

DISCOURSES

Seventh Revised Edition (1987)

Third Printing (1995)

by

Meher Baba

An Avatar Meher Baba Trust Online Release

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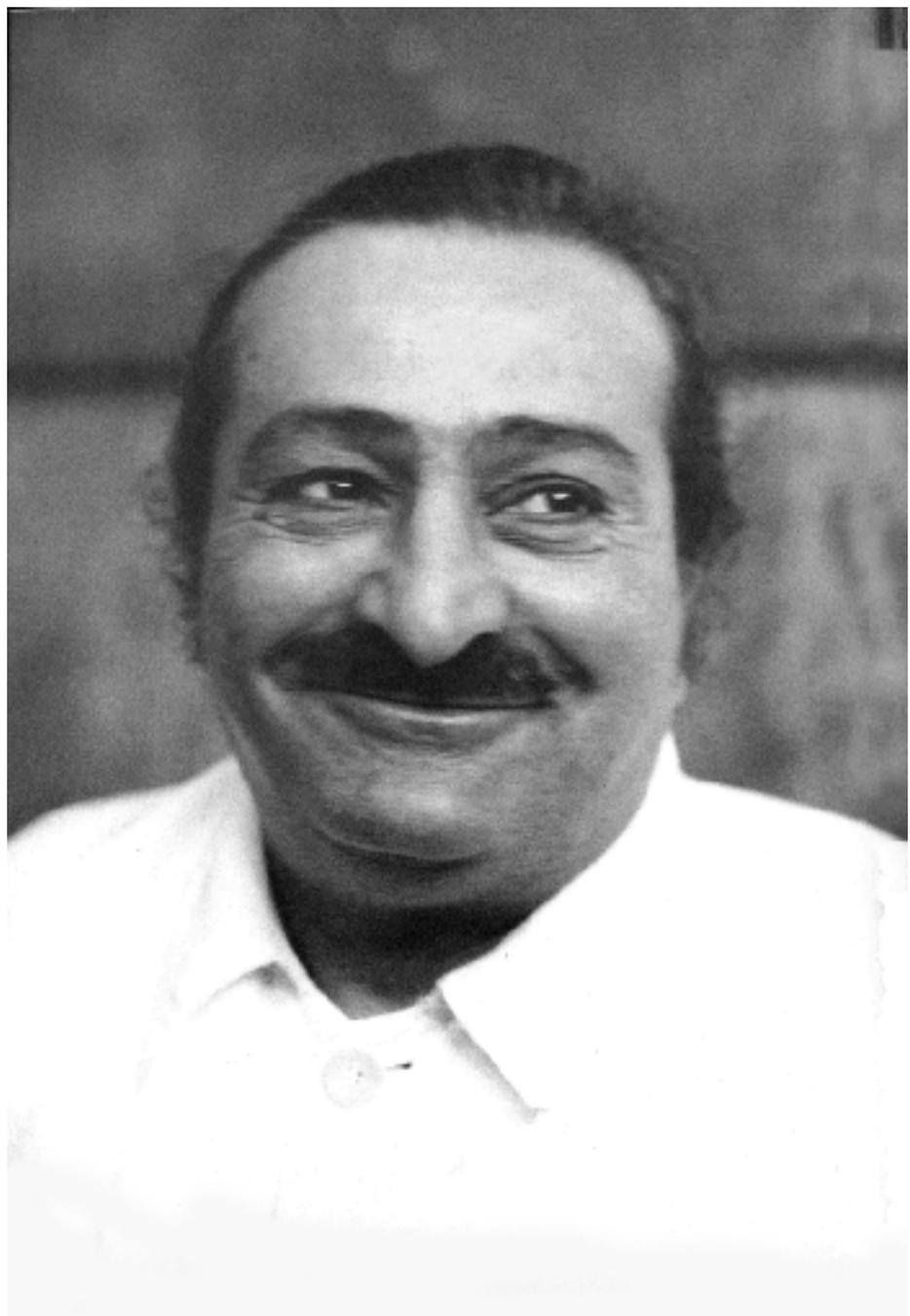
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DISCOURSES



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Meher Baba

SHERIAR
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Foreword

The editors of this seventh edition felt that it would be useful to present a brief publishing history of the *Discourses* and to comment on the reasons why a new, revised edition was desirable at this time.

Publishing History of the Discourses

From time to time and over a period of years, Meher Baba dictated discourses and messages on His alphabet board to various individuals and groups. When the *Meher Baba Journal* first appeared in November 1938, it was arranged that a discourse or message by Meher Baba would be included in each issue. Dr. Chakradhar D. Deshmukh, a member of the Meher Editorial Committee, had the primary responsibility of editing and preparing the dictated material for inclusion in the *Journal*, though several other individuals also participated in this task. At the end of each year, the monthly articles by Meher Baba were compiled into one volume. In this way the first four volumes of the *Discourses* appeared in book form. After the *Journal* ceased production in October 1942, a subsequent volume of additional discourses was brought out, thus completing the first five-volume edition of the *Discourses*, which were printed for private distribution in India between 1939 and 1943.

As each volume of the five-volume set went out of print, it was reprinted, with only minor corrections. These reprints constituted the second through fifth “editions” of the *Discourses*, which were also issued in India, between 1941 and 1954.

Over the years, readers made inquiries about various points in the *Discourses* and asked Meher Baba and His close disciples for clarifications. The problems of misinterpretations and the possible need for revisions were addressed by Mani (Manija S. Irani), Meher Baba's sister, in a letter that appeared in *The Awakener* (vol. 3, no. 1, 1955): "There are those who believe that literally every word in the original *Discourses* is Baba's and are reluctant to accept any revised version; but actually, though Baba dictated for hours on the board, Professor Deshmukh embellished and worked up the points. Though Deshmukh has undoubtedly done brilliant work in many places, we feel there are many places where simplification of sentence structure or correction of grammar would enhance the beauty and simplicity which are the essence of Baba's teachings. . . . Now we find there are places in the original *Discourses* where Deshmukh obviously misinterpreted the point, with the result that there are several important errors. . . ." This quotation is given here, not to disparage Dr. Deshmukh or in any way minimize his and the other editors' monumental work, but to indicate that the original edition of the *Discourses* did contain some stylistic problems and points that needed rectification.

In 1948 Meher Baba authorized Charles B. Purdom to edit and condense the *Discourses* into one volume for publication in the West. Meher Baba chose the title Himself for this version, *God to Man and Man to God: the Discourses of Meher Baba*. It was first published in England in 1955.

With the publication of Meher Baba's book *God Speaks* in 1955, certain points and terms had been refined and redefined. In 1967 the sixth edition of the *Discourses*, in three volumes, was published by Sufism Reoriented, San Francisco, California, U.S.A. With Meher Baba's approval, the editors, Ivy Oneita Duce and Don E. Stevens, made some revisions based on *God Speaks* and other subsequent explanations He had given on various points. The three-volume edition also simplified some of the sentence structure and presented the chapters in a more logical arrangement. There have been three reprints, with minor corrections, of the sixth edition.

The Seventh Edition

When the sixth edition was almost out of print, the Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public Charitable Trust made plans to have the *Discourses* republished. At first it was planned to simply reprint the text

as it appeared in the sixth edition; thus the initial emphasis was on completing the supplementary material to be added: a new introduction, a glossary, and an index. But it soon became clear that some textual changes would have to be made. In the years since the 1967 edition, additional inquiries had accumulated, and some points needed further clarification. As translations were being prepared for French, German, Italian, and Spanish editions, linguistic as well as textual questions came up. It also became apparent that stylistic changes had to be made. The individual discourses, it must be remembered, appeared over a period of years, mostly as journal articles-which inadvertently resulted in inconsistencies in spelling, capitalization, use of italics, punctuation, and so forth.

Once the decision was made that a revised edition was needed, it was decided that the text should be gone over as carefully as possible. As mentioned earlier, Meher Baba's explanations had become more detailed and profound over the years, as He expanded and further elucidated many points. For instance, terms that had been used in their broadest sense were redefined to become more specific-often coming to mean only one aspect of a larger concept they had earlier encompassed. Meher Baba unfolded the divine theme, in *God Speaks* and through discussions with His close disciples, to an audience now ready to understand and accept ideas and concepts of greater profundity.

In answer to questions about the Circles of the Perfect Masters and the Avatar, Meher Baba expanded the explanations He had given in "The Circle" discourse; and in 1955 this clarification appeared as an article entitled "The Circles" in *The Awakener* (vol. 3, no. 1). The importance of this discourse, and its relative inaccessibility to most readers, convinced the editors to include it as the only new textual material added to this edition-under the title "The Circles of the Avatar." This addition necessitated a minor rearrangement of chapters.

Also, after due consideration, it was decided to publish the seventh edition of the *Discourses* in a one-volume format.

Because people are often wary of any change in a work such as the *Discourses*, which is much studied and often reread, the editors thought it best to allay any fears of massive revisions by specifying just how the editing was approached and what types of changes have been made. The following criteria and guidelines were used: make as

few changes as possible; make textual changes only when points conflicted with *God Speaks* or later explanations; change obsolete or archaic words and rephrase awkward sentence structure only when the reader might be misled or confused; and correct stylistic inconsistencies.

The stylistic changes fall into the following broad categories: (1) regularizing spelling, hyphenation, grammar, and punctuation, using authoritative style manuals and dictionaries—especially the latest editions of *The Chicago Manual of Style* and *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, which were the main sources consulted to achieve editorial uniformity in usage, style, and form; (2) arriving at a pattern for capitalizing spiritual terms and applying it consistently, except for rare cases of emphasis; (3) adjusting the spelling and form of non-English terms and names to *God Speaks* usage or other reference sources if appropriate; (4) eliminating most italics, except for their standard use for occasional emphasis and for the first occurrence of non-English words.

Readers sensitive to current trends in English usage will certainly notice the frequent occurrence of masculine forms and pronouns to denote both men and women—for example, man, mankind, the Master/he, a person/him, the aspirant/his, and so forth. Although some adjustments have been made, retention of these forms was based on the editorial policy to make a minimum of changes in the text; and changing these forms throughout would have entailed considerable rewriting. The consistent use of masculine forms was not intended to exclude women or imply a male bias in Meher Baba's teachings; they simply reflect the writing style of the period in which the *Discourses* first appeared.

One final, minor but amusing point. The word *surrenderance* is used throughout the text as a variant of *surrender*, but it does not appear in any major dictionary. The question of course arose whether it should be retained or not, as it did not “officially” exist. An inquiry to Merriam-Webster Inc. produced a delightful reply: Although there was lack of evidence that *surrenderance* had ever been used anywhere else, it need not be regarded as a nonword and should be judged on its own merits. Since Meher Baba had actually spelled out this word on His alphabet board, it was felt that *surrenderance* certainly merited retention.

The editors have taken great care to see that the *meaning* behind the words of Meher Baba in the text remained unchanged when making any revisions. All the efforts of the editors are offered to Meher Baba in surrenderance to His will and pleasure, and it is hoped that Meher Baba Himself will help each reader *understand* the meaning He wished to convey through His *Discourses*.

The Editors

Meherazad, India
1986

Eruch B. Jessawala, J. Flagg Kris, Bal Natu

Introduction to the Seventh Edition

Merwan Sheriar Irani was born in Poona,* India, on 25 February 1894. His parents, Sheriar and Shirin, were Zoroastrians of Persian descent. His father, Sheriar, was a genuine seeker of God. Merwan attended St. Vincent High School; he was a lively and happy boy who excelled in both studies and sports, and was not overly interested in spirituality. However, a school friend once gave Merwan a booklet on the life of Buddha; and years later when He reminisced about this incident, He remarked: “I opened the book to the place that told about the second coming of the Buddha as Maitreya, the Lord of Mercy. And I realized all of a sudden, ‘I am that, actually’-and I felt it deep within me. Then I totally forgot about it, and years passed by.”

One day in May 1913, while studying at Deccan College in Poona, He cycled past the venerable Muslim woman Hazrat Babajan, one of the five Perfect Masters of the time. She beckoned Him to her and kissed Him on the forehead, subsequently revealing to Him His true state as the *Avatar*, the total manifestation of God in human form.

At first Merwan was dazed; but gradually over a period of months the focus of His consciousness returned sufficiently to His surroundings to lead Him to the Perfect Master Sai Baba of Shirdi-who in turn guided Him to another of the Perfect Masters, Upasni Maharaj, a Hindu, in Sakori. (Sai Baba did not disclose his religion. The two

*Now officially spelled Pune. Sassoon Hospital, in which Merwan was born, was maintained at the time by a well-known, philanthropic Jewish family.

remaining Perfect Masters of the period were the Muslim Tajuddin Baba and the Hindu Narayan Maharaj.) For seven years Upasni Maharaj integrated Merwan's God-consciousness with consciousness of the gross world, establishing Him in His role as the Avatar of the Age. This Avatic mission started its outward expression in 1921 with the gathering together of His first disciples, who gave Him the name *Meher Baba*, which means "Compassionate Father."

After months of intensive work with these disciples and travel in India (including present-day Pakistan) and Iran, Meher Baba and His followers took up residence in 1923 in a vacant World War I military camp near Ahmednagar, India. This became known as Meherabad. Here He instituted a number of projects, such as a free hospital and dispensary, shelters for the poor and the mad, and a free school for boys of all religions where spiritual training was stressed. In the school no caste lines were observed, as the high and the low mingled in common fellowship forged by love of the Master. To all, Meher Baba offered regular instruction in moral discipline, spiritual understanding, selfless service, and above all, love of God.

All these activities moved at high speed despite Meher Baba's silence, which He commenced with little advance warning on 10 July 1925. When asked previous to the start of His silence how He would continue to give discourses and teachings to His followers, He countered, "I come not to teach but to awaken." In later years, during one of His visits to the West, His comments were equally profound and thought-provoking: "Things that are real are given and received in silence"; and again, "If my silence cannot be heard, of what avail words?" After also giving up writing in 1927 (except for His signature), He communicated by pointing to letters on an alphabet board; but this too was given up in 1954. Subsequently He conversed through His own unique system of handgestures. However, His *Discourses* and His book *God Speaks* were dictated before giving up the alphabet board.

During the early 1930s Meher Baba's travels began to reach into Europe and then on to America. Contacting hundreds on both continents, His name rapidly became known to those deeply and sincerely interested in the spiritual life. Only some of these were permitted to come later to India in small groups. Their visits ranged generally from weeks to years; but just before World War II, all but a handful were asked to return to the West.

Meher Baba visited the West again in 1952, 1956 and 1958; Aus-

tralia was also visited during the last two tours. After this He did not travel outside of India, and He allowed Westerners to visit Him in India only on rare occasions. One of these rare occasions was the great East-West Gathering of November 1962. At His invitation, thousands of His devotees from all over the world converged on Poona. For almost a week Meher Baba gave unstintingly of Himself. The activities were as varied as the assemblage: brief discourses, group meetings, personal interviews, songs and prayers in praise of God, an open day of public *darshan* attended by multitudes surging from the city to pay homage to the Master and receive His blessings. The world's literature contains many references to the need for transfusions between East and West. Here was a rich confluence in which mutual respect, affection, and unity in praise of the Beloved Avatar bridged vast differences in culture and tradition.

Persistent throughout decades of Meher Baba's Avataric activities was His seeking out and contacting God-intoxicated souls, or *masts* (pronounced "musts"). Through Dr. William Donkin's book *The Wayfarers*, * Meher Baba has described most clearly the states of *masti* (divine intoxication). The *masts* are those who have lost contact with the external world through intense absorption in their love of God, rather than through breakdown and insanity. Especially in the 1940s, Meher Baba contacted hundreds of these God-intoxicated souls throughout the subcontinent of India, often tending personally to their daily needs, giving each what only He knew they needed in their journey to God.

Meher Baba also personally served the poor, the mentally ill, and physically handicapped, and showed a special concern for those stricken by leprosy. With infinite care and love He washed their feet, bowed His forehead to the often twisted stumps on which they hobbled, and sent them on their way with small gifts and renewed hope. "They are like beautiful birds in ugly cages," He conveyed on one such occasion. "Of all the tasks I have to perform, this touches me most deeply."

While traveling widely and contacting many thousands of people, Meher Baba continued to emphasize that He had not come to teach or lay down new precepts. He stressed repeatedly that the Truth had been revealed by the great Ones of the past, and that the present task

*William Donkin, *The Wayfarers* (Ahmednagar, India: Meher Publications, 1948; 2nd edition, San Francisco: Sufism Reoriented, 1969).

for humanity is to realize the Truth embodied in their teachings. Meher Baba's Avatic work is therefore the awakening of humanity to that realization through His age-old message of Love. His life is a gauge "against which man can measure what he is and what he may become."

In essence, however, one does not know how Meher Baba achieved, and continues to elicit, unexpected responses from those drawn to Him. All that the individual senses is a powerful force sweeping through the snarls of life, energizing and freeing the inner being in a manner that is intuitively trusted. One of the great wonders of contact with Meher Baba is *acceptance*. Charles Purdom in his book *The God-Man** notes that, "He invites people to look at themselves, to accept their egoistic selves not as good or bad, clever or stupid, successful or unsuccessful, but as illusions of their true selves, and to cease to identify themselves with the illusion."

The history of man's search for his soul has produced few works that lay out in minute detail the techniques for the soul's discovery. Meher Baba's *Discourses* are a major contribution to that small body of literature. In this work, given to His close disciples during the 1930s and early 1940s, He describes the means for incorporating daily life into one's spiritual ongoing. He also outlines the structure of creation and clarifies the relationship of the aspirant to the Avatar and the Master. In His later classic work, *God Speaks*, Meher Baba describes in detail the states of God, His will to know His divinity consciously, and the consequent role of creation. The *Discourses*, on the other hand, are practical guides to daily life for those slowly finding their way back to Oneness after having developed consciousness through the deeps of evolution.

The *Discourses* not only provide descriptions of the spiritual path and its disciplines but also shed powerful light on the goal for the wayfarer who aspires to attain it. The reader will discover that they in no way provide a cut-and-dried formula for spiritual development. Rather, they are a reminder of the continuous need for love of God and surrender to Him. Love for God is the guiding force along the path, and it is love for and surrender to God that eventually attains the goal by the grace of a Perfect Master. Such a Master is the knowing guide who has already traversed the path and experienced the Truth, and who

*C. B. Purdom, *The God-Man* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1964: 2nd edition, Crescent Beach, SC.: Sheriar Press, 1971).

provides the infinite patience, the security, and the steady pace that can lead the disciple to the goal.

As described in detail in the discourse “The Avatar,” it is the periodic manifestation of God as the Avatar-the God-Man, the Messiah, the Buddha, the Christ, the Rasool-that brings about the spiritual rebirth of humanity; for it is the Avatar who releases a spiritual dispensation that assumes unlimited dimensions. Independent of the grace of the Perfect Master, the grace of the Avatar flows to all alike at every step toward the Truth, provided there is intense love and longing for God. It is not just during the period of His physical presence that the guidance and the grace of the Avatar are available. He is not only for contemporary humanity during His advent but for posterity as well. His grace and His guidance toward the Truth are constantly accessible and available to one and all. In all instances, to attain the goal and make the final leap from the realms of duality to the abiding experience of the oneness of Reality, it is necessary to have the grace of a living Perfect Master or of the Avatar-who is THE ETERNAL LIVING PERFECT MASTER. *

Meher Baba’s silence of forty-four years remained unbroken when He passed away on 31 January 1969. His last years were marked by great physical suffering due to two severe auto accidents. The first occurred near Prague, Oklahoma, while traveling across the United States in 1952; the second occurred in India, near Satara, in late 1956. In both accidents Meher Baba sustained serious injuries that made walking-even standing-extremely painful and difficult thereafter. Such physical pain is an outward manifestation of the intense inner suffering the Avatar takes on for the sake of humanity each time He comes in our midst.

His final years were largely spent in close seclusion and in intense and exhausting preoccupation with His universal work. In mid-1968 Meher Baba announced that His work had been completed to His one-hundred-percent satisfaction. The same period also witnessed the explosive growth in the numbers of those who look to Him for the key to meaning in life. At His passing, thousands came for a last glimpse and to pay homage to the well-loved form as it lay for seven days in the Tomb at Meherabad, before His interment there. More thousands from all over the world attended the April to June, 1969 Darshan

*This revealing discussion of the unique availability of the Avatar at all times is from one of Meher Baba’s *mandali* (close disciples).-D.E.S.

Program in Poona, which He had arranged months before His passing; and they deeply felt His love and presence in their hearts.

Today, Meher Baba's love spreads out in ever-widening circles, drawing people from all corners of the world, from all walks of life, and from all religions to search for Truth under His loving guidance. Although hundreds of Meher Baba groups function throughout the world, in the West He personally established two major centers: Meher Spiritual Center in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, U.S.A.; and Avatar's Abode in Woombye, Queensland, Australia. Each year hundreds of seekers visit these centers, and thousands more make pilgrimages to Avatar Meher Baba's Tomb-Shrine as well as the long-time residence of His later years at Meherazad, also near Ahmednagar, India.

Don E. Stevens

The Seven Realities

*Existence, Love, Sacrifice, Renunciation,
Knowledge, Control, and Surrender*

I give no importance to creed, dogma, caste, or the performance of religious ceremonies and rites but to the *understanding* of the following seven Realities:

1. The only **Real Existence** is that of the one and only God, who is the Self in every finite self.

2. The only **Real Love** is the love for this Infinity (God), which arouses an intense longing to see, know, and become one with its Truth (God).

3. The only **Real Sacrifice** is that in which, in pursuance of this love, all things-body, mind, position, welfare, and even life itself-are sacrificed.

4. The only **Real Renunciation** is that which abandons, even in the midst of worldly duties, all selfish thoughts and desires.

5. The only **Real Knowledge** is the knowledge that God is the inner dweller in good people and in so-called bad, in saint and in so-called sinner. This knowledge requires you to help all equally as circumstances demand without expectation of reward; when compelled to take part in a dispute, to act without the slightest trace of enmity or hatred, to try to make others happy with brotherly or sisterly feeling for each one; and to harm no one in thought, word, or deed-not even those who harm you.

6. The only **Real Control** is the discipline of the senses to abstain from indulgence in low desires, which alone ensures absolute purity of character.

7. The only **Real Surrender** is that in which poise is undisturbed by any adverse circumstance; and the individual, amidst every kind of hardship, is resigned with perfect calm to the will of God.

The New Humanity

As in all great critical periods of human history, humanity is now going through the agonizing travail of spiritual rebirth. Great forces of destruction are afoot and seem to be dominant at the moment, but constructive and creative forces that will redeem humanity are also being released through several channels. Although the working of these forces of light is chiefly silent, they are eventually bound to bring about those transformations that will make the further spiritual advance of humanity safe and steady. It is all a part of the divine plan, which is to give to the hungry and weary world a fresh dispensation of the eternal and only Truth.

At present the urgent problem facing humanity is to devise ways and means of eliminating competition, conflict, and rivalry in all the subtle and gross forms that they assume in the various spheres of life.

