families. That is one side of life. And the other side is realizing that there is something besides the worldly life, that there is a higher ideal, a greater happiness, a deeper insight into life, and a greater peace. This is another life. By inner life I do not at all mean a religious life; for a man may be religious and at the same time very worldly.

There is a story about Aurangzeb's reign in India, that he issued an imperial command that everyone in his dominions must attend all the five prayers of the faithful. At that time, a sage lived there, although no one knew that he was a sage as he lived in solitude. This sage also received the command, but he forgot it or did not think about it. The police were sent to bring him to the house of prayer, and he came willingly and joined the congregation. When the priest who leads the prayers began his recitation the sage ran away from the congregation almost at once. The police went after him, and he was brought before the judge, for he had not only violated the law but disturbed the whole congregation. He said to the judge, 'I would like to know what the leader of the prayers meant the congregation to do.' The judge said, 'Religion teaches that your thoughts should be united with the thought of your leader.' The sage said, 'But that is what I did! The teacher's thought went to his house; he had forgotten his keys at home. So I could not remain in the house of prayer; I ran for the keys.' In the end it was proved that it was so. He was a great sage and to him was known all that was going on in the minds of others.

To be religious, to be orthodox, or to be pious does not necessarily mean to be spiritual. To be spiritual is something quite different from being 'prayerful', as one calls it.

The question is, how does one proceed in the inner life? The

inner life can be considered as a journey to a desired goal; and there are certain conditions on this journey which one should first know. In the first place the journey is hard because there are no electric trains. It is a journey we have to make on foot. This at once changes the character of the journey and makes it different from the journeys we are accustomed to. There is no modern equipment, and we have forgotten how one journeyed in the past. To go through the wilderness, over mountains, to swim rivers in order to get to the other side, to risk all sorts of dangers on the way, that is the kind of journey we have to make in spiritual attainment. The outer journeys are made easy today, but the inner journey has kept its difficulties.

The first condition of this journey is conscientiousness in regard to the customs on the way. For instance when one has to walk long distances one gives up all unnecessary burdens. We have to give up so many things in life in order to make this journey. We unconsciously make our life heavy for ourselves; and while outwardly it may not seem difficult, yet when we begin to journey inwardly we realize how difficult it is to carry a heavy load. When we have to travel on foot every little responsibility we take upon us, and every little habit, weigh upon us, little things which in everyday life we would never think about. We have become more and more addicted to comforts, more and more intolerant towards environment, more and more sensitive to jarring influences. Instead of becoming stronger we have become weaker every day, so that when it comes to journeying and facing the difficulties which we find on the journey, it becomes very difficult indeed.

Everyone at all periods of the world's history who has tried to proceed on the spiritual path has met with difficulties. The moment he starts on this path he has more difficulties than the average person; from all sides come greater and greater temptations on his way, temptations which perhaps had never come before. The moment he takes this path temptations of all kinds come. He is tested and tried at every step he takes. Besides, if he does not keep himself in hand, he is taken to task very seriously. Others are not taken to task so seriously, and this is natural. When a child breaks a glass one overlooks it, but when the maid does it

one asks why she did it, why was she not more careful. For a grown-up person is responsible. The one who takes the spiritual path is responsible; that is why more is exacted from him. He has to answer for everything he does, either to himself or to life.

We have many debts to pay in our lives, debts we do not always know of. We only know our money debts, but there are many others: of the husband to his wife and of the wife to her husband; of the mother to the child and of the child to the mother; the debts to pay to our friends and acquaintances, to those who stand above us and to those who are dependent upon us. There are so many different kinds of debts we have to pay; and yet we never think about them. In ancient times even those not taking the spiritual path, for instance noblemen and warriors, had the law of chivalry, and there were strict rules about paying one's debts. The ancient people thought, 'My mother has brought me up from infancy, she has sacrificed her sleep, rest, and comfort for me and loved me with a love which is beyond any other love in this world, and she has shown in life that mercy to me which is the compassion of God.' The child thought a great deal about the debt it owed to its mother.

Someone went to the Prophet Mohammad and asked him, 'Prophet, you said there is a great debt to be paid to one's mother. Suppose that I gave my mother all that I have earned, would that pay her back?' The Prophet said, 'No, not in the least. If you served her your whole life, even then you could not pay the debt of what she has done for you in one day. She brought you up with the thought always in her mind that even when she was gone you would live; she has not only given her service and heart and love to you, but also her life. That you will live after her, that has been all her thought. And what is your thought? If you are a kind and good person your thought is, "So long as my poor mother is living, I will take care of her to the end; one day she will die, and then I shall be free." It is a different thought from her thought.'

This is only one example; but there are many other debts, to our neighbours, to strangers, to those who depend upon us or who expect from us some help, some counsel, a word of advice, some service. They are all debts we have to pay. There is also

much to pay to God, but God can forgive. The debt to the world, however, must not be forgotten before entering upon the spiritual path. The spirit feels a great release when it pays its debts as it goes further. Do people think of these simple things nowadays? As soon as a person starts thinking about spiritual matters the first question is what occult books shall he read in order to obtain the key to the path. He never thinks about these little things and how much depends upon them. But there is a condition that must be fulfilled, and that condition is our consideration for every soul.

We may ask, 'What if they don't deserve it, what if they are not worthy of it?' It is not our concern whether they deserve it or not. We should not think about it. When there is money to be paid to a money-lender it must be paid whether he deserves it or not. And so it is on the spiritual path. Those we have to pay we must pay, in the way of attention, service, respect. All that is due to anyone, we have to pay. In the first place, apart from spiritual realization, we feel such a release at having paid our debt to everyone to whom it is due. It opens for us the light of the soul, straightening and illuminating the way, so that the confusion one always feels when striving to progress spiritually disappears.

We can now understand what is the next step on the spiritual path. It is to develop our tendency to trust. A person who wants to go along the spiritual path should have a greater desire to trust than the average man. No doubt the world is going from bad to worse today. Promises have no value. A ten-cent stamp is valued more than a word of honour. Since this is the state of the world it is difficult for a person to develop the tendency to trust. But when we begin to tread the spiritual path trust is the first thing necessary. Very often a person says, 'I would like to trust people, but people are not worthy of trust'. It may be practical to think about it like this in business, but when it comes to another kind of life, social life or the life of spiritual attainment, we should not look at it in this way. We can only develop the tendency to trust others by being ready to undergo every loss.

It is not always foolish to trust. On the contrary, it is the wise one who trusts more than the foolish one. Besides it is not a weakness to trust, it is a strength; the one who has less trust is

weak, and every day makes him weaker. The one who does not trust people outside will soon not be able to trust his own relatives, his own friends; and finally that distrust develops to such an extent that he does not trust himself. That is the end.

There is a story of a great Sufi who in his early life was a robber. Once there was a man travelling through the desert in a caravan and he had a purse full of coins. He wanted to entrust them to someone because he heard that robbers were about.

He looked around and some way off he saw a tent, and a man was sitting there, a most distinguished looking man. So he said, 'Will you please keep this purse, for I am afraid that if the robbers come they will take it.' The man said, 'Give it to me, I will keep it.' When the traveller came back to the caravan he found that robbers had come and taken all the money of his fellow-travellers, and he thanked God that he had given his purse to someone to keep. But when he returned to that tent he saw all the robbers sitting there and among them was this most dignified man dividing the spoils. He realized that this was the chief of the robbers and thought, 'I was more foolish than all the others, for I gave my money to a thief! Who can be more foolish than that!' And he was frightened and backed away. But as soon as the thief saw him he called to him and said, 'Why are you going, why did you come here?' He said, 'I came here to get my purse back, but I found that I had given it to the very band from which I wanted to protect it'. The chief said, 'You gave me your purse, is it not so? You entrusted it to me, and it was not stolen from you. Did you not trust me? How can you expect me to take it from you? Here is your purse, take it.' This act of trustworthiness impressed the robbers so much that they followed the example of their chief. They gave up robbery. It moved them to the depths of their hearts to feel what trust means. And in his later days this chief accomplished great spiritual work. This shows that by distrusting people we perhaps avoid a little loss, but the distrust that we have sown in our heart is a still greater loss.

The third step in the inner life is to find someone whose guidance we can trust. We might find a spiritual teacher as great as an angel, and yet if we have no trust, he can do very little for us. Besides if we found in our life a spiritual guide who did not prove

trustworthy, our loss would be smaller than the loss of the teacher. The loss of that teacher would be far greater. Nevertheless, the whole of the spiritual progress under the guidance of a teacher depends upon the extent of our trust in his guidance. Without this trust all the teachings and practice of occult laws will amount to nothing.

People seeking after truth should know the place of the teacher in their lives, the importance of a spiritual guide and of his guidance; they should value it and consider it sacred. If that knowledge is not there, then nothing is there and they are like lost sheep. Moreover the tendency of going from one thing to another, from one teacher to another, is an offence to the teacher, to God, and to oneself; in this way one accomplishes nothing.

Many wonder why it should be necessary to seek the guidance of someone else in order to arrive at spiritual attainment. If a person is self-sufficient, if he is satisfied and guided by the light from within he need not seek any such personality. But I have never seen a child born who had already learnt how to speak and who never needed help from his mother or father. And just as it is necessary for an infant to learn how to speak from someone, so also one must learn the heavenly language from someone who knows it.

In my youth my interest in the spiritual path was great, and I came in contact with the teacher by whom I was destined to be initiated. And one thing my teacher said was, 'No matter how great a teacher comes, once you have received this initiation, this blessing from my hands, your faith may not change.' Having had a modern education I wondered what to think about this. I did not doubt but I asked myself what does it mean? But with every step further in my life I found out more surely that this alone is the right way. When the mind is disturbed, when a person is distrustful and he goes first to one teacher and then tries another method, what can one find in him? There is no ideal there. In a university one may study first under one professor and then under another, and so on. That is all right for a university; it is a different kind of education; but when it comes to spiritual education, idealism is necessary.

In a village there was once a young peasant who was known

to be a great seeker after truth. A great teacher came to that village, and it was announced that for whoever came into the presence of this teacher, the doors of heaven would be opened, and he would be admitted without having to account for his deeds. The peasants were very excited about this, and they all went to the teacher except this young man. The teacher said, 'Everyone from the village came to me except that young man; I shall go to him myself.' So he went to the cottage of this young man and said, 'What is it? Is it that you are antagonistic to me, or that you doubt my knowledge? What is it that has kept you from coming to see me?' And he said, 'There was nothing that kept me back except this one thing: I heard the announcement that everyone in your presence would be admitted to heaven without question. And I do not seek this admission, because although I had a teacher once I do not know where he is, in heaven or in hell. If I went to heaven and he was in the other place it would be terrible for me! Heaven would become hell for me. I would rather be with my teacher wherever he is.'

That is the ideal of the seekers after truth about their spiritual teacher. And that idealism enables them to progress and gain the confidence of their teacher. Today the tendency is different. A pupil begins to weigh and measure the teacher before he has started on the spiritual path. He wants to know whether the teacher fits in with his idea or whether he does not fit in, and if the teacher does not fit in with his idea he does not come to learn. But when it comes to teaching it is quite different; they say they are seeking a teacher, but they believe they are teachers themselves. It is this attitude which is keeping thousands of people back.

It is not only the faith and devotion one has for one's teacher which counts, but also the effacing of one's self, because the teacher's work is like that of a goldsmith who melts the gold and then makes an ornament out of it. Therefore the teacher has to test and to try, to mould and to melt before he can use the pupil for a better purpose. If a pupil cannot give himself to that moulding, then he will have a difficult time.

One might ask if it is not weakness to be so passive. Yes, if one were passive from weakness it would be weakness. But if one is

passive from will-power then it is strength, for it requires great strength to dominate one's own self. One's self has a silent influence as is shown in the story of Daniel. It was the power of his self that tamed the lion. But it is easy to tame a lion compared with the taming of one's self. One's self can be horrible, more horrible than a lion. One may think, 'How I have melted, how gentle, how thoughtful I have become!' but then there may be moments when one acts quite differently, to one's own astonishment. Really to dominate the crude nature is a melting process; then when the gold is melted one can turn it into any ornament one likes.

And when we go still further on the spiritual path it becomes the path of power, of concentration. The mind is just like a restive horse that will not stay quiet, that cannot be controlled. Once a person begins to practise concentration he finds an even greater difficulty in making his mind obey. As long as he does not try he is unaware of this, but the moment he begins he realizes how very difficult it is to concentrate the mind.

In concentration lies the secret of all things. What is meant by concentration is the change of identification of the soul, so that it may lose the false conception of identification and identify itself with the true self instead of the false self. This is what is meant by self-realization. Once a person realizes his self by the proper way of concentration, of contemplation, of meditation, he has understood the essence of all religions. Because all religions are only different ways that lead to one truth, and that truth is self-realization.

THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF LIFE WITHIN AND WITHOUT

IT IS the lack of knowledge about the interdependence of life within and without which causes man to live in confusion, in a mist. One asks for the cause of everything, and one does not get to know the cause. The first thing to understand in connection with this subject is that an individual is a mechanism as well as an engineer. There is a part of his being which is merely a mechanism, and there is another part which is an engineer. If the former dominates and governs that part in him which is the engineer, then that person becomes like a machine, working under the influence of all that he comes in touch with. The influences of both the finer world and the grosser world, influences of all kinds acting upon that person, keep him every moment of the day in working order, whether these influences act in his favour or to his disadvantage, whether against his will or according to his will. If it is according to his will he calls it a happy chance; if it is against his will it is a misfortune. Will has an important part to play in life, but when the will is hidden under that mechanism it has no more power over life. The mechanism works automatically, influenced by different forces coming from the finer and the grosser worlds.

Why are there in the world so many people who believe that something is wrong with them, and so very few who think that all is well? Even among ten thousand people there is hardly one who will say, 'All is well with me'. It is very easy to blame destiny and to call it misfortune or ill luck, but it cannot be remedied by calling it by these names; on the contrary, it grows with the years. Besides the more the mechanism gains hold of a person's life, the more that part which is called the engineer is suppressed; it never gets a chance. A person with only a little will, with only a few desires and wishes, is pushed downward by the force of this automatic working in life. He calls this automatic working 'conditions' or 'circumstances'. He may see some reason for it, and he

may find an answer when he looks at it from a logical point of view, but it is never wholly satisfactory. It does not give the fullest satisfaction because there remains the feeling that underneath there is some other solution and some other meaning in every problem.

Everything one sees, hears, or perceives through any sense or experience has a distinct and definite effect upon one's soul, upon one's spirit. What one eats, what one drinks, what one sees, what one touches, the atmosphere in which one lives, the circumstances one faces, the conditions one goes through, all these have a certain effect upon one's spirit. Whether a person eats grosser food or finer and purer food is manifested outwardly; even if one does not heed it, it is manifested outwardly. The body shows the nature it has inherited from the earth to which it belongs; for the nature of this earth is such that when it receives the seed of a flowering plant it produces flowers, and when the seed of a fruit-tree, it produces fruits. And when it receives the seed of poison it produces poison.

Sometimes benefit is derived from bad experiences, while it may happen that good experiences result in a loss. Sometimes out of good experiences something good is received, and out of bad experiences something bad. For instance, when a person has had a bad experience in friendship, and because of it there has developed in him a kind of coldness, a pessimistic view of life, a kind of indifference, and he shows contempt, hatred, prejudice, or unwillingness to associate with anybody else, this means that he has received the bad effects of his experience.

There is another person who through having been disappointed has learned something, has learned how to be tolerant, how to be forgiving, how to understand human nature, how to expect little from others and how to give more to others, how to forget himself, and how to be open to sympathize with another. It is one and the same experience that makes one man go to the North and another to the South. The effect of the experiences of life is different upon each person. A certain drug or herb has a certain effect, favourable to one and unfavourable to another; and so it is with the outer experiences of life.

Man's contact with the outer world is such that there is a

continual mechanical interchange going on; every moment of his life he is partaking of all that his senses allow him to receive. Therefore very often the man who is looking for faults in others, who is looking for evil, even though he may not be a wicked person, is yet partaking unknowingly of all that is evil. Once deceived, a person is always on the look-out; even with someone who is honest he will look for deceit, as he holds that impression within himself. Thus a hunter who comes from the forest where he has just received a blow from a lion, will shrink even from the caress of his mother; and when we consider how many impressions, agreeable and disagreeable, we receive from morning till evening, we realize how someone may become wicked without meaning to. For in point of fact nobody is born wicked. Although the body belongs to the earth, yet the soul belongs to God, and from above man has received nothing but goodness. With the wickedest person in the world, when one can touch the deepest depths of his being one finds nothing but goodness there. So if there is any such thing as wickedness or badness, it is only what man has acquired; and he has not acquired it willingly but simply because he is open to all impressions, as it is natural for every man to be open to impressions.

The science of physiognomy or phrenology goes as far as saying that what one acquires helps to form the different muscles and bones of the features and the head, according to what one's mind has taken in. It is written in the Qur'an that every part of man's being will bear witness to his actions; and the words of Christ, 'Where your treasure is there will your heart be also', mean that man creates in himself all that he values. No doubt when a person is an admirer of beauty, he will always partake of all that he sees as beauty: beauty of form, of colour, of line, and beyond that the beauty of manner and attitude, which is a greater beauty still.

Every race and every creed has its principles of right and wrong, but there is one fundamental principle of religion in which all creeds and all people can meet, and that is to see beauty in attitude, in action, in thought, and in feeling. There is no action with a stamp on it saying that it is right or wrong, but what we think wrong or wicked is really that which our mind sees as such because

it is without beauty. All the great ones who have come into the world from time to time to awaken humanity to a greater truth, what did they bring? They brought beauty. It is not what they taught, it is what they were themselves. Words seem inadequate to express either goodness or beauty; one can speak of it in a thousand words, and yet one will never be able to express it. For it is something which is beyond words, and the soul alone can understand it. And the one who will always follow the rule of beauty in his life, in every little thing he does, will always succeed; and he will be able to discriminate between right and wrong, and between good and bad.

We are placed in the world in such a condition that we are always subject to outer influences. It is as if a soul were thrown into life susceptible to being moved to the South, North, East, or West depending absolutely on the way the wind blows; the soul turns accordingly. If there were not this little spark in our soul which may be called the engineer, and which we recognize as free will, we would never realize for one moment that we are beings. There would be no difference between things and beings. And the more we realize the existence of will in us and are conscious of it, the more we are able to stand firm in all winds; from whichever side the wind comes we can stand against it.

Even from a material point of view the strength which enables a person to stand on the earth, on this ever-moving earth, is not his mechanical body; it is his will. If he lost his will which holds his body man could not stand on the earth. Not knowing what the will is nor where it is, we very often overlook its existence in us and become absorbed in the causes that are outside us, causes of all the things that bring us joy and distress. The outer conditions move the spirit, and the condition of the spirit moves the outer conditions of life. Never, therefore, be surprised that good luck and ill luck rise and fall; both are directed by the will behind them. But man, accustomed to look at everything according to logic and reason, sees them in a different form from what they actually are. The saints and the wise therefore wish to find this faculty which is called the will; and on finding it they work with it. And when one becomes able to work with it properly one gains mastery over it.

Very often a thinking person asks whether there is freewill or destiny, as it seems to him that these two cannot both exist at the same time. It is with them as with light and darkness: in reality there is no such thing as darkness; there is less light and more light. Only when they are compared do we distinguish them as light and darkness. In the same way one can look at freewill and destiny: that destiny is always at work with freewill, and freewill with destiny. They are one and the same thing; it is a difference of consciousness. The more one becomes conscious of one's will, the more one sees that destiny works around it and that destiny works according to it. And the less conscious one is of that will, the more one finds oneself subject to destiny. In other words, either a person is a mechanism or an engineer; but if he is a mechanism then in him there is a spark of engineer, and if he is an engineer then the mechanism is a part of his being.

In spiritual realization we do not need to renounce things. Self-denial as described in the Bible has a different meaning: it means to deny one's self its wrong conception of itself, to take that wrong conception away from it. That is true self-denial. When man once recognizes that part of him which is called will as a divine spark in his heart, and blows on it in the hope of turning it into a flame and then into a blaze, it is he who gives himself life; a life which may be called the birth of the soul.

One cannot say that there is no destiny. There is the plan of an individual, and there is the plan which is the divine plan, although mostly the plan of an individual is not really different from the plan of God. It is not true, however, that destiny does not change; as we change our plans so the Creator changes His plans also.

Everything we make inspires us to complete it. We may make a wrong thing or a right thing, a good thing or a bad thing; but its effect upon us will be that we shall wish to complete it in some way or other. If we create ill luck for ourselves we complete it; we may be against it but still we make it complete; that is the tendency of man: to complete what he has made. Often he does not know this, but when the will is hidden by the mind he sees himself in the hand of conditions; then what little power his will exerts is used to fulfil the demands of the conditions around him,

and to complete that destiny which may be called good luck or ill luck.

It is in the consciousness of the free will and in the understanding of that definite plan which one really wishes to complete, to fulfil, that one can find life's ultimate purpose.

INTEREST AND INDIFFERENCE.

VERY often spiritual people in speaking about interest and indifference give preference to indifference; and many who have not reached that stage begin to wonder whether interest or indifference is preferable. Very often people even lose their interest because they think that in principle indifference is the better thing. It is however a subject that one should study: what is gained by interest, and what is accomplished by indifference, all there is to be gained by interest, and all there is to be lost by indifference; and one must find out if one wants to gain or lose. If one is hungering after gain one should have interest; but if one feels a relief in losing one should have indifference. In other words, either one should keep one's coins locked in the safe, or throw them away and feel relieved. Both ways are all right; it is simply according to one's wish.

Interest can be described as of four kinds. The first is interest in the self. Even if a person is not interested in anybody or anything he is certainly interested in himself. No person is loveless; when a person boasts that he loves no one then one can be sure that he loves himself. Love must be used somewhere; it can very well be used for oneself.

Then there is interest in another. It has a different character because it is chiefly based upon sacrifice.

The third interest is in science or art, or in the attaining of a material object, wealth or power or possessions. This interest has nothing to do with a special person; it is for something which is to be gained, and this needs sacrifice also.

And the fourth interest is interest in spiritual things. That brings one again to interest in oneself, but whereas the one interest is lower selfishness, the other is higher selfishness.

Indifference can also be divided into four classes: indifference to oneself, as when a person says, 'I do not care what people say; I am not interested in myself; I have other things on my mind.' That is one kind of indifference.

And the next indifference is towards an individual or towards individuals. One does not mind whether one lives or dies, one does not mind what happens to one. One does not mind if they love or hate one, whether one profits by them or not. If they are happy, or if they are unhappy, it is all the same.

The third aspect of indifference is when one says, 'What do I care whether I am rich or poor, whether my rank is high or low, whether I am this or that in the world; I am quite indifferent to it.'

Finally the person who attains to the fourth kind of indifference says, 'What does it matter whether I pray or do not pray. Whether in the hereafter it is good or bad, what does it matter? Whether I am received in paradise or not, it matters little'. That is the fourth kind of indifference.

Each person we see in everyday life has either the one or the other, interest or indifference: either one of the four kinds of indifference or one of the four aspects of interest mentioned above. One might ask which is desirable and which is undesirable. All that is natural is desirable, and all that is unnatural is undesirable. When one is interested in something but says, 'I do not want it; I do not like to take an interest in it although it captivates me, although I am attracted by it', that is not right. Or when a person feels that he should look after himself, feed himself, look as nice as he can, and he says that in principle it is not good to pay attention to oneself, that also is wrong. When a person says that all earthly things are unimportant and valueless compared with spiritual ones and that one should not heed them, and yet at the same time is inwardly attracted by the world, then he should not say such things. His interest is preferable to his indifference. One should evolve naturally. One should not think that to take an interest in the things of the world is wrong because in principle it is greater to be without worldly interests. But if one is indifferent to them by nature, even if the whole world reproaches one for this it does not matter. One should say, 'I am indifferent to your opinion too.'

Sometimes interest is required, sometimes indifference is profitable. For instance you may be in a situation where you want to accomplish something, and people laugh at you; or perhaps people do not like you or are apt to criticize you. If you are

interested in all these things you will lose your way. In that situation you should be indifferent. But if you have a business, and in order to promote it you have to see someone to get connections, all this will only succeed according to your interest. If you are indifferent about it you will defeat your own ends.

I was very much amused once when visiting a certain town in India. I went into a shop to buy something, and the owner was sitting cross-legged on some cushions, smoking his pipe. I asked him whether he had a certain thing I wanted. He thought for a minute or two and said, 'I don't think so.' I asked, 'Where can one get such a thing?' He said, 'I don't know.' He would not budge. He remained sitting quite comfortably where he was. I saluted him and thanked him for his kind silence and indifference.

It is all right, indifference, when one sits in meditation in the forest; but if one has a shop what is needed is interest.

People often say that indifference is a philosophy. There are Yogis, ascetics, adepts, mystics who say that indifference gives great power. But interest also gives great power. The whole of manifestation is a phenomenon of interest. All that we see in this world of art and science, the new inventions, the beautiful houses, all this world that man has made, where has it come from? It has come from the power of interest. The power of interest is behind it all, and it is that power which has enabled man to create it.

To go still further, it is the interest of the Creator which has made this creation. Even the Creator would not have been able to create if there had been no interest. The whole creation and all that is in it is the product of the Creator's interest, the Creator as Spirit, or as human being, as a living being.

It is the interest of the bird which enables it to build its nest, and in the same way it is the interest of man which enables him to make all that he makes. If man did not have this faculty of taking interest the world would never have evolved; this is why the secret of manifestation and the mystery of evolution are to be found in interest. But at the same time I do not deny the power of indifference. The power of indifference is a greater one still, provided that the indifference is not an artificial one. When a person chooses indifference only because he thinks it is a good principle, then it is not a virtue; and also there will be no power,

for such a man is a captive: on one side he is drawn by interest, and on the other side he wants to show indifference. It is a mistake on his part, for he neither accomplishes anything by the power of interest, nor does he gain the advantages that can be derived from indifference.

Seen from the point of view of metaphysics, why is the power of indifference greater than the power of interest? Because although motive has a power, yet at the same time motive limits power. Man is endowed at birth with much greater power than he ever imagines, and it is motive that limits this power: any motive and every motive; yet it is motive that gives man the power to accomplish things. If there were no motive there would be no power. But when one compares the original power of man with the power of motive, one will find it is just like the difference between the ocean and a drop. The motive reduces the power to a drop. Without a motive the power of the soul is like an ocean; but at the same time that ocean-like power cannot be used without a motive, while as soon as one wants to use it for a purpose it becomes less.

Indifference releases that limitation automatically. The limitation is broken, and the power automatically becomes greater. One can see this even in worldly things. There are people who run after money, and there are people after whom money runs; and they are not necessarily spiritual people. Sometimes they themselves do not realize their condition.

Some people are worshippers of beauty; there are others before whom beauty worships. There are some who wish to wield power, what little power they can get; and there are others upon whom power is heaped though they do not want it. We also see many examples in this world of how interest often limits man's power, and how indifference makes it greater. But at the same time indifference should not be practised unless it springs naturally from the heart. There is a saying in the Hindi language, 'Interest makes kings, but indifference makes emperors.'

During the reign of Akbar there lived a great sage in Delhi. One day the emperor heard about him and wanted to go and pay him homage. This sage was sitting on a rock with legs stretched out and arms folded. The emperor had Birbál, his friend and

minister, with him; and the latter did not like the way the emperor was received by this sage, for though the sage knew quite well that it was the emperor, he remained in the same position. So Birbál asked the sage sarcastically, how long he had been sitting in this way. And the answer of the sage was, 'Since I folded my hands.' This means, 'As long as my hands were held out in need, my legs stood up. But since my hands do not ask for anything any more, my legs remain stretched out. It makes no difference if a king or emperor comes.' In other words, 'As long as I had interest, my legs were functioning, but since I have no interest any more I sit in the way I like to sit.'

That is the indifference of the sages. But how does this indifference come to them? How is it practised? There comes a day in the life of a person, sooner or later, the day when he no longer thinks about himself, how he eats, how he is clothed, how he lives, how anybody treats him, if anybody loves him or hates him. Every thought that concerns himself leaves him. That day comes, and it is a blessed day when it comes to a man. That day his soul begins to live, to live independently, independently of fear. As long as man is bound by such thoughts as, 'I am treated badly or wrongly; people do not love me or like me; people do not treat me justly or fairly', he is poor. Whatever his position in life, he is poor. The moment he begins to forget about it his power becomes great.

From a worldly aspect there may be a man who looks after himself, who is self-conscious, who thinks of himself, who concerns himself solely with himself. One can say that the ego counts in that person, but that is all that one can admire. Then there may be another person, who has outgrown that thought of self. You cannot help respecting him. The respect comes by itself, as soon as a person has emerged from that thought of self. And when a person has lost interest in holding, in possessing others, then his charm is such that without his holding or possessing all becomes his own. You can feel that person to be above the average in the world.

From the point of view of the sages no one really belongs to himself. In the East it is said that it displeases God when the parents think that their children are their own. God has created

all creatures, and providence has brought about situations in which they are connected, as parents, as master, as servant, as friend, or in whatever relation it may be. And when we think that we possess, that we own or hold them, then God is displeased; and when human beings are not pleased either then they arrive at that stage where one does not possess or own anything or anyone. That also is a stage of indifference.

Besides this there is the stage of indifference where even rank and position and honour and power do not matter very much. For all these are also false claims. In order to occupy a certain position one has to deprive others of it. But when a position or rank no longer makes any difference then one has reached a still higher stage; and when one arrives at the stage where even paradise has no more attraction for one, when one is willing to meet whatever the hereafter may bring, then one's point of view becomes the point of view of the sage, of the master.

A great Persian poet has said, 'Be thou a friend within, and indifferent without.' This manner is very becoming and yet very rare; it really is the manner of the madzub, but one need not go as far as the madzub to find this manner; very often one finds it among friends and relatives. There may be a father, full of affection for his children, with great kindness and love, but yet without any outward expression of it. It is never expressed in a form one recognizes. One often finds this manner too among friends, who may feel great friendship and warmth but yet it is never apparent.

The question arises, how can one learn indifference? By learning interest. If in our life we do not learn interest, we cannot learn indifference. A person who is born with no interest in life is only an idiot. The child which does not hold on to the toy in its hands gives no promise of progress. It is natural for the child to hold on to the toy and claim it as its own. That is the first lesson it should learn. It is normal for a child to say the toy belongs to it and to hold on to it. In that way one develops interest, interest in one's wellbeing and in one's progress in life, so that one can accomplish one's purpose in life. All this is natural and normal. It is interest in other people, in their affairs, in those one loves and likes, which develops the character.

By interest in things of the world one helps the world; by interest one contributes one's service to the world. If one had no interest one would not do so, one would not render service to the nation or to the cause of the world.

Evolution goes on step by step, not hurrying. Indifference is attained by developing interest, and by developing discrimination in one's interest. Instead of going backward one should go forward in one's interest; then one will find that a spring will rise naturally in one's heart, when the heart has touched the zenith in the path of interest. Then the fountain of interest will break up gradually, and when this happens, one should follow this trend, so that in the end one may know what interest means, and what indifference means.

FROM LIMITATION TO PERFECTION (1)

THE ROCKS, the trees, the animals, and man all in their turn show an inclination to seek perfection. The tendency of rocks is to form into mountains reaching upward; and the waves are ever reaching upward as if they were trying to attain something which is beyond their reach. The tendency of birds is the same. Their joy is flying in the air and going upward. The tendency of many animals is to stand on their hind legs; and man, who is the culmination of creation, has this tendency from infancy to stand up. An infant who is not yet able to stand, moves his little hands and legs showing the desire to do so.

This all shows the desire for perfection. The law of gravitation is only half known to the world of science, which believes that the earth attracts all that belongs to it. It is true. But the spirit also attracts all that belongs to it, and that other side to the law of gravitation has always been known to the mystics. The law of gravitation is working from two sides: from the side of the earth which draws all that belongs to the earth, and from the side of the spirit which attracts the soul towards it. Even those who are unconscious of this law of gravitation are also striving for perfection, for the soul is being continually drawn towards the spirit. They are striving for perfection just the same. In the small things of everyday life a man is never satisfied with what he has; he always wants more and more, be it a higher rank, wealth, or fame. He is always striving for this.

This shows that the heart is like a magic bowl; however much you pour into it, it only becomes deeper; it is always found to be empty. The reason why man is never satisfied is that he is unconsciously striving for perfection; those however who strive consciously after perfection have a different way. Nevertheless, each atom of the universe is meant to struggle and strive in order to become perfect one day. In other words, if a seer happens to be in the mountains he will hear the mountains cry continually, 'We are waiting for that day when something in us will awaken.'

There will come a day of awakening, of unfoldment; we are silently awaiting it.' If he went into the forest and saw the trees standing there they would tell him that they too were waiting patiently. One can feel it; the more one sits there the more one feels that the trees are waiting for the time when there will be an unfoldment. So it is with all beings; but man is so absorbed in his everyday actions and his greed that he seems to be unaware of that innate desire for unfoldment. It is his everyday tasks, his avariciousness, his cruelty to other beings, that keep him continually occupied, and that is why he cannot hear the continual cry of his own soul to awaken, to unfold, to reach upward, to expand, and to go towards perfection.

It is the nature of God to wish to realize His own perfection. An artist wishes to bring out the best that is in him; therein lies his satisfaction. In every soul there is a longing to bring out, to bring to a culmination, what is waiting within. And as soon as it has realized this longing the purpose of that soul's birth on earth has been fulfilled.

As is the nature of the creatures, so is the nature of the Creator. His satisfaction also lies in the realization of perfection. It was to this end that everything was created; by going through this entire process His nature was perfected, wherein lies the fulfilment of His own desire.

All that is in our nature is in the nature of God. The only difference is that God is great and we are small; we are limited and God is unlimited; we represent imperfection, God represents perfection. As we sleep God sleeps too; if we can be unconscious, there is also God's unconsciousness. It is said in the Bible, that in God's image was man created. If one wishes to study God, one must study man.

Is it possible for man to reach perfection? When one sees how limited man is one can never believe that he is entitled to perfection. There is no end to his limitations and he cannot even comprehend what perfection means. One becomes pessimistic when it is a question of perfection. Yet we read in the Bible the words of Christ, 'Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect'; this shows that there is indeed a possibility of it. All philosophies, all religious and sacred teachings, are intended to bring about that

realization which is called perfection. Any philosophy or religion that does not show this path to perfection has been corrupted and fails; there is something missing in it. But if we look at religion as one and the same religion in all the ages, given by different masters of humanity yet inspired by one and the same Spirit of Guidance, one and the same light of wisdom, we see that they have all given the same truth. It is only when it is interpreted to suit people of different ages, periods, and races that it varies. In this way it differs. But the underlying truth of all religions is one and the same, and whenever a preacher teaches that perfection is not for man, he corrupts the teaching that is given in all the religions; he has not understood it. He professes a certain religion, but he does not understand it, for the main object of every religion is the striving toward perfection.

Many people seeking for knowledge say, 'What we want in the world today is greater harmony, greater peace, better conditions. We don't want spiritual perfection.' But Christ has said in the Bible, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you'. The tendency of every man is to seek everything else first and to keep the kingdom of God for the last. That which should be sought first is left to the last; that is why humanity is not evolving towards perfection.

Occupations such as war and preparation for war cannot be called civilized occupations. It is a pity that in this period of civilization man should have wars; and yet we think that we are more civilized than the people of ancient times! Ages before Christ Buddha taught, '*Ahimsa paramo dharma ha*'—harmlessness is the essence of religion. And he taught people to be friendly even to the smallest insect; he taught them the brotherhood of all things. And we occupy ourselves with wars! Under the conditions existing today we can expect war anywhere in the world. Why is this so? It all comes from seeking perfection in the wrong way. Instead of seeking spiritual perfection earthly perfection is sought; but what the earth holds is limited, and when everyone struggles for earthly perfection the earth will not be able to answer the demands. Whether we get what we want or not, there will be a continuous struggle.

The main way of seeking for perfection is through religion.

Religion has five different aspects, and its principal aspect and foundation is belief in God. What is God? To many the thought of a personal God does not appeal, though they might accept the idea of an abstract God. But they forget that something abstract cannot be a living being. You cannot call something abstract like space, God. Space is space. You can neither call space God, nor can you call time God. Space is a conception of our own, and in the same way time is a conception. In reality they do not exist.

What is unlimited cannot be comprehended, and what cannot be comprehended is nameless. We can give a name to what is intelligible; if it is unintelligible we cannot give it a name, because we do not know it. And when we consider those who believe in a personal God, many of them merely believe in a certain law given in the name of God; they do good works for the sake of God, but at the same time they only know that there is a God somewhere.

Neither of these types of believer in God has a conception of the real meaning of the God-ideal. They merely have belief in God, and this does not take one much further. The God-ideal is in reality a stepping-stone towards the knowledge of spiritual perfection. It is through the God-ideal that higher knowledge can be gained. And those who wait to see if they will be shown a God before their eyes, or who want a proof of the Being of God, are mistaken. That which cannot be compared, which cannot be named, cannot be shown.

For instance you see light. Light is intelligible to you because there is darkness opposed to it. Things are known by their opposites. Since God has no opposite, God cannot be known in the same way that the things of the earth can be known. Besides to explain God is to dethrone God; the less said the better; and yet the knowledge of God is necessary for those who seek after perfection.

Different religions have different conceptions of God; but not only religion, every man has his own conception of God. We cannot think of any being without making a conception in our mind of that being. For instance if someone told us a fairy tale, the first thing we would do would be to make a conception of a fairy, what it looks like. If someone talks to us about an angel we

make a conception of it. It is a natural tendency to make a conception according to one's own experience and therefore very near to one's own self. A human being does not think of an angel or a fairy as being like a bird or an animal, but as something like himself. If this is true then it is not a fault when someone has his own idea of God. But it is a great fault on the part of those who want to take away that idea and wish to give that person another idea. It is not right. No one can give to another his own conception of God, because each one must make it real for himself. The prophets of all ages have given some ideal to help man to form a conception of God. It has been said, 'If you have no God, make one.' That is the right way and the easiest way of realizing the unlimited truth.

In the story about the Eastern Romeo and Juliet, Leila and Majnun, someone said to Majnun, the young lover, 'Leila is not beautiful. What is she? Why do you love her so much?' And Majnun said humbly, 'In order to see Leila you must borrow Majnun's eyes.' The conception of God is different and distinct for every person and one cannot give one's conception of God to another.

There is another story told about a house-wife who was preparing a great feast. When her husband came home he said; 'My good wife, why have you prepared a feast? Is it a birthday? What is it?' She said, 'It is more than a birthday, it is a great day for me.' But he insisted, 'What is it?' She replied, 'My husband, I never thought that you believed in God.' He asked, 'And how did you find out?' She said, 'While turning over in sleep you uttered the name of God, and I am so thankful'. He said, 'Alas. That which was so sacred and secret in my heart has today been revealed. I can no longer sustain it and live.' And he dropped down dead. His conception of God was too sacred for him.

There is outer expression and inner expression, and we do not always know which is which. We may think many people are far removed from the God-ideal while they are much nearer to God than ourselves. It is difficult for anyone to judge who is near to God and who is not. It is difficult to know even in our own lives what pleases our friend and what does not please him. The more conscientious we are in wanting to please our friend,

the more we find how difficult it is to know what will please him and what will not. Not everyone knows it, but then the light of friendship has not been kindled in everyone. Sometimes it remains a word in the dictionary. One who has learned friendship has learned religion. The one who has learned friendship has attained spiritual knowledge. The one who has learned friendship need learn very little else; morals in Persian are called friendship.

When we cannot understand the pleasure and displeasure of our own friends in this world, how can we understand the pleasure and displeasure of God? Who on earth can say that God is pleased with this or that? No one could ever have the power of making rules and laws, saying God is pleased with this or displeased with that.

Another aspect of religion is the aspect of the teacher. For instance, Christ. There are those who see divinity in Christ. They say, 'Christ was God, Christ is divine.' And there are others who say, 'Christ was a man, one like all of us.' When we come to look at this question, we see that the man who says, 'Christ is divine' is not wrong. If there is any divinity shown it is in man. And the one who says, 'Christ was a man' is not wrong either. In the garb of man Christ manifested. Those who do not want Christ to be a man, drag down the greatness and sacredness of the human being by their argument, by saying that man is made of sin, and by separating Christ from humanity. But there is nothing wrong in calling Christ God or divine. It is in man that divine perfection is to be seen. It is in man that divinity is manifested. There are Christ's own words, 'I am Alpha and Omega'. Many close their eyes to this, but the one who said, 'I am Alpha and Omega' existed also before the coming of Jesus, and the one who says, 'first and last', must exist also after Jesus.

In the words of Christ there is the idea of perfection. He identified himself with that spirit of which he was conscious. Christ was not conscious of his human part, but of his perfect being when he said, 'I am Alpha and Omega'. He did not identify himself here with his being known as Jesus. He identified himself with that spirit of perfection which lived before Jesus and will continue to live to the end of the world, for eternity. If this is so then what does it matter if some say, 'Buddha inspired us', and

millions are inspired by Buddha? It is only a difference of name. It is all Alpha and Omega. If others say Moses, or Mohammad, or Krishna, what difference does it make? Where did the inspiration come from? Was it not from one and the same spirit? Was it not the same Alpha and Omega of which Jesus Christ was conscious? Whoever gives the message to the world, whatever illuminated human beings have raised thousands and millions of people in the world, they cannot but be that same Christ whom the one calls by this name and the other by another name. Yet human ignorance always causes wars and disasters on account of different religions, different communities, because of the importance they give to their own conception, their own corrupted conception which differs from another. Even now on the one hand there is materialism and on the other there is bigotry. What is necessary today is to find the first and last religion, to come to the message of Christ, to divine wisdom, so that we may recognize wisdom in all its different forms, in whatever form it has been given to humanity. It does not matter if it is Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism. It is one wisdom, that call of the Spirit which awakens man to rise above limitation and to reach perfection.

The third aspect of religion is the manner of worship. There have been many in different ages who have worshipped the sun, but they have believed in God just the same. The sun was only a symbol. They thought, 'This is a light which does not depend upon oil or anything else, something which remains.' And then there were others who worshipped sacred trees and holy places, rocks and mountains of ancient traditions; and again others who worshipped heroes of great repute or teachers and masters of humanity. Nevertheless, all had a divine ideal, and the form in which they worshipped does not matter.

The Arabs in the desert, where there was no house, no building to go to, stood in the open air and bowed low in the open space at sunset and sunrise. It was all worship of God; it was given in that form. The Hindus made idols of different kinds in order to help man to focus his mind on particular objects. These were all different prescriptions given by the doctors of souls. They were not pagans or heathens; they were only taught differently by the

wise; different thoughts, different ways were given to them just as a doctor would give different prescriptions to different patients in order to obtain the same cure. Therefore difference in worship does not make a different religion. Religion is one and the same in spite of a thousand different kinds of worship.

The fourth aspect is the moral aspect. Different religions have taught different moral principles; but at the same time there is one human, moral principle on which all is based, and that is justice. And this does not mean justice in principle and in rules and regulations, but it means that one, true, religious law that is in man, that is awakened in man. As his soul unfolds itself this law becomes more and more clear to him: what is just and what is unjust. The most wonderful thing about this law is that a thief or a wicked or unrighteous man may be most unjust to others, but if someone is unjust to him he will say, 'He is not just to me'. This shows that he too knows justice. When he is dealing with others he forgets it, but when it comes to himself he knows justice very well. We are all responsible to ourselves according to that religious law. If we do not regard it, it naturally results in unhappiness; everything that goes wrong, goes wrong for the one reason that we do not listen to ourselves.

The fifth aspect of religion is self-realization. This is the highest aspect, and everything we do leads to it: prayers, concentration, good actions, good thoughts. And how is it gained? Some say that we realize God by self-realization. But it is not so, for we can only realize self by the realization of God. Whenever someone tries to realize self while omitting God, he makes a mistake.