War a symptom of graver causes Military wars are, of course, the most obvious sources of chaos and destruction. However, wars in themselves do not constitute the central problem for humanity but are rather the external symptoms of something graver at their root. Wars and the suffering they bring cannot be completely avoided by mere propaganda against war; if they are to disappear from human history, it will be necessary to tackle their root cause. Even when military wars are not being waged, individuals or groups of individuals are constantly engaged in economic or some other subtle form of

warfare. Military wars, with all the cruelty they involve, arise only when these underlying causes are aggravated.

The cause of the chaos that precipitates itself in wars is that most persons are in the grip of egoism and selfish considerations, and they express their egoism and self-interest individually as well as collectively. This is the life of illusory values in which man is caught. To face the truth is to realize that life is one, in and through its manifold manifestations. To have this understanding is to forget the limiting self in the realization of the unity of life.

With the dawn of true understanding, the problem of wars would immediately disappear. Wars have to be so clearly seen as both unnecessary and unreasonable that the immediate problem would not be how to stop wars but to wage them spiritually against the attitude of mind responsible for such a cruel and painful state of things.

Wars unnecessary and unreasonable

In the light of the truth of the unity of all life, cooperative and harmonious action becomes natural and inevitable. Hence, the chief task before those who are deeply concerned with the rebuilding of humanity is to do their utmost to dispel the spiritual ignorance that envelops humanity.

Wars do not arise merely to secure material adjustment. They are often the product of uncritical identification with narrow interests, which through association come to be included in that part of the world regarded as "mine." Material adjustment is only part of the wider problem of establishing spiritual adjustment. Spiritual adjustment requires the elimination of self, not only from the material aspects of life, but also from those spheres that affect the intellectual, emotional, and cultural life of man.

Self must be eliminated in all spheres of life

To understand the problem of humanity as merely a problem of bread is to reduce humanity to the level of animality. But even when man sets himself the limited task of securing purely material adjustment, he can only succeed in this attempt if

Material adjustment requires spiritual understanding

he has spiritual understanding. Economic adjustment is impossible unless people realize that there can be no planned and cooperative action in economic matters until self-interest gives way to self-giving love. Otherwise, with the best of

equipment and efficiency in the material spheres, humanity cannot avoid conflict and insufficiency.

The *New Humanity* that emerges from the travail of the present struggle and suffering will not ignore science or its practical attainments. It is a mistake to look upon science as antispiritual. Science is a

**Rightful place
of science**

help or hindrance to spirituality according to the use to which it is put. Just as true art expresses spirituality, science, when properly handled, can be the expression and fulfillment of the spirit. Scientific truths concerning the physical body and its life in the gross world can become mediums for the soul to know itself; but to serve this purpose they must be properly fitted into larger spiritual understanding. This includes a steady perception of true and lasting values. In the absence of such spiritual understanding, scientific truths and attainments are liable to be used for mutual destruction and for a life that will tend to strengthen the chains that bind the spirit. All-sided progress of humanity can be assured only if science and religion proceed hand in hand.

The coming civilization of the New Humanity shall be ensouled not by dry intellectual doctrines but by living spiritual experience. Spiritual experience has a hold on the deeper truths that are inaccessible to mere intellect; it cannot be born of unaided intellect. Spiritual truth can often be stated and expressed through the intellect, and the intellect surely is of some help

**Need for spiritual
experience**

for the communication of spiritual experience. But by itself, the intellect is insufficient to enable man to have spiritual experience or to communicate it to others. If two persons have had headaches, they can cooperatively examine their experience of headaches and make it explicit to themselves through the work of the intellect. If a person has never experienced a headache, no amount of intellectual explanation will suffice for making him understand what a headache is. Intellectual explanation can never be a substitute for spiritual experience; it can at best prepare the ground for it.

Spiritual experience involves more than can be grasped by mere intellect. This is often emphasized by calling it a mystical experience. Mysticism is often regarded as something anti-intellectual, obscure and confused, or impractical and unconnected with experience. In fact, true mysticism is none of these. There is nothing irrational in

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true mysticism when it is, as it should be, a vision of Reality. It is a form of perception that is absolutely unclouded, and it is so practical that it can be lived every moment of life and expressed in everyday duties. Its connection with experience is so deep that, in one sense, it is the final understanding of all experience.

Nature and place of spiritual experience

When spiritual experience is described as mystical, one should not assume that it is something supernatural or entirely beyond the grasp of human consciousness. All that is meant is that it is not accessible to the limited human intellect until the intellect transcends its limits and is illumined by direct realization of the Infinite. Jesus Christ pointed out the way to spiritual experience when He said, "Leave all and follow me." This means that man must leave limitations and establish himself in the infinite life of God. A real spiritual experience involves not only realization of the nature of the soul while traversing the higher planes of consciousness but also a right attitude toward worldly duties. If it loses its connection with the different phases of life, what we have is a neurotic reaction that is far from being a spiritual experience.

The spiritual experience that is to enliven and energize the New Humanity cannot be a reaction to the stern and uncompromising demands made by the realities of life. Those without the capacity for adjustment to the flow of life have a tendency to recoil from the realities of life and to seek shelter and protection in a self-created fortress of illusions. Such a reaction is an attempt to perpetuate one's separate existence by protecting it from the demands made by life. It can only give a pseudo solution to the problems of life by providing a false sense of security and self-completeness. It is not even an advance toward the real and lasting solution; on the contrary, it is a sidetrack from the true spiritual path. Man will be dislodged again and again from his illusory shelters by fresh and irresistible waves of life, and will invite upon himself fresh forms of suffering by seeking to protect his separative existence through escape.

Spiritual experience not found in escape

Just as a person may seek to hold on to his separative experience through escape, he may also seek to hold on to it through uncritical identification with forms, ceremonies and rituals, or with traditions

and conventions. Forms, ceremonies and rituals, traditions and conventions, are in most cases fetters to the release of infinite life. If they were pliant mediums for the expression of unlimited life, they would be an asset rather than a handicap for securing the fulfillment of divine life on earth. But they mostly have a tendency together prestige and claims in their own right, independently of the life they might express. When this happens, any attachment to them must eventually lead to a drastic curtailment and restriction of life.

The New Humanity will be freed from a life of limitations, allowing unhampered scope for the creative life of the spirit; and it will break the attachment to external forms and learn to subordinate them to the claims of the spirit. The limited life of illusions and false values will then be replaced by unlimited life in the Truth; and the limitations, through which the separative self lives, will wither away at the touch of true understanding.

Just as a person may seek to hold on to his separative existence through escape or identification with external forms, he may seek to hold on to it through identification with some narrow class, creed, sect, or religion, or with the divisions based upon sex. Here the individual may seem to have lost his separative existence through identification with a larger whole. But, in fact, he is often *expressing* his separative existence through such an identification, which enables him to delight in his feeling of being separate from others who belong to another class, nationality, creed, sect, religion, or sex.

Separative existence derives its being and strength from identifying itself with one of the opposites and contrasting itself with the others. An individual may seek to protect his separate existence through identification with one ideology rather than another or with his conception of good as contrasted with his idea of evil.

What results from identification with narrow groups or limited ideals is not a real merging of the separative self but only a semblance of it. A real merging of the limited self in the ocean of universal life involves complete surrender of separative existence in all its forms.

New Humanity will not be attached to external forms

Identification with narrow group is a form of limited self

Limited self lives through opposites

The large mass of humanity is caught up in the clutches of separative and assertive tendencies. For one who is overpowered by the spectacle of these fetters of humanity, there is bound to be nothing but unrelieved despair about its future. One must look deeper into the realities of the day if one is to get a correct perspective on the present distress of humanity. The real possibilities of the New Humanity are hidden to those who look only at the surface of the world situation, but they exist and only need the spark of spiritual understanding to come into full play and effect. The forces of lust, hate, and greed produce incalculable suffering and chaos. However, the one redeeming feature about human nature is that even in the midst of disruptive forces there invariably exists some form of love.

Even wars require cooperative functioning, but the scope of this cooperative functioning is artificially restricted by identification with a limited group or ideal. Wars often are carried on by a form of love, though it is a love that has not been understood properly. In order that love should come into its own, it must be untrammelled and unlimited. Love does exist in all phases of human life; but it is latent or is limited and poisoned by personal ambition, racial pride, narrow loyalties and rivalries, and attachment to sex, nationality, sect, caste, or religion. If there is to be a resurrection of humanity, the heart of man will have to be unlocked so that a new love is born into it—a love that knows no corruption and is entirely free from individual or collective greed.

The New Humanity will come into existence through a release of love in measureless abundance, and this release of love can come through the spiritual awakening brought about by the Perfect Masters.* Love cannot be born of mere determination; through the exercise of will one can at best be dutiful. Through struggle and effort, one may succeed in assuring that one's external action is in conformity with one's concept of what is right; but such action is spiritually barren because it lacks the inward beauty of spontaneous love.

Love has to spring spontaneously from within; it is in no way amenable to any form of inner or outer force. Love and coercion can

*See Glossary.

never go together; but while love cannot be forced upon anyone, it can be awakened through love itself. Love is essentially self-communicative; those who do not have it catch it from those who have it. Those who receive love from others cannot be its recipients without giving a response that, in itself, is the nature of love. True love is unconquerable and irresistible. It goes on gathering power and spreading itself until eventually it transforms everyone it touches. Humanity will attain a new mode of being and life through the free and unhampered interplay of pure love from heart to heart.

When it is recognized that there are no claims greater than the claims of the universal Divine Life-which, without exception, includes everyone and everything-love will not only establish peace, harmony, and happiness in social, national, and international spheres but it will shine in its own purity and beauty. Divine love is unassailable to the onslaughts of duality and is an expression of divinity itself. It is

**Redemption of
humanity through
divine love**

through divine love that the New Humanity will tune in to the divine plan. Divine love will not only introduce imperishable sweetness and infinite bliss into personal life but it will also make possible an era of New Humanity. Through divine love the New Humanity will learn the art of cooperative and harmonious life. It will free itself from the tyranny of dead forms and release the creative life of spiritual wisdom; it will shed all illusions and get established in the Truth; it will enjoy peace and abiding happiness; it will be initiated in the life of Eternity.

Selfishness

Selfishness comes into existence owing to the tendency of desires to find fulfillment in action and experience. It is born of fundamental ignorance about one's own true nature. Human consciousness is clouded by the accumulation of various types of impressions deposited by the long course of the evolution of consciousness.

Analysis of selfishness These impressions express themselves as desires, and the range of the operation of consciousness is strictly limited by these desires. The *sanskaras*, or impressions, form an enclosure around the possible field of consciousness. The circle of *sanskaras* constitutes that limited area in which alone the individual consciousness can be focused.

With some of the desires action is merely latent, but others can actually translate themselves into action. The capacity of a desire to find expression in conduct depends upon the intensity and the amount of *sanskaras* connected with it. To use a geometric metaphor, we might say that when a desire passes into action, it traverses a distance that is equal to the radius of a circle describing the boundary of the *sanskaras* connected with it. When a desire gathers sufficient strength, it projects itself into action in order to get fulfilled.

The range of selfishness is equal to the range of desires. Owing to the hindrance of multifarious desires, it becomes impossible for the soul to find free and full expression of its true being; and life becomes self-centered and narrow. The entire life of the personal ego is contin-

usually in the grip of wanting, that is, an attempt to seek fulfillment of desires through things that change and vanish. But there can be no real fulfillment through transient things. The satisfaction derived from the fleeting things of life is not lasting, and the wants of man remain unfulfilled. There is thus a general sense of dissatisfaction accompanied by all kinds of worries.

The chief forms in which the frustrated ego finds expression are lust, greed, and anger. Lust is very much like greed in many respects; but it differs in the manner of its fulfillment, which is directly related

Lust, greed, anger to the gross sphere. Lust finds its expression through the medium of the physical body and is concerned with the flesh. It is a form of entanglement with the *gross* sphere.* Greed is a state of restlessness of the heart, and it consists mainly of craving for power and possessions. Possessions and power are sought for the fulfillment of desires. Man is only partially satisfied in his attempt to have the fulfillment of his desires, and this partial satisfaction fans and increases the flame of craving instead of extinguishing it. Thus greed always finds an endless field of conquest and leaves the individual endlessly dissatisfied. The chief expressions of greed are related to the emotional part of man. It is a form of entanglement with the *subtle* sphere.

Anger is the fume of an irritated mind. It is caused by the thwarting of desires. It feeds the limited ego and is used for domination and aggression. It aims at removing the obstacles existing in the fulfillment of desires. The frenzy of anger nourishes egoism and conceit, and it is the greatest benefactor of the limited ego. Mind is the seat of anger, and its expressions are mostly through the activities of the mind. Anger is a form of entanglement with the *mental* sphere. Lust, greed, and anger respectively have body, heart, and mind as their vehicles of expression.

Man experiences disappointment through lust, greed, and anger; and the frustrated ego, in its turn, seeks further-gratification through lust, greed, and anger. Consciousness is thus caught up in a vicious circle of endless disappointment. Disappointment comes into existence when either lust, greed, or anger is thwarted in its

*See Glossary under the terms *gross*, *subtle*, and *mental*.

expression. It is thus a general reaction of gross, subtle, and mental entanglements. It is a depression caused by the nonfulfillment of lust, greed, and anger, which together are coextensive with selfishness. Selfishness, which is the common basis of these three ingredient vices, is thus the ultimate cause of disappointment and worries. It defeats itself. It seeks fulfillment through desires but succeeds only in arriving at unending dissatisfaction.

Selfishness inevitably leads to dissatisfaction and disappointment because desires are endless. The problem of happiness is therefore the problem of dropping one's desires. Desires, however, cannot be effectively overcome through mechanical

Road to happiness repression. They can be annihilated only through Knowledge. If you dive deep in the realm of thoughts and think seriously for just a few minutes, you will realize the emptiness of desires. Think of what you have enjoyed all these years and what you have suffered. All that you have enjoyed through life is today nil. All that you have suffered through life is also nothing in the present. All was illusory.

It is your right to be happy, and yet you create your own unhappiness by wanting things. Wanting is the source of perpetual restlessness. If you do not get the thing you want, you are disappointed. And if you get it, you want more and more of it and become unhappy. Say "I do not want anything" and be happy. The continuous realization of the futility of wants will eventually lead you to Knowledge. This Self-knowledge will give you the freedom from wants that leads to the road to abiding happiness.

Wants should be carefully distinguished from needs. Pride and anger, greed and lust, are all different from needs. You might think, "I need all that I want," but this is a mistake. If you are thirsty in a desert, what you need is good water, not

Renunciation of wants lemonade. As long as one has a body there will be some needs, and it is necessary to meet those needs. But wants are an outcome of infatuated imagination. They must be scrupulously killed if there is to be any happiness. As the very being of selfishness consists of desires, renunciation of wants becomes a process of death. Dying in the ordinary sense means parting with the physical body, but dying in the real sense means renunciation of low desires. The priests prepare people for false death by painting gloomy pictures of hell and heaven; but their death is

illusory, as life is one unbroken continuity. The real death consists of the cessation of desires, and it comes by gradual stages.

The dawn of love facilitates the death of selfishness. Being is dying by loving. If you cannot love one another, how can you love even those who torture you? The limits of selfishness are created by ignorance.

Love and service When a person realizes that he can have more glorious satisfaction by widening the sphere of his interests and activities,

he is heading toward the life of service. At this stage he entertains many good desires. He wants to make others happy by relieving distress and helping them. And though even in such good desires there is often an indirect and latent reference to the self, narrow selfishness has no grip over good deeds. Even good desires may, in a sense, be said to be a form of enlightened and extended selfishness; for, like bad desires, they too move within the domain of duality. But as the person entertains good desires his selfishness embraces a larger conception that eventually brings about its own extinction. Instead of merely trying to be illustrious, arresting, and possessive, he learns to be useful to others.

The desires that enter into the constitution of the personal ego are either good or bad. Bad desires are ordinarily referred to as forms of selfishness, and good desires are referred to as forms of selflessness.

Arising of selfishness However, there is no hard-and-fast line dividing selfishness from selflessness. Both move in the domain of duality; and from the

ultimate point of view that transcends the opposites of good and bad, the distinction between selfishness and selflessness is chiefly one of range. Selfishness and selflessness are two phases of the life of the personal ego, and these two phases are continuous with each other.

Selfishness arises when all the desires are centered around the narrow individuality. Selflessness arises when this crude organization of desires suffers disintegration and there is a general dispersing of desires, with the result that they cover a much wider sphere. Selfishness is the narrowing down of interests to a limited field; selflessness is the extension of interests over a wide field. To put it paradoxically, selfishness is a restricted form of selflessness, and selflessness is the drawing out of selfishness into a wide sphere of activity.

Selfishness must be transmuted into selflessness before the

domain of duality is completely transcended. Persistent and continuous performance of good deeds wears out selfishness. Selfishness

Transformation of selfishness into selflessness

extended and expressed in the form of good deeds becomes the instrument of its own destruction. The good is the main link between selfishness thriving and dying. Selfishness, which in the beginning is the father of evil tendencies, becomes through good deeds the hero of its own defeat. When the evil tendencies are completely replaced by good tendencies, selfishness is transformed into selflessness, that is, individual selfishness loses itself in universal interest. Though this selfless and good life is also bound by the opposites, goodness is a necessary step toward freedom from the opposites. Goodness is the means by which the soul annihilates its own ignorance.

From the good, the soul passes on to God. Selflessness is merged into universal Selfhood—which is beyond good and bad, virtue and vice, and all the other dual aspects of *Maya* (Illusion, or Ignorance).

Universal Selfhood

The height of selflessness is the beginning of the feeling of oneness with all. In the state of Liberation there is neither selfishness nor selflessness in the ordinary sense, but both of these are taken up and merged into the feeling of *Selfness* for all. Realization of the unity of all is accompanied by peace and unfathomable bliss. It does not in any way lead either to spiritual stagnation or to the obliteration of relative values. Selfness for all brings about undisturbed harmony without loss of discrimination, and unshakable peace without indifference to the surroundings. This Selfness for all is not an outcome of merely subjective synthesis. It is a result of an actual attainment of union with the ultimate Reality, which includes all.

Open your heart by weeding out all desires and by harboring only one longing—the longing for union with the ultimate Reality. The ultimate Reality is not to be sought in the changing things of the external environment but in one's own

Union with ultimate Reality

being. Every time your soul intends to enter your human heart, it finds the door locked and the inside too full of desires. Do not keep the doors of your hearts closed. Everywhere there is the source of abiding bliss, and yet all are miserable because of desires born of ignorance. The goal of lasting happiness shines forth fully only when

the limited ego, with all its desires, finds its complete and final extinction.

Renunciation of desires does not mean asceticism or a merely negative attitude to life. Any such negation of life would make man inhuman. Divinity is not devoid of humanity. Spirituality must make man more human. It is a positive attitude of releasing all that is good, noble, and beautiful in man. It also contributes to all that is gracious and lovely in the environment.

Spirituality a positive attitude toward life

Spirituality does not require the external renunciation of worldly activities or the avoiding of duties and responsibilities. It only requires that, while performing the worldly activities or discharging the responsibilities arising from the specific place and position of the individual, the inner spirit should remain free from the burden of desires.

Perfection consists in remaining free from the entanglements of duality. Such freedom from entanglements is the most essential requirement of unhindered creativity. But this freedom cannot be attained by running away from life for fear of entanglement. This would mean denial of life. Perfection does not consist in shrinking from the dual expressions of nature. The attempt to escape from entanglement implies fear of life. Spirituality consists in meeting life adequately and fully without being overpowered by the opposites. It must assert its dominion over all illusions-however attractive or powerful. Without avoiding contact with the different forms of life, a Perfect One functions with complete detachment in the midst of intense activity.

God and the Individual

God is infinite. He is beyond the opposites of good and bad, right and wrong, virtue and vice, birth and death, pleasure and suffering. Such dual aspects do not belong to God. If you take God as one separate entity, He becomes one term in relational

God is the only Reality existence. Just as good is the counterpart of bad, God becomes the counterpart of not-

God; and the Infinite comes to be looked upon as the opposite of the finite. When you talk of the Infinite and the finite, you are referring to them as two; and the Infinite has already become the second part of the duality. But the Infinite belongs to the nondual order of being. If the Infinite is looked upon as the counterpart of the finite, it is strictly speaking no longer infinite but a species of the finite; for it stands outside the finite as its opposite and is thus limited. Since the Infinite cannot be the second part of the finite, the apparent existence of the finite is false. The Infinite alone exists. God cannot be brought down to the domain of duality. There is only one being in reality and it is the universal Soul. The existence of the finite or the limited is only apparent or imaginary.

You are infinite. You are really everywhere. But you think that you are the body, and therefore consider yourself limited. If you think you are the body, which is sitting, you do

Apparent existence of the finite not know your true nature. If you were to look within and experience your own soul in its true nature, you would realize that you are infinite and beyond all creation. However, you identify yourself

with the body. This false identification is due to ignorance, which makes itself effective through the medium of the mind. An ordinary person thinks that he is the physical body. A spiritually advanced individual thinks that he is the subtle body. The saint thinks that he is the mind. But in none of them is the soul having direct Self-knowledge. It is not a case of pure thinking unmixed with illusion.

The soul as Soul is infinite-alooof from mind or body-yet owing to ignorance, the soul comes under the sway of the mind and becomes a “thinker,” sometimes identifying itself with the body and sometimes with the mind. From the limited point of view of a person who has not gone beyond the domain of Maya, there are numberless individuals. It seems that there are as many individuals as there are minds and bodies. In fact, there is only one universal Soul, but the individual thinks that he is different from other individuals. The one and the same Soul is ultimately behind the minds of seemingly different individuals, and through them it has the multifarious experiences of duality. The One *in* the many comes to experience itself as one *of* the many. This is due to imagination or false thinking.

Thinking becomes false because of the interference of sanskaras accumulated during the process of the evolution of consciousness. The function of consciousness is perverted by the operation of sanskaras, which manifest themselves as desires.

Cause of false thinking Through many lives, consciousness is continually being burdened by the aftereffects of experience. The perception of the soul is limited by these after-effects. The thinking of the soul cannot break through the hedge created by sanskaras, and consciousness becomes a helpless captive of illusions projected by its own false thinking. This falsification of thought is present not only in cases where consciousness is partly developed but also in man, where it is fully developed.

The progressive evolution of consciousness from the stone stage culminates in man. The history of evolution is the history of a gradual development of consciousness. The fruit of evolution is full consciousness, which is characteristic of man. But even this full consciousness is like a mirror covered by dust. Owing to the operation of sanskaras, it does not yield clear and true knowledge of the nature of the soul. Though fully developed, it yields not truth but imaginative construction, since its free functioning is

**Scope of full
consciousness**

hindered by the weight of the sanskaras. Moreover, it cannot extend beyond the cage created by its desires and therefore is limited in its scope.

The boundary in which consciousness can move is prescribed by the sanskaras, and the functioning of consciousness is also determined by the desires. As desires aim at self-satisfaction, the whole consciousness becomes self-centered and individualized. The individualization of consciousness may in a sense be said to be the effect of the vortex of desires. The soul gets enmeshed in the desires and cannot step out of the circumscribed individuality constituted by these desires. It imagines these barriers and becomes self-hypnotized. It looks upon itself as being limited and separate from other individuals. It gets entangled in individualistic existence and imagines a world of manifold separateness composed of many individuals with their respective minds and bodies.