It is very difficult for man to realize his true self, because the self he knows is a most limited self. The self to which he is awakened from the time of birth, the self which has made within him a conception of himself, is most limited. However proud and conceited he may be, however good his idea of himself, yet in his innermost being he knows his limitation, the smallness of his being. He may be a most successful general, he may be a king; but he discovers his limitation when the time comes for him to lose his kingdom. Then he knows that he is not really a king. Earthly greatness does not make him great. If there is anything

that can make him great it is only the effacing of himself and the establishing of God instead. The one who wants to begin with self-realization may have many intellectual and philosophical principles, but he will get into a muddle and arrive nowhere. These are wrong methods.

There are people who say, 'I am God'. This is insolence, stupidity; it is foolish to say such things. They insult the greatest ideal that the prophets and saviours of humanity have always respected. Such people can never reach spiritual perfection. In order to reach spiritual perfection the first thing is to destroy this false self. First this delusion must be destroyed; and this is done by the ways taught by the great teachers, ways of concentration and meditation, by the power of which one forgets oneself and removes one's consciousness from oneself, in other words rises from one's limited being. In this way a person effaces himself from his own consciousness, and places God in his consciousness instead of his limited self. And it is in this way that he arrives at that perfection which every soul is seeking.

FROM LIMITATION TO PERFECTION (2)

EVERY kind of striving in man's life, whether for a material or for a spiritual object, is the result of his natural inclination to reach from limitation towards perfection. Whatever it may be, wealth or rank or name or comfort or pleasure, it is this limitation which keeps man discontented. Also, in all his learning, studying, practising, acquiring, attaining, we see this same striving to go from limitation to perfection. The saying of the scriptures that God alone is rich and all others are poor, can be seen in everyday life. The greater the riches one has the more one wants; and it is interesting to find when observing the life of a poor person that he is more content with what he has than a rich person with all his wealth. Sometimes one also sees that a poor person is more generous in his giving than a rich person in parting with his possessions.

When we look at another aspect of life, we see that a person who is learned in a small degree believes that he has learned and read a great deal and he wishes to show it; whereas someone who has learned more begins to discover that it is really very little and that there is still very much to be learned.

There is still another picture to be seen: that of the foolish and the wise. The foolish man is ready to teach you without a moment's thought, ready to correct you, ready to judge you, ready to form an opinion about you. But the wiser a man is the more diffident he is to form an opinion about you, to judge you, to correct you. What does this mean? It means that whatever man possesses in a small degree he thinks he has much of, but when he possesses more he begins to feel the need and the desire for perfection, for completion.

There is an ancient story that a king wanted to grant a dervish his desire. And the desire of the dervish was to fill his cup with gold coins. The king thought that it would be the easiest thing in the world to fill the cup of the dervish; but when they tried to fill it it proved to be a magic cup: it would not fill. The more

money was poured into it, the emptier it became. And the king was very disappointed and disheartened at the thought that this cup could not be filled. The dervish said, 'Your Majesty, if you cannot fill my cup you only have to say so, and I shall take my cup back. I am a dervish, and I will go, and I will only think that you have not kept your word.' The sovereign, with every good intention, with all his generosity, and with all his treasures could not fill that cup. And he asked, 'Dervish, tell me what secret you have in this cup; it does not seem to be natural. There is some magic about it; tell me what is its secret.' The dervish answered, 'Yes, your Majesty, what you have found out is true; it is a magic cup. But it is the cup of every heart. It is the heart of man, which is never content. Fill it with whatever you may, with wealth, with attention, with love, with knowledge, with all there is. It will never fill, for it is not meant to be filled. Not knowing this secret of life man goes on in pursuit of every object, or any object he has before him, continually. And the more he gets the more he wants, and the cup of his desire is never filled.'

The meaning of this can be understood by the study of the soul. Man's appetite is satisfied by food; but behind it is an appetite which is the appetite of the soul, and that appetite is never satisfied. That appetite is at the back of all the different forms of hunger and of thirst. And since man cannot trace that innermost appetite he strives all through his life to satisfy these outer appetites, which are satisfied and yet remain unsatisfied. If someone is making a study of objective things, things of the objective world, he may gain a great deal of knowledge about them, and yet there is never an end to it. The one who searches the secret of sound, the one who searches the mystery of light, the one who searches the mystery of science, they all search and search and search, and there is never an end to it, nor is there ever satisfaction. And a thoughtful person wonders if that satisfaction is to be found anywhere, the satisfaction which so to speak fulfils the promise of the soul.

Indeed, there does exist a possibility for that satisfaction; and that possibility is to attain to the perfection which is not dependent upon outside things, a perfection which belongs to one's own being. This satisfaction is not attained; it is discovered. It is in the

discovery of this satisfaction that the purpose of life can be fulfilled.

And now the question arises: how does one arrive at this perfection? Religion, philosophy, and mysticism will all help one, but it is by the actual attainment of this knowledge that one will arrive at this satisfaction.

Life can be pictured as a line with two ends. One end of the line is limitation, and the other end of the same line is perfection. As long as one is looking at the end which is limitation, however good, virtuous, righteous, or pious one is, one has not touched what may be called perfection. Are there not many believers in religion, in a God? There are many worshippers of a deity, and more among simple people than among the intellectuals and the educated. Do they all arrive at perfection before leaving this earth, by their belief in a deity or by their worship?

There are others who learn from books. I have known some people who had written perhaps fifty or a hundred books themselves, and had read may be a whole library, yet they still remained standing in the same place where they were. As long as one's face is not turned away from that end which is the end of limitation, and as long as one does not look towards that ideal of perfection which is the real Ka'ba or place of pilgrimage, one will not arrive at that perfection.

What keeps this perfection, which belongs to his own life, which is his own being, hidden from man? A screen put before it; and that screen is one's self. The soul, conscious only of its limitation, of its possessions with which it identifies itself, forgets its own being and becomes so to speak the captive of its limitation. Religion or belief in God, worship, philosophy, and mysticism, all help one to attain this. But if one does not search for perfection through these, even they will only be an occupation, a pastime, and will not bring man to the right goal.

Is there any definition of this perfection? What sort of perfection is it? Can it be explained in any way? It is only perfection itself which can realize itself. It cannot be put into words, it cannot be explained. If anyone believes that truth can be given in words he is very much mistaken. It is just like putting sea-water into a bottle, and saying, here is the sea! Very often people ask, 'But what is the

truth? Can you explain it?' Words cannot explain it. Often I thought it would be a good thing to write the word TRUTH on a brick, and give it into the hands of such a person, and say, 'Hold it fast, here is the truth!'

There is a great difference between fact and truth. Fact is a shadow of truth. Fact is intelligible; but truth is beyond comprehension, for truth is unlimited. Truth knows itself, and nothing else can explain it. What little explanation can be given lies in the idea of expansion. There is a man who toils all day in order to gain his livelihood, to give himself a little comfort or a little pleasure, and so life goes on. And there is another man who has a family, who has others to think about, who works for them. Sometimes he forgets his own pleasure and comfort for the comfort and pleasure of those who depend upon him. He hardly has time to think about his own comfort or about himself. His pleasure is in the pleasure of those who depend upon him, his comfort is in their comfort. And there is still another man who tries to be useful to his town, to improve its condition, to help the education of the people of his town. He is engaged in this work, and very often he forgets himself in striving for the happiness of those for whom he is working. There are also those who live for their nation, who work for their nation, who give their whole life to it. They are only conscious of their nation.

The consciousness of the latter is expanded; it becomes larger. There is very little difference in the size of men's frames but there is a great difference in the expansion of man's consciousness. There is one man who seems as large as he actually is; there is another who seems as large as his family, another who seems as large as his town, another who seems as large as his nation. And there are men who are as large as the world.

There is a saying of a Hindustani poet, 'Neither the sea nor the land can be compared with the heart of man.' If the heart of man is large, it is larger than the universe. Therefore if perfection can be explained in any terms, if perfection can be defined, it is in the expansion of man's consciousness. The man who strives after this perfection need not know or learn what is selfish or unselfish. Unselfishness comes to him naturally, he becomes unselfish. In the last few years humanity has gone through a great

catastrophe; all nations have suffered and have shared in it. Every individual, even every living creature on this earth has been affected by it. One might ask, what was lacking? Was education lacking? There are many schools and universities. Was religion lacking? There are many churches still, and many different beliefs still exist in the world. What was lacking was the understanding of the true meaning of religion. What was lacking was the understanding of the real meaning of education.

Those who have found out that perfection is attained by realizing the self within, have not attained it only by what man calls external worship; it was by self-abnegation in the true sense of the word. It is by going into that silence where one can forget the limitations of the self, that one can get in touch with that part of one's being which is called perfection; and this can best be attained by those who have realized the meaning of life.

THE PATH OF ATTAINMENT (1)

THE secret of life is the desire to attain something; the absence of this makes life useless. Hope is the sustenance of life; hope comes from the desire of attaining something. Therefore this desire is in itself a very great power. The object which a person wishes to attain may be small compared with the power he develops in the process of attainment. The Hindus call attainment *Sadhana*; the power gained through attainment is called in Sanskrit *Siddhi*, and it is this which is the sign of spiritual mastery.

By learning the mystery of attainment one learns the divine mastery which is suggested in that phrase of the Bible, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' This phrase is a veil which covers the mystery of attainment. On coming to earth, man, who is the instrument of God, loses connection with that divine power whose instrument he is, thus keeping not only himself but even God from helping His will to be done. When man, who is born to be the instrument of God, does not perform his mission properly he naturally feels dissatisfied. It does not mean that he does not accomplish what he desires, but it is the reason why he is unhappy. This condition is like a hand out of joint: it is not only the hand that suffers, but the person whose hand it is, not being able to use it, suffers also. Therefore in accomplishing the work he undertakes, in attaining to the aim he has in life, man not only helps himself but he also serves God.

The way in which spiritual attainment is reached must be considered from quite another point of view. It cannot be done in the same way as material attainment. And it is discouraging when after striving perhaps for many years one does not seem to have arrived anywhere. The one who strives to attain the things of this world finds the proof of having attained them by holding them. He says, 'This is mine', because he possesses it. Spiritual attainment on the contrary wants to take possessions away; it does not even allow one to possess oneself. This can be a great

disappointment for a person whose only realization of having attained something is in possessing it. Spiritual attainment, however, comes by not attaining.

Then there is the question of the difference between a spiritual person and a person who possesses nothing. The difference is indeed great, for the spiritual person without any possessions is still rich. Why? Because the one who does not possess anything is conscious of limitation, but the spiritual person who does not even possess himself is conscious of perfection. But how, one asks, can a limited man be conscious of perfection? The answer is that the limited man has limited himself; he is limited because he is conscious of his limitation. It is not his true self which is limited; what is limited is what he holds, not himself. That is why Christ said, 'Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.'

Spiritual knowledge does not lie in learning something, but in discovering something; in breaking the fetters of the false consciousness and in allowing the soul to unfold itself with light and power. What does the word 'spiritual' really mean? Spiritual means spirit-conscious. When a person is conscious of his body, he cannot be spiritual. It is like a king who does not know his kingship. The moment he is conscious of being a king, he is a king. Every soul is born a king; it is only afterwards that he becomes a slave. Every soul is born with kingly possibilities, but they are taken away from him by this wicked world. This is told in many symbolical stories, as in the story of Rama from whom the beloved Sita was taken away. Every soul has to fight for this kingdom and to conquer. It is through that fight that the spiritual kingdom is attained. No one will fight for one, neither one's teacher nor anybody else. While those who are more evolved can help one, each man has to fight his own battle, and find his own way to that spiritual goal.

An intellectual thinks that by adding to his knowledge he may attain spiritual knowledge. This is not so. The secret of life is boundless but knowledge is limited. Eyes see only a very short distance, and the human mind is just as limited. Those who see can see by not seeing, learn by not learning. The way of spiritual attainment is contrary to the way of all material attainment.

For material attainment one must take; for spiritual attainment one must give. In material attainment one must learn; in spiritual attainment one must unlearn. If a person is conscious of his body and thinks it is all that can be known of him, his spirit is covered up. In English one says: he has lost his soul; but it is only covered, for how can anything that is possessed be lost? If a man thinks so he is limited. Neither objects nor beings are lost; they may be temporarily covered up, but they are still there. Nothing made can ever be destroyed; it is only a covering and an uncovering. No relations and connections are ever separable. The separation is outward; inwardly there is never separation. They are separated from one's consciousness, but when the consciousness accommodates them, then nothing in the world can separate them. What does one learn by this? That spiritual attainment is to be reached by the raising of the consciousness from limitation to perfection.

There is another side to this question. There is no one, wise or foolish, who is not progressing slowly or quickly towards the spiritual goal. The only difference is that the one is attracted by it, and faces his goal, making his way towards it; while the other has his back turned to it and is drawn towards the goal without being conscious of it. Poor man, he does not know where he is being taken, but he goes just the same; his punishment is that he does not see the glory he is approaching, and his torture is that he is being drawn towards the opposite pole to that which he desires. His punishment is not different from that of the infant which walks into the water of the lake and whose mother pulls it back by its shirt; but it is looking all the time at the lake.

From a religious point of view it seems very unjust of the divine Judge that one should be deprived of that perfect bliss which is spiritual attainment. But from the point of view of metaphysics no soul will be deprived of this knowledge at any time in eternity.

What does Sufism teach on this subject? Sufism avoids words, words from which differences and distinctions arise. Words can never express the truth fully. Words promote argument. All the differences between religions are differences of words; in sense they do not differ, for they have all come from one source and to the same source they return. This very source is a store for them,

it is their life, light, and power. Therefore the way of the Sufi is that if he does not agree with somebody in a particular idea, he takes a step higher instead of differing on the lower plane. For the wise person there is no difference. The main things that Sufism teaches is to dive deep within oneself, and to prepare mind and body by contemplation so as to make one's being a shrine of God, which is the purpose for which it was created.

What is needed first, both for worldly and spiritual attainment, is to gain self-discipline. Many experience, although few know why, that things go wrong when one's self is not disciplined. Those who give way to anger, passion, or emotions may seem for the moment successful, but they cannot continually succeed in life. Very often misfortunes follow, and illness or a failure; the reason is that one weakness gives way to another, and so the person who goes down continues to go down. It is natural sometimes to take a step downward, for the path of life is not even. But the wise way is to ensure that if one has gone down one step the next step should be taken upward. No doubt it means resisting the force that pulls one downward, but only that resistance ensures the safety of life.

What generally happens is that man does not mind a little mistake. He does not take notice of a small weakness. He underestimates a little failure, and in this way in the long run he meets with a great failure. It is wise, therefore, no matter how deep one has fallen, to raise one's eyes upward; and to try to rise instead of falling. It is very interesting to observe that when one points towards God in heaven it is always upward, although in reality God is everywhere and so is heaven. What makes one think that God or heaven is above is a natural impulse in man, a divine impulse which gives him an inclination to rise. This shows that success and its attainment are God's pleasure. Failure and its experience are God's displeasure.

People who blame destiny for their failure take the way of least resistance. But there are no difficulties that are really insurmountable, because they will become less for the man who struggles with life as he goes forward. The man who takes his path easily finds that the difficulties become more numerous as he goes on. This does not mean that one should choose a path in life that is without difficulties; it only means that on the path of

attainment difficulties should not be counted. Difficulties rise over the head of him who looks at them with awe; but the same difficulties fall at the feet of him who takes no notice of them. The man who fails in the world will fail to attain spiritual bliss.

Man is the king of his domain; his coming on earth takes away his kingdom. During that trial he is tested, to see if he uses that human virtue which helps him to regain mastery over his kingdom. Whatever a man's life may be he will not be satisfied, for his soul's satisfaction is in fulfilling its purpose. The day when he arrives at that mastery, the day when he has regained the kingdom he had lost, he can say, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' And in this lies the fulfilment of his being born on this earth.

What is it to have self-discipline? It is to be able to say, 'I can' and not 'I cannot'. No doubt the words 'I cannot' are often used when a person does not think it would be wise or just to do a certain thing. In that case it is different. But when there is something he believes to be just, to be good, to be right and he still thinks, 'I cannot', it is then that self-discipline is lacking. When a person says, 'I cannot tolerate, I cannot endure, I cannot bear, I cannot forgive', these are all signs of lack of self-discipline.

Some people say, 'I cannot rise above my faults.' The only way to overcome one's faults is by struggle, struggle in the spiritual path. Such a struggle is faced for instance by a person who during a disagreeable conversation has an inclination to retort; he does so, but at the same time the power to fight, to give back, has left him. By dispersing his force in returning insult for insult he has lost his power. By controlling this inclination his power would have been a thousandfold greater, although at the moment when something like this happens, and one humiliates oneself and crushes one's pride and one's self, one feels crushed both ways: by not answering and then by the crushing of one's self. And to be able to say, 'I have answered him back!' gives one a certain pride, a certain satisfaction.

In order to see this question more clearly one must picture oneself as two beings, one the king and the other the servant. When one of them expresses a wish, it is the king who wishes; and the part that says, 'I cannot', is the servant. If the servant has his

way, then the king is in the place of the servant. And the more the servant has his way, the more the servant rules and the king obeys. In this way naturally conflict arises and that reflects upon the outer life; one's whole life becomes unlucky. One may be pious or good or religious, it makes no difference. If man does not realize the kingdom of God within himself nor realize his spirit to be a king, he does not accomplish the purpose of life.

THE PATH OF ATTAINMENT (2)

THE secret of the working of the whole universe is in the duality of nature. In all aspects of nature two forces are working, and it is their action which balances life. Therefore in the path of attainment the power which manifests as enthusiasm or action is not sufficient; knowledge and the capacity for work are also necessary. Very often a person fails to succeed with all his enthusiasm and power of will; and the reason is that either by the power he possesses he pushes his object along like a ball, or with his strength he breaks up the rock which he really needs whole, and not in pieces. Power is no doubt most necessary in attainment, but in the absence of knowledge power may prove helpless.

By power I mean power in all its aspects; all power that one possesses in outer life, and the power of mind and body. It is the power of mind which is called will-power. No doubt many will fail through lack of knowledge, but the lack of power also brings failure.

If an object is pulled from both sides by power and knowledge, then also there will be no success. It is the co-operation of these two powers which is the secret of all success. Success, be it of a material character or of some other nature, is always success. Success, however small, is a step forward to something greater; and failure, however small, is a failure and it will lead to something worse.

Success should not be valued according to its outer value. It must be valued according to what it prepares in oneself. And failure, however small, gives an undesirable impression within oneself. This shows how very necessary it is to keep the balance between power and knowledge. It is of great value to try to develop power and knowledge in attaining one's object. There are two people who become tired of life in the world: the one who has risen above the world, and the one who has fallen beneath it. The former has attained his object, but the latter, even if he left

the world would not be satisfied by any other life. His renunciation of worldly things means nothing. It only means impotence. It is the conqueror of the life of the world who has the right to give up the struggle of the world if he wishes to. But he from whose hands the life of the world is snatched away by his fellow-men and who is incapable of holding it, who cannot progress, who cannot attain in life what he wishes to attain, if he left the world it would not be renunciation, it would simply be poverty.

It is not by any means selfish or avaricious to want to succeed in life. But often by success man closes his eyes to what lies beyond on his path; he stands still; and that standing still is like death. When the many successful people whom we see in this world do not progress spiritually, it means that they did not continue in the path of success. In reality all roads lead to the same goal: business, profession, science, art, religion, or philosophy. When people do not seem to have arrived at their proper destination it is not because they have preferred one path to another, it is that they have not continued on their path.

Very often people who are lacking in knowledge and have more strength than is necessary, destroy their own purpose. While wanting to construct they cause destruction. The greatest fault of human nature is that every man thinks that he knows best. When he speaks to another he thinks that the latter knows but half; and when he is speaking about a third person he thinks that that person knows only a quarter. Some few who do not rely upon their knowledge are then dependent upon the advice of others; therefore their success or failure, and also their thinking, depend upon the advice of others. It is most difficult in life to possess power and knowledge, and together with these to have clear vision. And the best way of keeping the vision clear is by retaining the balance between power and knowledge.

Man generally gets unbalanced, for when there is power he wants to exert it. Also, man is always involved in reasoning; in that way he easily loses his balance. Then one must try to judge whether he attaches too much importance to power, not cultivating knowledge enough. Take for instance a man who is perhaps very enthusiastic in a certain business; and just with his

will-power he wants to get as much money as he can, without any thought of how it will be used. He has only the strength of the purpose 'I must succeed', and he gives all his energy to it without thinking about it. In that way he might achieve success; but still there is always a danger. And then there is another man who is thinking out a thousand things before taking a step in an affair, contradicting everything with his own knowledge. What one should do is this: if one takes one step in power, one should take another step in knowledge, and then there will be balance, then one's life becomes rhythmic. Just like the accent in musical two-four time: there is the strong accent, and then comes a weak accent. Now there is power, then there is thinking.

There are many in this world who from enthusiasm push along the object of their attainment like a football. They mean to grasp it, but unintentionally they push it on, and this happens when a man is too enthusiastic to attain a certain thing for which he has not prepared himself. One should remember that in the path of attainment one must first feel strong enough to bear the burden of what one wishes to attain. The wisdom one sees working behind nature has intended and arranged that every being and every thing shall bear the weight that it can sustain. Very often man's ambition outruns his power or wisdom. Before thinking whether he is entitled to a certain thing or not, he tries to attain it; and it is this which very often causes failure. Man must first become entitled to have what he wishes to have; this makes it easy for him to gain what he wishes to gain, and it attracts towards him what he wishes to attract.

Desiring is one thing, and imagining is another. Lying in a grass hut one might desire a solid wall around one's hut, but one can imagine a palace standing before one; however, it is not imagination which helps in the attainment; it is the earnest desire.

There are things which are within one's reach and there are things which are beyond it. One must first prove to one's own self one's capability of attaining what is within one's reach. This gives one sufficient self-confidence to attain that which seems beyond one's reach. In the path of attainment one must keep the eye of justice open. One must be able to know what is right for one to

attain, and which attainment one does not deserve. There is no soul in this world who is not striving after something. To one the object of his striving is distinct, to another perhaps it is perplexing. Yet there is no one alive who is not striving after something; if the object is clear to one, then it is easier to attain.

In the process of attainment there are four stages. In the first place, the object one wishes to attain must be concrete in one's mind. Next it must be reasoned out how the desire can be materialized. Thirdly, what material is to be obtained and used for it. The fourth stage is the composing or the building of that object. The central theme of the whole of creation is attainment. In the striving of all souls in the world there is only one impulse, and that is the divine impulse. Yet for the man who strives ignorantly after something and goes about it wrongly, it ends in disappointment; and disappointment not only to himself but even to God. The one who knows his affairs, and who accomplishes them rightly, fulfils the mission of his life and the wish of God. No matter what man accomplishes, it is only a step towards something else. As a man goes on accomplishing in the path of attainment, in the end he arrives at the purpose of his life. In the final attainment lies the purpose of all souls, although in the beginning they may seem different.

The secret of all attainment is in the realization of the self. Both the impulse to attain a thing and the control of that impulse are necessary. Very often a man loses the chance of attaining something through his over-enthusiasm which puts his life out of balance. At the same time the power of impulse is a great power and the person who has no strength in his impulse must certainly lose. One should strike a balance between impulse and control. There must be an impulse, but it must be under control. A person who is over-joyous at having riches must realize that he may very soon lose some of them; and it is the same with everything.

The balance should be kept by realizing that nothing which the earth can offer is more precious than one's soul. From the one who runs after things, those things run away, frightened of his pursuit. But the one who does not go in pursuit of objects will

find that they inevitably become his own. When God becomes one's own, what will not become one's own?

For the very reason that God is divided on earth into different beings, and reunites Himself in one Being, His power is unlimited. The real object of all people on earth is the same as the object of God in heaven; but this object can only be attained if man will yield up his desire to the desire of God, if man will give himself up to the Self of God. That is the meaning of the sacrifice of Abraham; that is the real meaning of the crucifixion: to crucify the lower self.

In the path of attainment confidence is necessary. It is according to one's confidence that the object of attainment is drawn closer. It is not by over-enthusiasm; for over-enthusiasm is intoxicating. A person intoxicated by enthusiasm is liable to do the wrong thing instead of the right thing. It is always the inner power which is the secret of attainment; a person who allows his power an outlet only wastes it. It is the conserving of this power which makes a reservoir of power with which all things can be accomplished. For the person who has attained to the mystery of Sadhana, there is nothing in this world which cannot be attained; all is within his reach, his power, his grasp. As high as one's object of attainment is, so high one rises; and as low as the object of attainment is, so low one stands. If the object is honour-giving one will be honourable; if the object is painful one will be sad; if the object is pleasant one will be joyous; if the object is exalting one will be holy. Therefore a person should know what object to keep before his view, what object he should pursue in life.

There are many childlike people who do not know what is their object in life. One minute they think it is one thing, another minute they think it is another thing. In the end they come to nothing because they have no object set before their view. No one can depend upon a person like this. Even the birds are frightened to sit upon a moving branch. The person whose object is set is the one whose life is settled, whom one can call serious, on whom others can depend. The person who does not know his own mind cannot help his fellow-men; he will only upset them. He can neither attain for himself nor can he help another. One should

therefore remember continually to keep one's mind so clear that one can see one's object before one: its character, its nature, its value; and then to exert every effort to pursue that object patiently till one has attained it. No matter how small the object, the attainment of it builds a step towards the final goal.

STAGES ON THE PATH OF SELF-REALIZATION

WE SEE that in the words of philosophers, mystics, sages, thinkers, and prophets, great importance is given to self-realization. If I were to explain what self-realization is, I would say that the first step to self-realization is God-realization. The one who realizes God in the end realizes self, but the one who realizes self never realizes God. And that is the difficulty today with those who search after spiritual truth intellectually. They read many books about occultism, esotericism, and mysticism; and what they find most emphasized is self-realization. Then they think that what they have to do is to attain that self-realization and that they can just as well omit God. But in reality God is the key to spiritual perfection. God is the stepping-stone to self-realization, God is the way which extends over the knowledge of the whole of creation; and if God is omitted then nothing can be reached. There is a wrong method in use today in many so-called cults, which often proves to be a failure, and which consists in teaching the beginner on the spiritual path to say, 'I am God': a thoughtless phrase, a word of insolence, a thought which has no foundation. It leads him nowhere except to ignorance. To the prophets and thinkers, to the sages who taught their followers the ideal of God, it had a meaning, a purpose. But today people do not recognize these, and being anxious to find a shortcut, they omit the principal thing in order to come to the realization of self.

Once a man went to a Chinese sage and said to him, 'I want to learn the occult laws. Will you teach me?' The sage said, 'You have come to ask me to teach you something, but we have so many missionaries in China who come to teach us.' The man said, 'We know about God, but I have come to you to ask you about occult laws.' The sage said, 'If you know about God you don't need to know anything more. God is all that is to be known. If you know Him you know all.'

In this world of commercialism there is a tendency, an unconscious tendency, even for a person who wants to promote the

spiritual truth, to cater for the taste of the people. Either because of a commercial instinct, or with the desire to have a success, there is a tendency to cater for what people want. If people seem to be tired of the God-ideal, those who have that tendency want to give them occultism; they call it that or mysticism, because the God-ideal seems so simple. And as there is a fashion in everything there is even a fashion in belief. Man thinks that the ideal of God is old-fashioned, something of the past. In order to create a new fashion he abandons the method which was the royal road trodden by all the wise and thoughtful of all ages, the method which will surely take men to perfection. Safety and success are sure in that path.

There may be a man of devotion and of simple faith, religious and believing in God, who calls Him the Judge, the Creator, the Sustainer, the Protector, the Master of the Last Day, the Lord, the Forgiver, and so on. And there may be another man, perhaps an intellectual who has studied philosophy, and he says, 'God is all, and all is God. God is abstract and it is the abstract which is God.'

In point of fact the one has a God, even if only in his imagination, but the other has none; he has only the abstract. He calls it God because the others say God, but in his mind he has only the abstract. For instance when you say 'space', there is no personality attached to it, no intelligence recognized in it, no form, no distinct individuality or personality. It is the same thing with time. When you speak about time you do not imagine time to be something or somebody. You say it is time, which means a conception which you have made for your convenience. A man who says that the abstract is God, has no God. By this I do not mean to say that one or the other is right; what I wish to explain is that from a mental point of view the one has a God, even if it is only a God of his imagination, but the other has none, whether he admits it or not. Both are right, and both are wrong. One is at the beginning, and the other is at the end. The one who begins with the end will end at the beginning; and the one who begins with the beginning will end at the end.

We might think, why in this short life should we create for ourselves a kind of illusion, why should we only arrive at the truth at the end? Why not begin with it? But if truth were such

that it could be spoken of in words, I would have been the first to give it to you. Truth is a thing that must be discovered; we have to prepare ourselves to realize it, and it is that preparation which is called religion or occultism or mysticism. Whatever we may call it, it is that preparation. We prepare ourselves by one way or the other in order to realize truth in the end; and the best way, which all the thinkers and sages have adopted, is the way of God.

The next question is belief in God. There are four stages of belief in God. Each stage is as essential and important as the other. And if one does not go stage by stage, gradually evolving towards the realization of God, one does not arrive at anything. It must be remembered that belief is a step on the ladder. Belief is the means and not the end. It leads to realization; it is not that we advance towards a belief. If a man's foot is nailed on the ladder, that is not the object; the object is that he should climb upward on the ladder step by step. If he stands still on the ladder he defeats the object for which he journeys on the spiritual path. Those therefore who believe in a particular creed, in a religion, in God, in the hereafter, in the soul, in a certain dogma, are no doubt blessed by their belief and think they have something; but if they remain there, there will be no progress. If the only thing necessary was to have a religious belief, then thousands and millions of people in the world today who have a certain religious belief could have been most advanced people. But they are not. They go on year after year believing something that people have believed perhaps for many generations, and still they continue with it and remain there just like a man standing on a staircase, which is a place not made for him to stand on but to climb up. When he stays there he comes to nothing.

The first belief is the mass-belief. If someone says, 'There is a God', then everyone repeats after him, 'Yes, there is a God.' One might think that today, at this stage of civilization, people are too advanced to have mass-beliefs, but that would be a great mistake. People are the same today as they were a thousand years ago, perhaps worse if it comes to spiritual questions. Someone who is called 'the man of the day' in a nation, is for the time being supported by the whole nation; thousands and millions lift him up, hold him high; but for how long? Until some still more

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powerful person says, 'No, it is not so.' Then the whole country lets him down.

Just before the war I was visiting Russia. In every shop one saw a picture of the Czar and Czarina, held in high esteem. It was a sacred thing for people. There was a religious ideal attached to the emperor as he was the Head of the Church. And they used to be filled with joy when they saw the Czar and Czarina passing in the street; it was a religious upliftment for them. But not long afterwards they themselves had processions in the streets when at each step they broke the czarist emblems. It did not take them one moment to change their belief. Why? Because it was a mass-belief.

It is a very powerful belief. It changes nations. It throws them down and raises them up; it brings war. But what is it after all? A mad belief. And yet no one will admit it. If you ask an individual, he says, 'I am not one of them'. Yet at the same time all move together when an impulse comes for good or bad.

Then there is a second step towards belief, and that is belief in an authority, as with people at the time of a dictatorship. They believe in a leader. They say, 'I will not believe in the ordinary man, in my neighbour, in my colleague; I believe in that man whom I trust'. This belief is one step higher, because it is a belief in somebody in whom one has trust. When a person says, 'I am a Christian', it means a belief in Jesus Christ and his teaching. It is a belief in someone, not in an abstraction. One might think that people do not believe in authority today, but this is not so. For instance everyone accepts a discovery made by a scientist before having made investigations about it. Investigations come afterwards. When somebody comes forward and says he has discovered something, everyone accepts it. Perhaps another scientist will produce something else one may believe, but the one who says a thing with authority is believed by the multitude.

Then there is a third stage of belief, a further stage, and this belief makes man still greater. It is the belief of reason, and it means that one does not believe in any authority, nor in what everybody else believes, but that one has reasoned it out; that one sees reason in it. This belief is stronger still; for of the beliefs I

have explained before one cannot give proof, but in this case one can stand up and say, 'Yes, I have reasoned it out.'

This, however, also has its limitation. Since reason is the slave of the mind, reason is as changeable as the weather; reason obeys our impressions. If we have an impulse to insult a person, or to fight with him, we can produce many reasons for it. It may be that afterwards there will be contrary reasons; but at the time, while we have this impulse, right or wrong, there is always a reason which supports it. Have the criminals put in jail committed crimes without a reason? No, they have a reason too. It does not fit in with the law perhaps, it does not satisfy society, but if we ask them, they have a reason. The reason we have today we may perhaps change next week, but nevertheless this third belief makes us stand on our own feet, for that moment if not always; and it gives us a greater power to defend our belief.

And then again there is a fourth belief. That belief is a belief of conviction, which stands above reason. There is a sense of conviction in man which is not discovered for some time in life; but there comes a time when it is discovered; and that is a blessed day. Then there arises an idea, an idea which no reason can break, a feeling which is not a passing feeling but is a conviction. However high the idea may be, one seems to be an eye-witness of that idea; one is as strong, as confident, as a person who has seen with his own eyes. One can be convinced of ideas so subtle that they cannot even be expressed in words, and one is more convinced of them than if one had seen them with one's own eyes. It is this belief which is called by the Sufis and Persian mystics *Iman*, which means conviction.

I remember the blessing my spiritual teacher, my murshid, used to give me every time I parted from him. And that blessing was, 'May your Iman be strengthened'. At that time I had not thought about the word Iman; on the contrary I thought as a young man, is my faith so weak that my teacher requires it to be stronger? I would have preferred it if he had said, may you become illuminated, or may your powers be great, or may your influence spread, or may you rise higher and higher, or become perfect. But this simple thing, may your faith be strengthened, what did it mean? I did not criticize but I pondered and pondered

upon the subject. And in the end I came to realize that no blessing is more valuable and important than this. For every blessing is attached to a conviction. Where there is no conviction there is nothing. The secret of healing, the mystery of evolving, the power of all attainments, and the way to spiritual realization, all come from the strengthening of that belief which is a conviction, so that nothing can ever change it.

And now we come again to the question of God. Because this is the important question we must first make it clear in our minds before we take a further step in spiritual progress. Since to analyse God means to dethrone God, the less said on the subject the better; but at the same time, the seekers for truth who want to tread the spiritual path with open eyes and whose intellect is hungering for knowledge, should know something about it.

There is a Hebrew story that once Moses was walking near the bank of a river. And he saw a shepherd boy speaking to himself. Moses was interested and halted there to listen to what he was saying. The shepherd boy was saying, 'O God, I have heard so much of You. You are so beautiful, You are so lovely, You are so kind, that if You ever came to me I would clothe You with my mantle, and I would guard You night and day; I would protect You from the cruel animals of this forest, and bathe You in this river, and bring to You all good things, milk and buttermilk. I would bring You a special bread; I love You so much. I would not let anyone cast his glance upon You. I would be all the time near You. I love You so much! If only I could see You once, God, I would give all I have.' Moses said, 'What are you saying!' The boy looked at Moses and trembled and was afraid. 'Did I say anything wrong?' he asked. Moses said, 'God, the Protector of all beings, you think of protecting Him, of giving Him bread? He gives bread to the whole universe. You say you would bathe Him in the river. He is the purest of all pure things. And how can you say that you will guard Him who guards all beings?' And the boy trembled. He thought, what a terrible thing I have done! He seemed to be lost. But as Moses went a few steps further there came a voice, 'Moses, what did you do! We sent you to bring our friends to Us, and now you have separated one. No matter how he thought of Us, he thought of Us just the same. You should

have let him think the way he was thinking about Us; you should not have interfered with him!' Everyone has his own imagination of God. It is best if everyone is left to his own imagination.

In our daily life we may hate someone, yet the same one is loved by someone else. We may criticize, and the same one is praised by someone else. If this is so then the conception of everyone is different. The same person is considered a saint by one and Satan by another. The God we know, or can know, is nothing but our conception, a picture that we have made of God for our own self, our own use. It is the greatest mistake for anyone to interfere with the conception of God held by another, or to think that another should have the same conception of God as he has himself. It is impossible. Many different artists have painted the picture of Christ, yet each one is different. And since we allow every artist to have his own conception of Christ so we should allow every person to have his own conception of God.

We need not blame the ancient Chinese and Greeks and Indians who believed in many gods. Many gods is too small a number. In reality every single person has his own God. Besides all the different conceptions are really nothing but covers over one God. Let them call God by any name, or think of Him with whatever imagination they have: it is after all the highest ideal. And the ideal of each one is as high as his imagination can make it. Urging upon someone that God is abstract and formless and pure, and that God is nameless, all these things do not help that person to evolve; for the first step on the path of God is to make a conception of God. It is simply to help the seekers after God that the wise in all ages have sometimes made a small statue and called it a god or goddess. They said, 'Here is God; here is a shrine. Come there.' And to the one who was not satisfied with this, they said, 'Walk two hundred times round the shrine before you enter, then you will be blessed.' When the worshipper got tired he naturally felt exaltation because he walked in the path of God.

But, one might ask, if we leave everyone with his particular imagination or ideal of God, will he then progress and one day come to the realization of the self which is the highest attainment taught by all great teachers of humanity? The answer is yes. There are three stages on the way to spiritual perfection. Those

who are unaware of the possibility of spiritual perfection are greatly mistaken when they say that man is imperfect and cannot be perfect. They are mistaken for the reason that they have seen only man in man. They have not seen God in man. Christ has said, 'Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect.' This shows that there is the possibility of perfection. It is also true that man cannot be perfect; but man is not man alone; in man there is also God. Therefore though man remains imperfect the God part in man seeks for perfection. That is what the world was created for. Man is here on earth for this one purpose, that he may bring forth that spirit of God in him and thus discover his own perfection.

The three stages towards this perfection are the following. The first stage is to make God as great and as perfect as your imagination can. It is in order to help man to perfect God in himself that the teachers gave various prayers, the prayers to God, calling Him the Judge, the Forgiver, most Compassionate, most Faithful, most Beautiful, most Loving. All these attributes are our limited conceptions. God is greater than what we can say about Him. And when by all these conceptions and by our imagination we make God as great as we are able to, it must still be understood that God cannot be made greater than He is. We cannot give God pleasure by making Him great, but by making God great we ourselves arrive at a certain greatness; our vision widens, our spirit deepens, our ideal reaches higher. We create a greater vision, a wider horizon, for our own expansion. We should, therefore, by way of prayer, by praise, by contemplation, try to make God as great as we can possibly imagine.

The truth behind this is, that a person who sees good points in others and wants to add what is lacking in others, becomes nobler every day. By making others noble, by thinking good of others, he himself becomes nobler and better than those of whom he thinks good; and the one who thinks evil of others in time becomes wicked, for he covers up the good in him and produces thus the vision of evil. Therefore the first stage and the first duty of every seeker after truth is to make God as great as possible, for his own good, because he is making an ideal within himself; he is building within himself that which will make him great.

The second stage is the work of the heart. The first is of the head. To make God great intellectually, with thought and imagination, is really the painter's work, but still more important is the work of the heart.

In our everyday life we see the phenomenon of love. The first lesson that love teaches us is: 'I am not; thou art'. The first thing to think of is to erase ourselves from our minds and to think of the one we love. As long as we do not arrive at this idea, so long the word love remains only in the dictionary. Many speak about love but very few know it. Is love a pastime, an amusement, a drama; is it a performance? The first lesson of love is sacrifice, service, self-effacement.

There is a little story of a peasant girl who was passing through a field where a Muslim was offering his prayers. And the law was that no one should pass by a place where somebody was praying. After a time this girl returned by the same way, and the man said, 'O girl, what a terrible thing you have done today.' She was shocked and asked, 'What did I do?' He said, 'You passed by this way! It is a great sin. I was praying, thinking of God!' She said, 'Were you thinking of God? I was going to see my young man! I did not see you; how did you see me when you were thinking of God?'

To close the eyes for prayer is one thing, and to produce the love of God is another thing. That is the second stage in spiritual realization; where in the thought of God one begins to lose oneself, in the same way that the lover loses the thought of self in the thought of the beloved.

And the third stage is different again. In the third stage the beloved becomes the self, and the self is there no more. For then the self, as we think it to be, no longer remains; the self becomes what it really is. It is that realization which is called self-realization.

MAN, THE MASTER OF HIS DESTINY (1)

IT IS said in the Gayan, 'The present is the reflection of the past, and the future is the re-echo of the present.' Destiny is not what is already made; destiny is what we are making. Very often fatalists think that we are in the hands of destiny, driven in whatever direction in life destiny wills; but in point of fact we are the masters of our destiny, especially from the moment we begin to realize this fact. Among Hindus there is a well-known saying that the creation is Brahma's dream; in other words that all manifestation is the dream of the Creator. I would wish to add to this, that destiny means the materialization of man's own thought. Man is responsible for his success and failure, for his rise and fall; and it is man who brings these about either knowingly or unknowingly.

There is a hint of this in the Bible, in the principal prayer taught by Christ, in which it is said, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' It is a psychological suggestion to mankind to make it possible that the will of God, which is easily done in heaven, should also be done on earth. And the English saying that man proposes and God disposes supports this; it suggests the other side of the same truth. These seem to be two contrary ideas, yet they explain the same theory; that what is meant by destiny is changed by man, but that destiny also changes man's plans.

The more we study life the more we understand that it is not only qualifications, enthusiasm, and energy that count, but also the design, the plan already made. And according to that plan man has to go through his destiny. No doubt one should not use this to support the argument of some fatalists who think that they can sit back comfortably and wait for better times to come. They may just as well wait for the rest of their life and not accomplish anything.

The question of destiny can be better explained by the picture of an artist meditating on a certain design he has in his mind. The first stage is to create the design in his mind. The second is to

bring it on to the canvas; and when he draws this picture on the canvas, it may suggest something to him that he had not thought of when he made the design in his mind. And when the artist has finished his picture, he will see that it is quite different from what he had originally thought of.

This shows that our life stands before us like a picture; when all that has been designed beforehand begins to happen, our soul will receive a totally different suggestion from the picture. Something that was lacking may have been put in, and in this way the picture is improved. For there are two kinds of artists: one who paints the plan which has been made in his mind on the canvas; and the other who takes suggestions from the picture itself as he goes on painting. The difference is that the one is merely an artist and the other is a master. The latter is not bound to the plan; the former has designed something and is bound to what he has designed; he is limited.

One sees the same thing with a composer of music. He composes a certain melody in his mind; he ponders over it and wishes to put it on paper. But when he plays his composition on the piano, the music suggests improvements to him. He plays the same musical idea that he first had, but he is able to perfect and complete it when he has heard it with his own ears.

That is a picture of our life. There is one man who is driven by the hand of destiny, he does not know where he comes from, he does not know where he is going. He is placed in certain conditions in life. He is busy with something, occupied with something, and he cannot see any other way of getting on; he may desire something quite different, he may have difficulty in putting his mind to what he is doing, but he still thinks he must go on. That is the man who has not yet understood the meaning of this secret. But there is another man who even after a hundred failures is still determined that he will succeed at the next attempt. That man is the master of his success.

There are two parts in man. One part is his external self which the soul has borrowed from the earth; and the other part is his real self which belongs to his source. In other words an individual is a combination of spirit and matter, a current which runs from

above and attracts to it the earth from below, shaping it in order to make it a vehicle. The human body is nothing but a vehicle of the soul which has come from above and has taken the human body as its abode; thus an individual has two aspects of being: one is the soul, the other is the body. It is the meeting of the soul and the body which makes the mind; and these three together make an individual.

The external part of an individual can be likened to the outer form of a globe, while the mind takes the place of the finer inner machinery. This is the mechanical part of being. There remains the soul which is the divine heritage, a spiritual current shooting forth from that Spirit which is the source of all things. Therefore the soul has in it a potentiality, a creative power as its divine heritage. On the one side man is limited and imperfect; on the other side he represents the unlimited and perfect. That is why Christ has said, 'Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect'. It means: one not only inherits from one's earthly parents, but one also inherits that creative power which makes one's life from the Father in heaven.