When the rays of the sun are made to pass through a prism, they get dispersed and become separate because of the refraction. If each of these rays had consciousness, it would consider itself as being separate from the other rays, forgetting entirely that at the source and on the other side of the prism it had no separate existence. In the same way, the one Being descends into the domain of Maya and assumes a multiplicity that does not in fact exist. The separateness of individuals does not exist in reality but only in imagination. The one universal Soul imagines separateness in itself, and out of this division there arises the thought of “I” and “mine” as opposed to “you” and “yours.” Although the soul is in reality an undivided and absolute unity, it appears as being manifold and divided owing to the working of its own imagination. Imagination is not a reality. Even in its highest flight, it is a departure from truth. It is anything but the truth. The experience the soul gathers in terms of the individualized ego is all imagination. It is a misapprehension of the soul. Out of the imagination of the universal Soul are born many individuals. This is Maya, or Ignorance.

Side by side with the birth of the separate and limited individuality, there also comes into existence the objective universe. As the limited individuality has separate existence not in fact but only in imagination, the objective universe also has no independent and

separate reality. It is the one universal Self appearing in the second role of manifestation through these attributes. When the soul descends into the domain of Maya, it takes upon itself the limitations of manifold existence. This self-limitation of the soul might be looked upon as its self-sacrifice on the altar of consciousness. Although it eternally remains the same infinite Absolute, it suffers a kind of *timeless* contraction through its apparent descent into the world of time, variety, and evolution. What really evolves, however, is not the soul itself but only the consciousness-which, because of its limitations, gives rise to the limited individuality.

The history of the limited individuality is a history of the development of a triple entanglement with mind, energy, and matter (body). Duality prevails in all these domains; and the soul gets entangled therein, although it is in essence beyond duality. Duality implies the existence of opposites limiting and balancing each other through mutual tension. Good and bad, virtue and vice, are examples of such opposites. The ignorant soul enmeshed in duality is in the clutches of both good and bad. The duality of good and bad arises due to Ignorance; but once entangled with it, the soul comes under its sway.

During the evolution of the triple entanglement with matter (body), energy, and mind, the ignorant soul is continually in the grip of wanting. It wants the good and bad of the gross world; it wants the good and bad of the subtle world; and it wants the good and bad of the mental world. And owing to this distinction of good and bad, wanting itself becomes good and bad. Wanting thus comes to be inevitably limited by the perpetual tension of the opposites. This gives rise to unending oscillation from one state to another without arriving at the unlimited state, which can only be discovered in the unchanging, eternal aspect of life. The Infinite is to be sought beyond the domain of duality. This becomes possible only when consciousness can emerge from the limited individuality by breaking through the barriers of *sanskaras*.

We have seen that the possible field of consciousness is limited by the *sanskaras*. This limitation creates a division of the human psyche into two parts. One part falls within the range of consciousness, and the other part falls beyond it. The unconscious part, in its full extent,

is identical with the power that is behind matter. It is referred to as God by the orthodox religions. The ultimate Reality, which is symbolically represented through such concepts, can be known fully only by bringing the unconscious into consciousness. An extension of consciousness consists in being conscious of that which was formerly a part of the unconscious. The progressive conquest of the unconscious by the conscious culminates in *consummate* consciousness, which is unlimited in scope and unhindered in function. Between this highest state of consciousness and the limited-though full-consciousness of average humanity, there are about forty-nine degrees of illumined consciousness. They mark the important stages of growing Illumination.

The gulf between the clouded consciousness of average humanity and the fully illumined consciousness of a Perfect Master is created by *sanskaras* that give rise to egoism. These can be removed through perfect character, devotion, and selfless service; but the best results in this direction are attained through the help of a Perfect Master. Spiritual advancement consists not in the further *development* of consciousness (for it is already fully developed in man), but in the *emancipation* of consciousness from the bondage of *sanskaras*. Although, in essence, consciousness is the same in all the different states of existence, it can never be consummate unless it can reflect the knowledge of Infinity without the least shadow of ignorance, and also cover the whole extent of creation illumining the different spheres of existence.

Every time you go to sleep you are unconsciously united with the infinite Reality. This unification involves the extension of unconsciousness over consciousness. It thus bridges over the chasm between the unconscious and the conscious. But being unconscious of this union, you do not consciously derive any benefit from it. This is the reason why, when you wake up again from deep sleep, you become aware of the selfsame, humdrum individual; and you begin to act and experience exactly as you acted and experienced before going to sleep. If your union with the supreme Reality had been a conscious union, you would have awakened into a completely new and infinitely rich life.

Chasm between consciousness and unconsciousness

Spiritual advancement

Deep sleep

A Perfect Master is consciously united with the infinite Reality. In his case the chasm between consciousness and unconsciousness is bridged, not by the extension of the unconscious over the conscious (as with the person who enjoys deep sleep) but

Conscious union with infinite Reality by the extension of consciousness over unconsciousness. The waxing and waning

of consciousness is applicable only to the limited individual. In the case of the Perfect Master, the conquest of the unconscious by the conscious is final and permanent; and therefore his state of Self-knowledge is continuous and unbroken, and remains the same at all times without any diminution. From this you can see that the Perfect Master never sleeps in the ordinary sense of the word. When he rests his body he experiences no gap in his consciousness.

In the state of Perfection, full consciousness becomes consummate by the disappearance of all obstacles to Illumination. The conquest of the unconscious by the conscious is complete, and the person continuously dwells in the full blaze of

State of Perfection Illumination or as one with Illumination. He becomes Illumination itself.

As long as a person remains under the sway of duality and looks upon manifold experience as being true and final, he has not traversed the domain of Ignorance. In the state of final understanding, a person realizes that the Infinite, which is one without a second, is the only Reality. The Infinite pervades and includes all existence, leaving nothing as its rival. A person who has such realization has attained the highest state of consciousness. In this state the full consciousness, which is the fruit of evolution, is retained; but the limitations of sanskaras and desires are completely transcended. The limited individuality, which is the creation of Ignorance, is transformed into the divine Individuality, which is unlimited. The illimitable consciousness of the universal Soul becomes individualized in this focus without giving rise to any form of illusion. The person is free from all self-centered desires, and he becomes the medium of the spontaneous flow of the supreme and universal will, which expresses divinity.

Individuality becomes limitless by the disappearance of Ignorance. As it is unimpaired by the separateness of Maya and unentangled in its duality, it enjoys the state of Liberation in which there is objectless awareness, pure being, and unclouded joy. Such a person

has no longer any of the illusions that perplex and bewilder man. In one sense he is dead. The personal ego, which is the source of the sense of separateness, has been forever annihilated. But in another sense, he is alive forevermore with unconquerable love and eternal bliss. He has infinite power and wisdom, and the whole universe is to him a field for his spiritual work of perfecting mankind.

The Beginning and the End of Creation

Aslong as the human mind does not directly experience ultimate Reality as it is, the mind is baffled in every attempt to explain the origin and purpose of creation. The ancient past seems to be shrouded in inscrutable mystery, and the future seems to be a completely sealed book. The human mind can at best make brilliant conjectures about the past and the future of the universe because it is bound by the spell of Maya. It can neither arrive at final knowledge of these points, nor can it remain content with ignorance about them. “Whence?” and “Whither?” are the two everlasting and poignant queries that make the human mind divinely restless.

The human mind cannot reconcile itself to infinite regress in its search for the origin of the world, nor can it reconcile itself to endless change without a goal. Evolution is unintelligible if it has no initial cause, and it is deprived of all direction and meaning if it all does not lead to a terminus. The very questions “Whence?” and “Whither?” presuppose the beginning and the end of this evolving creation. The beginning of evolution is the beginning of time, and the end of evolution is the end of time. Evolution has both beginning and end because time has both beginning and end.

Between the beginning and the end of this changing world there are many cycles; but there is, in and through these cycles, a continuity of cosmic evolution. The real termination of the evolutionary process

is called *Mahapralaya*, or the great annihilation of the world, when the world becomes what it was in the beginning, namely *Nothing*. The Mahapralaya of the world may be compared with the sleep of a person. Just as the varied world of experience completely disappears for the individual who is in deep sleep, the entire objective cosmos, which is the creation of Maya, vanishes into nothingness at the time of Mahapralaya. It is as if the universe had never existed at all.

Even during the evolutionary period the universe is in itself nothing but imagination. There is in fact only one indivisible and eternal Reality, and it has neither beginning nor end. It is beyond time. From the point of view of this timeless Reality, the whole time process is purely imaginary. And the billions of years that have passed and the billions of years that are to pass do not have even the value of a second. It is as if they had not existed at all.

Reality is timeless and absolute

So the manifold and evolving universe cannot be said to be a real outcome of this one Reality. If it were an outcome of this one Reality, Reality would be either a relative term or a composite being, which it is not. The one Reality is absolute.

The one Reality includes in itself *all* existence. It is Everything, but it has Nothing as its shadow. The idea of all-inclusive existence implies that it leaves nothing outside its being. When you analyze the idea of being, you arrive by implication at the idea of that which does not exist. This idea of nonexistence, or Nothing, helps you to define clearly your notion of being. The complementary aspect of Being is thus Nonbeing or Nothing. But Nothing cannot be looked upon as having its own separate and independent existence. It is nothing in itself. Nor can it, in itself, be a cause of anything. The manifold and evolving universe cannot be the outcome of Nothing taken by itself, and you have seen that it also cannot be the outcome of the one Reality. How then does the manifold and evolving universe arise?

The manifold evolving universe arises from the mixing of the one Reality and Nothing. It springs out of Nothing when this Nothing is taken against the background of the one Reality. But this should not be

taken to mean that the universe is partly the outcome of the one Reality, or that it has an element of Reality.

Reality and the universe

It is an outcome of Nothing and is nothing. It only *seems* to have existence. Its apparent existence is due to the one Reality, which is, as it were, behind the Nothing. When Nothing is added to the one Reality, the result is the manifold and evolving universe.

The one Reality, which is infinite and absolute, does not thereby suffer any modification. It is absolute and is as such entirely unaffected by any addition or subtraction. The one Reality remains what it was, complete and absolute in itself and unconcerned and unconnected with the panorama of creation that springs out of Nothing. This Nothing might be compared to the value of zero in mathematics. In itself it has no positive value, but when it is added to another number it gives rise to the many. In the same way the manifold and evolving universe springs out of Nothing when it is combined with the one Reality.

The whole evolutionary process is within the domain of imagination. When in imagination the one ocean of Reality gets apparently disturbed, there arises the manifold world of separate centers of consciousness.

Imagined division between self and environment

This involves the basic division of life into the *self* and the *not-self*; or the “I” and its environment. Owing to the falseness and the incompleteness of this limited self (which is only an imagined part of a really

indivisible totality), consciousness cannot remain content with eternal identification with it. Thus consciousness is trapped in ceaseless restlessness, forcing it to attempt identification with the not-self. That portion of the not-self, or the environment, with which consciousness succeeds in identifying itself gets affiliated with the self in the form of “mine.” And that portion of the not-self with which it does not succeed in identifying itself becomes the irreducible environment that inevitably creates a limit and an opposition to the self.

Thus consciousness arrives not at the *termination* of its limiting duality but at its *transformation*. As long as consciousness is subject to the working of vitiating imagination, it cannot successfully put an end to this duality. All the varied attempts it makes for the assimilation of the not-self (or the environment) result merely in the replacement of the initial duality by other innumerable novel forms of the *same*

duality. The acceptance and the rejection of certain portions of the environment express themselves respectively as “wanting” and “not-wanting,” thus giving rise to the opposites of pleasure and pain, good and bad, and so forth. But neither acceptance nor rejection can lead to freedom from duality, and consciousness therefore finds itself engaged in ceaseless oscillation from one opposite to the other. The entire process of the evolution of the individual is characterized by this oscillation between the opposites.

The evolution of the limited individual is completely determined by the *sanskaras* accumulated by him through ages; and though it is all part of imagination, the determinism is thorough and automatic.

Every action and experience, howsoever ephemeral, leaves behind it an impression in the mental body. This impression is an *objective* modification of the mental body; and as the mental body remains the same, the impressions accumulated by the individual are capable of persisting through several lives. When the *sanskaras* thus accumulated begin to express themselves (instead of merely lying latent in the mental body), they are experienced as desires, that is, they are apprehended as being *subjective*. The objective and the subjective are the two aspects of *sanskaras*: the former is a passive state of latency, and the latter is an active state of manifestation.

Through the active phase, the accumulated *sanskaras* determine each experience and action of the limited self. Just as several feet of film have to pass in a cinema to show a brief action on the screen, many *sanskaras* are often involved in determining a single action of the limited self. Through such expression and fulfillment in experience, the *sanskaras* get spent up. The weak *sanskaras* are spent up mentally; the stronger ones are spent up subtly in the form of desires and imaginative experience; and those *sanskaras* that are powerful are spent up physically by expressing themselves through bodily action.

Though this spending up of *sanskaras* is going on continually, it does not end in freedom from *sanskaras* because new *sanskaras* are inevitably being created—not only through fresh actions, but even through the very process of spending up. So the load of *sanskaras* goes on increasing, and the individual finds himself helpless before the problem of throwing off the burden.

The *sanskaras* deposited by specific actions and experiences

render the mind susceptible to similar actions and experiences. But after a certain point is reached, this tendency is checked and counteracted by a natural reaction consisting in a complete changeover to its direct opposite, making room for the operation of opposite sanskaras.

Balancing through opposites

Very often the two opposites form parts of one and the same chain of imagination. For example, a person might first experience that he is a famous writer-with wealth, fame, family, and all the agreeable things of life-and later in the same life, might experience that he has lost his wealth, fame, family, and all the agreeable things of life. Sometimes it seems that a chain of imagination does not contain both the opposites in the same lifetime. For instance, a man might experience throughout his life that he is a powerful king always victorious in battles. In this case he has to balance this experience by the experience of defeats or the like in the next life, taking one more life to complete his chain of imagination. The purely psychological compulsion of the sanskaras is thus subject to the deeper need of the soul to know its Self.

Suppose a person has killed someone in this life. This deposits in his mental body the sanskaras of killing. If consciousness were to be solely and simply determined by this initial tendency created by these sanskaras, he would go on killing others again and again ad infinitum, each time gathering further momentum from subsequent acts of the same kind. There would be no escape from this recurring determinism, were it not for the fact that the logic of experience provides a necessary check to it. The person soon realizes the incompleteness of the experience of one opposite, and he unconsciously seeks to restore the lost balance by going over to the other opposite.

Example of killing

Thus the individual who has had the experience of killing will develop the psychological need and susceptibility for getting killed. In killing another person he has appreciated only one portion of the total situation in which he is a party, namely, the part of killing. The complementary half of the total situation (that is, the role of being killed) remains for him understood and foreign, though it nevertheless has introduced itself into his experience. There thus arises the need to complete the experience by attracting to oneself the opposite of

what one has personally gone through, and consciousness has a tendency to fulfill this new and pressing need. A person who has killed will soon develop a tendency to get himself killed in order to cover the entire situation by personal experience.

The question that crops up here is, Who would arise to kill him in the next life? It may be the same person who was killed in the previous life, or it may be some other person with similar sanskaras. As a result of action and interaction between individuals, there come into existence sanskaric links or ties; and when the individual takes a new physical body, it may be among those who have previous sanskaric ties or among those who have similar sanskaras. But the adjustment of life is such as to make possible the free play of evolving duality.

Like the shuttle of the weaver's loom, the human mind moves within two extremes, developing the warp and the woof of the cloth of life. The development of spiritual life is best represented not as a straight line but as a zigzag course. Take

**Through opposites to
beyond opposites**

the function of the two banks of a river. If there were no banks, the waters of the river would disperse, making it impossible for the

river to reach its destination. In the same way, the life-force would dissipate itself in endless and innumerable ways, were it not confined between the two poles of the opposites.

These banks of the river of life are best looked upon not as two parallel lines but as two converging lines that meet at the point of Liberation. The amount of oscillation becomes less and less as the individual approaches the goal, and completely subsides when he realizes it. It is like the movement of the doll that has its center of gravity at the base, with the result that it has a gradual tendency to become steady in the sitting posture. If shaken, it continues to swing from side to side for some time; but each movement covers a shorter span, and in the end the doll becomes stationary. In the case of cosmic evolution, such subsiding of alternation between the opposites means Mahapralaya; and in the spiritual evolution of the individual, it means Liberation.

The step from duality to nonduality is not merely a matter of difference in the state of consciousness. As the two are qualitatively different, the difference between them is infinite. The former is a not-God state and the latter is the God state. This infinite difference constitutes the abyss between the sixth plane of consciousness and the

seventh. The lower six planes of involution of consciousness* are also separated from each other by a kind of a valley or distance. But though the difference between them is great, it is not infinite because all are equally subject to the bipolarity of limited experience, consisting in the alternation between the opposites.

The difference between the first plane and the second, the second and the third, and so on up to the sixth plane, is great but not infinite. It follows that, strictly speaking, none of the six planes of duality can be said to be really nearer to the seventh plane than any others. The difference between any of the six planes and the seventh plane is infinite, just as the difference between the sixth and the seventh planes is infinite. The progress through the six planes is progress in imagination; but the realization of the seventh plane is the *cessation* of imagination and, therefore, the awakening of the individual into Truth-consciousness.

The illusory progress through the six planes cannot, however, be altogether avoided. Imagination has to be completely exhausted before a person can realize the Truth. When a disciple has a Perfect Master, he has to traverse all the six planes. The Master may take his disciple through the inner planes either with open eyes or under a veil. If the disciple is taken under cover and is not conscious of the planes he is crossing, desires persist until the seventh plane; but if he is taken with open eyes and is conscious of the planes he is crossing, no desires are left on and after the fifth plane. If the Master comes for work, he often chooses to take his disciples under cover; for they are likely to be more actively useful for the Master's work when taken blindfolded than when taken with open eyes.

The crossing of the planes is characterized throughout by the unwinding of *sanskaras*. This process of unwinding should be carefully distinguished from that of spending up. In the process of spending up, the *sanskaras* become dynamic and release themselves into action or experience. This does not lead to final emancipation from *sanskaras*, as the never-ceasing fresh accumulation of *sanskaras* more than replaces those that are spent up; and the spending up itself is

*See Glossary.

responsible for further sanskaras. In the process of unwinding, however, the sanskaras get weakened and annihilated by the flame of longing for the Infinite.

Longing for the Infinite may be the cause of much spiritual suffering. There is no comparison between the acuteness of ordinary suffering and the poignancy of the spiritual suffering a person has to go through while crossing the planes. The former is the effect of sanskaras, and the latter is the effect of their unwinding. When physical suffering reaches its climax, a person becomes unconscious and so gets relief from it; but there is no such automatic relief for spiritual suffering. Spiritual suffering, however, does not become boring because there is also intermingled with it a kind of pleasure.

The longing for the Infinite gets accentuated and acute until it arrives at its climax, and then gradually begins to cool down. While cooling down, consciousness does not altogether give up the longing

Peace of Realization

for the Infinite but continues to stick to its aim of realizing the Infinite. This state of cooled but latent longing is preliminary to realization of the Infinite. Longing is at this stage the instrument of annihilating all other desires and is itself ready to be quenched by the unfathomable stillness of the Infinite. Before the longing for the Infinite is fulfilled through the realization of the Infinite, consciousness has to pass from the sixth to the seventh plane. It has to pass from duality to nonduality. Instead of wandering in imagination, it has to arrive at the end of imagination.

The Master understands the one Reality as being the only Reality and the Nothing as being merely its shadow. For him, time is swallowed up in eternity. As he has realized the timeless aspect of Reality, he is beyond time and holds within his being both the beginning and the end of time. He remains unmoved by the temporal process consisting of the action and interaction of the many. The ordinary person knows neither the beginning nor the end of creation. Thus he is overpowered by the march of events, which loom large because of the lack of proper perspective as he is caught up in time. He looks upon everything in terms of possible fulfillment or nonfulfillment of his sanskaras. He is, therefore, profoundly disturbed by the happenings of this world. The whole objective universe appears to him as an unwelcome limitation that has to be overcome or tolerated.

The Master, on the other hand, is free from duality and the

sanskaras characteristic of duality. He is free from all limitation. The storm and stress of the universe do not affect his being. All the bustle of the world, with its constructive and destructive processes, can have no special importance for him. He has entered into the sanctuary of Truth, which is the abode of that eternal significance which is only partially and faintly reflected in the fleeting values of ever-changing creation. He comprehends within his being all existence, and looks upon the entire play of manifestation as merely a game.

The Formation and Function of Sanskaras

There are two aspects of human experience—the subjective and objective. On the one hand there are mental processes that constitute essential ingredients of human experience, and on the other hand there are things and objects to which they refer. The mental processes are partly dependent upon the immediately given objective situation, and partly dependent upon the functioning of accumulated sanskaras, or impressions, of previous experiences. The human mind thus finds itself between a sea of past sanskaras on the one side and the whole extensive objective world on the other.

Analysis of human experience

Human actions are based upon the operation of the impressions stored in the mind through previous experiences. Every thought, emotion, and act is grounded in groups of impressions that, when considered objectively, are seen to be modifications of the mind. These impressions are deposits of previous experiences and become the most important factors in determining the course of present and future experience. The mind is constantly creating and gathering such impressions in the course of its experience.

Sanskaras originate in experience

When occupied with the physical objects of this world (such as the body, nature, and other things), the mind is, so to say, externalized and creates gross impressions. When it is busy with its own subjective

mental processes, which are the expressions of already existing sanskaras, it creates subtle and mental impressions. The question whether sanskaras come first or experience comes first is like the question whether the hen or the egg comes first. Both are conditions of each other and develop side by side. The problem of understanding the significance of human experience, therefore, turns around the problem of understanding the formation and function of sanskaras.

The sanskaras are of two types-natural and nonnatural-according to the manner in which they come into existence. The sanskaras the soul gathers during the period of organic evolution are natural. These sanskaras come into existence as the soul successively takes up and abandons the various subhuman forms,

Natural and non-natural sanskaras

thus gradually passing from the apparently inanimate states (such as stone or metal) to the human state, where there is full development of consciousness. All the sanskaras that cluster around the soul *before* it attains the human form are the product of natural evolution and are referred to as natural sanskaras. They should be carefully distinguished from the sanskaras cultivated by the soul *after* the attainment of the human form.

The sanskaras that get attached to the soul during the human stage are cultivated under the moral freedom of consciousness with its accompanying responsibility of choice between good and bad, virtue and vice. They are referred to as nonnatural sanskaras. Though these posthuman sanskaras are directly dependent upon the natural, they are created under fundamentally different conditions of life and are, in their origin, comparatively more recent than the natural sanskaras. This difference in the length of the formative periods and in the conditions of formation is responsible for the difference in the degree of firmness of attachment of the natural and nonnatural sanskaras to the soul. The nonnatural sanskaras are not as difficult to eradicate as the natural, which have an ancient heritage and are therefore more firmly rooted. The obliteration of the natural sanskaras is practically impossible unless the neophyte is the recipient of the grace and the intervention of a *Sadguru*, or Perfect Master.

The nonnatural sanskaras are dependent upon the natural, and the natural sanskaras are a result of evolution. The next important question is, Why should manifested life in different stages of evolution emerge out of the absolute Reality, which is infinite? The need for

manifested life arises out of the impetus in the Absolute to become conscious of itself. The progressive manifestation of life through evolution is ultimately brought about by the *will-to-be-conscious*, which is inherent in the Infinite. In order to understand creation in terms of thought, it is necessary to posit this will-to-be-conscious in the Absolute in a latent state prior to the act of manifestation.