A soul is born with a mechanism which one calls mind and body. From infancy a soul naturally finds itself limited in captivity. All the tragedy of life comes from limitation. If you ask a hundred people what is the difficulty in their life, each one will name a different struggle that he is facing at the time; but in reality it will be the limitation of life which has caused the tragedies in every form. Man grows up in limitation, and this limitation suggests to him at every step that he is imperfect, handicapped, weak, captive, incapable; and it is because of this constant suggestion of imperfection that he begins to say, 'I cannot endure it, I cannot stand it, I cannot bear it, I cannot forget it, I cannot forgive.' A man begins to think all these things because he is imperfect, because of all the continual suggestions which arise in life and convince him that he is limited. Naturally, therefore, as the man goes on, whether he is successful or unsuccessful, whether he is more qualified or less, whatever his condition may be, his mind holds the thought that his power and inspiration, his knowledge and capability are limited. He cannot understand anything else but that, and he remains totally unaware

of that spark which continually shines in his heart and which may be called his divine inheritance.

Is there a possibility of changing, or of improving our destiny? We in our material life become so rigid in our thinking that we cannot imagine something existing and at the same time improving and changing. We are only capable of recognizing change as far as we can see it, and the moment we cannot see that change any more we call it destruction or death. In other words what we call destruction or death is only a change. We cannot follow, we cannot see the link; it is not visible to us, we cannot fathom it, and therefore we say that it is the end. But is there anything that ends, that is destroyed, or anything that has ceased? Nothing. All these words are our own illusion, our own conception, a conception which is only true as long as we have not seen the continuity. As soon as we understand this mystery, we no longer continue to have that conception. When we see life end suddenly, we call it death. We say a word, in this case 'death', and once that word is spoken it is the end of the matter for us. But the word is never silent, it continues, if not in this then in another sphere.

So it is with thought. We have a thought and then we say, 'I have forgotten'. Yes, the mind has forgotten, but the thought is not dead. It is going on; it never ends. Is there anything that ends? Nothing. Such words as 'beginning' and 'end' are our conceptions, and the further we go in studying life the higher the realization we get of those conceptions. It is this principle which is called unlearning. People are proud and satisfied with what they have learned, but the further one goes the more one finds that learning ends in unlearning.

Then another learning begins. It is like turning life inside out. We are walking on the same earth under the same sun, but we are looking at a different world with different eyes. Life is a different life to us then and the meaning of every word is different. Those who have realized in themselves the possibility of improving their lives, do improve them. But the one who thinks, 'I cannot help it; I am what I am; I get angry, I cannot help it; I get annoyed, I cannot help it; I cannot understand, I cannot bear it'; that person comes under his own suggestion and he naturally becomes weaker every day and cannot accomplish

things. But the one who realizes that life begins with spirit, says, 'What does it matter; if I fail today I will succeed tomorrow. The present limitation does not discourage me'.

It is never too late in life to improve; there is always scope for the man who wants to improve himself. But the man who is content with himself, or so discouraged that he does not want to improve, falls flat. There is no way for him to accomplish anything in life. The spirit of those who went to mountain caves or lived in the forests was a meditative one; one might think it was an undesirable life. Yes, perhaps undesirable to follow, but in relation to what they reached the experience they gained was most desirable. There is much that could be exchanged between East and West. The West has improved and cultivated and invented many things which should go to the East. And the experience of those in the East who went to the forests and sat in meditation under the shade of trees should be taken to the West. It is this that will bring East and West closer, to the best advantage of the whole of humanity.

There is a story of Timurlenk, the great Moghul emperor, a man whom destiny had intended to be great. Yet he was not awakened to that greatness. One day, tired of the strife of daily life and overwhelmed by his worldly duties, he was lying on the ground in a forest waiting for death to come and take him. A dervish passed by and saw him asleep and recognized in him the man that destiny had intended to become a great personality. The dervish struck him with his stick and Timurlenk woke up and asked, 'Why have you come to trouble me here? I have left the world and have come to the forest. Why do you come to trouble me?' The dervish said, 'What gain is there in the forest? You have the whole world before you; it is there that you will find what you have to accomplish, if only you realize the power that is within you.' He said, 'No, I am too disappointed, too pessimistic for any good to come to me. The world has wounded me; I am sore, my heart is broken. I will no longer stay in this world.' The dervish said, 'What is the use of having come to this earth if you have not accomplished something, if you have not experienced something? If you are not happy, you do not know how to live!' Timurlenk said to the dervish, 'Do you think that I shall ever

accomplish anything?' The dervish answered, 'That is why I have come to awaken you. Wake up and pursue your duty with courage. You will be successful; there is no doubt about it.' This impression awakened in Timurlenk the spirit with which he had come into the world. And with every step that he took forward, he saw that conditions changed and all the influences and forces that he needed for success came to him as if life, which before had closed its doors, now opened all to him. And he reached the stage where he became the famous Timurlenk of history.

In all walks of life it will be proved to the seeker after truth that there is a key to success, a key to happiness, a key to advancement and evolution in life; and this key is the attainment of mastery. The question is, how does one attain mastery? There are three stages. The first stage of mastery is the attaining of self-control. And when once self-control is gained, then the second stage is to control all the influences that pull one away from the path which one wishes to take. And when one has been victorious in this second stage, then there is a third stage which is the control of conditions, of situations. The man who is responsible, the man who has control over conditions and situations, is greater than a thousand men who may be otherwise well qualified but do not have this. The one who is able to control them may sit in his chair appearing to do nothing, but he will accomplish more than one who is doing things all day long. Very few can imagine to what an extent a man can gain power, especially as life today is a continual strife for nothing, a busy life without much accomplishment. We cannot imagine to what an extent the power of the master-mind can accomplish things. But it is done behind the scenes. Those who do little come forward and say they can do so much, but those who really do something say little.

There are three aspects of the master-mind, or *Sahib-e Dil* as he is called in Persian. These three aspects are connected with three different temperaments. One is the saintly temperament, another is that of the master, and the third is the temperament of the prophet.

When a person has attained mastery, it may be called an inner initiation. From that time he is consciously used to fulfil a certain

purpose. Every soul is here on earth in order to fulfil a certain purpose in the scheme of life; but when one has reached mastery, from that moment one is chosen by Providence to be used as a tool, an instrument, to accomplish a certain purpose. Humanity, every single human being, is a kind of raw material which destiny uses. The master-mind, however, is a finished instrument which destiny handles to accomplish its purpose.

The saintly temperament is the negative temperament, resigned, perfectly resigned, to the will of God. The saint has learnt patience, confidence, endurance, tolerance. He has carried the cross, he is crucified a thousand times in his life. He knows what love means. He has taken a path of devotion; he leads a life of service; he has effaced himself; he has crushed his personality. He has dissolved the rock out of which he was made into water. His way is not the way of the hammer but of the water. The hammer breaks a rock but the water surrounds it and makes its way. That is why the saintly personality gives peace and harmony and comfort to those who come in contact with it. It is such a personality which heals and lifts up those who are groping in darkness, who are touching the depths of the earth. He has developed the love that one sees in a mother and father but he has that love for every person, for every soul. It is not just a fable that the trees and plants and rocks spoke to the saints. It is the truth. When a person has developed that sympathy, he is sympathetic to rock and plant and tree; everything in nature opens up before him. It is through that at-one-ment that he is able to communicate with every form of life, whatever it is. Therefore it is not necessary that he should leave the world; whether he is in the forest or amidst the world's strife, the soul of man is always capable of rising to the greatest heights, if only he wishes to attain to them.

The other aspect is the aspect of the master. Resistance against all that increases his weakness, that appeals to his weakness, the tendency of continual perseverance, courage and boldness, firmness and steadiness, all such qualities manifest in the master. That is the difference between saint and master. One is active, the other passive; one is resigned, the other persistent. But at the same time both are going forward. Only their ways are different; one

is the positive way, the other the negative way; one is the way of power, the other of gentleness. Nevertheless, both have their purpose to accomplish in the scheme of nature.

In the master's path the will is used mostly in regard to outer things; in the saintly path the will is used to control one's own self; in other words it is used for the time being against one's own self. The saint is resigned to Kaza, and the master has regard for Kadr. But in order to know the will of God it is wise first to take one's own will in hand and use it in the knowledge that it is given for some great purpose in life.

And the third aspect is the aspect of the prophet in whom these two qualities are balanced. On one hand the prophet is power, on the other hand gentleness itself. On the one hand the prophet is courage, on the other he is the personification of divine sympathy. On the one hand the prophet is enthusiastic in his desire to change the condition of humanity, on the other hand the prophet has retired from all things of life. All these opposite qualities are balanced in the spirit of the prophet.

The work of the prophet is a greater work than that of the master or saint. They can remain behind the scenes, but the prophet is before the world to awaken humanity, to raise mankind to a higher consciousness, to inspire it, and to voice the truth so that it may have its echo on the earth, in the sky, everywhere. Do not be surprised, therefore, when you hear that the words of Buddha or Mohammad are still being cherished after so many years, or that the personality of Christ still has power after two thousand years. They have won humanity; they were prophets because that part of their experience which we know in history was real and will always remain real. Mastery is not only a means of accomplishing the things of the world, but it is that by which a person fulfils the purpose of his life.

Everything to be found on earth, such as gold and silver, gems and jewels, is all for mankind. And all that gives happiness such as power, intelligence, harmony, peace, inspiration, ecstacy, joy, also belongs to man. Man can make a heavenly experience his treasure, just as well as an earthly possession. It is not necessary for man to leave all the things of the world and go into retreat. He can attend to his business, to his profession, to his duties in

life and yet at the same time develop this spirit in himself which is the spirit of mastery. The spirit of mastery is like a spark: by blowing continually upon it it will grow into a blaze, and out of it a flame will rise.

Man does not need to trouble about what is lacking outside, for in reality all is within himself. And if he will keep this idea before him and blow on the spark of mastery by constant contemplation, then one day that flame will rise and his life will become clear and his power will indeed be great.

MAN, THE MASTER OF HIS DESTINY (2)

THERE ARE two opposite opinions existing in the world: one belongs to those who are called fatalists, those who believe in fate, and the other is the opinion of those who believe in free will. And if we look at life from both these points of view we shall find reasons for and against each. There are many instances in life where there are qualifications, conditions, inclinations and every possibility of progress; yet at the same time there is some unknown hindrance and one cannot find out what it is. A man may work for years and years and not succeed. There are also many who hope and believe that all good things will come of themselves, but just by hoping and believing good things do not come; it takes an effort and persistence, it needs patience to accomplish things. This shows that there is truth in both possibilities; but at the same time the middle way is the best, the way of understanding how far free will works and also where free will is hindered.

Life according to the mystic's point of view can be divided into two aspects. One is the preparatory aspect, and the other is that of action. The preparatory aspect is the time before a person is born and the other aspect is the time after his birth. A person may be born into a certain condition which becomes the foundation of his life's course; for instance among people who are addicted to drink or in a rich family. The credit for what he does, considering that condition, belongs to him, but that condition is something he has not made; from it he has to develop and evolve through life. And the question is how this condition is brought about.

Eastern philosophers have had different ideas about this matter. The way that the wise and the mystics look at it is that man is a ray of the spirit, like a ray shooting forth from the sun. Therefore the origin of all souls is one and the same, just as the origin of the various rays is in the one sun. But as these rays shoot forth they pass through three different phases, in other words they

penetrate through three different spheres. When the ray shoots forth, the first sphere it passes is the angelic sphere, the next is the sphere of the genius or jinn, and the third is the physical sphere. As they are recognized in the metaphysics of the East.

Now the nature of each sphere is such that the ray or soul when it penetrates through a certain sphere must clothe itself in the garb of that sphere. Just as a person from a tropical country going to a cold climate must adopt the clothes of that climate, so the soul, which by origin is intelligence and a ray of that Sun which is the source and goal of all beings, adopts a certain garb with which it is able to enter, to stay, and to pass through that particular sphere. Therefore, according to the metaphysics of the East, man is an angel, a jinn, and is also man. In these three conditions the soul is the same, though the garb it has taken makes it seem different. Passing through the angelic sphere the soul is angel, passing through the sphere of the genius the soul is jinn, passing through the physical sphere the soul is man. The soul's condition in the preparatory stages of angel and jinn in the end makes it man.

What about the animals, and about many other beings and objects which show some part of life in them, such as trees and plants and rocks? All these are preparatory coverings which make the clothes, the garb, for the soul. There is a saying of a great sage of Persia who lived 500 years before Darwin and who gave his ideas on biology: he said that God slept in the rocks, God dreamed in the plant, God awoke in the animal, and God realized Himself in man. It tells that this process, from the vegetable to the animal, from the animal to man, is really the progress of the garb. For instance the first clothes were made of the bark of a tree. Then as people went on making clothes they found better materials and finally came to the finest. Man is the finest material: his garb, not his soul. His soul is the same as that of the man of a thousand years ago. The material has changed and has progressed with the evolution of the soul which has adorned itself with it. In this way the vanity of creatures has been made manifest. And as the matter of our bodies changes every few years, we attract a finer and finer quality of matter as we grow spiritually. Spiritual advancement has an influence upon the body.

There is also another outlook on this subject: that although the soul, as a ray, goes forward to the physical sphere, yet its nature is to go backward, because it follows the law of gravitation. Just as the body which is made of clay is drawn to the earth, so the soul which belongs to the spirit is drawn to the spirit. 'But', one may say, 'we can see the body drawn to the earth, we can see all things of the earth drawn to the earth, but we do not see the law of gravitation working in the soul.' Actually we do see it, but we deny it, because we do not look at it in that way. For there is a dissatisfaction, a discontent, in every soul. A man may be in a palace or in a cottage, but no matter what condition he lives in there is an innate yearning and longing which even he himself does not recognize. One thinks today that one longs for money, tomorrow for a position, for fame or name; one goes from one thing to another. It just goes on, and when in the end one has reached one's object one wants something else. It is the law of gravitation, that yearning towards the Spirit, the Sun, which is at the back of it. That is why in ancient times people worshipped the sun god as a symbol of the sun within us, the sun which cannot be seen by our eyes, but which is the source and goal of all beings, from which we have come and to which we are drawn. As it is said in the Qur'an, 'From God we all come and to Him we have to return'. That means: there is a spirit, the spirit of all things, the essence of life from which we come and towards which we are drawn.

These three spheres can only be entered on one condition, and that condition is that the soul must clothe itself in the garb belonging to that particular sphere. It is that garb which makes an entity of the soul which hitherto was without any distinction or attribute; as soon as it has adopted this garb it becomes an entity. Before it was only a divine ray. The first garb makes the soul an entity known as an angel. The next garb makes it a mind; and the third garb makes it a body.

Is the mind within the body, and is the soul within the mind? As according to science the brain is within the body one could think that the mind too is within the body, but it is not so. It is as much within as without. It is vaster and wider than the physical body. A jug cannot contain the water of a lake, and so the body

cannot contain in itself the mind; yet the jug can contain some water from the lake, and the body can contain some of the mind within itself.

But the word 'within' has a quite different meaning from that which we attach to it in everyday language. When we speak of the mind being within it means a different dimension; it does not mean in the head or in the breast. It means within each atom of the body, and within every nerve and every blood-cell. And at the same time that it means within, it means behind or beneath or under or nearest to the soul, nearest to our being. That is the meaning of within. The mind is both within and without the body; and so in the same way the soul is both within the mind and without the mind.

One might ask to what extent the jinn world and the angelic world occupy space in our world and pervade it. But what is space? Space is that which accommodates. The mind is a space also, a space which is wider than the world. Our eye is a space too; and as the mind does not mean the brain, so the space in the eyes of our body is not the only space; behind it is another space which is connected with it. And when this idea becomes clear to man, that there is another space, different from this outer space which already accommodates so much, then the vision of the heavens is opened before him. When a Chinese philosopher was asked what the soul is like, he answered that it is like the pupil of the eye. He meant to say that the soul is an accommodation, like the pupil of the eye, which is so small and yet accommodates so much.

And think of the heart. If there were a thousand universes it would accommodate them all, it is so large. As the former Nizam of Hyderabad who was a mystic said, 'What is the universe and the entire cosmos? If the doors of the heart are open, the heart proves to be larger than the whole cosmos'. What little one can understand of this is shown by the sign of the cross: there is a horizontal space and there is another kind of space which can be pictured as a perpendicular line. It is to explain the latter space that the mystics and seers have used the word 'within', and to explain the space of the world, they have used the word 'without'.

The entities or souls which shoot forth from the Spirit into

these three spheres have in each of them the experience of meeting those souls which are returning from manifestation. It is just like a person going from the United States to the Far East and another going from the Far East to the United States, and both meeting in Europe. They give each other whatever they have. The one coming from the Spirit gives magnetism, electricity, intelligence, freedom and freshness, love and life; and the one returning gives experience, knowledge, impression, expression, desires, wishes, thoughts of the wickedness and goodness of the earth, all that he has learned and earned and done and wants to accomplish. All these things are exchanged. It is like the way in which one man may come from Europe with an introduction to the United States which would take him into the best society, and another one who has not received any introduction might go to quite the wrong people.

Thus the soul comes on earth already prepared during the journey through these two spheres. Now supposing for instance the returning soul of Shakespeare met in the world of the jinn another soul coming from the inner Spirit and gave all its experience and qualities and attainments to this soul which was coming to the earth, then this soul would be born with the same qualities as Shakespeare; with the tendency to write poetry, and with much of the knowledge which Shakespeare expressed in his works. According to the Hindus this person may be called the reincarnation of Shakespeare. But one might think, 'What has happened to Shakespeare himself; is it not Shakespeare who has come again in this person?' Yes, but what we know of Shakespeare is of his mind and his body. Shakespeare's soul was a divine ray; it had no peculiarity that might serve as a proof of his being Shakespeare. The Shakespeare in him was outwardly his physical body, and inwardly his mind. That mind was impressed on a soul who came forth on to the earth with the heritage already received from Shakespeare. And for Shakespeare to continue further towards the inner Spirit it was necessary to throw away that garment. Therefore the mind of Shakespeare was a garment borrowed from the jinn plane. That garment he may have given to another one. So if you say, 'What about Shakespeare?' the first question really is: who was Shakespeare? Because it is not

the soul, it is the garment which has come again, renewed. The difference is only in words; in its deeper sense there is no difference.

There seems to be a great dissimilarity between the ideas of Buddhism and those of Christianity about reincarnation. The reason is that the message of Jesus Christ was given to the children of Beni Israel, to those prepared to understand God as the King, as the Master of the Day of Judgment, as the One who is all justice and all power; while the message which Buddha gave was to the people of India, who were more metaphysical and scientific. The simple people of India had their gods and goddesses, and they were satisfied with their religion; but the intellectual class was not satisfied with the gods and goddesses alone and with a religion of devotion. They were scientific and logical; they had their own philosophies. Buddha's mission therefore was to give the people of India an understanding beyond what religious devotion can teach. That is why he did not give the essential wisdom in the form of religion, but in the form of philosophy. The common belief was in reincarnation; and it was much easier for the Master not to attack that particular belief, but to build on that belief a wonderful structure.

Some Buddhists today whose insight is great wonder why Buddha gave this theory, and why he did not give a reason for it. I was very much interested once in San Francisco where a Buddhist came to see me. He was a well-known preacher of Buddhism in Japan. There was another man present who had read many Buddhist books. I was eagerly waiting to hear what this Buddhist priest had to say, but he did not think it necessary to say anything. In order to make him speak I said I would so much like to know the Buddhist teaching about reincarnation. But the other man, the one who had read many books, said, 'Reincarnation is the principal idea in the Buddhist religion; that one is born again and again; and that is what constitutes Karma.' But I was eager to hear something from the priest! After the other had finished his explanation, I asked the Buddhist preacher if this was right. And in his simple way of speaking, he said, 'What this gentleman has said is his belief.' He said no more.

If one should ask if there is such a thing as reincarnation the answer is both yes and no. Why? Because in both answers there

is sense and both answers are true. When you look at life as one life then you do not look upon people as separate entities. Then you cannot say that this person has reincarnated as another. It is the One who is all, and each one is nothing. Either you look at life in that way or you look at life by seeing each person as a separate entity. Naturally, as everything has to go on being something, it must still exist after it is destroyed, it must have an existence in some form. But the destruction or death is only a change. Something cannot be nothing. If it is nothing to our eyes, it is because we do not see. Everything must exist in some form or other. Thus the theory of reincarnation teaches that there is nothing which will be nothing, that everything will be something, must be something.

The other conception is this: if the source is one, the goal is one, then all that we see is phenomena as long as we do not look deeply. When once we look deeply we shall no longer distinguish separate entities; then we shall see one life, one Being; and then there is no reason to think about reincarnation. The thought of Buddha was the same as the teaching of Jesus Christ, only given to Hindus in another form. The religion of the Master was the same whether he was called Buddha or Christ. The more we think of this subject the more we shall find that a preparation is made for man before he is born on earth; and it is that preparation which makes him able to live the life on earth.

What is this life on earth? Is this a life which is fixed and designed, or is there free will? Very often people do not understand the meaning of the term freewill, and specially those who claim most to have free will have the least of it. They are so conscious of their free will and yet they do not know where it comes from. When they have an inclination to laugh or cry, to sit or move, they believe that it is because they want to do it; but they do not know where the thought came from. Do we not feel every day at some time an oppression, seemingly without reason, or a feeling of hilarity or of despair, or a desire for action and at other times a feeling of lethargy? We think that whatever comes into one's mind is freewill. But freewill is quite different from that. We each have our free will; and that free will gives us the power to work to some extent within the activity of the

whole. But both that which we decide and that which conditions create can all be summed up in the Will of God. We have our individual part to perform; and we must do what we feel is right.

How can there be freewill, one might ask, if all is God? The power of water is different from the power of fire; the power of fire is different from the power of earth. So the action of each individual is different, although in the soul of each there is God. According to conditions and education temperaments differ; yet God is in all.

There are many things one has to overcome before one sets forth upon the journey to higher realization; but at each step one takes towards the realization of truth one will feel more self-confident. And the more one overcomes all doubts and the more one's self-confidence grows, the greater will be one's will; and the closer to truth one reaches, the more light one will see. And what is that light? It is the light of self-realization.