Manifested life arises out of will-to-be-conscious in Absolute

Although for the purposes of an intellectual explanation of creation the impetus in the Absolute has to be regarded as a will-to-be-conscious, to describe it as a sort of inherent desire is to falsify its true nature. It is better described as a *lahar*, or an impulse, which is so inexplicable, spontaneous, and sudden that to call it this or that is to have its reality undone. As all intellectual categories necessarily turn out

Lahar within Absolute compared to a wave on the ocean

to be inadequate for grasping the mystery of creation, the nearest approach to understanding its nature is not through intellectual concept but through analogy.

Just as a wave going across the surface of a still ocean calls forth into being a wild stir of innumerable bubbles, the lahar creates myriads of individual souls out of the indivisible infinity of the Oversoul. But the all-abounding Absolute remains the substratum of all the individual souls. The individual souls are the creations of a sudden and spontaneous impulse and have, therefore, hardly any anticipation of their destined continuity of existence throughout the cyclic period until the final subsiding of the initial stir. Within the undifferentiated being of the Absolute is born the mysterious point (the *Om* Point) through which comes forth the variegated manyness of creation. And the vasty deep, which a fraction of a second before was icy-still, is astir with the life of innumerable frothy selves who secure their separateness in definite size and shape through self-limitation within the foamy surface of the ocean.

All this is merely an analogy. It would be a mistake to imagine that some real change takes place in the Absolute when the lahar of the latent will-to-be-conscious makes itself effective by bringing into existence the world of manifestation. There can be no act of involution or evolution within the

Absolute unchanged by bhas of manifestation

being of the Absolute; and nothing real can be born from the Absolute, as any real change is necessarily a negation of the Absolute. The change implied in the creation of the manifested world is not an ontological change—that is, not a change in the being of the absolute Reality. It is only an apparent change.

In one sense the act of manifestation must be regarded as a sort of *expansion* of the illimitable being of the Absolute, as through that act the Infinite, which is without consciousness, seeks to attain its own consciousness. As this expansion of Reality is effected through its self-limitation in various forms of life, the act of manifestation might with equal aptness be called the process of timeless *contraction*. Whether the act of manifestation is looked upon as a sort of expansion of Reality or as its timeless contraction, it is preceded by an initial urge or movement, which might (in terms of thought) be regarded as an inherent and latent desire to be conscious.

The manifoldness of creation and the separateness of the individual souls exist only in imagination. The very existence of creation or of the world of manifestation is grounded in *bhas*, or illusion; so that in spite of the manifestation of numberless individual souls, the Oversoul remains the same without suffering any real expansion or contraction, increment or decrement. Although the Oversoul undergoes no modification due to the *bhas*, or illusion, of individuation, there comes into existence its apparent differentiation into many individual souls.

The most original *bhas*, or illusion, into which the Oversoul was allured synchronizes with the first impression. It therefore marks the beginning of the formation of *sanskaras*. The formation of *sanskaras* starts in the most finite center, which becomes the first focus for the manifestation of the individuality of the soul. In the gross sphere a focus of this manifestation is represented by the tri-dimensional and inert stone, which has the most rudimentary and partial consciousness. This vague and undeveloped state of consciousness is hardly sufficient to illumine its own shape and form, and is hopelessly inadequate to fulfill the purpose of creation, which was to enable the Oversoul to know itself.

Whatever little capacity for illumination consciousness has in the stone phase is ultimately derived from the Oversoul and not from the body of the stone. But consciousness is unable to enlarge its scope

independently of the body of the stone, because the Oversoul first gets identified with consciousness and then through it with the stone form. Since all further development of consciousness is arrested by the body of the stone and its langour, evolution of the higher forms, or vehicles, of manifestation becomes indispensable. The development of consciousness has to proceed side by side with the evolution of the body by which it is conditioned. Therefore the will-to-be-conscious, which is inherent in the vastness of the Oversoul, seeks by divine determination a progressive evolution of the vehicles of expression.

Thus the Oversoul forges for itself a new vehicle of expression in the metal form, in which consciousness becomes slightly more intensified. Even at this stage it is very rudimentary; and so it has to get

**Progressive evolution
of consciousness
and forms**

transferred to still higher forms of vegetation and trees, in which there is an appreciable advance in the development of consciousness through the maintenance of the vital processes of growth, decay, and reproduction. Emergence of a still more developed form of consciousness becomes possible when the Oversoul seeks manifestation through the instinctive life of insects, birds, and animals, which are fully aware of their bodies and their respective surroundings, and develop a sense of self-protection and aim at establishing mastery over their environment.

In the higher animals, intellect or reasoning also appears to a certain extent; but its working is strictly limited by the play of their instincts, like the instinct of self-protection and the instinct for the care and preservation of the young. So even in animals consciousness has not had its full development, with the result that it is unable to serve the initial purpose of the Oversoul to have Self-illumination.

The Oversoul finally takes the human form, in which consciousness attains its fullest development with complete awareness of the self and the environment. At this stage the capacity of reasoning has

Human consciousness

the widest range of activity and is unlimited in its scope. But as the Oversoul gets identified through its consciousness with the gross body, consciousness does not serve the purpose of illuminating the nature of the Oversoul. However, as consciousness has its fullest development in the human form, there is in it a latent potentiality for Self-realization. And the will-to-be-conscious with which evolution

started becomes fructified in the Sadguru, or Man-God, who is the fairest flower of humanity.

The Oversoul cannot attain Self-knowledge through the ordinary consciousness of humanity because it is enveloped in a multitude of sanskaras, or impressions. As consciousness passes from the apparently inanimate state of stone or metal, then

Winding of sanskaras to the vegetative life of the trees, then onward to the instinctive states of insects, birds, and animals, and finally to the full consciousness of the human state, it is continually creating new sanskaras and becoming enveloped in them. These natural sanskaras are increased even after attaining the human state by the further creation of nonnatural sanskaras through manifold experiences and multitudinous activities.

Thus the acquisition of sanskaras is unceasingly going on during the process of evolution as well as during the later period of human activities. This acquisition of sanskaras may be likened to the winding up of a piece of string around a stick—the string representing the sanskaras and the stick representing the mind of the individual soul. The winding up starts from the beginning of creation and persists through all the evolutionary stages and the human form; and the wound string represents all the sanskaras, natural as well as nonnatural.

The fresh sanskaras that are constantly being created in human life are due to the multifarious objects and ideas with which consciousness finds itself confronted. These sanskaras bring about important transformations in the various

Examples of potency of impressions states of consciousness. Impressions created by beautiful objects have the potency of arousing in consciousness the innate capacity

for appreciating and enjoying beauty. When one hears a good piece of music or sees a beautiful landscape, the impressions caught from these objects gives one a feeling of exaltation. In the same way, when one contacts the personality of a thinker, one may become interested in new avenues of thought and inspired with an enthusiasm utterly foreign to one's consciousness formerly. Not only impressions of objects or persons but also impressions of ideas and superstitions have great efficacy in determining the conditions of consciousness.

The power of impressions of superstitions might be illustrated by

means of a ghost story. Of the different realms of human thought there are perhaps none as abounding in superstitions as those connected with ghosts, who according to popular belief are supposed to harass and torture their victims in curious ways. Once upon a time, during the Mogul rule in India, a highly educated man who was very skeptical of the stories about ghosts made up his mind to verify them from personal experience. He had been warned against visiting a certain graveyard on the night of *amavasya* (the darkest night of the month); for it was reported to be the habitation of a very dreadful ghost who unfailingly made its appearance whenever an iron nail was hammered into the ground within the limits of the graveyard.

With a hammer in one hand and a nail in the other, he walked straight into the graveyard on the night of *amavasya* and chose a spot bare of grass in order to drive in the nail. The ground was dark, and his loosely hanging cloak was equally dark. When he sat on the ground and tried to hammer in the nail, an end of his cloak lay between the nail and the ground and was pinned down. He finished hammering and felt that he was successful with the experiment without encountering the ghost. But as he tried to rise to leave the spot, he felt a strong pull toward the ground; and he became panic-stricken. Owing to the operation of previous impressions, he could not think of anything except the ghost who, he thought, had caught him at last. The shock of the thought was so great that the poor man died of heart failure. This story illustrates the tremendous power that sometimes resides in the impressions created by superstition.

The power and effect of impressions can hardly be overestimated. An impression is solidified might, and its inertness makes it immobile and durable. It can become so engraved upon the mind of a person that despite his sincere desire and effort to eradicate it, it takes its own time and has a way of working itself into action directly or indirectly. The mind contains many heterogeneous *sanskaras*; and while seeking expression in consciousness, they often clash with each other. The clash of *sanskaras* is experienced in consciousness as mental conflict. Experience is bound to be chaotic and enigmatic, full of oscillations, confusion, and complex tangles until consciousness is freed from all *sanskar-*

**Impressions of
superstitions**

**Experience becomes
harmonious when
freed from *sanskaras***

as, good and bad. Experience can become truly harmonious and integral only when consciousness is emancipated from the impressions.

Sanskaras can be classified according to essential differences in the nature of the spheres to which they refer. Referring to these different spheres of existence, they are found to be of three kinds: (1)

Types of sanskaras and states of consciousness Gross sanskaras, which enable the soul to experience the gross world through the gross medium and compel it to identify itself with the gross body. (2) Subtle sanskaras, which enable the soul to experience the subtle world through the subtle medium and compel the soul to identify itself with the subtle body. (3) Mental sanskaras, which enable the soul to experience the mental world through the mental medium and compel it to identify itself with the mental body. The differences between the states of the individual souls are entirely due to the differences existing in the kinds of sanskaras with which their consciousness is loaded. Thus gross-conscious souls experience only the gross world; subtle-conscious souls experience only the subtle world; and mental-conscious souls experience only the mental world. The qualitative diversity in the experience of these three types of souls is due to the difference in the nature of their sanskaras.

The Self-conscious souls are radically different from all other souls because they experience the Oversoul through the medium of the Self; whereas the other souls experience only their bodies and the corresponding worlds. This radical difference

Self-conscious souls free from sanskaras between the consciousness of Self-conscious souls and other souls is due to the fact that whereas the consciousness of most souls is conditioned by some kinds of sanskaras, the consciousness of Self-conscious souls is completely free from all sanskaras. It is only when consciousness is unobscured and unconditioned by any sanskaras that the initial will-to-be-conscious arrives at its final and real fruition, and the infinity and the indivisible unity of the Absolute is consciously realized. The problem of deconditioning the mind through the removal of sanskaras is therefore extremely important.

The Removal of Sanskaras

Part I

The Cessation, the Wearing Out, and the Unwinding of Sanskaras

Human beings do not have Self-illumination because their consciousness is shrouded in sanskaras, or the accumulated imprints of past experience. In the human form the will-to-be-conscious with which evolution started has succeeded in creating consciousness. However, unconsciousness does not arrive at the knowledge of the Oversoul because the individual soul is impelled to use it for experiencing sanskaras instead of utilizing it for experiencing the soul's own true nature as the Oversoul. The experiencing of sanskaras keeps it confined to the illusion of being a finite body trying to adjust itself in the world of things and persons.

Sanskaras prevent Self-illumination

Individual souls are like drops in the ocean. Just as each drop in the ocean is fundamentally identical with the ocean, the soul-which is individualized due to bhas, or illusion-is still the Oversoul and does not really become separate from the Oversoul. Yet the envelope of sanskaras, by which consciousness is covered, prevents the drop-soul from having Self-illumination and keeps it within the domain of duality. In order for the soul to consciously realize its identity with the Oversoul, it is necessary that consciousness should be retained and that sanskaras should be

Problem of securing release from sanskaras

entirely removed. The sanskaras, which are contributory to the evolution of consciousness, themselves become impediments to its efficacy in illuminating the nature of the Oversoul. Henceforth the problem with which the will-to-be-conscious is confronted is not that of evolving consciousness but that of releasing it from sanskaras.

The release from sanskaras takes place in the following five ways:

1. *The cessation of creating new sanskaras.*

Five ways of securing release from sanskaras This consists in putting an end to the ever-renewing activity of creating fresh sanskaras. If the formation of sanskaras is compared to the winding of a string around a stick, this step amounts to the cessation of the further winding of the string.

2. *The wearing out of old sanskaras.*

If sanskaras are withheld from expressing themselves in action and experience, they are gradually worn out. In the analogy of the string, this process is comparable to the wearing out of the string at the place where it is.

3. *The unwinding of past sanskaras.*

This process consists in annulling past sanskaras by mentally reversing the process that leads to their formation. Continuing our analogy, it is like unwinding the string.

4. *The dispersion and exhaustion of some sanskaras.*

If the mental energy that is locked up in sanskaras is sublimated and diverted into other channels, they are dispersed and exhausted and tend to disappear.

5. *The wiping out of sanskaras.*

This consists in completely annihilating the sanskaras. In the analogy of the string, this is comparable to cutting the string with a pair of scissors. The final wiping out of sanskaras can be effected only by the grace of a Perfect Master.

It should be carefully noted that many of the concrete methods of undoing sanskaras are found to be effective in more than one way, and the five ways mentioned above are not meant to classify these methods into sharply distinguished types. They represent rather the different principles characterizing the spiritual processes that take place while sanskaras are being removed. For the sake of convenience, this Part will deal only with those methods that preeminently illustrate the first three principles (namely, the cessation of creating fresh san-

skaras and the wearing out and the unwinding of past sanskaras). The methods that predominantly illustrate the last two principles (the dispersion and exhaustion through sublimation of sanskaras, and the wiping out of sanskaras) will be explained in Parts II and III.

If the mind is to be freed from the bondage of ever-accumulating sanskaras, it is necessary that there should be an end to the creation of new sanskaras. Fresh multiplication of sanskaras can be stopped

Renunciation through renunciation. Renunciation may be external or internal. External, or physical, renunciation consists in giving up everything to which the mind is attached—home, parents, marriage, children, friends, wealth, comforts, and gross enjoyments. Internal, or mental, renunciation consists in giving up all cravings, particularly the craving for sensual objects.

Though external renunciation in itself is not necessarily accompanied by internal renunciation, it often paves a way for internal renunciation. Spiritual freedom consists in internal renunciation and not in external renunciation, but external renunciation is a great aid in achieving internal renunciation. The person who renounces his possessions disconnects himself from everything that he had or has. This means that the things he renounces are no longer a source of fresh sanskaras. He thus takes an important step toward emancipating himself from his sanskaras by putting an end to the process of forming new sanskaras. This is not all that is achieved through external renunciation. With the renouncing of everything, he also renounces his past bindings. The old sanskaras connected with his possessions get detached from his mind; and since they are withheld from expressing themselves, they get worn out.

For most persons, external renunciation creates a favorable atmosphere for the wearing out of sanskaras. An individual who possesses wealth and power is exposed to a life of indulgence and extravagance. His circumstances are more favorable for temptations. Man is mostly what he becomes by being chopped, chiseled, and shaped by the sculptor of environment. Whether or not he can surmount his surroundings depends upon his strength of character. If he is strong, he remains free in his thought and action, even in the midst of action and reaction with his environment. If he is weak, he succumbs to its influence. Even if he is strong, he is likely to be swept off his feet by a powerful wave of the collective mode of life and thought. It

is difficult to withstand the onslaught of a current of ideas and avoid falling prey to circumstances. If he resists the circumstances, he is likely to be carried away by some wild wave of collective passion and get caught up in modes of thought that he is unable to renounce. Though it is difficult to resist and overcome these influences and surroundings, it is easier to escape from them. Many persons would live a chaste and straightforward life if they were not surrounded by luxuries and temptations. The renunciation of all superfluous things helps the wearing out of sanskaras and is therefore contributory to the life of freedom.

The two important forms of external renunciation that have special spiritual value are solitude and fasting. Withdrawal of oneself from the storm and stress of the multifarious worldly activities and occasional retirement into solitude are valuable for wearing out the sanskaras connected with the gregarious instinct. But this is not to be looked upon as a goal in itself.

Like solitude, fasting also has great spiritual value. Eating is satisfaction; fasting is denial. Fasting is physical when food is not taken, in spite of the craving for the enjoyment of eating; it is mental when food is taken not for its delights and attachments but merely for the survival of the body. External fasting consists in avoiding direct contact with food in order to achieve mental fasting.

Food is a direct necessity of life, and its continued denial is bound to be disastrous to health. Therefore, external fasting should be periodical and only for a short time. It has to be continued till there is complete victory over the craving for food. By bringing into action the vital forces to withstand the craving for food, it is possible to free the mind from attachment to food. External fasting has no spiritual value when it is undertaken with the motive of securing the health of the body or for the sake of self-demonstration. It should not be used as an instrument for self-assertion. In the same way, it should not be carried to the extreme-until the body is reduced to its limits. Self-mortification through prolonged fasting does not necessarily promote freedom from the craving for food. On the contrary, it is likely to invite a subsequent reaction toward a life of extravagant indulgence in food. If, however, external fasting is undertaken in moderation and for spiritual purposes, it facilitates the achievement of internal fasting. When external and internal fasting are wholehearted and faithful,

they bring about the unwinding of the sanskaras connected with the craving for food.

The unwinding of many other sanskaras can be brought about through penance. This consists in augmenting and expressing the feeling of remorse an individual feels after realizing that he has done

Penance

some wrongful act. Repentance consists in mentally reviving the wrongs with severe self-condemnation. It is facilitated by availing oneself of the different circumstances and situations that stir up penance, or by remaining vulnerable during periods of emotional outbursts, or by deliberate efforts to recall the past incidents with a remorseful heart and acute disapproval. Such penance unwinds the sanskaras that are responsible for the action. Self-condemnation accompanied by deep feeling can negate the sanskaras of anger, greed, and lust. Suppose a person has done irreparable wrong to someone through uncontrolled greed, anger, or lust. Sometime or other he is bound to have the reaction of self-killing remorse and experience the pricks of conscience. If at this time he vividly realizes the evil for which he was responsible, the intensity of emotional awareness by which it is accompanied consumes the tendencies for which he stands self-condemned.

Self-condemnation sometimes expresses itself through different forms of self-mortification. Some aspirants even inflict wounds on their body when they are in a mood of penitence, but such drastic expression of remorse must be discouraged as a general usage. Some Hindu aspirants try to cultivate humility by making it a rule to fall at the feet of everyone whom they meet. To those of strong will and stable character, penance can bring the desired good effect through self-humiliation, which unwinds and eradicates the different sanskaras connected with good and bad actions. Others who might be feeble in their willpower also derive benefit from penance if they are under sympathetic and loving direction. When penance is carefully nourished and practiced, it inevitably results in the mental revocation of undesirable modes of thought and conduct, and makes one amenable to a life of purity and service.

It should, however, be carefully noted that there is always the danger in penance that the mind might dwell too long upon the wrongs done and thus develop the morbid habit of wailing and weeping over petty things. Such sentimental extravagance is often an indiscrimi-

nate waste of energy and is in no way helpful in the wearing out or the unwinding of sanskaras. Penance should not be like the everyday repentance that follows everyday weaknesses. It should not become a tedious and sterile habit of immoderate and gloomy pondering over one's own failings. Sincere penance does not consist in perpetuating grief for the wrongs but in resolving to avoid in the future those deeds that call forth remorse. If it leads to lack of self-respect or self-confidence, it has not served its true purpose, which is merely to render impossible the repetition of certain types of action.

The wearing out and the unwinding of sanskaras can also be effected by denying to desires their expression and fulfillment. People differ in their capacity and aptitude for rejecting desires. Those in whom desires arise with great impulsive velocity are unable to curb them at their source, but they can refrain from seeking their fulfillment through action. Even if someone has no control over the surging of desires, he can prevent them from being translated into action. Rejection of desires by controlling actions avoids the possibility of sowing seeds of future desires.

On the other hand, if a person translates his desires into action, he may spend up and exhaust some impressions. But he is creating fresh impressions during the very process of fulfilling the desires and is thus sowing seeds for future desires, which in their turn are bound to demand their own satisfaction. The process of spending up or exhausting impressions through expression and fulfillment does not in itself contribute toward securing release from sanskaras.

When desires arise and their release into action is barred, there is plenty of opportunity for spontaneous cogitation about these desires. This cogitation results in the wearing out of the corresponding sanskaras. It should be noted, however, that such spontaneous cogitation does not bring about the desired result if it takes the form of mental indulgence in the desires. When there is a deliberate and wanton attempt to welcome and harbor the desires in the mind, such cogitation will not only have no spiritual value but may itself be responsible for creating subtle sanskaras. Cogitation should not be accompanied by any conscious sanction for the desires that arise in consciousness, and there should not be any effort to perpetuate the memory of these desires. When desires are denied their expression and fulfillment in action and are allowed to pass through the intensity of the fire of a

cogitative consciousness that does not sanction them, the seeds of these desires are consumed. The rejection of desires and the inhibition of physical response effect, in time, an automatic and natural negation of the past *sanskaras*.

Rejection of desires is a preparation for desirelessness, or the state of nonwanting, which alone can bring about true freedom. Wanting is necessarily binding, whether it is fulfilled or not. When it is fulfilled, it

Desirelessness leads to further wanting and thus perpetuates the bondage of the spirit. When it is unfulfilled, it leads to disappointment and suffering, which-through their *sanskaras*-fetter the freedom of the spirit in their own way.

There is no end to wanting because the external and internal stimuli of the mind are constantly alluring it into a state of wanting or disliking (which is another form of wanting) something. The external stimuli are the sensations of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. The internal stimuli are those that arise in the mind of man from the memories of the present life and the totality of *sanskaras* gathered by consciousness during the evolutionary period and during human lives. When the mind is trained to remain unmoved and balanced in the presence of all external and internal stimuli, it arrives at the state of nonwanting. And by not wanting anything (except the absolute Reality, which is beyond the opposites of stimuli) it is possible to unwind the *sanskaras* of wanting.

Wanting is a state of disturbed equilibrium of mind, and nonwanting is a state of stable poise. The poise of nonwanting can only be maintained by an unceasing disentanglement from all stimuli—whether pleasant or painful, agreeable or disagreeable. In order to remain unmoved by the joys and sorrows of this world, the mind must be completely detached from the external and internal stimuli. Though the

Poise of nonwanting and principle of *neti neti* mind is constantly fortifying itself through its own constructive suggestions, there is always the chance of these outposts of defense being washed away by some sudden and unexpected wave arising in the ocean of the natural and mental environment. When this happens you may, for a time, feel completely lost; but the attitude of nonattachment can keep you safe.

This attitude consists in the application of the principle of *neti*

neti (not-this, not-this). It implies constant effort to maintain a watchful detachment in relation to the alluring opposites of limited experience. It is not possible to deny only the disagreeable stimuli and remain inwardly attached to the agreeable stimuli. If the mind is to remain unmoved by the onslaughts of the opposites, it cannot continue to be attached to the expressions of agreeable stimuli and be influenced by them. The equipoise consists in meeting both alternatives with complete detachment.

The “yes, yes” meaning of the positive *sanskaras* can only be annulled through the negative assertion of “no, no.” This negative element is necessarily present in all aspects of asceticism, as expressed through renunciation, solitude, fasting, penance, withholding desires from fulfillment, and nonwanting. The happy blending of all these methods and attitudes creates a healthy form of asceticism in which there is no toil or exertion. But to ensure all this, the negative element in them must come naturally without giving rise to any perversions or further limitations.

Trying to coerce the mind to a life of asceticism is of no use. Any forcible adjustment of life on ascetic lines is likely to stunt the growth of some good qualities. When the healthy qualities of human nature are allowed to develop naturally and slowly, they unfold the knowledge of relative values and thereby pave the way for a spontaneous life of asceticism. Whereas any attempt to force or hasten the mind toward an ascetic life is likely to invite reaction.

The process of being freed from some attachments is often accompanied by the process of forming some other new attachments. The grossest form of attachment is that which is directed toward the world of objects; but when the mind is being detached from the world of objects, it has a tendency to arrive at some finer attachments of a subjective kind. After the mind has succeeded in cultivating a certain degree of detachment, it might easily develop that subtle form of egotism which expresses itself through aloofness and a superior air. Detachment should not be allowed to form any nucleus upon which the ego could fasten itself; and at the same time, it should not be an expression of one’s inability to cope with the storm and stress of worldly life.

The things that limit pure and infinite being should be given up

through an attitude of immense strength, which is born of purity and enlightenment, and not from a sense of helplessness in the face of strife and struggle. Further, true detachment does not consist in clinging to the mere formula of *neti neti*, which sometimes becomes an obsession of the mind without any deep-felt longing for enlightenment. Such interest in a mere formula of negation often exists side by side with an inward dwelling on the temptations. Detachment can be integral and wholehearted only when it becomes an inseparable part of one's nature.

The negative assertion of "no, no" is the only way of unwinding the positive *sanskaras* gathered through evolution and human lives. Although this process does destroy the positive *sanskaras*, it results in

the formation of the *negative* *sanskaras*, which in their own way condition the mind and create a new problem. The assertion of "no, no" has to be sufficiently powerful to effect the eradication of all the physical, subtle, and mental *sanskaras*; but after it has served its purpose, it has to be ultimately abandoned. The finality of spiritual experience does not consist of bare negation. To bring it under a negative formula is to limit it by means of an intellectual concept. The negative formula has to be used by the mind to decondition itself, but it must be renounced before the ultimate goal of life can be attained.

Negative *sanskaras* must also disappear before enlightenment

Thought has to be made use of in order to overcome the limitations set up by its own movement; but when this is done, it has itself to be given up. This amounts to the process of going beyond the mind, and this becomes possible through nonidentification with the mind or its desires. To look objectively upon the body, as well as all thoughts and lower impulses, is to get established in blissful detachment and to negate all *sanskaras*. This means freeing the soul from its self-imposed illusions-like "I am the body," "I am the mind," or "I am desire"-and gaining ground toward the enlightened stage of "I am God" ("*Anal Haqq*," or "*AhamBrahmasmi*").

The Removal of Sanskaras

Part II *The Dispersion and* *Exhaustion of Sanskaras*

At the end of Part I, the methods of removing sanskaras are explained that depend chiefly on the principle of negating the positive sanskaras, which also veil the Truth from consciousness and prevent Self-illumination-for which the whole creation came into being. All these methods of negating the positive sanskaras are ultimately based upon the control of the body and mind. Control of the habitual tendencies of the mind is much more difficult than control of physical actions. The fleeting and evasive thoughts and desires of the mind can be curbed only with great patience and persistent practice. But the restraint of mental processes and reactions is necessary to check the formation of new sanskaras and to wear out or unwind the old sanskaras of which they are expressions. Though control might be difficult at the beginning, through sincere effort it gradually becomes natural and easy to achieve.

Control is deliberate and involves effort as long as the mind is trying to decondition itself through the removal of sanskaras. But after the mind is released from the sanskaras, control becomes spontaneous because the mind is then functioning in freedom and understanding. Such control is born of strength of character and health of

mind, and it invariably brings with it freedom from fear and immense peace and calmness. The mind, which appears feeble when it is wanton and uncontrolled in its functioning, becomes a source of great strength when it is controlled. Control is indispensable for the conservation of mental energy and the economical use of thought force for creative purposes.

However, if control is purely mechanical and aimless, it defeats its own purpose, which is to make possible the free and unconditioned functioning of the mind. Control that has true spiritual value does not consist in the mechanical repression of

True control a creative readjustment in light of true values

thoughts and desires, but is the natural restraint exercised by perception of positive values discovered during the process of experience. True control is therefore not merely negative. When some positive values come within the focus of consciousness, their claims for being expressed in life generate mental responses that ultimately remove all the tendencies obstructing a free and full expression of those values. Thus the tendencies for lust, greed, and anger are removed through an appreciative recognition of the value of a life of purity, generosity, and kindness.

The mind, becoming accustomed to certain habits of thought and response, does not find it easy to adjust itself to these new claims of its own perceptions, owing to the inertia caused by impressions of previous modes of thought and conduct. This process of readjustment in the light of true values takes the form of what we call controlling the mind. This control is not a mechanical or forcible twisting of the mind. It is an effort of the mind to overcome its own inertia. It is fundamentally creative and not negative in its purpose, for it is an attempt of the mind to arrive at self-adjustment in order to release the expression of the true values of life.

Creative control becomes possible because the source of light is within everyone; and though Self-illumination is prevented by the veil of sanskaras, it is not all darkness even within the boundaries of ordinary human consciousness. The ray of light consists of a sense for true values and guides man onward with varying degrees of clarity according to the thickness of the veil of sanskaras. The process of the negation of sanskaras is at the same time the process of understanding

Dispersion and exhaustion of sanskaras

true values. Spiritual progress is thus characterized by the dual aspect of renouncing the false values of sanskaras in favor of the true values of understanding. The process of replacing lower values by higher values is the process of sublimation, which consists in diverting the mental energy locked up in the old sanskaras toward creative and spiritual ends. When this energy locked up in the sanskaras is thus diverted, they get dispersed and exhausted.

The method of sublimation is the most natural and effective method of breaking through the grooves of old sanskaras, and has the special advantage of having an unflinching interest for the aspirant at all stages. The method of mere negation with-

Process of sublimation sustained by unflinching interest

out any substitution is sometimes likely to be boring and may seem to lead to vacuity. But the method of sublimation consists in replacing lower values with higher ones and is therefore full of absorbing interest at every stage, bringing an ever-increasing sense of fulfillment. Mental energy can be sublimated into spiritual channels through (1) meditation, (2) selfless service for humanity, and (3) devotion.

Meditation is deep and constant concentration upon an ideal object. In such concentration upon an ideal object, the person is conscious only of the object of meditation, completely forgetting the mind as well as the body. Thus no new sanskaras

Meditation: its nature and purpose

are formed and old ones are dispersed and exhausted through the mental activity of dwelling on the object of concentration.

Finally, when the sanskaras completely disappear, the soul as individualized is dissolved in the intensity of concentration and is merged in the ideal object.

There are many forms of meditation according to the aptitude of different persons. The imaginative genius of persons who have to labor hard is often dried up due to overwork. For such persons the form of meditation most suitable consists in dis-

Forms of meditation

connecting oneself from one's thoughts, and then looking upon these thoughts and the body *objectively*. After the aspirant is successful in regarding his thoughts and his body with complete objectivity, he tries to identify himself with the cosmic Being through constructive suggestions—such as “I am the Infinite,” “I am in everything,” “I am in all.”

Those who have vivid and lively imaginations can try intensive concentration on some point, but fixing the mind on some point should be avoided by those who have no liking for it. Ordinarily, the energy of the mind is scattered, through its diverse thoughts. Meditation on a point is very salutary for the mind to gather itself and settle down, but it is a mechanical process and therefore lacks creative and blissful experiences. However, in the initial stages, this form of meditation might be used as a preparation for other more successful forms of meditation.

The more successful and deeper forms of meditation are preceded by deliberate and constructive thinking about God, the Beloved. Meditation on God is spiritually most fruitful. God can become the object of meditation either in His *impersonal* aspect or in His *personal* aspect. Meditation on the impersonal aspect of God is suitable only for those who have a special aptitude for it. It consists in focusing all thoughts on the abstract and unmanifest existence of God. On the other hand, meditation on the personal aspect of God consists in centering all thoughts upon the form and attributes of God.

After intensive meditation the mind might want to settle down, not on the object of meditation, but on the steadiness of the expansive peace experienced during meditation. Such moments are the natural result of the fatigue of the faculty of imagination, and they should be effortlessly encouraged. Meditation should be spontaneous and not forced. In the moments of the surging up of divine impulses, imagination should be let loose and allowed to soar. The flight of imagination should be controlled only by the set purpose of becoming one with the Infinite. It should not be influenced by the currents of the diverse feelings of lust, greed, or anger.

Success in concentration comes only gradually, and the novice is likely to be disheartened because he does not get satisfactory results in the beginning. Often the disappointment that he experiences is in itself a serious obstruction to beginning the meditation of the day and to persist in it.

Obstacles in meditation Other obstacles like idleness and ill health also may be difficult to overcome, but they can be gotten over by having fixed and regular hours for meditation and steady practice. During early morning or at sunset the quiet condition of nature is

particularly helpful for meditation, but it may also be undertaken at any other suitable time.

Solitude is one of the essential conditions for attaining success in meditation. In the world of thought there is a constant intermingling of thought forms and colors. Some mighty ideas tend to strengthen the

**Importance of solitude
for meditation**

mind by facilitating integration; whereas some frivolous thoughts are dissipating. The mind is either attracted or repelled by these diverse thoughts in the mental environment. It is advisable to avoid the influence of these variegated thoughts in order to get established in one's own ideal thoughts. For this purpose solitude has immense possibilities. Solitude means economy of mental energy and increased power of concentration. Having nothing extraneous to attract or repel the mind, you are drawn inward and learn the art of opening yourself to the higher currents, which have the potency of giving you strength, bliss, and peaceful expansiveness.

While meditation on the personal and impersonal aspects of God requires withdrawal of consciousness into the sanctuary of one's own heart, concentration on the universal aspect of God is best achieved through selfless service for humanity.

Selfless service

When a person is completely absorbed in the service of humanity, he is completely oblivious of his own body or mind or their functions, as in meditation; and therefore new sanskaras are not formed. Further, the old sanskaras that bind the mind are shattered and dispersed. Since the individual is now centering his attention and interest not upon his own good but upon the good of others, the nucleus of the ego is deprived of its nourishing energy. Selfless service is therefore one of the best methods of diverting and sublimating the energy locked up in the binding sanskaras.

Selfless service is accomplished when there is not the slightest thought of reward or result, and when there is complete disregard of one's own comfort or convenience or the possibility of being misunderstood. When you are wholly occupied with

**Implications of
selfless service**

the welfare of others, you can hardly think of yourself. You are not concerned with your comfort and convenience or your health and happiness. On the contrary you are willing to sacrifice

everything for their well-being. Their comfort is your convenience, their health is your delight, and their happiness is your joy. You find your life in losing it in theirs. You live in their hearts, and your heart becomes their shelter. When there is true union of hearts, you completely identify yourself with the other person. Your act of help or word of comfort supplies to others whatever might be lacking in them; and through their thoughts of gratitude and goodwill, you actually receive more than you give.

Thus, through living for others, your own life finds its amplification and expansion. The person who leads a life of selfless service is therefore hardly conscious of serving. He does not make those whom

Freedom and fulfillment through service

he serves feel that they are in any way under obligation to him. On the contrary, he himself feels obliged for being given a chance of making them happy. Neither for show nor for name and fame does he serve them. Selfless service is completely achieved only when an individual derives the same happiness in serving others as in being served himself. The ideal of selfless service frees him from the sanskaras of craving for power and possession, of self-pity and jealousy, of evil deeds actuated through selfishness.

Selfless service and meditation are both spontaneous when they are inspired by love. Love is therefore rightly regarded as being the most important avenue leading to the realization of the Highest. In

Love

love the soul is completely absorbed in the Beloved and is therefore detached from the actions of the body or mind. This puts an end to the formation of new sanskaras and also results in the undoing of old sanskaras by giving to life an entirely new direction. Nowhere does self-forgetfulness come so naturally and completely as in the intensity of love. Hence it has been given the foremost place among the methods that secure release of consciousness from the bondage of sanskaras.

Love comprehends in itself the different advantages belonging to other paths leading to emancipation, and is

Purifying efficacy of love

in itself the most distinguished and effective path. It is at once characterized by self-sacrifice and happiness. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that it is accompanied by an exclusive and wholehearted

offering to the Beloved without admitting the claims of any other object. Thus there is no room for the diversion of mental energy, and concentration is complete. In love the physical, vital, and mental energies of man are allgathered up and made available for the cause of the Beloved, with the result that this love becomes a dynamic power. The tension of true love is so great that any foreign feeling that might intervene is at once thrown out. The expulsive and purifying efficacy of love is unparalleled.

There is nothing unnatural or artificial about love. It exists from the very beginning of evolution. At the inorganic stage it is crudely expressed in the form of cohesion or attraction. It is the natural affinity that keeps things together and draws them to each other. The gravitational pull exercised by the heavenly bodies upon each other is an expression of this type of love. At the organic stage love becomes self-illuminated and self-appreciative, and plays an important part from the lowest forms like the amoeba to the most evolved form of human beings. When love is self-illuminated, its value is intensified by its conscious sacrifice.

The sacrifice of love is so complete and ungrudging that it has all to give and nothing to expect. The more it gives the more it wants to give, and the less it is aware of having given. The stream of true love is ever increasing and never failing. Its simple expression is its simple giving over. The complexities of the Beloved are a concern of its best attention and care. Endlessly and remorselessly it seeks to please the Beloved in a thousand ways. It does not hesitate to welcome suffering in order to satisfy but one wish of the Beloved or to relieve the Beloved of the slightest pain of neglect or indifference. The lover would gladly pine and perish for the sake of the Beloved. Careworn and tormented, love waits not to attend to the very body that houses and nourishes it. It brooks no compromise, and the Beloved is the concern of the lover's lifetime. The tabernacle of love bursts under unmanageable restlessness and gives birth to streams of love and supreme sweetness, until the lover breaks through his limitations and loses himself in the being of the Beloved.

When love is deep and intense, it is called *bkakti*, or devotion. In its initial stages devotion is expressed through symbol worship, supplica-

tion before the deities, reverence and allegiance to the revealed scriptures, or the pursuit of the Highest through abstract thinking. In its more advanced stages devotion expresses itself as interest in human welfare and the service of humanity, love and reverence for saints, and allegiance and obedience to a spiritual Master. These stages have their relative values and relative results. Love for a living Perfect Master is a unique stage of devotion, for it eventually gets transformed into *para-bhakti*, or divine love.

Para-bhakti is not merely intensified bhakti. It begins where bhakti ends. At the stage of para-bhakti, devotion is not only single-minded but is accompanied by extreme restlessness of the heart and a ceaseless longing to unite with the Beloved.

Para-bhakti This is followed by lack of interest in one's own body and its care, isolation from one's own surroundings, and utter disregard for appearances or criticism -while the divine impulses of attraction to the Beloved become more frequent than ever. This highest phase of love is most fruitful because it has as its object the One who is love incarnate and who can, as the supreme Beloved, respond to the lover most completely. The purity, sweetness, and efficacy of the love that the lover receives from the Master contributes to the insuperable spiritual value of this highest phase of love.

The Removal of Sanskaras

Part III

The Wiping Out Of Sanskaras

Love for the Sadguru, or Perfect Master, is particularly important because it invites contact with the Sadguru. Through such contact the aspirant receives from the Master impressions that have the special potency of undoing other past impressions, thus completely transforming the tenor of his life. The recipient of the impressions may entirely give up old habits of life and ways of thought. Such contact changes and elevates the tone of the most depraved life. A person might have been leading a life of reckless dissipation without ever thinking of anything other than the fulfillment of mundane desires. He might have been caught up in the thirst for possession and power, with no ideal other than that of acquiring and hoarding money and making merry.

However, even such a person, who cannot by any stretch of imagination think of freedom from earthly fetters, may find that the sanskaras he receives from his contact with the Sadguru are potent enough to drop forever a curtain on his old manner of thought and existence, and to open for him entirely new vistas of a higher and freer life. The impressions received from the Master might be equally beneficial to an intellectual and cultured person whose vision is nevertheless circumscribed, whose imagination can at best appreciate the

beauty of art and literature, and whose altruism cannot go beyond the limits of his neighborhood or the boundaries of his country. Such a person would, on receiving impressions from a Master, be lifted to still higher modes of life.

The Sadguru can raise the aspirant from the ordinary intellectual level of consciousness to the level of consciousness where there is inspiration and intuition, and then onward to the level of insight and illumination that culminates in his merging

**Wiping out all
sanskaras through
intervention of
Sadguru**

into the Infinite. This rising of the aspirant corresponds to his progress from the mundane sphere to the subtle sphere, from the subtle sphere to the mental sphere, and finally from the mental sphere to the state of Freedom. The last step implies complete wiping out of all sanskaras – natural or nonnatural, positive or negative. To take the analogy of the string wound around a stick, this process of the wiping out of sanskaras consists in cutting the string with a pair of scissors. The erasing of all sanskaras, which is implied in the final release of consciousness from all illusion and bondage, can never be achieved except through the grace of a Sadguru.

But such active intervention by the Sadguru presupposes an unrestrained relationship between the aspirant and the Master, which can be established only when the aspirant succeeds in complete self-surrender to him. Self-surrender implies obedience to all the orders of the Master.

**Need for complete
self-surrender**

When all your desires and actions are guided by him and are the result of your obeying his orders, he becomes directly responsible for them. Thus, when self-surrender is thorough, the responsibility for your release from sanskaras is devolved upon the Master; and under this new condition the Master annihilates all your sanskaras in no time.

Obedience to the Master as implied in full self-surrender is of two kinds: intellectual and literal. Of these two types of obedience, intellectual obedience comes first and is a preliminary to literal obedience, which is more fruitful. When you are intel-

Intellectual obedience

lectually convinced about the greatness and Perfection of the Master, you have love and respect for him but are unable to follow his orders literally. Reason being the basis of your conviction, you find it difficult to divorce it from

your understanding of the Master and his orders. As the two are inextricably intertwined with each other, your reasoned faith holds you within the limits of intellectual obedience. This phase of the pupil is left undisturbed by the Master, and all the “pills” of obedience offered by him are intellectualized in order to suit the pupil’s taste and caliber.

Through intellectual obedience to the Master, you can annihilate all your sanskaras, provided you are sincere in your logical interpretation of his orders and in their execution. But the result comes much quicker if your obedience is literal. Literal

Literal obedience obedience is the effect of the rocklike faith and deep love that the Master inspires in the pupil through his human appeal. The overflowing radiance of the Master’s halo and the effulgence of his purity and compassion are mainly responsible for creating in the pupil an unswerving faith, which prepares him to follow the Master’s orders implicitly-irrespective of their satisfying his critical spirit.

Such literal obedience is not even bound by the requirement that the real significance of the orders should be within the intellectual comprehension of the pupil, and it is the best type of obedience to which you can aspire. Through such implicit and unquestioning obedience, all the crooked knots of your desires and sanskaras are set straight. It is also through such obedience that a deep link is created between the Master and the pupil, with the result that there is an unhindered and perennial flow of spiritual wisdom and power into the pupil. At this stage the pupil becomes the spiritual son or daughter of the Master, and in due time he or she is freed from all individualistic and sanskaric ties. Then such a rare one also becomes a Master.

The Sadguru, or Perfect Master, has a position and power that is unique. There are many souls in the world who are more or less advanced on the spiritual path, but there are few who have crossed all

Role of Sadguru six stages of the internal spheres of consciousness and become one with the infinite source of existence, knowledge, and bliss.

The Sadguru has not only experienced the different planes of consciousness, but he actually permeates the very being of all souls because of his having become one with the Infinite. He is the pivot of universal activity.

In a sense, to him are due all your thoughts and actions, your joys

and sorrows, your frets and fumes, your strengths and weaknesses, your possessions and surrenderance, and your love and longing. He not only pervades all existence but is consciously conversant with the cosmic law of cause and effect and the complex working of the sanskaras of individual souls. The causes of individual happiness or misery, vices or virtues, are as much known to him as the causes of cosmic changes and upheavals. Every being is an open book for the infinite searchlight of his omnipresent consciousness. Because of his union with the Infinite, the Master is endowed with unlimited power; and in the twinkling of an eye he can annihilate all the sanskaras of the soul and liberate it from all entanglements and bondage.

Good and Evil

The human mind is not only going through experiences but is constantly evaluating them. Some experiences are regarded as agreeable and some disagreeable; some experiences are found to bring happiness and some suffering; some experiences are perceived as being pleasant and some unpleasant. Some experiences are apprehended as restricting the life of man and some as leading it toward fullness and freedom. And some experiences are looked upon as being good and some bad. These are the opposites created by human imagination when it is meeting life with a particular point of view.

Evaluation of experience through opposites

Man's conception of what is acceptable or unacceptable goes on evolving and changing according to the nature of desires that happen to be dominant at any particular moment. But as long as there is any

Acceptable and unacceptable

kind of desire in his mind, he is impelled to appraise his experience in relation to that desire and divide it into two parts: the one contributing toward its fulfillment and therefore acceptable, and the other tending to prevent its fulfillment and therefore unacceptable. Instead of meeting life and all that it brings without expectation, entanglement, or shirking, the mind creates a standard whereby it divides life into opposites—one of which is regarded as acceptable and the other as not acceptable.

Of the opposites created by the human mind, the division between

good and bad is spiritually most significant. It is based upon man's desire to be free from the limitation of all desires. Those experiences and actions that increase the fetters of desire are bad, and those experiences and actions that tend to emancipate the mind from limiting desires are good. Since good experiences and actions also exist in relation to desire, they also bind in the same way as do bad experiences and actions. All binding can truly disappear only when all desires disappear. Therefore, true freedom comes when good and bad balance each other and become so merged into each other that they leave no room for any choice by the limited self of desire.

Although in humans consciousness is fully developed, one finds in it a preponderance of bad elements; since at the subhuman stages of evolution, consciousness has been chiefly operating under limiting tendencies like lust, greed, and anger. The experiences and actions created and sustained by such egocentric tendencies have left their imprints on the developing mind,

Man starts with animal sanskaras

and the mind has stored these imprints in the same manner as film records the movement of actors. It is therefore easy to be bad and difficult to be good. Animal life, from which human consciousness emerges, is mostly determined by animal lust, animal greed, and animal anger-though some animals do at times develop the good qualities of self-sacrifice, love, and patience. If all the accumulated animal sanskaras had been bad and none good, the appearance of good tendencies in human consciousness would have been impossible.

Though some animal sanskaras are good, most are bad; so, at the start, human consciousness finds itself subject to a propelling force that is mostly bad. Right from the beginning of human evolution, the problem of emancipation consists in cultivating and developing good sanskaras so that they may overlap and annul the accumulated bad sanskaras. The cultivation

Need for cultivating good sanskaras

of good sanskaras is achieved by fostering experiences and actions opposite to those that predominate in animal life. The opposite of lust is love, the opposite of greed is generosity, and the opposite of anger is tolerance or patience. By trying to dwell in love, generosity, and tolerance, man can erase the tendencies of lust, greed, and anger.