THE LAW OF ACTION

TO SAY that results are according to deeds sounds simple, for almost everyone knows it. But not everyone always follows it; and the reason is that knowing a law does not necessarily enable man to observe that law. Besides the nature of life is so intoxicating that, absorbed in the activity of life, one mostly forgets this rule. It is natural, however, that this most simple thing should be very difficult to practise, because one generally neglects to think seriously about it. In order to prove this theory, that the results of a deed are similar to the deed, one need not go far; one can see numberless examples in one's own life and in the lives of others. For it is like an echo; what one does has an echo, and in that echo is the result.

Zarathushtra says that actions may be divided into three kinds: deed, speech, and thought. One may not do wrong, but one may speak wrongly. One may not speak wrongly, but one may think wrongly; and the wrong is done just the same. And how many people excuse themselves by saying, 'I only said it, but I did not do it!' A person can even excuse himself by saying, 'I did not say it, I only thought it.'

According to the ideas of the mystics the world in which we make our life is an Akasha, and Akasha means capacity. It is pictured by them as a dome; and whatever is spoken in it has its echo; therefore no one can do, say, or think anything for one moment which will become non-existent. It is recorded; and that record is creative. It is not only what one does, says, or thinks that is recorded in the memory or in the atmosphere, but that record also creates at every moment, so that every line and letter of it becomes the seed or the germ that produces a similar effect.

I once heard a sculptor say that every man is the sculptor of his own image. Not only is this true, but every man is also the creator of his own conditions, favourable or unfavourable. The difficulty is that man never has the patience to wait till he sees the result. For the result takes some time to manifest, and before that he

may meet with contrary effects. For instance a man who has just robbed another person may have the good luck to find in the street a purse full of gold coins. Naturally he will think, 'What a good result after good work! Now that it is shown that I have done good work, I must continue it! It is the simple ones who say things against it, but I have seen the good results in my own experience!' Life is so intoxicating that it gives man no time to think that the result of one's deed is perhaps waiting; that what happens today may be the result of something else further back.

When we consider the law of action we see that it can be divided into five different aspects. One aspect is the law of the community; for this law is made for the comfort and convenience of the members of that community. Another aspect can be called the law of the state; it is the law by which different classes of people and different communities are governed as one whole. No doubt this aspect of the law is as limited as the mind of man. Naturally, therefore, many laws are rejected, and many new laws are made and brought into practice. And as time goes on people will see that the members of the community or the state will always wish for changes to be made in the law. This has always been and will always be.

The third aspect of the law is the law of a Church. A law which perhaps comes from tradition; a law that people accept, not only because it is a law by which they are governed, but because it is a law that is concerned with their faith, with their belief, which is sacred to them. It is this law which builds a conscience, more than any other aspect of the law.

But then there is another aspect and that is the law brought by the prophets from time to time. And what is this law? It comes as an interpretation of the hidden law which a prophet has been able to see; but a law given by a prophet is also related to the period in which he lived, to the people of that period and their particular evolution. Thus this law is brought about by two actions. One action is the condition of humanity at that specific time, reflected in the heart of the prophet; and the other is the light of God, shining from above to make that condition so clear that a solution can be found for it; it is this solution which can be called the divine law, given by the prophet.

When we study the religions given by various prophets to different people in this world, in different periods of the world's history, we shall find that the truth which is behind all the religions is the same; if the teaching differs it differs only in the law they have given. People have always disputed in vain over this difference in the laws that the different teachers have given to their people, not realizing how much that law depended on the people who received it and on the time when it was given.

But these four laws mentioned above: the law of the community, of the state, of the Church, and of the prophet, all have their limitations. There is, however, one law which leads man towards the unlimited; and this law can never be taught and can never be explained. At the same time this law is rooted in the nature of man, and there is no person, however unjust and wicked he may seem, who has not got this faculty in his innermost being. It may be called a faculty, for it is the faculty of discerning between right and wrong.

But what determines that something should be called right or wrong? Four things: the motive behind the action, the result of the action, the time, and the place. Wrong action with the right motive may be right; and a right action with wrong motive may be wrong. We are always ready to judge an action, and we hardly think of the motive. That is why we readily accuse a person for his wrong, and excuse ourselves readily for our wrong, because we know our motive best. We would perhaps excuse another person as we excuse ourselves if we tried to know the motive behind his action too. A thought, a word, or an action in the wrong place turns into a wrong one, even if it was right in itself. A thought or word or action at a wrong time may be wrong although it may seem right. And when we analyse this more and more we shall say as a Hindu poet has said, 'There is no use in feeling bad about the wrong deed of another person. We should content ourselves with the thought that he could not do better.' To look at everything, trying to see what is behind it, to see it in its right light, requires divine illumination, a spiritual outlook on life. And this outlook is attained by the increase of compassion. The more compassion one has in one's heart, the more the world will begin to look different.

There is another side to this question. Things seem to us according to how we look at them. To a wrong person everything looks wrong, and to a right person everything looks right; for a right person turns wrong into right, and a wrong person turns right into wrong. The sin of the virtuous is a virtue, and the virtue of a sinner is a sin. Things depend very much upon our interpretation, as there is no seal on any action, word, or thought which determines it to be wrong or right.

There is still another side to it: how much our favour and disfavour play their part in discerning right and wrong. In someone whom we love and like and admire we wish to see everything wrong in a right light. Our reason readily comes to the rescue of the loved one. It always brings an argument as to what is right and what excuses his wrong. And how readily do we see the faults and errors of the one whom we disfavour; and how difficult it is for us to find a fault, even if we wanted to, in someone we love! Therefore, if in the life of Christ we read how he forgave those who were accused of great faults or great sins, we can now see that it was natural that the one who was the lover of mankind could not see faults; the only thing he could see was forgiveness. A stupid or simple person is always ready to see the wrong in another and ready to form an opinion and to judge. But you will find a wise person expressing his opinion of others quite differently, always trying to tolerate and always trying to forgive still more. The present is the reflection of the past, and the future will be the echo of the present; this saying will always prove true.

The Sufis of Persia have classified the evolution of personality in five different grades. The first is the person who errs at every step in his life and who finds fault with others at every moment of his life. One can picture this person as someone who is always likely to fall, who is on the point of tumbling down; and when he falls he at once catches someone else and pulls him down with him. This is not rare if we study the psychology of man. The one who finds fault with another is very often the one who has the most faults himself. The right person first finds fault with himself; the wrong person finds fault with himself last; only after having found fault with the whole world does he find fault with himself.

And then everything is wrong, then the whole world is wrong.

The next grade of personality is that of the one who begins to see the wrong in himself and the right in the other. Naturally he has the opportunity in his life to correct himself because he finds time to discover all his own faults. The one who finds fault with others has no time to find fault with himself. Besides he cannot be just; the faculty of justice cannot be awakened unless one begins to practise that justice by finding the faults in oneself.

The third person is the one who says, 'What does it matter if you did wrong or if I did wrong? What is needed is to right the wrong.' He naturally develops himself and helps his fellow-men also to develop.

Then there is the fourth man, who can never see what is called good without the possibility of its becoming bad, and who can never see what is called bad without the possibility of that bad turning into good. The best person in the world cannot hide his faults before him and the worst person in the world will show his merit to his eyes.

But when man has risen to the fifth grade of personality, then these opposite ideas of right or wrong, good or bad, seem to be like the two ends of one line. When that time has come he can say little about it, for people will not believe him, while he is the one who can judge rightly, yet he will be the last to judge.

There are three different ways that man may take in order to progress towards human perfection. But a person who is not evolved enough to adopt the third way or the second way, should not be forced to attempt them. If he were forced at this stage it would mean that he was only taught a manner. For these three ways are like three steps towards human perfection.

The first degree is the law of reciprocity. It is in this degree that one learns the meaning of justice. The law of reciprocity is to give and to take sympathy, and all that sympathy can give and take. It is according to this law that the religion and the laws of the state and of the community are made. The idea of this law is that you may not take from me more than you could give me: I will not give you more than I could take from you. It is fair business: you love me, I can love you; you hate me, I can hate you. And according to this law if a person has not learned the just

measure of give and take, he has not practised justice. He may be innocent, he may be loving, but he has no common sense, he is not practical.

The danger in this law is that a person may value most what he himself does and may diminish the value of what is done by another. But the one who gives more than he takes is progressing towards the next grade.

It is easy for us to say that this is a very hard and fast law. But at the same time it is the most difficult thing to live in this world and to avoid it. One must ask a practical man, a man with common sense, if it is possible to live in this world and not to observe this law of give and take. If the people of the world did no better than keep this law properly there would be much less trouble in this world. It is no use thinking that people will become saints or sages or great beings; if they became just it would already be something.

And now we come to the next step. This is the law of beneficence. And this law means being unconcerned with how another person responds to us in answer to what we do to him in love and sympathy. What concerns one is what can one do for the other person. It does not matter if a favour is not appreciated. Even if the favour were absolutely ignored, still the satisfaction of the beneficent man comes from what he has done, not from what the one who has received it has expressed. When this sense is born in man, from that day he begins to live in the world. For his pleasure does not depend upon what he receives from others but depends upon what he does for others. His happiness is not dependent on anything; his happiness is independent; he becomes the creator of his happiness; his happiness is in giving, not in taking.

But what do I mean by giving? We give and take every moment of the day. Every word we speak, every action we do, every thought and feeling we have for one another, is all giving and all taking. But it is the man who gives who will forget his sorrow, it is he who will forget his miseries, it is he who will rise above the pains and miseries of this world.

Then comes the third law, and that is the law of renunciation. To the one who observes this law giving means nothing. For he

is not even conscious of the fact that he gives; he gives automatically. He never thinks 'I give'; he thinks that it is being given. This person may be pictured as someone walking on the water. For it is he who will rise absolutely above the disappointments, distresses, and pains of life which are so numberless. Besides renunciation means independence and indifference; indifference to all things, and yet not by the absence of sympathy. And independence in regard to all things, and yet not independence in the crude sense of the word.

Renunciation, therefore, may be called the final victory. Only one in a million can attain to this ideal. And the one who has attained this ideal is he who may be called elevated, liberated.

PURITY OF LIFE

PURITY of life is the central theme of all the religions which have been given through the ages to humanity. For purity is not only a religious idea but it is the outcome of the nature of life itself, and one sees it in some form or other in every living creature. It is the tendency of all animals and birds to cleanse their coats or feathers, and to find a clean place in which to live or sit; and in the human being this tendency is even more pronounced. Even a man who has not risen above the material life shows this faculty in physical cleanliness, but behind this there is something else hidden, something which is the secret of the whole creation and the reason why the world was made.

Purity is the process through which the life-rhythm manifests; the rhythm of that indwelling spirit which has worked through the ages in mineral and plant, in animal and man. For its effort, through all these experiences, is to arrive at that realization where it finds itself pure, pure in essence and pure from all that could affect its original condition. The entire process of creation and of spiritual unfoldment shows that the spirit which is life itself, and which represents the divine in life, has wrapped itself in numberless folds, and in that way has, so to speak, descended from heaven to earth.

This process is called involution, and that which follows is known as evolution, or the unwrapping of the divine essence from the folds of enshrouding matter. The sense of this need of freeing the spirit from that which clogs and binds it is called purity, in whatever part of life it is felt. It is in this sense that we may understand the saying 'cleanliness is next to godliness'. In the Arabic language the word for purity is *Saf*, from which root the name Sufi is derived. Some of the early orders of Sufis were called the Brothers or the Knights of Purity; and this did not allude to physical purity but to the unfoldment of the spirit towards its original condition, the pure being of the metaphysician, or the pure reason of the philosopher. The word *Sophia* or pure wisdom has the same derivation.

In the ordinary use of the word 'pure' we find the same meaning: for instance, when we speak of pure water or pure milk, we mean that the original substance is unmixed with any foreign element. Therefore a pure life is the term used to express the effort of man to keep his spiritual being untainted by the false values of the worldly life. It is the constant search for the original self, the desire to reach it, and the means employed to recover it, which alone can truly be called purity of life; but the term can be applied with the same meaning to any part of man's life.

When it refers to the body, it expresses the idea that what is foreign to the body should not be there; and this is the first stage of purity. When a person is spoken of as pure-minded, does it not mean that only that which is natural to the mind remains there, and that all which is unnatural has been washed away? This leads us to the question as to what is natural to the mind; and for an answer we cannot do better than to take the mind of a little child. What do we find there? We find first of all faith, the natural tendency to trust; then love, the natural tendency towards friendliness and affection; then hope, the natural expectancy of joy and happiness.

No child is a natural unbeliever; if it were so it could not learn anything. What it hears and what it is told is accepted by the mind which is ready to believe, admire, and trust. It is experience of life, the life of the world where selfishness reigns, that spoils the beauty of the mind of the child who is a natural believer, a natural friend, ready to smile at every face; a natural admirer of beauty, ready to see without criticism and to overlook all that does not attract it; a natural lover who knows no hate.

There are two ways of becoming pure in mind and body. The one way is to live so that the divine nature in us may shine out and illuminate our path, and so that everything we do and refrain from doing may result in a pure life. The other way is very simple and yet very difficult: it is to observe a child, to envy its innocence, simplicity, and purity, and to grow like a child, following first the example of a child of nine years, then of eight years, then of seven, and so on; as one goes further one comes to taking even an infant as one's example. It was this secret which

was taught by the pictures of the Holy Mother with the infant Christ. Also the symbolical meaning of the wise men of the East, coming to pay homage to the infant Christ, is that to learn the truth we must unlearn all the truths we have learnt.

To bring back that higher stage of innocence which existed in the Garden of Eden we do not need to lose intellect, we need to rise above it. As long as man is beneath his intellect, he is the slave of his intellect; but when he is above it he is its master. Man is greater than the angels, therefore the world can be a higher place than the Garden of Eden, if only man has mastery over his intellect, if only he can rise above it instead of sinking beneath it.

When the soul is evolved it feels by itself. In other words it becomes conscious of its purity, of its majesty, of its eternal life, of its bliss, of its inspiration and of its power. Such is the original mind of man and such its natural condition. It is not sin that is original but purity, the original purity of God Himself. But as the mind grows and is fed by the life in the world, unnatural things are added to it and for the moment these additions seem desirable, useful, or beautiful; they build another kind of mind which is sometimes called the ego or the false self. They make man clever, learned, brilliant, and many other things; but above and beyond all is the man of whom it can be said that he is pure-minded.

When we think about this there arises the question as to whether it would then be desirable to keep a child always a child, so that it should never learn the things which belong to the worldly life. But one might just as well ask if it is not desirable that the spirit should always remain in heaven and never come to earth at all!

True exaltation of the spirit resides in the fact that it has come to earth and has realized there its spiritual existence. It is this which is the perfection of spirit. Therefore all that the world gives in the way of knowledge, of experience, or of reason, all that a man's own experience or that of others teaches, all that is learnt from life, its sorrows and disappointments, its joys and opportunities, all these contradictory experiences help our love to become fuller and our vision wider. A man who has gone

through all experiences and has held his spirit high and has not allowed it to be stained, such a man may be said to be pure-minded. The person who could be called pure because he had no knowledge of either good or evil would in reality be merely a simpleton. To go through all which takes away the original purity and yet to rise above everything which seeks to overwhelm it and drag it down, that is spirituality; the light of the spirit held high and burning clear and pure. It needs the effort of a whole lifetime, and he who has not known it has not known life.

The first kind of purity is the purity of the physical world in which man has to obey the laws of cleanliness and of hygiene; and in doing so he takes the first step towards spirituality. The next is what is generally called purity of life; that purity of life which is shown in a man's social, moral, and religious attitude. The national and religious codes are often very rigid with regard to this kind of purity, and sometimes it is merely an external, man-made purity which the individual soul has to break through to find that of a higher plane. There is, however, a standard of inner purity of which the principle is that anything in speech or action which causes fear, brings confusion, or gives a tendency to deception, extinguishes that little spark in the heart, the spark of trueness which only shines when the life is natural and pure.

A man may not always be able to tell when an action is right in regard to particular circumstances, or when it is wrong; but he can always remember this psychological principle, and judge as to whether the action or word robs him of that inner strength and peace and comfort which form his natural life. No man can judge another; it is a man's self that must be his judge. Therefore it is no use to make rigid standards of moral or social purity. Religion has made them, schools have taught them, yet the prisons are full of criminals and the newspapers are daily more eloquent about the faults of humanity. No external law can stop crime. It is man himself who should understand what is good for him and what is not; he should be able to discriminate between what is poison and what is nectar. He should know it, measure it, weigh it and judge it; and that he can only do by understanding

the psychology of what is natural to him and what is unnatural. The unnatural action, thought, or speech is that which makes him uncomfortable before, during, or after it has taken place; for his sense of discomfort is proof that in this case it is not the soul which is the actor. The soul is forever seeking something which will open a way for its expression and give it freedom and comfort in this physical life. In reality the whole life is tending towards freedom, towards the unfoldment of something which is choked up by physical life; and this freedom can be gained by true purity of life.

We have seen what it means to purify the life of the body and of the mind; but there is a further purity which is the purity of the heart, the constant effort to keep the heart pure from all the impressions which come from without and are foreign to the true nature of the heart, which is love. And this can only be done by a continual watchfulness over one's attitude towards others; by overlooking their faults, by forgiving their shortcomings, by judging no one except oneself. For all harsh judgments and bitterness towards others are like poison; to feel them is exactly the same as absorbing poison in the blood: the result must be disease. First disease in the inner life only, but in time the disease breaks out in the physical life; and these are illnesses which cannot be cured. External cleanliness does not have much effect upon the inner purity; but inner uncleanness causes disease both inwardly and outwardly.

Then after this third stage has been reached, and the heart has been attuned by high ideals, by good thoughts, by righteous actions, there comes a still greater purity in which all that is seen or felt, all that is touched or admired, is perceived as God. At this stage no thought or feeling may be allowed to come into the heart but God alone. In the picture of the artist this heart sees God; in the merit of the artist which observes nature, in the faculty of the artist to reproduce that which he observes, such a one sees the perfection of God; and therefore to him God becomes all and all becomes God.

When this purity is reached man lives in virtue. Virtue is not a thing which he expresses or experiences from time to time; his life itself is virtue. Every moment that God is absent from the

consciousness is considered by the sage to be a sin; for at that moment the purity of the heart is poisoned. It is lack of life which is sin: and it is purity of life which is virtue. It is of this purity that Jesus Christ spoke when he said, 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.'

IDEAL

IF anyone asked me what is the life of life, and what is the light of life, what gives one interest in life, I should answer him in one word, and that is: the ideal. A man with wealth, with qualifications, with learning, with comfort, but without ideal to me is a corpse; but a man without learning, without qualifications, without wealth or rank, but with an ideal is a living man. If a man does not live for an ideal what else does he live for? He lives for himself, which is nothing. The man who lives and does not know an ideal is powerless and without light. The greater the ideal, the greater the person. The wider the ideal the broader the person. The deeper the ideal the deeper the person, the higher the ideal the higher the person. Without an ideal, whatever a man may be in life, life for him is worthless.

What do I mean by an ideal? However insignificant the object may be which one loves, which one looks up to, for which one is ready to sacrifice oneself and all one possesses, yet that is an ideal. I prefer the fanatic who says, 'For this idol of stone I will give my life, I worship it as a god', to the one who says, 'I do not know, I just live on from day to day.' A sincere ideal, however slight, is an ideal. Even to have a slight ideal, and yet to understand it and to be sincere about it, is something worth while. We do not reach the ideal when we go from one ideal to another.

There is an old story of Haris Chandra, a king, whose principle was to be faithful, to be truthful, to be true to his word. At one time, having been taken prisoner, he was sold into the house of a person who made him a keeper of the graveyard. And one day he saw his wife coming there, from whom he had been separated many years. His wife was bringing his son who had died to be buried there. A great struggle went on in his mind when he saw that it was his own child and his own wife, whom he had not seen for so many years. She was so poor that she could not pay the money that was needed for the burial, and here he was appointed by his master to ask money for the work he had to do. But though

he recognized his wife, he never said, 'I am your husband.' He recognized his child, but never allowed his heart to show his deep sadness. He did not allow her to enter without paying, for he was appointed for that purpose. He went through a sorrow which was worse than death; yet he kept to his principle. The ideal will always appeal to one; however fanatical it may seem, however unreasonable, however it may seem to lack logic, yet an ideal is an ideal. It has a life of its own. An ideal is living, and it makes the one who is an idealist alive.

There may be someone who will go through any sacrifice to serve his nation: he has his ideal. There is another who in order to keep up the dignity of his family, of his ancestors, will endure troubles and difficulties, and yet will keep his honour; he has some ideal. However narrow he may seem to be, however conservative, yet he has a virtue which should be recognized. The records of the world's history show that those who have been able to maintain their virtue, have very often been able to do so because their parents or their ancestors had maintained their dignity; therefore they could not do otherwise. A person who does not consider these things will go on living, and may even have a profitable life, but it will be an ordinary life, a life without depth, without value. There is nothing in life which can make it worth while except an ideal.

There are others who have a racial ideal; they value certain qualities of their race and maintain them, and in order to maintain them they are willing to go through any sacrifice. There are others who have the honour of their word; once they have given their word it is for ever. There are other idealists who have the honour of their affection, the honour of their love, the honour of their friendship. Once they have given it, it is given; to go back upon it is the greatest disgrace to them. Both in giving their heart and in accepting a heart there is character, there is honour. The loss of that stability is worse to them than death. All these things, however small and childish they may appear, have great value; they are really the only things worth while in life. The following story is an example of an extreme ideal.

Once in the Panjab some little girls were playing together when Maharaja Ranjit Singh passed by. He was taking a walk,

disguised as an ordinary man. One little girl said, 'I am going to marry a millionaire'; another little girl said, 'I am going to marry a general.' Then a third little girl who was a Rajput, a caste which is known for its pride and chivalry, said, 'I am going to marry the king of this place, the Maharaja.' Ranjit Singh, who was old enough to be her grandfather, overheard this and was greatly amused. He told the parents of that girl that when the time of her wedding came they should apply to him, and then a dowry would be given to her by the state so that she could be happy all her life.

Years passed and the king died; and the time came for the parents to think about arranging their daughter's marriage. When the question was put to the girl she said, 'How can it be? I have been married already. Did I not give my word? Is it not enough?' They said, 'It was a word given in your childhood, it meant nothing at all. It was play, and the Maharaja is now dead'. She said, 'No, I will not hear another word about it. I am the daughter of a Rajput, I have given my word and I will not go back on it.' This is an extreme ideal; it has a fanatical aspect, but nevertheless it is an ideal.

There is another story of a Rajput Raja, a man with a fine nature and high ideal, and who was also very fond of poetry. He waged war against the Moghul Emperor of Delhi, and the struggle continued for a long time. While the war was going on, other princes gave in and came to the emperor's court and did homage, but that one Raja said that as long as he lived he would never bow to the emperor. And at last, when the emperor became disheartened after a long battle, he told the warriors of his court that there would be a very large prize for the one who would bring him the head of this Raja who had caused such great trouble and expense.

No one seemed to want to undertake this task except one man, a great poet at the court of the emperor. All the brave warriors laughed at him, but the poet went to the camp of the Raja, and his great talent made such an impression upon the Raja that he said, 'Ask, O poet, for I really do not know what to give you; there seems to be nothing worthy of you in the treasury.' 'No,' he said, 'do not promise what will be difficult for you to keep.' He replied, 'My promise is a promise.' The poet then said, 'I feel very

embarrassed at asking you, but it is your head I want. Will you keep your promise?' The Raja at once unsheathed his sword and put it in the hand of the poet and said, 'It is a very small thing you have asked, it is not greater than my word.' The people, his children, the ministers, were all very upset; but he was not upset at all.

Then the poet said, 'As you have promised me your head, why not give me your body also? Why should not this body also come with me?' The Raja agreed and left with the poet, the poet first and the Raja behind him; and thus he was brought alive to the camp of the emperor. And there was great excitement, and in order to satisfy his vanity the emperor asked the Raja to come into the court where all the nobles were gathered. After the poet had brought the Raja into the court, the emperor looked at him, at that enemy with whom he had been at war for so many years, and he said, 'You have come after all, after so many years, but it does not seem that your pride is gone, for you do not think even now of bowing before me!' The Raja answered, 'Who should bow, a dead person?' No doubt that ironhearted emperor did not see the beauty of that soul for he ordered that he should be beheaded. But the poet exclaimed, 'No, if he is to be killed, then I must be killed first. I must be beheaded also, for I shall never find anyone who will appreciate my music as he has.' So this poet died together with the Raja; and the sons of the poet, his whole family, all came and recited the most wonderful and inspiring poems which were just like the salt of the earth. Each one said one poem and died, for the merit of that Raja and the great wisdom he had shown.

Everyone must die one day or other; the Raja died because he would not break his word. If the earth were above and the sky below, he would keep it just the same.

In the history of nations one finds a great many examples of idealism like these. One might say that these people lack wisdom, that they lack balance, reason, logic; and yet they stand above logic and reason, they stand above what one calls practicality and common sense. Many practical people with common sense have come and gone; but if we remember the names of any who have made a lasting impression upon the world they are the idealists.

It is very difficult to distinguish between a false and a true ideal. It is not only difficult, but it is impossible; for if something is false, then it is as false as it is real; and if it is real, it is as real as it is false. The best way is just to take as true that which at the time appears true to us. But we should not always discuss it with others, nor try to defend it. We do not know. We do not know if what we find true today will not appear false to us tomorrow; for all these terms, good or bad, right or wrong, virtue or sin, false or true, are relative; and according to differences of time and space they change, which means that it depends from what height we look at it, from what position we see it. In other words, what seems right in the morning, may seem wrong in the evening, and what may seem wrong in the day, may seem right at night. Another example is that if we stand on a certain step of a staircase when looking at things, the right things will seem wrong by looking at them from another step; and the wrong things will seem right by looking at them from a higher or lower one. Therefore whatever we consider at the time to be right, just, good, and virtuous, that is the thing we ought to do; but we should not impose or urge what we consider right or good or true upon others who do not consider it in the same way as we do.

The ideal is such that one can go to extremes, but as they say in Sanskrit, extremes in all things are undesirable. Yet at the same time it is not generally so; mostly one does not consider the ideal enough. For instance one cannot be too good and one cannot be too true. The way to practise this is in one's everyday life; if one would only keep in mind that what one has said one must do, even if it is a very small thing.

This whole question is very delicate, because it is said that in the beginning was the Word; so breaking one's word is breaking God. If man begins to realize, 'In my word there is God', then he will keep his word.

Some wonder if it is better to keep one's word even if one finds later one was mistaken in giving it. This depends upon one's discernment. Keeping one's word is like a promise; besides this, a person may speak without thought and later he will have to change; but if he will always try to speak without mistakes, then in time he will be able to avoid mistakes.

To say, 'A promise is a promise' might seem somewhat rigid, but it is not; for a promise is one's word, one's honour, one's ideal. As high as one's ideal is, so important is one's promise. If one's word can be kicked about like a football it is nothing. One's word is like a pearl mounted on the crown of a king. There are men with such high ideals that once their word is broken they do not wish to live. There is something very high, very wonderful, in this, for it is the divine spark within which gives one the sense of the word. If there is anything by which one can test a person, what he is, his personality, his greatness, his goodness, it is by his word.

No doubt the ideal by which we all feel that we come from the same source and return to the same source is the greatest; for in that ideal we unite with one another, serve one another, and feel responsible for being sincere and true to one another. Even if a man has learned some virtues, he cannot very well practise those virtues if he has no ideal. Ideal teaches virtues naturally; they rise from the heart of man.

There is a story of a king who judged four persons for the same misdemeanour. The wise king said to one that he must be exiled, to the other that he would be put in prison for some time, to the third that he should have a life sentence, and to the fourth he said, 'I am surprised; I never expected that such an offence would be committed by you.' And what was the result? The one who was sent to prison was quite happy with his comrades there. The one who was exiled built up his business outside the country. The one who was sentenced was sentenced, and that was that. But the fourth one went home and committed suicide.

It is the ideal which prompts man to sacrifice, and the most important thing he can sacrifice is his own life. A man without ideal has no depth, he is shallow. However pleased he may be with his everyday life, he can never enjoy that happiness which is independent of outer circumstances. The pleasure which is experienced through pain is the pleasure experienced by the idealist. But what of the pleasure that has not come out of pain? It is tasteless. Life's gain, which people think so much of, what is it after all? A loss caused by an ideal is a greater gain than any other gain in this world.

The true ideal is always hidden behind a man-made ideal which covers it. For instance the fragrance is hidden in the petals of the rose, and when one wants to extract the spirit from them one has to crush them; but thereby the same rose that could have lasted for only a few days has been turned into spirit, into essence, which can last a whole lifetime. That is what is meant by the saying from the Gayan: 'The ideal is a means, but its breaking is the goal.' The ideal can also be pictured as an egg: its breaking is the fulfilment, as with the egg when the chick comes forth. It is necessary for the ideal to break; if it is not broken then the ideal is not used.

The ideal recedes when one approaches it, but the keener one's sight becomes, the greater becomes the beauty of the ideal. In this way one is not removed further from the ideal; one is brought closer to it.

THE JOURNEY TO THE GOAL (1)

WHEN WE picture life as a journey, there are a thousand things which will prove it to be so. When we are on a journey we are with a great many other people, looking at life and going forward. Those who have arrived at their station have got out of the train; and the little friendship or sympathy or anti-pathiness that existed between us only lasted till then. Those who went on have left behind the impression of them which we carry with us. That impression makes us either happy or unhappy; either it makes us love them even in their absence, or it makes us hate them, hoping that we shall never see them again. When we think of yesterday, of last week, of the last months, of the years that have passed in our lives, it only shows that they have passed and we have gone on. It is like the sensation that one has in the train, as though the train were standing still and the trees were moving. In life we have the same sensation, that life is passing and we are standing still.

And we also see when travelling that some are prepared, with all that is necessary in this world, while there are others who are not prepared. Both have to travel just the same, those who are prepared and those who are not. The only difference is that for those who are prepared, this journey is easy. This is explained by the Indian fable of the monkey and the sparrows. When autumn seemed to be approaching the sparrows said, 'We must have a nest; we must build it and it must be ready soon, for autumn is coming nearer.' A little monkey overheard this and was very frightened because it was the first time this young monkey had had to face the winter. It went with great anxiety to its parents and said, 'We must build a home, we must build a nest where we can be protected. I did not know the autumn was coming, but someone told me so.' While they were discussing this the sparrows made their nest ready, but the monkeys put it off from one day to another until autumn was upon them.

And so it is in the world. We find people who say, 'What does

it matter? We shall wait and see what will come'; but when they are faced by a difficulty, by a need, then they begin to realize that it would have been better if they had been prepared. It is the same with education. A young person when he should be learning is always attracted to play and to the enjoyment of life; but when that golden age of childhood which gives facilities for learning and for acquiring knowledge is past, then it is too late.

The greatest wealth is health, energy, intelligence, and life itself. If this health is not preserved and looked after in youth, then even though one may not feel it at that time there will come a time when one realizes that one neglected it. I once asked a person who was old but strong and healthy, 'Will you tell me what blessings you have, what it is that keeps you so strong and healthy at your age?' He said, 'It is the conserved energy of youth which is now maintaining my life.'

Very few young people think about this. Youth is an intoxication. When they are in that intoxication, when they are full of energy, they do not think about it, of what they will have to spend in order to go far in the journey of life.

And then we come to the idea of humanity. Today what we consider learning or education, consists of grammar and history and geography and mathematics. But that kind of education which we should possess as current-coin: a good manner, strong will, a right attitude of mind, that kind of education seems to be quite overlooked. We find it nowhere; and yet if a man has education, qualification, rank or position, and lacks manner, he lacks a great part of life.

If a man does not have that strength of mind which he needs to carry him along the whole of his life's path he lacks a great deal. A man who lacks money misses little; but the man who lacks power of mind misses everything in life. Weakness develops, and it develops without his knowing it. When one sees a little spark of weakness in oneself one thinks it is nothing, but one does not know that the spark will one day turn into a glow, and the glow will turn into a flame. For those who lack manner, strength of mind, a right attitude, it is then too late; they cannot be corrected any more. The nature of life is such that a thoughtless life will draw one into thoughtlessness, and then thoughtlessness will draw

even a thoughtful person towards itself; therefore there is more chance of falling than of rising in life. Besides among thousands there is hardly one who goes upon this journey with open eyes, for nearly all journey with their eyes closed. Man depends so much upon his friends, upon his relations, upon those who love him, upon those who admire him; but he does not know that those who love him will demand from him what is missing.

What is necessary in life is to master ourselves, and not to think that because we have influential or wealthy parents it does not matter what we ourselves are like. Whatever relations we have, however great and good they may be, that is not of any use to us. We each have our journey to make, and we have to answer the demands of this journey. How wonderful it is to watch the people on the daily journeys we make! One person comes along in a group of travellers and gives pleasure to all; he shares with them and gives a good impression to all and he wins their hearts. When he has gone what he has left with his fellow-travellers is joy, a beautiful impression which they will always keep. And there is another one who causes hurt or harm or produces some disturbance among those travelling with him. And when he has gone they pray that they will never meet him again.

One day a maid informed her mistress that there was a funeral passing along the street. She was much impressed and said, 'Certainly the person who died went to heaven.' Her mistress laughed at this maid's authoritative exclamation that this dead person went to heaven. She said, 'Did you see this dead person going to heaven?' 'It is simple, Madam,' she said, 'for everyone who was following the funeral was weeping. Certainly this person has made a good impression on those among whom he lived.' Man loses everything when absorbed in his daily life, not realizing that life passes and the call comes before he even thinks of it.

Man makes many great mistakes but there is one principal one, and that is that he goes through life thinking that he will stay here for ever. And since he is without preparation, the call naturally comes to him as a blow instead of as an invitation. When we think of the journey beyond, we begin to see how many there are in this world who do not even know that there is a hereafter. And the

one who believes in the hereafter has his preconceived ideas about it; either a religious or a philosophical belief. But not even that suffices for our purpose. What suffices for our purpose is to become acquainted with the road along which we have to pass, and with the road whereby the soul descended to the earth. This road is the bridge that stands between the physical and the spiritual part of our own being, and therefore the nature of this journey is different.

The journey in the world we make outside ourselves; and it is by being acquainted with this road that we are led to that destination which we are meant to reach; it is this that is acquired as divine knowledge by the help of meditation. There are many in this world who are curious to know what we shall find beyond this life, and it is this curiosity which gives scope to those who wish to attract mankind by falsehood; it gives them the chance to make up stories to satisfy man's curiosity. For who can know of this way but man himself? He is the traveller and his own spirit is the way. It is man himself who must find his way, and it is with his own eyes that he must see what he will find on this way.

Therefore the true teachers of life's secret do not tell him that he will see this or that on the way. They say he will find whatever he will find, and that his duty is to open his eyes so that he may travel on the way and see for himself. Once a mureed asked his teacher, 'How I should like to see what it is like in heaven and what hell looks like!' 'Close your eyes,' said the teacher, 'and you will see it.' 'Shall I see heaven first?' The teacher said, 'Yes.' He closed his eyes and went into meditation. 'And now', said the teacher, 'see hell also in meditation.' And when the pupil opened his eyes the teacher asked, 'What did you see?' He said: 'I saw nothing in heaven of that paradise of which people speak, nor were there those beautiful plants and flowers and all the wonderful objects of comfort and luxury. There was nothing.' 'And what did you see in hell?' said the teacher. 'I saw nothing. I had expected to see fire and brimstone and people in torture but it was empty. What is the reason? Did I see or did I not see it?' And the teacher answered, 'Certainly you have seen heaven and hell; but the brimstone and fire, or the beautiful gems and jewels of paradise, you have to take there yourself. You do not get them there.'

This gives us the secret of Omar Khayyám's saying, 'Heaven is the vision of fulfilled desire; hell is the shadow of the soul on fire.' What is most necessary for us to learn and understand is that from a perfect source we come, and to a perfect goal we go. But few seek that source consciously, and fewer still seek that source rightly.

What is the right way of seeking that source? The way to seek it is first to learn the psychology of one's own life: what makes one fall, what makes one rise, what makes one fail, what makes one succeed, what gives one happiness, what brings one sorrow. Then one should study the nature of pleasure and pain, whether it is a lasting pain or whether it is a lasting pleasure, a momentary pleasure, or a momentary pain; and then find out the deceitful and false nature of one's own impressions, how under cover of pain there was pleasure, and how under cover of pleasure there was pain; how in the worst person there is some good to be found, and how in the best there is something bad to be traced. This widens the point of view of a man and prepares the ground of his heart to realize the secret of enjoyment.

And the next thing man has to do is to control his activities, physical and mental. He should know that the nature of life is to go on, and that therefore this suspension of life gives scope to that tendency to progress within, instead of only giving it scope to progress outwardly. However much a person reads about and studies these things, it does not bring him satisfaction; satisfaction comes only through experience, and experience is gained from meditation.

THE JOURNEY TO THE GOAL (2)

THERE ARE two different stages in human evolution; the minor and the major stage. In the Hindu Puranic symbology, characters belonging to the one or the other of these stages are called the younger and the elder brother.

Just as there is a stage of childhood when the child only knows what it wants and is only happy when it gets it, no matter what might be the consequences, so the minor stage of the soul is when man only desires what he can see, hear, perceive, or touch; when beyond that he does not care and does not wish for anything else. And the major stage is when man has experienced life to a certain extent, has known pleasure and pain, enthusiasm and disappointment, and has realized the variability of life; only then has he reached the stage of majority.

These minor and major stages do not depend upon a certain age, nor do they depend upon a particular education; they depend upon the inner life. When a man has penetrated into life as far as he can go, and when he has passed the limit of the minor stage, then he arrives at the major stage. In the East there is a custom that has become a kind of religious etiquette: not to wake a person who is asleep. In other words, one should treat the world according to nature and not go against nature. The man who is in the minor stage should not be forced into the major stage; he must first sleep well before he can awake.

On the spiritual path the man who is in the minor stage says, 'Yes, I would like to go on this path, but where shall I arrive?' Before he travels on this path he wants to know all about it. He wants to know whether his friends are going with him; and if they are not, he is not ready to go either. For he is not sure of the way; he will not go alone and wants to know when and where he will arrive, if it is safe to journey on that particular path. On his journey he looks back and at the same time tries to look forward, asking, 'Shall I reach the goal? Is it really the right path?' A thousand times doubt comes, or fear; he looks back, forward,

around. If others could only tell him how far he has journeyed! He is restless; he wants to know how far he is from the goal. He really is still a child, although he has a desire to travel on. To him the mystical hints for mental research are toys which keep him busy looking at the map of the journey to see where he is going.

About the conditions of the major stage the Bible says, 'Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.' If I were asked what the journey really is, and what its object, I would answer that the purpose of the whole of creation was for this journey, and that if it were not for this purpose there would be no creation at all. Before a person starts upon this journey he practises it in some form or other in play, although in reality he has not yet started. For instance a person desires to be rich, and he devotes all his time and energy, his life and his thoughts, to that object, and so to speak journeys towards that goal. If he desires power he makes for that and gets it; if he wants position he uses all his strength to reach that goal. But he does all this in play; and the proof of this is that every time he attains the object he desired and of which he was in pursuit, it only gives him the desire for something else. If he is rich he wants to be famous; if he is famous he wants something else; if he has one thing he strives for another and is never satisfied. It shows that man, outwardly busy in the pursuit of worldly things, is not satisfied but has a constant yearning in his soul for something more; and this keeps him uneasy. Rumi gives a good explanation of this in his Masnavi where he says, 'What is it in the reed flute that appeals to your soul, that goes through you, pierces the heart?' And the answer is: it is the crying of the flute, and the reason of its crying is that it once belonged to a plant from which it was cut apart. Holes were made in its heart. It longs to be reunited with its source, with its origin. In another place in his book Rumi says, 'So it is with everyone who has left his original country for a long time; he may roam about and feel very pleased with what he sees, but there will come a moment when a strong yearning rises in his heart for the place where he was born.'

One sees that those in the world who have really suffered, who have been disappointed, who are broken-hearted, do not wish to tell anybody about their experiences, they do not want any

company but wish to be alone. And then it is as if there were someone waiting with open arms, waiting for such a soul to come as a child comes to its mother. This shows that there is somewhere a consoler greater than any in the world, a friend dearer than anyone else, a protector stronger than any earthly one. Knowing that the world is not to be depended upon, the one who has gone through all this looks for that great one in himself.

The friend who is a friend in life and after death, in pleasure and pain, in riches and poverty, one upon whom one can always depend, who always guides rightly, who gives the best advice—that friend is hidden in one's own heart. One cannot find a better one. Who is this friend? Man's own being, his true inner being. That friend is the origin, source, and goal of all.

But the question arises: if that friend is one's own being, why then call him a friend, why not call him one's self? The answer is that no doubt this friend is really one's own being, but when the greater Self is compared with the present realization one finds oneself smaller than a drop in the ocean. Man cannot very well call that friend himself until he has forgotten himself, until he is no more himself. Until and unless one has arrived at the state of perfection one had better be quiet and not insolent, talking about that which one has not yet become.

All occult schools all over the world prescribe as the first lesson quietude, no discussion, no dispute, no argument. The conditions for those on the path are altogether different from the conditions of the outer world. The true knowers of life have kept their lips closed about this subject. No method has been successful and profitable other than the method of the prophets of all lands, who gave man the first lesson of love for God.

Religious authorities of different times have kept humanity ignorant of the knowledge of God and have only given it a belief in God; and it is lack of this knowledge which has made the man of reason rebel against that which he could not understand. There remained no link between the two, knowledge and belief, and that is how the reign of materialism came to the world, a reign which is still spreading. At such times of materialism chaos comes into the world; all is confusion and unrest. Many wish to do good, but do not know how. Such times Shri Krishna has called

'the decay of Dharma', when the spirit is gone and only the form remains. No doubt at times warning comes in the form of intuition to the soul, but the intoxication of life, the mist, is so great that the message is not heard, not understood, not received until the messenger has disappeared.

What is the manner and the method of the journey? We see that when a person rises above all the things of the world such as power, wealth, possessions, all that gives pride and vanity, there comes a desire in his heart, a remembrance of his origin, of the perfection of love and peace, although no one in the world can pretend to have arrived at this stage. Every moment of a man's life speaks louder of what he says than of what he really is.

Man's first tendency towards humanity is a loving, a charitable attitude, to the extent that forgiveness dictates every action of his life. He shows patience in his actions, tolerance towards his fellow-men, and considers that each one has his own stage of evolution. He does not expect a person to act in a better way than his stage of evolution permits. He does not make his own law wanting others to follow it; he follows the law for all.

When a man's attitude has become a loving attitude, a tendency to serve, to forgive, to tolerate, to have reverence for all, good and bad, young and old, then he begins his journey. To explain what path it is there is no better symbol than the cross. No one without courage, strength of will, and patience can follow this path. When a person has to live among people of every different kind, he must make his own character soft as a rose, make it even finer so that no one can be hurt by the thorns. Two thorns cannot harm each other. The thorns can hurt the rose, but the rose cannot tear the thorns. Think what the life of the rose between two thorns must be!

The journey begins with a path of thorns, and the traveller must go barefoot. It is not easy always to be tolerant and patient, to refrain from judging others, and to love one's enemy. It is a dead man who walks on this path, one who has drunk the bowl of poison. The beginning of each path is always difficult and uninteresting, hard for everybody. Ask the violinist about the first days when he practises scales and cannot even form the tones! Often he does not have enough patience to go on till he can play

well enough to satisfy himself. The first part of the path is constant strife, struggle with life, but as one approaches the goal the path gets easier; the distance seems greater but the path is smoother and difficulties less. The journey is achieved by realizing in oneself the answer to the questions: what am I? am I body, mind, or what else? do I originate from the earth or if not from whence?

As soon as one has started on the journey one's lower nature rises up, and all one's follies and weaknesses want to drag one down to earth; and the struggle of breaking these chains requires the strength of a Samson. Then comes the struggle between the beauty of matter and spiritual beauty. Beauty in form and colour is more realistic; spiritual beauty is hidden in mist until one comes to a stage when spiritual beauty becomes *the* beauty, which is a shining light.