The general process of freeing oneself from the limitation of sanskaras has therefore to be accompanied by the process of renouncing the bad for the good. But whether a person happens to be good or

Sinner and saint

bad at any given time is dependent upon the inexorable operation of his sanskaras. From this point of view the sinner and the saint are both what they are according to the laws operative in the universe. They have both the same beginning and the same end.

The sinner need not have the stigma of eternal degradation, and the saint need not have pride in his moral attainments. No one, however saintly he may be, has attained the heights of moral virtues except after a life of moral failings; and no one is so bad as to be unable to improve and become good. Everyone, no matter how depraved, can gradually become better and better until he becomes the best example for all mankind. There is always hope for everyone; no one is utterly lost, and none need despair. It remains true, however, that the way to divinity lies through the renunciation of evil in favor of good.

The gradual unfoldment of good brings in its train love, generosity, and peace. The good sanskaras deposited by the manifestations of these qualities overlap and balance the opposite bad sanskaras of lust,

Limited self lives in good sanskaras as well as bad

greed, and anger. When there is an exact balancing and overlapping of good and bad sanskaras, there is at once a termination of both types and the precipitation of consciousness from a state of bondage to a state of Freedom. The credit and debit sides must be exactly equal to each other if the account is to be closed. But usually either the debit side is greater or the credit side is greater, and the account is kept running.

It is important to note that the account is kept running not only by an excess of the debit side, but also by an excess of the credit side. It can be closed only when the two sides balance each other. In the field of sanskaras such balance is a rare happening because at any particular time, either the good or bad sanskaras are predominant. Just as the account can be kept running by an excess on either the debit or credit side, the life of the limited self is prolonged and sustained through the excess of either bad or good sanskaras. The limited self can linger through good as well as bad sanskaras. What is required for its final extinction is an exact balancing and overlapping of the bad and good sanskaras.

The problem of the exact balancing and overlapping of the good and bad sanskaras is not a mathematical problem of matching equal amounts. If it were purely a question of equal quantities it could be solved solely through the persistent accumulation of the good sanskaras. If there is a cessation or slowing down of the accumulation of bad sanskaras and if, side by side, there is an unceasing accumulation of good sanskaras at a greater rate, sooner or later the good would be a quantitative match for the accumulated bad; and they would effect the necessary balancing. For emancipation of consciousness, the good and bad sanskaras have not only to balance each other in strength, but there has to be a point to point overlapping of the one opposite by the other. So, in a sense, the problem before each center of consciousness is a specific problem relating to the qualitative variety of the nature of accumulated sanskaras.

If the accumulation of good sanskaras proceeds irrespective of the specific constitution of the existing ones, there is a possibility of accumulating in some directions an excess of good sanskaras, side by side with the existence of the bad of a different type. For example, through self-mortification and severe types of asceticism, some forms of attachment might be annulled; but other forms of attachment may remain untouched by these practices and may continue to exist. The aspirant is not only likely to ignore the forms of attachment that have remained untouched, but he may even carry on further his practices of self-mortification and asceticism by the propelling force of the sanskaras created by these very practices. In such cases an excess of good sanskaras is being created without termination of the limited ego. Even if the other forms of attachment remaining untouched are subsequently undone, the ego can get transferred to these new good sanskaras and continue to live through them.

Emancipation is not a matter of mere accumulation of virtue; it requires intelligent adjustment of sanskaras. Each center of consciousness is unconsciously gravitating toward the final emancipation of Truth-realization, and there is a natural tendency of the mind to invite to itself just that opposite which would meet the spiritual requirements of the situation. But

Balancing and overlapping good and bad sanskaras

Transference of ego to good sanskaras

Need for adjustment of sanskaras

it is not a mechanical and automatic process that can be left to itself, independent of intelligent and right effort on the part of the aspirant. More often than not, the aspirant finds it impossible to strike upon the really needful unless he has the good fortune to have the unfailing help of a Perfect Master, who alone has a direct and unerring insight into exactly what is necessary in a specific case.

It has been seen that good sanskaras can be the medium for the lingering life of the limited self. When a person looks upon himself as being good and not bad, he is engaged in self-affirmation through identification with this conviction, which is

Prison of the good

a continuation of separative existence in a new form. In some cases this new house the ego constructs for itself is more difficult to dismantle, because self-identification with the good is often more complete than self-identification with the bad. Identification with the bad is easier to deal with because, as soon as the bad is perceived as being bad, its grip on consciousness becomes less firm. The loosening of the grip of the good presents a more difficult problem, since the good carries a semblance of self-justification through favorable contrast with the bad. However, in the course of time the aspirant gets tired of his new prison-house, and after this perception he surrenders his separative existence by transcending the duality of good and bad.

The ego exchanges the abode of identification with evil for the abode of identification with good because the latter gives it a greater sense of expansion. Sooner or later the aspirant perceives the new house to be no less of a limitation. Then he

Good compared with evil

finds that the process of breaking through it is less difficult than the process of breaking through the former abode of identification with evil. The difficulty concerning the abode of evil is not so much in perceiving that it is a limitation but in actually dismantling it after arriving at such a perception. The difficulty concerning the abode of good is not so much in dismantling it as in perceiving that it is, in fact, a limitation. This difference arises because the animal sanskaras are more firmly rooted owing to their ancient origin and long-term accumulation. It is important to note that the good binds as much as the evil, though the binding of the good can be more easily undone after it is perceived as being a limitation.

The ego lives either through bad sanskaras or through good

sanskaras, or through a mixture of good and bad sanskaras. Therefore the emancipation of consciousness from all sanskaras can come either through the good sanskaras balancing and overlapping the bad; or through some good sanskaras balancing and overlapping the bad, and some bad sanskaras balancing and overlapping the good. If a dish is dirty you may cleanse it by covering it with soap and washing it with water. This is like good sanskaras overlapping the bad. Now if the dish is full of grease, one way of getting rid of the grease is to cover it with ashes and then wash it with water. Ashes are one of the most greaseless things in the world and, in a sense, the opposite of grease; so that when ashes are applied to the dish soiled with grease, it is easy to cleanse it. This is like bad sanskaras overlapping good sanskaras.

When there is exact balancing and overlapping of good and bad sanskaras, they both disappear; with the result that what remains is a clean slate of mind on which nothing is written and which therefore reflects the Truth as it is without perversion. Nothing is ever written on the soul. The sanskaras are deposited on the mind and not on the soul. The soul always remains untarnished, but it is only when the mind is a clean mirror that it can reflect the Truth. When the impressions of good and bad both disappear, the mind sees the Soul. This is Illumination.

The mind seeing the Soul, however, is not the same as the Soul knowing itself, for the Soul is not the mind but God, who is beyond the mind. Therefore, even after the mind has seen the Soul, it has to be merged in the Soul if the Soul is to know itself as Truth. This is Realization. In this state the mind itself with all its good and bad sanskaras has disappeared. It is a state beyond mind, and therefore it is also beyond the distinction of good and bad. From the point of view of this state there is only one indivisible existence-characterized by infinite love, peace, bliss, and knowledge. The perpetual strife between good and evil has disappeared because there is neither good nor evil, only the one inclusive and undivided life of God.

Violence and Nonviolence

Man has a tendency to cling to catchwords and to allow his actions to be determined by them almost mechanically without bringing his actions into direct relation with the living perception that these

Going beyond words

words embody. Words have their own place and use in life; but if action is to be intelligent, it is imperative that the meaning these words are intended to convey should be carefully analyzed and fixed. Among the words that need such exploration, few are as important as “violence” and “nonviolence.” They have a direct bearing upon the ideologies that shape not only particular actions but also the entire tenor of life.

Spiritual life is a matter of perception and not of mechanical conformity to rules, even when these rules are meant to stand for the highest values. It implies an understanding that goes beyond all words

Spiritual understanding goes beyond formulations

or formulations. All words and formulations have a tendency to limit the Truth. Therefore, those who seek to bring out the spirit underlying these formulations often have to launch upon a searching analysis of the formulated principles and to supplement this analysis by constantly retaining touch with concrete examples taken from life. This is particularly true of those guiding principles formulated through the opposite concepts of violence and nonviolence.

The words “violence” and “nonviolence” are, in ordinary references, applicable to such diverse situations in practical life that no exposition of the issues involved can be complete unless it takes note of

these diverse situations and uses them as a starting point. However, for the purpose of exposition, it is not necessary to exhaust numerically all the possible diversities that would be covered by these words. It is enough to consider some of the most representative situations. The representative situations mentioned below have been selected because of their capacity to shed abundant light on the fundamental values that center around the concepts of violence and nonviolence.

Situation No. 1. Suppose a man who does not know how to swim has fallen into a lake and is drowning, and that there is another person nearby who is good at swimming and wants to save him. The drowning man has a tendency to grasp desperately at the person who comes to his aid; and the hold is often so restricting that it may not only make it impossible to save the drowning man but may even cause the drowning of the one who came to help. The one who wishes to save the drowning man may therefore have to strike him unconscious before he can help him. Striking the drowning man under such circumstances cannot be looked upon either as violence or nonviolence.

Situation No. 2. Suppose a person is suffering from some disease that can only be cured through an operation. Thus in order to cure this suffering patient as well as to protect others from catching this infection, a surgeon may have to remove the infected part. This cutting of the body with a knife also cannot be looked upon either as violence or nonviolence.

Situation No. 3. Suppose an aggressive nation invades a weaker nation for selfish purposes; and another nation, inspired solely by the noble desire of saving the weak nation, resists this aggressive invasion by armed force. Fighting in defense of the weak nation cannot be looked upon as either violence or nonviolence, but can be called nonviolent violence.

Situation No. 4. Suppose a mad dog has run amuck and is likely to bite some schoolchildren, and the teachers in the school destroy the mad dog in order to protect the children. This destruction of the mad dog does imply violence, but there is no hatred in it.

Situation No. 5. Suppose a physically strong man is insulted and spat upon by an arrogant man who is nevertheless weak. And suppose that the strong man who has the power to crush the arrogant man not only desists from hurting him, but calmly explains to him the gospel of love. This action implies nonviolence, but it is the nonviolence of the strong.

Case of nonviolence of the strong

The first three situations mentioned above clearly bring out that the question whether a situation implies violence or nonviolence cannot be decided except by entering into many subtle and delicate considerations regarding the diverse details of the situation and the motive that prompts action. The last two situations show that even where violence or nonviolence is implied, certain other factors give meaning beyond the ordinary sense attached to these words “violence” and “nonviolence.”

Need for delicate considerations

A detailed analysis of situation no. 1 shows that though it involves the use of force without prior consent of the victim, the motive was to save the drowning man. The application of force without the consent of the man on whom it is used may be termed a case of violence. But force is used for the good of the drowning man and not with any desire to inflict injury or harm on him; and in that sense it may be said that it is not a case of violence. In these special senses the situation can be said to involve violence and nonviolence respectively; but in the ordinary sense of the words, it cannot be looked upon as a case of either violence or nonviolence.

Comments on case of drowning man

Situation no. 2 is slightly different. Here also there is application of force (even to cutting the body), which is for the good of the patient. But in most cases the patient gives his prior consent to the operation.

Comments on case of surgery

Further, the operation is intended not only to protect the patient himself from the further ravages of the disease but is also intended to protect others from the spread of infection. The application of force here springs out of the motive of doing unmixed good, both to the patient as well as many others who might come into contact with him. Since no harm is intended, the application of force does not amount to violence in the ordinary sense. Nor can it be adequately looked upon as nonviolence, since it is a clear

case of cutting a part of a living body.

Situation no. 3 is also very interesting and instructive. Here the fighting involves offering resistance to aggression, with no selfish motive or personal interest but solely with a purpose of defending the weaker nation. This may inflict much in-

Comments on case of aggressor nation

jury and even destruction upon the aggressor nation, and the use of force is not only without its prior consent but against its deliberate and conscious will. Even in this situation we do not have a clear case of violence. In spite of the injury and harm involved, the application of force is not only for the good of the weaker nation, which is the victim, but in a very important sense it is also for the good of the aggressor nation itself. Because through the resistance encountered to its aggression, it is gradually cured of its spiritual weakness or disease of having a tendency to invade and exploit weaker nations. This violence is really not violent, and so it is called nonviolent violence.

The case of fighting with an aggressor nation is very similar to the case of surgery on an infected part of the body. In the case of fighting with the aggressor nation, the good of the weaker nation

Comparison between aggressor nation and surgery

appears to be the primary result and the good of the aggressor nation (against which force is exercised) appears to be a secondary result. In the case of the operation, the good of the patient (on whom force is exerted) appears to be the primary result and the good of others appears to be a secondary result. But this is only a minor difference in benefit; and when the two situations are carefully analyzed and compared, it is found that both promote equally the good of the target of force as well as many others involved in the situation.

Defending the weak is an important form of selfless service, and it is a part of *karma-yoga*, or the yoga of action. Use of force, when necessary for this purpose, is completely justified as an indispensable instrument for securing the desired objec-

Defending weak a form of selfless service

tive. But any fighting undertaken to defend the weak must be without any selfish motives or hatred if it is to have unalloyed spiritual importance. It resembles, for example, a case of a man who defends a woman being attacked by another man for vile purposes -thus saving the woman's honor and life, and punishing the attacker

and making him repent.

Situation no. 4 is definitely a case of violence. However, it is justified because there is no hatred in it and because it is intended to promote the greater good of the children who might be attacked by the mad dog. The case of the strong man who

Comments on cases of mad dog and non-violence of the strong

gives a sermon instead of seeking revenge (situation no. 5) implies nonviolence, but it is not a case of inaction. It implies neither passivity nor weakness but strength and true creative action of an impersonal nature. It is nonviolence of the strong.

The detailed analysis and comparison of the above diverse situations bring out the fact that questions concerning violence and non-violence-their justification or otherwise, and the ascertainment of their true value or lack of value-cannot be

Spiritual understanding above rules and requires divine love

decided by any formal enunciation of a universal rule. They involve many delicate spiritual issues and implications. A right understanding of the status of violence and nonviolence in the scheme of spiritual values requires a true perception of the meaning of the purpose of existence. Action, therefore, should not be governed by means of any slogans (however high-sounding) based upon incomplete and insufficient ideas of mere violence or mere nonviolence. It should be a spontaneous outcome of divine love, which is above duality, and of spiritual understanding, which is above rules.

Violence and Nonviolence Further Explained

Nonviolence

I

Nonviolence Pure and Simple
(based on divine love)

Here one sees all as one's own Self and is beyond both friendship and enmity. Never under any circumstances does a single thought of violence enter one's mind.

II

Nonviolence of the Brave
(based on unlimited pure love)

This applies to those who, although not one with all through actual Realization, consider no one as their enemy. They try to win over even the aggressor through love and give up their lives if attacked, not through fear but through love.

Violence

III

Non violent Violence
(based on unlimited love)

Violence done solely to defend the weak, where there is no question of self-defense or of self-motivation, is nonviolent violence.

IV

Selfless Violence

(based on limited human love)

Here violence is done in self-defense when one is attacked treacherously and with no other selfish motive. For example, when one's mother's honor is on the point of being violated by a lustful man, one defends one's mother. Also when a nation's honor is at stake and it is being attacked by enemies, the nation's selfless effort at defending itself is selfless violence.

V

Nonviolence of the Coward

(based on unlimited weakness of character and mind)

Those who do not resist aggression because of fear, and for no other reason, belong to this class.

VI

Selfish Violence

(based on hatred and lust)

When violence is done for selfish motives by an individual or nation for power, selfish gains, and so forth, it is called selfish violence.

Nonviolence pure and simple means love infinite. It is the goal of life. When this state of pure divine love is reached, the aspirant is at one with God. To reach this goal there must be intense longing, and the aspirant who has this longing to realize the supreme state has to begin by practicing what is termed nonviolence of the brave. This applies to those who, though not one with all through actual Realization, consider no one as their enemy. They try to win over even the aggressor through love and give up their lives if attacked, not through fear but through love.

As pointed out, nonviolence of the brave is practicable for those individuals who have an intense longing to attain the supreme state. This longing is not to be found in the masses. If, therefore, it is intended to lead the masses to pure nonviolence, it is necessary first to prepare them for the nonviolence of the brave. To achieve this aim in a practical way it is necessary to make them follow, in the beginning, the

principle of nonviolent violence—that is, violence done solely to defend the weak without any selfish motive whatever.

In times of actual war when the masses are taken by surprise, they are not in the mood even to listen to advice about having intense longing to attain the supreme goal of life. The only practical way to lead them finally toward the goal is to begin by inculcating in them the principle of nonviolent violence and then gradually introducing the nonviolence of the brave. A premature attempt to introduce nonviolence of the brave among the unprepared masses in actual wartime would not only fail but incur a serious danger of bringing in the fatal nonviolence of the coward, that is, the masses would not resist the aggression simply because of fear and for no other reason.

The masses may also be educated and led to the nonviolence of the brave by making them follow the principles of selfless violence instead of those of nonviolent violence. Selfless violence is violence done in self-defense when attacked treacherously. No other selfish motive should be allowed to justify the violence. Thus, for example, when one's mother's honor is on the point of being violated by a lustful man and one defends her by resorting to violence, one is said to have followed the principles of selfless violence. Similarly, when the honor of a nation is at stake and it is being attacked by enemies, the nation's selfless effort in defending itself is selfless violence. A tinge of selfishness being present (as the mother is one's own mother), the love expressed here is limited human love.

Nonviolence of the coward is, as pointed out, fatal. So also is selfish violence, that is, violence for selfish motives by individuals or nations to gain power or for other selfish ends.

It will therefore be seen that while nonviolence pure and simple is the goal of life, this goal has to be attained by individual seekers of God by following nonviolence of the brave. The masses who have not the requisite intense longing for being one with Him have to be led gradually toward this goal by the principles of nonviolent violence or those of selfless violence, according to the circumstances. In conclusion, it must be very clearly understood that nonviolent violence and selfless violence are merely means of attaining the goal of life—namely, pure and simple nonviolence, or love infinite. The means must not be confused or otherwise mixed up with the goal itself.

The motive and the result are always judged by general acceptance as to whether they are good or bad. For example, nonviolence of

the brave and nonviolence of the coward are both nonviolence. But from the viewpoint of the motive force behind it, nonviolence of the brave is born of *love* and nonviolence of the coward is born of *fear*, which is the opposite of love. While as nonviolence they are not opposites, their motives are infinitely opposed to each other, The motive behind nonviolence of the brave is losing one's life to gain infinite love; but the motive behind nonviolence of the coward is to save one's own life, which gains infinite contempt. Nonviolence of the coward we put therefore under the heading of "nonlove," while we put nonviolence of the brave under the heading of "love."

Nonviolent violence is not placed under the heading of love, but under the heading of "duty" -duty done selflessly to others according to karma-yoga-which eventually is linked up with unlimited love, but motivated by human love.

The difference between the two opposite forces cannot be obliterated, but the transformation of one force to another can happen when expressed rightly through the right channels. Food given wrongly becomes poison, while poison (like strychnine) given in small quantities as a tonic becomes food for the nerves. Although food in substance does not become poison and vice versa, the action and the result due to the use can become transformed.

Action and Inaction

All action except that which is intelligently designed to attain God-realization creates a binding for consciousness. It is not only an expression of accumulated ignorance but a further addition to that accumulated ignorance.

Religious forms and ceremonies, as well as rituals and injunctions of different creeds and spiritual institutions, have a tendency to encourage the spirit of love and worship. As such they are helpful to a limited extent in wearing out the ego-shell in which human consciousness is caught. **Forms and ceremonies are sidetracks on path** But if they are unintelligently and mechanically followed, the inner spirit of love and worship gets dried up. Then they only result in hardening the ego-shell rather than wearing it out.

Therefore, rituals and ceremonies cannot carry man very far on the spiritual path; and if they are unintelligently followed, they create as much binding as any other unintelligent action. Deprived of all inner life and meaning, they might be said to be even more dangerous than other forms of unintelligent action because man pursues them with the belief that they are helpful for God-realization; whereas in fact they are far from being helpful. Owing to this element of self-delusion, lifeless forms and ceremonies become sidetracks on the path. Often, through mere force of habit, man becomes so attached to these external forms that he cannot be disillusioned about their imaginary value except through intense suffering.

In many ways inaction is preferable to unintelligent action, for it has at least the merit of not creating further sanskaras and complications. Even good and righteous action creates sanskaras and means one more addition to the complications created by past actions and experiences. All life is an effort to attain freedom from self-created entanglement. It is a desperate struggle to undo what has been done in ignorance, to throw away the accumulated burden of the past, to find rescue from the debris left by a series of temporary achievements and failures. Life seeks to unwind the limiting sanskaras of the past and to obtain release from the mazes of its own making, so that its further creations may spring directly from the heart of eternity and bear the stamp of unhampered freedom and intrinsic richness of being that knows no limitation.

Life seeks freedom from self-created entanglement

one more addition to the complications created by past actions and experiences. All life is an effort to attain freedom from self-created entanglement. It is a desperate struggle to undo what has been done in

Action that helps in attaining God is truly intelligent and spiritually fruitful because it brings release from bondage. It is second only to that action that springs spontaneously from the state of God-realization itself. All other forms of action

Inaction often necessary stage

(however good or bad and however effective or ineffective from a worldly point of view) contribute toward bondage and are inferior

to inaction. Inaction is less helpful than intelligent action; but it is better than unintelligent action, for it amounts to the non-doing of that which would have created a binding. The movement from unintelligent action to intelligent action (that is, from binding karma to non-binding karma) is often through inaction. This is characteristic of the stage where unintelligent action has stopped because of critical doubt, but intelligent action has not yet begun because no adequate momentum has arisen. This special type of inaction, which plays its part in progress on the path, should in no way be confused with ordinary inaction, which springs from inertia or fear of life.

Perfection

In order to have a comprehensive idea of what is implied in perfection, it is necessary to classify it into two categories. There is spiritual Perfection, which consists in the inner Realization of a transcendent state of consciousness beyond duality.

Two types of perfection There is also perfection as expressed and seen in the domain of duality. All related existence, which is a part of the manifold world of manifestation, admits of degrees. And when one is concerned with perfection as seen in this manifested world, one finds that like other things subject to duality it also admits of degrees. Bad and good, weakness and strength, vice and virtue, are all opposites within duality. In fact, all these aspects are expressions of the one Reality in different degrees.

Thus, evil is not utterly evil but goodness in its lowest degree; weakness is not mere incapacity but strength in its lowest degree; and vice is not pure vice but virtue at its lowest. In other words, evil is the minimum of good; weakness is the minimum of strength; and vice is the minimum of virtue. All the aspects of duality have a minimum and a maximum and all intervening degrees; perfection is no exception to this. The whole range of humanity is included within the two extremes of perfection and imperfection; and both perfection and imperfection are essentially matters of comparison, contrast, and relative existence. Perfection in the domain of duality is only *relative* perfection. It is only when one

**Only relative
perfection in duality**

compares it with imperfection that it appears to one as perfection.