When man has acquired knowledge, power, magnetism, he becomes conscious of having greater power than others, of knowing more than others, of being able to achieve more than others. To use these faculties rightly is another struggle. He should not pride himself on these accomplishments. There is an enemy who starts with him on the journey and never leaves him: his pride and spiritual egotism, and this enemy stays with him as long as he is on the path.

It is a great temptation to think, on having received inspiration and power, 'I can do, know, understand more than you'. It is a constant struggle until the end, and at any moment one may stumble and fall down. Only the steadfast traveller will persist in rising up every time, for without patience he may lose his way. But those who journey on this path will get help; as Christ said, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you'. It is the goal which is important, and so is the right attitude of the soul towards it; not the things one meets on the path.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

WHAT generally happens in life is this: man acknowledges what he should not acknowledge, and he does not acknowledge what he should acknowledge. As a rule it is best never to acknowledge a fact that one does not wish to give life to. For instance, when a person begins to see that his friend is not as kind, not as affectionate as he ought to be as a friend, as soon as he acknowledges it he at once gives substance to something which so far has been only a shadow. A person who feels, 'Everyone in my family, in my surroundings, dislikes me, disapproves of me; I have a tiring effect upon them', certainly gives life to that fact.

Once a friend came to me and said, 'I do not know what bad planet is exerting its influence upon me, but for the last three years everything I touch has gone wrong; nothing that I touch brings success or pleasure.' I said, 'I am very sorry you have come so late; yet it is not too late; but for three years you have added fuel to this fire.' Then he asked, 'How did I add fuel to this fire?' I answered, 'By acknowledging it'. If we acknowledge every little fact that has a bad effect upon our life, we give it life from our own, and thus make it a living thing. And so it is with many illnesses. Very often people get into the habit of saying, 'Oh, I am so tired!' It is not necessary for them to cut wood or carry stones; they will be tired before doing it; no sooner do they think of tiredness than it is there. There are many cases in which there is no need to be tired; one becomes tired only by the fact of having acknowledged it. It is the same with sleeplessness. Once one acknowledges to oneself that one cannot sleep, that is enough to keep one awake all night. There are many illnesses of this kind, and chief among them is depression.

To the one who acknowledges this life to be his friend, life will prove to be his friend; to the one who acknowledges this life to be his enemy, life will prove in every way to be his enemy. There are many who take notice of those who are working against them, and by taking notice they make them do it even more;

because they make an impression upon them. One might ask if there does not exist any animosity in people if one does not think about it. It may exist, but by taking notice of it, by acknowledging it, one gives life to it; if one does not acknowledge it, it will die in time. For animosity is a fire, but not a perpetual fire; it is the acknowledging which gives fuel to the fire. If one does not acknowledge it, the fire will be extinguished. Many might say that it is hypocrisy not to acknowledge a fact; but that hypocrisy is better than the truth. In point of fact one would not call it hypocrisy if one knew its meaning, its worth. The doctor who, even when he sees that his patient has a high fever, tells him, 'It is all right, it is nothing', is not a hypocrite. By saying that there is a high fever, he will certainly increase the fever of the patient; and many doctors do so. Everything a physician or a religious man does to make a person who is on his deathbed think of death, only encourages him towards death, he is pushing him towards death. One could prove a greater friend to someone who is on his deathbed by not acknowledging his trouble, his difficulty, his coming death. I have known cases in which, as soon as the doctor said that he had given up hope, the whole family began to talk about it to the patient, and his departure was hastened by many months.

What should we acknowledge? That which we always escape from acknowledging, that is to say our faults. By acknowledging our faults we shall kill them. But it is the one thing we want to hide, that we want to keep hidden even from our own sight. To look one's own fault in the face is the best thing one can do; to analyse it, to weigh it, to measure it, and to understand it better. By this one either destroys it or understands it, or one turns the same fault into a merit. Very often people think it is wise to say to someone, 'No, you are not my friend. You have not been very attentive or kind to me.' When a person tells another such things, he will inspire that person with them, even if they did not exist before. Besides all misfortunes, all dangers that threaten and frighten man, are very often not as great as man thinks and can be avoided if man did not acknowledge them; for how a person feels about the danger depends upon the particular pitch to which the heart is tuned. For instance if ten

people were standing before the same danger and one could weigh their fear, one would find that each of them had a very different degree of fear.

Once when the Prophet Mohammad and his followers were exiled, his enemies were pursuing them in the desert. They were standing behind a rock when suddenly the galloping of many horses was heard. 'O, Prophet,' said one of the disciples, 'they are pursuing us. They are many, there is a whole army behind us.' 'O they are going somewhere else,' said the Prophet, 'they will go in some other direction'. 'But what shall we do if they come here?' said the disciple. 'They are so many, and we are only two!' 'Are we only two?' said the Prophet, 'no, three: you, I, and God.'

Everyone does not look at danger from the same point of view. To one the smallest thing is too great, to another the greatest thing is nothing. It is according to how one views it. Once one sees the danger as being great, one will make it greater; but by not acknowledging the greatness of the danger one will diminish it. When conditions have gone so far that it is most difficult to overcome the trouble, then one has to get them under control again, yet by making a great fuss over it we shall not make the trouble any less; on the contrary it will become greater.

There is an amusing story which explains this. Not long ago there was a Prime Minister of Hyderabad. He belonged to one of the ancient princely families who carried with them a certain ideal of manners and culture. Once when he was sitting at table entertaining some foreign friends, it happened that a part of the palace caught fire. As it was the custom not to come hurriedly when bringing any news, the aide-de-camp came very gently, between the courses, and he whispered in his ear what was happening. To the great surprise of the aide-de-camp the Prime Minister only said, 'Yes?' and went on with the next course which had arrived; and then when that was served, he asked his guests to excuse him and said, 'I will come back in a moment'. Quietly he went, as if nothing had happened, giving orders what to do to extinguish the fire, and then came back quietly. A great part of the palace had already burned, but the guests left without having

noticed anything. Next day they read in the paper about the fire. They were very surprised to see such a thing, such patience, such self-control, such mastery. It did not mean that the minister did not feel the loss; he felt it perhaps more than anyone else could have felt it, but he did not show it. It was not his way to jump up and make a fuss for nothing. Suppose he had done as everyone does, what would he have achieved? He would have excited the others also, and made things worse. It was better that the palace should be on fire than the spirit.

There is another thing that one should acknowledge. One should acknowledge in one's friend, in one's companion, in those one wishes to help, the good part in their character. By acknowledging it, by noticing it one will fortify it; it will become greater. And do not think that it is against humility to acknowledge even one's own merits; for if one is unconscious of one's merits the plant is suffering there without water. It does not mean that by acknowledging one's merit, one's virtue, one becomes proud or conceited; if one wants to one can keep oneself free from pride or conceit. But by recognizing one's merit one certainly waters the plant which is worth rearing.

This same method can be extended from psychology to esotericism. In esotericism we have a problem before us. There is a truth which we have to discover, which is obscured by a fact; and if we become accustomed to deny a fact in order to discover a truth, we will be ready then in esoteric work to discover that truth which is worth discovering. The fact is a shadow which for the moment represents something which has a certain meaning attached to it, which we can witness, but which at the same time will not continue to be real for ever. For instance a person says, 'Sandow,* in fact, is a strong man.' Yes it is a fact that he is a strong man, but because he will not be eternally strong it is only a fact, it is not a truth. Therefore the knowledge of the existence of others, all this knowledge that we have is a changeable knowledge, and since it is changeable it is a fact; truth is behind it. But when we discover within our own self and in others that something which is everlasting and will never change, that is

* EUGENE SANDOW: famous as a 'strong man' and inventor of a system of physical culture early in the century.

the truth. The one who understands this will understand the meaning of all the concentrations and meditations which are studied and practised by the Sufis; they are all one means for one purpose; they are all in order to deny fact, in order to establish truth.

RESPONSIBILITY

IN THE Qur'an it is said that God offered His trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused, being unable to bear it; and then God offered His trust to man who did accept it. Trust in this case is responsibility. The value of man is as great as his responsibility, for what mountains cannot bear, mankind has carried through life; and that is why a responsible man naturally shows a spiritual quality in all connections, in all relationships. Be he our friend or our master or servant or relative, if he is responsible for the trust we give him, it is that which gives him value. Be he a minister or a king or a president of the state, his greatness, his value, is according to his responsibility, and according to the power with which he carries it out through life.

But there is another point of view from which to look at it: that man may become great by his responsibility. And at the same time he may fall, for there is a stumbling block: the more conscious man becomes of his responsibility, the less he recognizes the power of wisdom which is working beside him. It is because of this that at this time of materialism there are great personalities who accomplish many things, and yet in the end they show their limitation. This limitation comes from being drowned in the responsibility they have taken upon themselves and from having forgotten God, the other power that is working beside them. However great man may be in wisdom, in power, yet he is limited; and if his wisdom and power are compared with divine wisdom and power, they are not even as much as a drop compared with the sea. Sa'di, the Persian poet, has made a remark in his Rose-garden in simple words. He says, 'The Constructor of this whole universe is active in constructing even my affairs. But my anxiety about my affairs is my illness'. By this he means, 'It is something I cannot help, but at the same time I recognize that all that I wish to accomplish is already done by someone else, who is far greater, more powerful and wise than I'.

Jelal-ud-Din Rumi points out in his *Masnavi* that the smallest insect receives its proper nourishment; either it is attracted to its nourishment or the nourishment is sent to it. Man, who is responsible for himself and who takes the responsibility upon himself for other living creatures, would never even think of the small insects living at the bottom of the wall of the house, under the earth, hidden under leaves, covered by grass. But they receive what is needed to keep them alive; and so birds and animals all receive their nourishment and everything they need to build their nests without the help of man. The unfortunate task falls upon man of toiling and of earning his living, but it is the price that he pays for self-reliance, for self-dependence, for the responsibility that he takes upon himself. In so far as he takes a responsibility upon himself he undoubtedly does a great work for humanity; but if he becomes so absorbed in that responsibility that he relies only upon his own limited resources, forgetting that source from whence his help comes, and if he is unaware of that power and wisdom which is beside him, then no doubt with his very great responsibility he will fail in the end, notwithstanding all the power and might he may have.

When a man asks today if there is not an energy, a force, working which is devoid of wisdom, the answer is, that there cannot exist a quality, an attribute, without the possessor of that quality, of that attribute. Energy cannot exist without the energetic, to whom energy belongs. Might cannot exist without the mighty one whose attribute it is. Intelligence cannot exist without the intelligent one to whom that intelligence belongs. And then a person may say, 'Well, is it not energy, a force, a power from which all this comes?' But he does not call himself energy, or force, or power. He says, 'I am I, an ego, a being.' If this being is produced from an object he can not be a being; he should not claim himself to be a being. This shows that a being comes from a being; that there is a being behind it all. And that Being is perfect in His power and wisdom. But then a person is inclined to wonder if that being is a larger being than himself, for his ego compares that being with himself; he wants to see that other being, how it stands in comparison with himself. And the answer to this is, that it is a Being that includes everyone and all

things; and therefore there is nothing else that one can compare this Being with, nor can it be explained, for neither is His wisdom like our wisdom nor His power like our limited power.

Those who have tried to learn the life of dependence upon that Being have been saints and sages. They have practised the recognition of the divine power and of divine wisdom by becoming passive to it, by becoming responsive to it. And by this practice their load of responsibility was taken away from them and their lives were made easy for them, and they experienced a great ease and peace.

Very often a thoughtful man envies a little child, who is so happy, without care, without anxieties. He realizes that the child represents the divine kingdom. It is as if all that is there belongs to it, all that is good and beautiful. But now the question arises as to how far one should depend upon divine power and wisdom, and how far one should feel responsible for oneself and for those who depend upon one. What sometimes happens is that man takes a principle and practises it; but in order to practise that principle one must prepare oneself. If one is not prepared for that principle one should not practise it. If a man who toils every day for his livelihood sits down and says that God must provide for his livelihood, the supply will not come so soon and he will be disappointed. In order to practise it he must first of all prepare himself to acquire faith; it is confidence and faith which will bring the supply. But confidence and faith should first be cultivated gradually, and the principle should not be practised at once. If one has a business affair somewhere, and one says, 'Well, it will all be done by itself, I shall not go there', that will be wrong, because that man has started by being responsible for it; he cannot suddenly take himself away like this. At the same time he should practise every day that principle of recognizing the wisdom and power which is beside oneself.

I would never advise anyone to give away one's responsibility in recognition of the might and wisdom of God. But one should be full of courage and confidence in the face of difficulty and seeming trouble, by recognizing that there is a mighty power, that there is a perfect wisdom behind one, and that all will be well. Through this a person will rise above his limited power and

wisdom, and will be able to draw power and wisdom from that unlimited source which in the end will lead him to success. Then even in the case of failure this recognition of a perfect power and wisdom working beside oneself will give one the strength to bear it, and to be resigned to the will of God.

THE CONTINUITY OF LIFE

THERE IS a question which occupies every mind: sooner or later a person begins to wonder whether there is such a thing as continuity of life. There are many who, in their pessimism, believe that there will be nothing afterwards; and there are others who, owing to their optimistic attitude, think that no matter whether it is true or not, it is just as well to believe that there is something. Nevertheless it is most painful when a person thinks that there will be nothing after death; and however many reasons he may have in support of his belief, that belief is worse than death.

There are some who wish by various phenomena to gain proof of life in the hereafter; but they meet with ninety-nine disappointments and perhaps one reality.

The idea of the Sufi is that life lives and that death dies. In other words: to life there is no death, and to death there is no life. But this way of attaining to the certainty that life is continuous, is not only an intellectual one. For by studying all the philosophies and metaphysics all through his life, a man may prove to himself by reasoning that there is continuity of life; yet this realization gained by effort of mind will still not give him the feeling of certainty which he would wish to have. The Sufi, therefore, practises the process by which he is able to touch that part of life in himself which is not subject to death; and by finding that part of life he naturally begins to feel the certainty of life. It makes him more certain of life than of anything else in the world, for he sees the changeability and limitation of all things. Everything that is constructed is subject to destruction; everything that is composed is subject to decomposition; everything born is subject to death. In finding that life he finds his own self, and as that is the real life, everything else that he knows about life begins to lose its importance.

In what way does he discover that life in him which was never born and will never die? By self-analysis; but a self-analysis

according to what mystics know of it, which means the understanding of what this vehicle which we call our body is to us and in what relation we stand to it; by understanding what the mind, that which we call mind, consists of; by asking oneself, 'Am I, then, this body, am I this mind?' There comes a time when man begins to see that he himself is the knower of the body and of the mind. But he only arrives at this realization when he can hold the body and mind in his hands, like objects which he uses for his purpose in life. Once he has done this, then the body and mind become like two floats which he puts on in order to swim in the water without danger of drowning. The same body and mind which cause man's mortality, at least in his thought, then become the means of his safety; they save him from drowning in the water of mortality.

In point of fact mortality is only our conception; immortality is the reality. We make a conception of mortality because we do not know the real life. By realization of the real life and the comparison between real life and mortality, one learns that mortality is non-existent. It is no exaggeration to say that the work of a Sufi is unlearning. What he is accustomed to call or recognize as life, he then begins to recognize as death; and what he is accustomed to call death, he then begins to recognize as life. Thus for him both life and death are not conditions to which he is subject, but conditions which he himself brings about. A great Persian Sufi, Bedil, says, 'By myself I become captive, and by myself I become free.' In simple language this means, 'By myself I die, and by myself I live.' Why does a Sufi say this? Why does not everyone say this? Because for a Sufi it is a condition which he brings about; for another person it is a condition in which he is helpless.

To bring about this realization, the first thing that one must learn in every little thing in life is the way of unlearning. In my own work I find it very difficult when a person comes to me and says, 'Now I have learned so far; will you add more to my knowledge?' In my heart I say, 'The more you have learned, the harder it is for me; and if I wanted to add to it, it would not be adding; it would be taking away from what you have, in order that I may unburden you from all you have learned. You must

be able to unlearn first; for through this unlearning will come the true learning.'

But, one might say, is it then quite useless for us to learn what we learn in life? And the answer is no, it is all useful; but for what? For the object for which one has learned it. But not everything is learned on account of the object for which one is searching. When one is searching for the secret of life, the first thing to unlearn is that which one calls learning. No doubt this is something which is difficult for everyone to understand. And yet when we read the lives of Rumi and his teacher, Shams-e Tabrèz, the first lesson the latter gave to Rumi was to unlearn all that he had learned.

Is this unlearning forgetting all that one learns? Not at all. This unlearning means to be able to say with reason, logically, the contrary to what one has learnt. When one is accustomed to say: this is wrong, that is right; this is good and that is bad; this is great and that is small; this is higher and that is lower; this is spiritual and that is material; this is up and that is down, and this is before and that is after; if one can use the opposite words for each with reason and logic, one has unlearned naturally that which one had once learned. It is after this that the realization of truth begins; for then the mind is not fixed any more. And it is then that one becomes alive, for then one's soul has been born. It is then that one will become tolerant, and it is then that one will forgive; for one will understand both one's friend and one's foe. Then one never has only one point of view; one has all points of view. Is it not dangerous, one might ask, to have all points of view? wouldn't that make one lose one's own point of view? Not necessarily; one may occupy one room in the house or ten rooms; one may use each as one likes according to how many points of view one can see, so large is one's point of view.

All this is attained by the meditative process, by tuning oneself, by bringing oneself into a proper rhythm; by concentration, contemplation, meditation, and realization; by both dying and living at the same time. In order to rise above death one must first die. In order to rise above mortality one must know what it is. But this is certain, that the greatest and most important thing

that one can wish to accomplish in life, is one and only one: to rise above the conception of death.

In order to rise above the conception of death, one should play death, and try to know what death is. And it is a great lesson to play death. What we do is a very false thing, for we play life when we are subject to death. If we played death it would be something real, and not a hypocrisy. It is through this that we shall discover life; for we experience death by playing life, and we experience life by playing death. What we call death is the death of this body, and if we attach ourselves to this body as our being, then it is death. A simple man asked a friend, 'How shall I know that I am dead?' 'Well,' the friend said, 'it is very easy; when your coat has become torn and worn out, that is the sign of death.' And when his coat was worn out and torn, this man began to think that he was dead, and he was weeping bitterly. Then some thoughtful person came along and told him, 'It is only your coat that is torn. How can you cry? You are still alive!'

This story illustrates exactly the mystical idea. To the mystic the body is a garment. But it is no use realizing this intellectually; for if one says intellectually, 'My body is my garment', the next question is, 'But then what am I, and where am I?' It is by the meditative process that one finds where one is and what one is, and this does not remain as a belief; it becomes faith, and even greater than faith; it becomes conviction.

There was a king who thought that he would give up his kingdom and become a mureed. He wanted to give up all worldly things, and just lose himself in spiritual thought. And when he went to Bokhara, under the guidance of a teacher, the teacher gave him a probationer's work, and that work was to sweep and clean the whole house where all the pupils lived, and to collect the garbage and take it out of the village. No doubt the pupils were very much in sympathy with this man, and they were shocked that he, who used to sit on the throne and be a king, had to do this. They thought it must be a terrible thing for him. The teacher, knowing the object that he had before him, could not do otherwise. He said, 'He must do it, for he is not yet ready.' Once all the disciples came and said, 'Teacher, we are all in sympathy

with this man, and we think he is so refined, so kind, and so cultured, and we would be so glad if you would relieve him of this duty.' The teacher said, 'We will have a test.' One day when he was taking his garbage pail outside the town somebody collided with him, and all was spilled on the ground. He looked up and said, 'Well, this would not have happened in the past, that I can tell you!' And when the report was brought to the teacher he said, 'Did I not say that the time had not yet come?'

After some time a test was made again; and when the same thing happened, this man looked at the one who had pushed him and said nothing. Again the teacher said, 'Did I not say that the time has not yet arrived?' But the third time when he was tested he did not even look at the man who upset his pail; he gathered up everything that had been spilled and carried it along. Then the teacher said, 'Now is the time, now he can play death.'

All the teachings of Christ, such as: if one should strike you on one side of the face, turn the other side; if one should ask you to go one mile, go still farther; if one asks you for your overcoat, give your cap also; when we think of it, what does it all mean? Is it not all teaching us how to play death? Therefore, if at any time the teachers of truth have prescribed for their pupils any process of behaviour towards their fellow-men, that process can be called nothing else but playing death. One might think that this is very hard, that it is very cruel on the part of the teacher; but the instructor had also to go through the same cruelty at a certain period of his life. Sometimes the greatest cruelty is the greatest kindness; it is hard, but the hardest path can be conquered in this way. And how many times do we take to heart unnecessary things; how many times do we cause, or take interest in, disharmony which could just as well have been avoided? How often do we refrain from evil which we could just as well have refrained from? This is all playing life, and the other is playing death. When we play death we arrive at life; when we play life we arrive at death.

Playing with death is rising above the sensible and the insensible, because what we call sensible and insensible belongs to a certain stage. One can rise above that stage; then all is sensible. Besides one will always find that those who play death or who

have played death are the ones who are the most open and sympathetic to the pain of others; for while they are playing death, automatically they are playing life too. That is why they are alive to everything that can help them to aid others, although they are dead to all the wrong things that come to them.

What is the life of a mystic, of a man who has realized God, if it is not playing a part? The part is not one part; it is a thousand parts. He has to play the part of a servant, of a master, of his parents' son, of a friend, of the father of his child, of a neighbour; and yet in his mind he realizes unity. In all capacities he goes on playing the part and yet keeping that feeling of oneness alive. The further one advances on the spiritual path the more one will have to learn to play a part. The twelve Apostles could suddenly speak many languages, and from that day they were able to play many parts and to answer the questions of everyone in his own language. The inspiration that came to them enabled them to play the part.

If one wants to take part in the play produced before one, this can be accomplished by effacing oneself. One has to become separate from one's self; that is the whole secret: when one is no more what one thought oneself to be. Annihilation, which is such a frightening word, is in reality nothing but acting in a play with a different name, a different form, a different appearance. The annihilation of the self comes first by adoring another form or appearance. That annihilation never kills a person. It is *Fanà-fi-Shaikh*, and later come *Fanà-fi-Rasul* and *Fanà-fi-Allah*; these are the three steps on the path of annihilation. One step is annihilation in the ideal of form, the next in the ideal of name, and the third step is annihilation in the nameless and formless.



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