When perfection is concerned with duality, it consists in the *excellence* of some attribute or capacity. In this context perfection in one aspect does not necessarily include perfection in other aspects. For

Spiritual Perfection distinguished from excellence

example, someone who is perfect in science may not be perfect in singing, or someone who is perfect in singing may not be perfect in science. There is a sense in which excellence can be exhibited even in crimes. When

a murder is committed in such a manner that not a single clue is left for tracing the murderer, it is called a perfect crime. Even in crimes or sins, then, there is a sort of perfection. But this type of perfection, which consists in the excellence of a quality or capacity, should be carefully distinguished from *spiritual* Perfection, which is not in the domain of duality.

The different types of excellence that are characteristic of duality are all within the scope of the intellect. For such excellence can be easily envisaged by the extension (in imagination) of something good that is found in the limited experience of everyday life. The Perfection that belongs to the spiritually realized souls is not in the domain of duality, and as such is entirely beyond the scope of the intellect. It has no parallel in the domain of duality. When a person becomes spiritually perfect, he knows that nothing exists but God, and that what seems to exist in the domain of duality and is capable of being grasped by the intellect is only illusion. For the spiritually perfect, God is the only Reality. Science, art, music, weakness, strength, good, and evil are all nothing to him but dreams. His perfection consists in the knowledge of one indivisible Existence.

When a spiritually perfect being wants to use all his knowledge and powers, it is always for the spiritual upliftment of other souls. His knowledge of others is not based upon their expressed thoughts:

All forms of excellence in spiritual Perfection

thought comes first, and its expression in words follows later. As he directly knows the minds of all, he is not dependent upon the expression of thought. For him words

are unnecessary. If he wants to know something before it is manifested, he can do so; but he does so only when it is necessary for spiritual reasons. In the same way, if he wants to show excellence in any other matter, he can show it without any difficulty. All sorts of

excellence are latent in spiritual Perfection.

Krishna, as the Avatar, was not only spiritually perfect but Perfection personified. He was also perfect in everything. If He had wanted to, He could have shown Himself as a perfect drunkard, a perfect sinner, a perfect rogue, or a perfect murderer; but that would have shocked the world. Though possessed of perfection in every respect, it was not necessary for Him to exhibit it in fulfilling His mission.

The spiritually perfect can exhibit supreme excellence in any mode of life that they may be required to adopt for the spiritual upliftment of other souls, but they do not do so merely to show themselves as perfect. This excellence is used by them only when there is a spiritual need for it, not merely to satisfy the curiosity of others. When they use such excellence, they do so with utter detachment. Just as a person who wears gloves may touch the dirt of the world without getting soiled, a spiritually perfect being can be engaged in universal activity without being bound by it.

Spiritual Perfection is the full development of all the aspects of personality, so Perfection must be all-sided. Perfection in one aspect is not Perfection. It is only a lopsided growth of a faculty or capacity, resulting in inflexibility or the incapacity to adjust oneself to the ever-changing and multitudinous vicissitudes of life. Such a person cannot maintain a moving equilibrium of mind while keeping pace with the swift changes of life. If he is in an environment that by its nature gives scope for the faculty he has developed, he is temporarily happy and enjoys a sense of being in harmony with the world. But if he finds himself in a hostile environment where his faculty is unsuitable, he has a sense of failure and his poise is disturbed. Therefore Perfection implies perfection in every respect.

If you try to grasp the nature of Perfection by means of a set standard (implying an opposite), you are bound to limit it and thus fail to understand its real significance. Perfection includes the opposites and transcends them; therefore a Perfect One is not bound by any rule or limited ideal. He is beyond good and bad; but his law for those who are good provides good rewards, and for those who are bad it responds in their own coin.

Perfection must be all-sided

Perfection includes opposites

Krishna proved to Arjuna, who was His devotee, that His apparent bringing about of the physical and mental annihilation of the vicious Kauravas was for their spiritual salvation. Perfection might manifest itself through killing or saving according to the spiritual demands of the situation.

The heart of a Perfect One is at once as soft as butter and as hard as steel. Perfection is not limited in its expression to any *one* of the opposites and does not exclude the possibility of finding expression through the opposite. It can express itself through either of the opposites according to the logic implied in the situation. That is why Perfection transcends the opposites and is capable of giving a rational response to all the possible situations in life. It ensures perfect adaptability without surrendering the standpoint of Truth and secures an unshakable peace and sense of harmony in the midst of diverse situations-which must be baffling to those who have not achieved all-sided development.

Human activities are limited by the opposites, and Perfection is beyond them. It should not be imagined, however, that Perfection has no human element about it. When human beings are unhappy, they laugh to make themselves and others

Full development of human rationality

happy. But even a Perfect One, who is eternally happy, is not without a sense of humor. In other words, Perfection does not consist in being inhuman but superhuman; it is the full development of that rationality which is implicit in humanity.

Perfection does not belong to God as God, nor does it belong to man as man. Perfection is attained when man becomes God or when God becomes man. The finite being who is conscious of his being finite is

Perfection is man becoming God or God becoming man

obviously short of Perfection; but when he is conscious of being one with the Infinite, he is perfect. That is what happens when man gives up the illusion of being finite and attains Godhood by realizing his divinity. If

by the Infinite one means that which is opposed to the finite or is separate from the finite and necessarily other than the finite, this Infinite is already limited by its being unable to assert itself in and through the finite. In other words, Perfection cannot belong to such an Infinite. The Infinite, therefore, has to discover its unlimited life in and through the finite without getting limited by this process.

God's Perfection is revealed only when He manifests Himself as man. The conscious descent of God into the limited form of man is the Avatar. This again is a case of Perfection. Thus we have Perfection when the finite transcends its limits and realizes its infinity or when the Infinite gives up its supposed aloofness and becomes man. In both cases the finite and the Infinite do not stand outside each other. When there is a happy and a conscious blending of the finite and the Infinite, we have Perfection. Then we have the Infinite revealing itself through the finite without getting limited thereby and the finite transcending its sense of limitation in the full knowledge of its really being the revelation of the Infinite.

The Life of the Spirit

In true karma-yoga, or the life of perfect action, there is proper adjustment between the material and the spiritual aspects of life. In this type of life, consciousness is not fettered by mundane and material things, but at the same time it is not allowed to run away from everyday existence. The mind is not allowed to be immersed in the material life of gnawing wants, nor is it allowed to be merged in spiritual bliss. It is used to face and tackle the problems of life from the point of view of spiritual understanding.

True karma-yoga

Matter as pliable instrument for expression of spirit

Proper adjustment between the material and the spiritual aspects of life is not secured by giving equal importance to them. It is not secured by taking something from the material and something from the spiritual and then striking a balance between the two. The spirit must and ever will have an inviolable primacy over matter; however, the primacy is not expressed by avoiding or rejecting matter but rather by using it as an adequate vehicle for the expressions of the spirit. In intelligent adjustment matter has to play the role of a pliable instrument for the self-manifestation of the spirit and must not in any way become obtrusive in its own right. Just as a musical instrument is valuable only if it gives expression to the song of a musician and

becomes a hindrance if it does not yield complete subservience, matter is valuable if it gives free and adequate expression to the creative flow of life and becomes an obstacle if it interferes with it.

Owing to the multifarious cravings of the mind, matter has a tendency to assume importance for itself. For the drunkard wine is everything; for the greedy the hoarding of money is all-important; and for the flirt the chase of sensations is the supreme end of life. These are examples of how, through diverse cravings of the mind, matter becomes unduly obtrusive and perverts the expressions of the spirit. The way to restore the dignity of the spirit is not to reject matter but to use it for the claims of the spirit.

This is possible only when the spirit is free from all cravings and is fully conscious of its own true status. When this is achieved, an individual may have material goods but is not caught up in them. When necessary he may use them as means for the life of the spirit, but he is not allured by them nor does he become restless for them. He realizes that in themselves they do not constitute the real significance of life. He dwells in the material and social environment without any hankering for them and, being unattached, is able to convert them into spiritual life.

When once true adjustment between spirit and matter is secured, there is no phase of life that cannot be utilized for the expression of divinity. No longer is there any need to run away from everyday life and its tangles. The freedom of the spirit that is sought by avoiding contact with the world and retiring to a cave or to the mountains is a negative freedom. When such retirement is temporary and is meant to digest worldly experiences and develop detachment, it has its own advantages. It gives breathing time in the race of life. But when such retirement is grounded in fear of the world or lack of confidence in the spirit, it is far from helpful in the attainment of real freedom. Real freedom is essentially positive and must express itself through unhampered dominion of the spirit over matter. This is the true life of the spirit.

The life of the spirit is the expression of Infinity and, as such, knows no artificial limits. True spirituality is not to be mistaken for an

exclusive enthusiasm for some fad. It is not concerned with any "ism."

**Spirituality covers
the whole of life**

When people seek spirituality apart from life, as if it had nothing to do with the material world, their search is futile. All creeds and cults have a tendency to emphasize some fragmentary aspect of life, but true spirituality is total in its outlook. The essence of spirituality does not consist in a specialized or narrow interest in some imagined part of life but in a certain enlightened attitude to all the various situations that obtain in life. It covers and includes the whole of life. All the material things of this world can be made subservient to the divine game; and when they are thus subordinated, they become auxiliary to the self-affirmation of the spirit.

The value of material things depends upon the part they play in the life of the spirit. In themselves they are neither good nor bad. They become good or bad according to whether they help or hinder the manifestation of divinity through them.

**Body not necessarily
hindrance to
spiritual life**

Take, for example, the place of the physical body in the life of the spirit. It is a mistake to set up an antithesis between "flesh" and "spirit." Such contrast almost inevitably ends in an unqualified condemnation of the body. The body obstructs spiritual fulfillment only if it is pampered as having claims in its own right. Its proper function is rightly understood as ancillary to spiritual purposes.

The rider needs a horse if he is to fight a battle, though the horse can become an impediment if it refuses to be completely submissive to his will. In the same way, the spirit needs to be clothed in matter if it is to come into full possession of its own possibilities, although the body can at times become a hindrance if it refuses to be compliant with the requirements of the spirit. If the body yields to the claims of the spirit as it should, it is instrumental in bringing down the kingdom of heaven on earth. It becomes a vehicle for the release of divine life; and when it subserves this purpose, it might aptly be called the temple of God on earth.

Since the physical body and other material things can be used for the life of the spirit, true spirituality does not take any hostile attitude toward them but seeks expression in and through them. Thus a perfected person does not look down upon things of beauty or works of art, attainments of science or achievements of politics. Things of

beauty can be degraded by being made objects of craving or jealous and exclusive possessiveness; works of art can often be used to augment and exploit egoism and other human frailties. The attainments of science can be used for mutual destruction, as in modern wars; political enthusiasm without spiritual insight can perpetuate social and international chaos. But all these can also be rightly handled and spiritualized. Things of beauty can become the source of purity, happiness, and inspiration; works of art can ennoble and raise the consciousness of people. The attainments of science can redeem humanity from unnecessary suffering and handicaps; political action can be instrumental in establishing a real brotherhood of humanity. The life of the spirit does not consist in turning away from worldly spheres of existence but in reclaiming them for the divine purpose—which is to bring love, peace, happiness, beauty, and spiritual Perfection within the reach of everyone.

However, those who would live the life of the spirit must remain detached in the midst of worldly things without becoming cold or indifferent to them. Detachment should not be misunderstood as lack of appreciation. It is not only compatible with the true evaluation of things but is its very condition. Craving creates delusion and prevents right perception. It nourishes obsessions and sustains the feeling of dependence upon external objects. Detachment promotes right understanding and facilitates perception of the true worth of things without making consciousness dependent upon external objects.

To see things as they are is to grasp their real significance as parts of the manifestation of the One Life, and to see through the veil of their apparent multiplicity is to be free from the insistent obsession for anything in its imagined isolation and exclusiveness. The life of the spirit is to be found in comprehensiveness that is free from clinging and in appreciation that is free from entanglement. It is a life of positive freedom in which the spirit infuses itself into matter and shines through it without submitting to any curtailment of its own claims.

The things and the happenings of this earthly existence are looked upon as extraneous only until they are engulfed in the advancing tide of comprehensive spirituality. When once they find their right

place in the scheme of life, each of them is seen to participate in the symphony of creation. Then spirituality does not require a separate or exclusive expression; it does not become degraded by being concerned with the ordinary physical, intellectual, and emotional needs of people. The life of the spirit is a unified and integral existence that does not admit of exclusive or unrelated compartments.

True spirituality is comprehensive

The life of the spirit is an unceasing manifestation of divine love and spiritual understanding, and both these aspects of divinity are unrestricted in their universality and unchallengeable in their inclusiveness. Thus divine love does not require any special type of context for making itself felt. It need not await some rare moments for its expression, nor is it on the lookout for somber situations that savor of special sanctity. It discovers its expression in every incident and situation that might be passed over by an unenlightened person as too insignificant to deserve attention.

Divine love a creative and dynamic response to environment

Ordinary human love is released only under suitable conditions. It is a response to certain types of situations and is relative to them. But divine love, which springs from the source within, is independent of stimuli. It is released, therefore, even in circumstances that would be looked upon as unfavorable by those who have tasted only human love. If there is lack of happiness or beauty or goodness in those by whom a Perfect Master is surrounded, these very things become for him the opportunity to shower his divine love on them and to redeem them from the state of material or spiritual poverty. His everyday responses to his worldly environment become expressions of dynamic and creative divinity, which spreads itself and spiritualizes everything he puts his mind to.

Spiritual understanding, which is the complementary aspect of the life of the spirit, must be distinguished from worldly wisdom, which is the quintessence of the conventions of the world. Spiritual wisdom does not consist in the unquestioning acceptance of the ways of the world. The ways of the world are almost always the collective effect of the actions of materially inclined people. Worldly people consider

Spiritual understanding not born of blind imitation

something to be right and make it right for persons of similar inclination. Therefore the blind following of conventions does not necessarily secure wise action. The life of the spirit cannot be a life of uncritical imitation; it must have its basis in the true understanding of values.

Selfless Service

The *karma-yogi* avoids the chaotic activity of selfish desires as well as the apparent inaction of total nonwanting. He leads a life of selfless service, in which there is not the slightest alloy of any personal motive and which furthers the release of divinity in all phases of life. It is very important that service, even when it is utterly selfless, be guided by spiritual understanding; for selfless service, when unintelligently handled, often creates chaos and complications. Many good persons are ceaselessly active in public causes through social institutions. But what does that activity lead to? For every problem it solves, it often creates ten other problems owing to the unforeseen and uncontrollable side results of such activity. Worldly people try to counteract evil through opposition, but in doing so they often unconsciously become authors of other evils.

Suppose a group of ants has climbed onto the body of an individual, and one of them bites him. He might instinctively want to punish the ant by killing it; but if he were to strike it with his hands he might, in so doing, kill many other ants that were in no way involved in the biting. In trying to secure justice against one ant, he is thus inevitably drawn into an activity that means injustice to many other ants. The person who is drawn into the vortex of public life through a generous

Karma-yogi avoids chaotic activity as well as inaction

Unintelligent service creates chaos and complications

impulse, without having mastered the art of pure service, finds himself in a similar situation. He may be selfless, but his actions create chaos instead of harmony because he has not learned how to render real and effective service without creating complications. If action is to be a pure blessing for the universe, it must be born of consummate understanding of life. Those who come into contact with me should develop true understanding of life and cultivate that type of service which creates no complications.

When service is rendered in a selfless spirit, it always benefits the karma-yogi, although he himself does not do it for the sake of any reward or result. There is no doubt that even when he renders selfless service unintelligently he derives some spir-

Selfless service based upon understanding

itual benefit thereby; but in doing so he cannot avoid causing much unnecessary suffering to others. However, when he renders selfless service with spiritual understanding, it not only confers spiritual benefit upon himself but also promotes the material and spiritual well-being of others involved. Selfless service must be based upon understanding if it is to be an unmixed boon for *all* concerned.

That which is looked upon as service by ordinary persons might, under special circumstances, be considered as disservice by a Perfect Master; for he has an unerring knowledge of the situation and a deeper

Apparent service may really be disservice

grasp of its spiritual demands. Hence, though it is normally an undeniable act of service to give food to those who are needy, there may be some qualifying circumstances, which in a particular situation require that the needy person should not be given food for his own good. The tendency to beg for food as charity creates undesirable sanskaras; and in feeding a person who comes to you with this tendency, you may help him to increase the burden of such sanskaras. So, though you may appear to do him good by offering food, you may in reality be successful only in binding him further. Though it may not have been your motive to crush him under your obligations, you may in actuality be doing nothing else when you are charitable, not through understanding but through habit.

What applies to the above instance of giving food also applies to the dispensation of many other things-tangible and intangible. And though from the narrower point of view a thing may definitely seem to be nothing but service for the recipient, it may, from the higher point of

view, be a definite act of disservice to him. Just as what is nourishing to the healthy may be poison to the sick, what is good for people generally may be evil for some particular person. Hence intelligent charity requires profound understanding of the spiritual needs of the situation.

All this should only make people more careful and discriminating in their service. It need not discourage their spirit of selfless service. It is true that only a Perfect Master can be unerring in gauging the spiritual demands of any situation; but it would be a pity if those who cannot be so sure about their judgment withheld their spontaneous urge for selfless service lest they might unwittingly render a disservice.

Even unintelligent service confers spiritual benefit

Even when a person renders selfless service unintelligently, he always derives spiritual benefit through it.

In fact, from the spiritual point of view, the real danger in service lies more in the possibility of your rendering it from a false motive than in making a mistake about the spiritual demands of the situation. If you render service in order to oblige a person

Service rendered with utter detachment

and if you feel proud of doing it, you are not only doing spiritual harm to the recipient of your service but also to yourself. If, while serving, you take delight in it and develop pride in doing a good thing, you are getting attached to your act and thereby binding yourself. Just as one may get bound by an iron or a golden chain, so also a person can get spiritually bound by his attachment to evil or good deeds. Hence the way to remain free from karma is to remain completely detached in service.

The consciousness that “I am obliging someone” is the first to occur during the process of serving; but it can be annulled by the contrary thought, “I am obliged by being given this opportunity of serving.” This latter thought facilitates the attitude of detachment and secures freedom from the bondage of good actions. Service based upon comprehensive understanding is not only selfless and adjusted to the spiritual demands of the recipient but is rendered with complete detachment. Such service takes the aspirant to the goal most rapidly.

The value of service depends upon the kind of good secured through it. Ministering to the bodily needs of others is service; cultivation of the intellect of others is service; feeding the hearts of people is

service; satisfying the aesthetic requirements of society is service. All these forms of service are not of the same value, even if they are all accompanied by a spirit of selflessness. The kind of well-being that is sought through service will depend upon the vision of the person, and one who has the clearest perception of the final good will be in a position to render the most important and valuable type of service. Those who have not found the supreme Truth are incapable of this highest type of service. Their service cannot have the same value for creation as the service of a person who has arrived at finality in spiritual understanding. In a sense, true service begins after Realization.

Nevertheless, the spirit of service that is invariably present in aspirants and good persons can be harnessed and creatively utilized for spiritual purposes if it is allied with the work of a Master. The

Serving Master facilitates enlightenment

Master serves the whole universe out of the finality of his infinite consciousness, and those who serve the Master and obey him also have their share in his universal work.

Their service has the advantage of his wisdom and insight. Willing participation in the work of the Master not only raises the value of service but creates the best opportunities for spiritual enlightenment. Service originating in the instructions of the Master is second in importance only to the service rendered by the Master himself.

For most persons the idea of service is inextricably bound with securing certain definite results in the objective world. For them service consists in the removal of human suffering or illiteracy or other difficulties and handicaps that thwart

Service free from attachment to results

the flourishing of individual or social life. This is the type of service rendered by aspirants, politicians, social reformers, and

other good people. Though this type of service is of immense spiritual importance, it is in its very nature unending. In spite of what any individual might attain in these fields, there always remains much that is to be achieved. Therefore, as long as the idea of service is thus tied to the idea of results, it is inevitably fraught with a sense of incompleteness. There can be no realization of Infinity through the pursuit of a never-ending series of consequences. Those who aim at

sure and definite results through a life of service have an eternal burden on their minds.

On the other hand, service that comes after realization of the Truth is a spontaneous expression of spiritual understanding of the true nature of the Self. And though it also brings about important

**Service after
Realization**

results in the objective world, it is in no way complicated by any longing for them. The sun shines because it is its nature to do so and not because it wants to achieve something through shining. In the same way, the God-realized person also lives a life of self-offering because of the basic structure of the divine life that is at the heart of Reality and not because he longs to achieve anything. His life is not a reaching out toward something with the hope of some kind of attainment. He does not seek enrichment through attainments but is already established in the fullness of the realization of the Infinite. The overflow of his being is a blessing to life in other forms and actually brings about their upliftment from the material as well as the spiritual point of view. As his own happiness is grounded in the realization of the Divinity within him, it does not suffer any diminution due to the imperfection or suffering of life in other forms; and his consciousness is not tinged by the ache of something unrealized.

There is thus a vast gulf between service before the realization of the Truth and service after realizing it. The life of the Man-God is a life of service; it is a perpetual offering to other forms of his own Self. This service, which is characteristic of the life of a God-realized person, is fundamentally different from service found in the lives of those who have not realized the Truth.

The Avenues to Understanding

The different avenues that lead to spiritual understanding can be understood best through an initial distinction between spirit and matter. In order to understand matter we have material means, and in order to understand the spirit we have spiritual means. Matter is understood through the mind or the intellect working upon data given through the different senses, but spirit can be understood only through the spirit itself. This highest form of understanding, in which the spirit enjoys Self-knowledge without using any instrument or medium, is very rare and most difficult to attain. The best approach for the understanding of the spirit is through the heart and not through the mind.

The mind is accustomed to work upon material things, and its driving power for this intellectual understanding of material objects is derived from lusts and cravings. When mind is turned toward spiritual problems, it tackles them along lines it is accustomed to; and in so doing, mind uses concepts it has invented for the intellectual understanding of material things. However, this approach to understanding spiritual problems is doomed to fail, because all concepts that the intellect evolves for knowledge of material things are inadequate for understanding the spirit. It is like trying to see through the ears or hear with the eyes. If the mind tries to understand the spirit independently

**Spirit not understood
through mind**

**Concepts of mind
toward matter
inadequate for spirit**

of the heart, it is bound to use analogues from the material world; and this inevitably leads to the spirit being looked upon as an object of the mind, which it is not.

As contrasted with the method of the mind—which has its foundation in sensations and proceeds through inference and proofs to conclusions—there is the more direct method of the heart. The heart intuitively grasps the values that are progressively realized in the life of an individual as he goes through the diverse experiences of the world, and as his attention is centered on arriving at spiritual understanding. In the life of most persons the mind and the heart are at loggerheads, and the conflict between the two creates confusion.

**Conflict between
mind and heart**

The heart, which in its own way feels the unity of life, wants to fulfill itself through a life of love, sacrifice, and service. It is keen about giving instead of taking. It derives its driving power from the inmost spiritual urge, expressing itself through the immediate intuitions of the inner life. It does not care about the proofs or intellectual corroborations that the mind seeks while dealing with material objects. In its objective handling of the material world, mind is saturated with experiences of multiplicity and separateness and therefore feeds the egocentric tendencies that divide humanity and make it selfish and possessive. But the heart, feeling in its inner experiences the glow of love, has glimpses of the unity of the spirit and thus seeks expression through self-giving tendencies that unite humanity and make it selfless and generous. Therefore, there is necessarily a conflict between the inner voice and the deliverances of the intellect, which are based upon the apparent and superficial aspects of life.

When the mind encroaches upon the province of the heart, it does so by requiring assurance or conviction as a precedent condition that must be fulfilled before there is a release of love. But love is nothing if it is not spontaneous. It cannot be a conclusion of reasoning. It is not a fruit of the spirit of bargaining. If you want to be certain about the object of love before giving your love, it is only a form of calculating selfishness. Many persons, for example, want to be convinced of my divinity in order to be able to love me. That is to say, they want me to give them objective proofs of my spiritual status by performing miracles. Conviction of this type is

**Mind craves assurance
or conviction**

often a hindrance rather than a help in releasing the highest form of love—which is utterly indifferent to what it might receive from the object of love.

When the mind seeks conviction or corroboration (through objective proofs and miracles as an aid to spiritual understanding), it is encroaching upon the sphere that properly belongs to the heart. Con-

**Intellectual
conviction hinders
spontaneous love**

viction and corroboration become important when a person desires guarantees for securing certain definite and tangible results in the objective world. Even if we suppose that a person is intellectually con-

vinced of the existence of God by means of miracles or some such objective data, this will not necessarily release his heart. The allegiance he might perhaps give to God as a result of such cold revelation will be either through fear or through a sense of duty. Love in which there is no sense of restraint cannot be born of a conviction that is based upon things accessible to the mind. And where there is no love, there is no bliss or beauty of being. In fact, God's nature as the Ocean of Love cannot be grasped by the mind. God has to be known through love and not through an intellectual search for miracles.

That is the reason why I do not perform miracles for those who are closest and dearest to me. I would rather have no following than use miracles for convincing others of my divinity. It is true that, while loving me, people often do have spiritual experiences that were hitherto unknown to them; and these experiences help them in the further opening of their hearts. But they are not meant to feed the mental craving for intellectual conviction, and they should not be regarded as the goal.

When a person has his eye on the results of actions instead of being concerned solely with their intrinsic worth, he is trying to tackle spiritual problems through the mind alone and, in doing so, is interfering with the proper functioning of the heart.

**Spirit glimpsed only
through heart**

Mind wants to have all kinds of things and therefore seeks objective proofs, convictions, and assurances. This demand of the

mind fetters the spontaneous outflow of love, which at once depends upon and furthers true spirituality. You cannot love through the intellect. What you may get through the mind is a *theory* of love, but not love itself. The kind of knowledge that certain types of yogis have

attained through their minds is merely intellectual and dry. It cannot give them the spiritual bliss that characterizes the life of love.

Love and happiness are the only important things in life, and they are both absent in the dry and factual knowledge accessible to the intellect. Spirituality does not consist in intellectual knowledge of true values but in their realization. It is this knowledge of inner realization that is worthy of being called spiritual understanding, and this is far more dependent upon the heart than on the mind. Knowledge of the intellect alone is on the same footing as mere information, and being superficial, it moves on the surface of life. It gives the shadow and not the substance of reality. The hidden depths of the ocean of life can be gauged only by sounding the heart.

The intellect of most persons is harnessed by innumerable wants. From the spiritual point of view, such a life is the lowest type of human existence. The highest type of human existence is free from all wants and is characterized by sufficiency or contentment. Everyone is seeking happiness, but few have it; for lasting happiness dawns only when there is complete freedom from wants. This highest state of nonwanting may outwardly seem to imply inaction and to be easy to attain. However, if anyone tries to sit quietly without inwardly wanting anything and with full consciousness (that is, without going to sleep), he will realize that such a state of nonwanting is very difficult to attain and that it can be sustained only through tremendous spiritual activity. In fact, complete nonwanting is unattainable as long as life is mind-ridden. It is possible only in supramental existence. One has to go beyond the mind to experience the spiritual bliss of desirelessness.

Between the two extremes of a life harassed by wants and a life completely free from wants, it is possible to arrive at a mode of practical life in which there is harmony between the mind and the heart. When there is such harmony, the mind does not dictate the ends of life but only helps to realize those ends that are given by the heart. It does not lay down any conditions to be fulfilled before an utterance of the heart is adopted for translation into practical life. In other words, the mind surrenders its role of judge-which it is accustomed to play in its intellectual queries concerning the nature of the uni-

Freedom from wants possible only in supramental existence

Conditions for harmony between mind and heart

verse-and accepts unquestioningly the dictates of the heart.

The mind is the treasure-house of learning, but the heart is the treasure-house of spiritual wisdom. The so-called conflict between religion and science arises only when there is no appreciation of the

Heart must be free to determine ends of life

relative importance of these two types of knowledge. It is futile to try to glean knowledge of true values by exercise of the mind alone. Mind cannot tell you which things are worth having; it can only tell you how to achieve the ends accepted from intellectual sources. In most persons the mind accepts ends from the promptings of wants, but this means denial of the life of the spirit. Only when the mind accepts its ends and values from the deepest promptings of the heart does it contribute to the life of the spirit. Thus mind has to work in cooperation with the heart. Factual knowledge has to be subordinated to intuitive perceptions, and the heart has to be allowed full freedom in determining the ends of life without any interference from the mind. The mind has a place in practical life, but its role begins after the heart has had its say.

Spiritual understanding is born of harmony between mind and heart. This harmony of mind and heart does not require the mixing up of their functions. It does not imply cross-functioning but cooperative

Harmony of mind and heart implies cooperative functioning

functioning. Their functions are neither identical nor coordinate. Mind and heart must of course be balanced, but this balance cannot be secured by pitting the mind against the heart or by pitting the heart against the mind. It can be attained not through mechanical tension but through intelligent adjustment. Mind and heart may be said to be balanced when they serve their proper purpose and when they perform their respective functions without erring this way or that. It is only when they are so balanced that there can be true harmony between them. Such harmony of mind and heart is the most important condition of the integral, undivided life of spiritual understanding.

The Problem of Sex

Sex is decidedly one of the most important problems with which the human mind is confronted in the domain of duality. It is one of the givens in the makeup of human nature that one has to deal with. Like

Element of sex

everything else in human life, sex comes to be judged through the opposites, which are the necessary creations of the limited mind.

Just as the mind tries to fit life into a scheme of alternatives—such as joy or pain, good or bad, solitude or company, attraction or repulsion—in relation to sex it tends to think of indulgence and repression as alternatives from which there is no escape.

It seems as if the mind must accept the one alternative or the other. Yet it cannot wholeheartedly accept either. When it tries repression, it is dissatisfied with its lot and longingly thinks of indulgence. When it tries indulgence, it becomes conscious of its bondage to the senses and seeks freedom by going back to mechanical repression. The mind remains dissatisfied with *both* alternatives, and there thus arises one of the most vital and complicated problems of human life.

In order to solve the problem of sex, the mind must first understand that both alternatives are equally the creation of imagination working under the deluding influence of

Opposites of indulgence and repression

craving. Craving is implicitly present in the repression of sex as well as in its gratification. Both result in the vitiation of consciousness through lust or the desire for

sensations. The mind is therefore inevitably restless in either alterna-

tive. Just as when there are clouds in the sky, there is gloom and lack of sunshine, whether it rains or not; so when the human mind is shrouded by craving there is a diminution of being and lack of true happiness, whether this craving is gratified or not.

The mind when restless with desire creates an illusory idea of happiness in the gratification of desire and then, knowing that the soul remains dissatisfied even after gratification of desire, seeks freedom through repression. Thus searching for happiness and freedom, the mind gets caught up in the opposites of indulgence and repression, which it finds equally disappointing. Since it does not try to go *beyond* these opposites, its movement is always from one opposite to the other and consequently from one disappointment to another.

Thus, craving falsifies the operation of imagination and presents the mind with the option between the alternatives of indulgence and repression, which prove to be equally deceptive in their promise of

**False promises
of opposites**

happiness. However, in spite of alternate and repeated disappointment in indulgence as well as in repression, the mind usually does not renounce the cause of unhappiness, which is craving. Hence, while experiencing disappointment in repression, it is easily susceptible to the false promise of gratification; and while experiencing disappointment in gratification, it is easily susceptible to the false promise of purely mechanical repression.

This is like moving within a cage. The gateway to the spiritual path of internal and spontaneous renunciation of craving remains closed for those who have not the good fortune to be awakened by a

**Renunciation of
craving through
awakening**

Perfect Master. True awakening is the entering into the path of wisdom-which, in course of time, surely leads to the freedom and abiding happiness of life eternal.

Internal and spontaneous renunciation of craving is as different from mechanical repression as it is from indulgence. Mind turns to the mechanical repression of craving because of disappointment, but it turns to internal and spontaneous renunciation of craving because of disillusionment or awakening.

The need for indulgence or mechanical repression arises only when the nature of craving is not clearly grasped. When aspirants become fully awake to the inevitable bondage and suffering entailed by craving, they begin voluntarily to disburden themselves of craving

through intelligent understanding. The question of indulgence or repression arises only when there is craving. The need for both vanishes with the complete disappearance of craving. When the mind is free from craving, the mind can no longer be moved by the false promises of indulgence or mechanical repression.

However, it should be borne in mind that the life of freedom is nearer to the life of restraint than to the life of indulgence (though in quality it is essentially different from both). Hence for aspirants, a life of strict celibacy is preferable to married life, if restraint comes to them easily without undue sense of self-repression. Such restraint is difficult for most persons and sometimes impossible, and for them married life is decidedly more helpful than a life of celibacy. For ordinary persons, married life is undoubtedly advisable unless they have a special aptitude for celibacy.

Just as the life of celibacy requires and calls forth the development of many virtues, married life in turn also nourishes the growth of many spiritual qualities of utmost importance. The value of celibacy lies in the habit of restraint and the sense of detachment and independence it gives. But as long as the mind is not altogether free from craving, there is no true freedom. In the same way, the value of marriage lies in the lessons of mutual adjustment and the sense of unity with the other. True union or dissolution of duality is possible, however, only through divine love, which can never dawn as long as there is the slightest shadow of lust or craving in the mind. Only by treading the path of inner and spontaneous renunciation of craving is it possible to attain true freedom and unity.

For those who are celibate as well as for married persons, the path of inner life is the same. When aspirants are drawn by the Truth, they long for nothing else; and as the Truth increasingly comes within their ken, they gradually disburden themselves of craving. Whether in celibacy or in marriage, they are no longer swayed by the deceptive promises of indulgence or mechanical repression, and they practice internal and

spontaneous renunciation of craving until they are freed from the deceptive opposites. The path of perfection is open to aspirants whether in celibacy or in marriage; and whether they begin from celibacy or from marriage will depend upon their sanskaras and karmic ties of the past. They cheerfully accept the conditions that their past lives have determined for them and utilize these conditions for spiritual advancement in the light of the ideal they have come to perceive.

Aspirants must choose one of the two courses that are open to them. They must take to a life of celibacy or to a married life and must avoid at all costs a cheap compromise between the two. Promiscuity in sexual gratification is bound to land the aspirants in the most pitiful and dangerous chaos of ungovernable lust. As such diffused and undirected lust veils the higher values, it perpetuates entanglement and creates in the spiritual path insuperable difficulties to the internal and spontaneous renunciation of craving. Sex in marriage is entirely different from sex outside marriage. In marriage the sanskaras of lust are much lighter and are capable of being removed more easily. When a sexual relationship is accompanied by a sense of responsibility, love, and spiritual idealism, conditions for the sublimation of sex are much more favorable than when it is cheap and promiscuous.

In promiscuity the temptation to explore the possibilities of mere sexual contact is formidable. It is only by the maximum restriction of the scope of mere sex that aspirants can arrive at any real understanding of the values attainable through the gradual transformation of sex into love. If the mind tries to understand sex through increasing the scope of sex, there is no end to the delusions to which it is prey-for there is no end to the enlarging of its scope. In promiscuity the suggestions of lust are necessarily the first to present themselves to the mind, and the individuals are doomed to react to people within the limitation of this initial perversion and thus close the door to deeper experiences.

Truth cannot be grasped by skipping over the surface of life and multiplying superficial contacts. It requires the preparedness of mind, which can center its capacities upon selected experiences and free itself from its limiting features. This process of discrimination

between the higher and the lower, and the transcendence of the lower in favor of the higher, is made possible through wholehearted concentration and a real and earnest interest in life. Such wholehearted concentration and real interest is necessarily precluded when the mind becomes a slave to the habit of running at a tangent and wandering between many possible objects of similar experience.

In married life the range of experience to be had in the company of the partner is so wide that the suggestions of lust are not necessarily the first to present themselves to the mind. There is therefore a real opportunity for the aspirants to recognize and annul the limiting factors in experience. By the gradual elimination of lust and the progression through a series of increasingly richer experiences of love and sacrifice, they can finally arrive at Infinity.

The Sanctification of Married Life

Most persons enter into married life as a matter of course, but marriage will become a help or a hindrance according to the manner in which it is handled. There is no doubt that some immense spiritual possibilities are accessible through married life, but all this depends upon having the right attitude. From the spiritual point of view, married life will be a success only if it is thoroughly determined by the vision of Truth. It cannot offer much if it is based upon nothing more than the limited motives of mere sex, or if it is inspired by considerations that usually prevail in a business partnership. It has to be undertaken as a real spiritual enterprise that is intended to discover what life can be at its best. When the two partners launch together upon the spiritual adventure of exploring the higher possibilities of the spirit, they cannot at the outset limit their experiment by any nice calculations concerning the nature and amount of individual gain.

Married life almost always makes many demands upon both partners for mutual adjustment and understanding, and creates many problems that were not originally expected. Though this might in a sense be true of life in general, it is particularly true of married life. In married life two souls get linked in many ways, with the result that they are called upon to tackle the whole complex problem of personality rather

**Married life a
spiritual enterprise**

**Married life utterly
different from
promiscuity**

than any simple problem created by some isolated desire. This is precisely why married life is utterly different from promiscuous sexual relations. Promiscuous sex attempts to separate the problem of sex from other needs of the developing personality and seeks to solve it in isolation from them. Although this kind of solution might seem to be easy, it turns out to be very superficial and has the further disadvantage of sidetracking aspirants from attempting the real solution.

The relative values of the various sides of the limited personality can best be appreciated when they become intertwined and appear in varied settings and perspectives. It is difficult to discriminate between

**Married life calls
forth sublimation**

them if they appear fitfully in a disconnected series. In married life there is ample room for varied experience, with the result that the different tendencies-latent in the mind begin to organize around the crystallized scheme of married life. This organization of varied purposes not only provides an unlimited field for discrimination between the higher and lower values but also creates between them a necessary tension, which requires and calls forth effective and intelligent sublimation.

In one sense married life may be looked upon as the intensification of most human problems. As such it becomes the rallying ground for the forces of bondage as well as for the forces of freedom, the factors of ignorance as well as the factors of light. As

**Conditions of marriage
precipitate changes
in inner life**

the married life of ordinary persons is determined by mixed motives and considerations, it inevitably invites an uncompromising opposition between the higher and the lower self. Such opposition is necessary for the wearing out of the lower self and the dawning of the true divine Self.

Married life develops so many points of contact between two souls that severance of all connection would mean the unsettlement and disarrangement of practically the whole tenor of life. Since this difficulty of breakingaway from one another invites and precipitates inner readjustment, marriage is really a disguised opportunity for the souls to establish a real and lasting understanding that can cope with the most complex and delicate situations.

The spiritual value of married life is directly related to the nature of the preponderant factors that determine its daily course. If it is based upon shallow considerations, it can deteriorate into a partner-

ship in selfishness aimed against the rest of the world. If it is inspired by lofty idealism, it can rise to a fellowship that not only requires and calls forth increasingly greater sacrifices for each other but actually becomes a medium through which the two souls can offer their united love and service to the whole family of humanity. When married life is thus brought into direct line with the divine plan for the evolution of the individuals, it becomes a pure blessing for the children who are the fruit of the marriage. For they have the advantage of absorbing a spiritual atmosphere from the very beginning of their earthly career.

Married life must be in line with divine plan

Though the children are thus the beneficiaries of the married life of the parents, the married life of the parents is in its turn enriched by the presence of the children. Children give to parents an opportunity for expressing and developing a real and spontaneous love in which sacrifice becomes easy and delightful. And the part played by children in the life of parents is of tremendous importance for the spiritual advancement of the parents themselves. It therefore follows that when children make their appearance in married life, they ought to be wholeheartedly welcomed by the parents.

Married life enriched by children

In view of the claims that children have on married lives, birth control deserves careful attention and critical examination. The question must not be considered from the point of view of any one special or limited interest but from the standpoint of the ultimate well-being of the individuals and society. The right opinion in this respect, as in all respects, must above everything be based upon spiritual considerations. The attitude that most persons have toward birth control is oscillating and confused because it contains an admixture of good and bad elements. While birth control is right in its aim of securing the regulation of population, it is disastrously unfortunate in the choice of its means.

Birth control

There can be no doubt that the regulation of childbearing is often desirable for personal and social reasons. Uncontrolled breeding intensifies the struggle for existence and may bring about a social order where ruthless competition becomes inevitable. Apart from creating a responsibility for parents, which they may be unable to

adequately discharge, it becomes an indirect and contributory cause of crime, war, and poverty. Though humane and rational considerations demand and justify all serious attempts to regulate the birth of children, the use of physical means for securing this purpose remains fundamentally indefensible and unjustifiable.

The purely physical means generally advocated by the supporters of birth control are most objectionable from the spiritual point of view. Although the physical means of birth control are advocated on humani-

**Physical means
remove incentive
for mental control**

tarian grounds, they are almost always used by the generality of people to serve their own selfish ends and to avoid the responsibility of bearing and bringing up children. Since the physical consequences

of yielding to lust can be so successfully avoided through the use of these means, those who have not begun to awaken to the higher values have no incentive to moderation in the gratification of passion. They thus become victims of excessive indulgence and bring about their own physical, moral, and spiritual ruin by neglecting mental control and becoming slaves to animal passion.

The easy use of physical means obscures the spiritual side of the question and is far from contributory to the awakening of individuals to their real dignity and freedom as spiritual beings. Thoughtless and

**Mental control
indispensable for rising
from passion to peace**

uncontrolled indulgence must inevitably lead to reaction and spiritual bondage. For spiritual aspirants in particular, but also for all human beings (because they are all potentially spiritual aspirants), it is ex-

tremely inadvisable to rely upon physical means for the regulation of childbearing. For such regulation the individuals must rely upon nothing but mental control.

Mental control secures the humanitarian purposes that inspire birth control but keeps clear of the spiritual disasters entailed by the use of physical means. Mental control is not only useful for regulating the number of children but is also indispensable for restoring to humanity its divine dignity and spiritual well-being. Only through the wise exercise of mental control is it possible for humanity to rise from passion to peace, from bondage to freedom, and from animality to purity. In the minds of thoughtful persons the much ignored spiritual side of this question must assume the importance it deserves.

Since the woman has to undertake the trouble and the responsibility of bearing and rearing children, she may seem to be affected more seriously by any possible failure in mental control than the man. In

Joint responsibility of parenthood fact, it does not mean any real unfairness to the woman. While it is true that the woman has to undertake the trouble and the responsibility of bearing and rearing children, she

also has the compensating joy of feeding and cuddling them. Thus the joy of motherhood is much greater than the joy of fatherhood. Further, the man must also face and shoulder the economic and educational responsibilities for the children. In a properly adjusted marriage there need not be any injustice in the distribution of parental responsibility to be shared between the man and the woman. If both are truly conscious of their mutual responsibility, inconsiderateness will give way to an active and cooperative endeavor to attain full mental control. In the event there is any failure in mental control, they will cheerfully and willingly discharge the joint responsibility of parenthood.

For those who are not prepared to undertake the responsibility of children, there is only one course left to them. They must remain celibate and practice strict mental control; though such mental control

Children must be welcome is extremely difficult to attain, it is not impossible. From the purely spiritual point of view, strict celibacy is best; but since it is so difficult, few can practice it. For those

who cannot practice it, the next best course is to marry rather than fall prey to promiscuity. Within married life one can learn to control animal passion. It is bound to be a gradual process; and in cases of failure in practicing control, the couple must allow nature to take its own course rather than interfere with it through artificial means. They must cheerfully welcome the consequences and be prepared to shoulder the responsibility of bringing up the children.

From the spiritual point of view, birth control must essentially be effected through mental control and nothing else. Physical means are under no circumstances advisable even when the partners seek to use

Physical means become addictive them merely as a provisional and secondary aid, without intending to ignore the ideal of developing mental control. While using physical means they can never arrive at

real mental control, though they might truly want it in earnest. On the

contrary, they become addicted to the use of physical means and even begin to justify them.

To explain still more clearly, what happens in the use of physical means is that, while the individuals think they are using them merely as a preliminary step before mental control is fully developed, they actually get addicted to their use and become slaves to the habit. Though they may remain for some time under the delusion that they are trying to develop mental control (side by side with the use of physical means), they are actually losing it gradually. In short, mental power is necessarily undermined by reliance on physical means. Thus the use of physical means is detrimental to the development of self-control and is positively disastrous for spiritual advancement. It is therefore entirely inadvisable even for the best of motives.

In the beginning of married life the partners are drawn to each other by lust as well as love; but with conscious and deliberate cooperation they can gradually lessen the element of lust and increase the element of love. Through this process of sublimation, lust ultimately gives way to deep love. By the mutual sharing of joys and sorrows the partners march on from one spiritual triumph to another -from deep love to ever deeper love — till the possessive and jealous love of the initial period is entirely replaced by a self-giving and expansive love. In fact, through the intelligent handling of marriage they may traverse so much of the spiritual path that it needs only a touch by a Perfect Master to raise them into the sanctuary of Eternal Life.

**Spiritual advancement
through married life**

Love

Life and love are inseparable from each other. Where there is life, there is love. Even the most rudimentary consciousness is always trying to burst out of its limitations and experience some kind of unity with other forms. Though each form is separate from other forms, in reality they are all forms of the same unity of life. The latent sense for this hidden inner reality indirectly makes itself felt even in the world of illusion through the attraction that one form has for another form.

Love pervades universe

The law of gravitation, which all the planets and the stars are subject to, is in its own way a dim reflection of the love that pervades every part of the universe. Even the forces of repulsion are in truth expressions of love, since things are repelled from each other because they are more powerfully attracted to some other things. Repulsion is a negative consequence of positive attraction. The forces of cohesion and affinity, which prevail in the very constitution of matter, are positive expressions of love. A striking example of love at this level is found in the attraction the magnet exercises for iron. All these forms of love are of the lowest type, since they are necessarily conditioned by the rudimentary consciousness in which they appear.

Love in inanimate nature

In the animal world love becomes more explicit in the form of conscious impulses that are directed toward different objects in the

surroundings. This love is instinctive, and it takes the form of gratifying different desires through the appropriation of suitable objects. When a tiger seeks to devour a deer, it is in a very real sense in love with the deer. Sexual attraction is another form of love at this level. All the expressions of love at this stage have one thing in common, namely, they all seek to satisfy some bodily impulse or desire through the object of love.

Human love is much higher than all these lower forms of love because human beings have fully developed consciousness. Though human love is continuous with the lower subhuman forms of love, in one way it is different from them. For henceforth its operations have to be carried on side by side with a new factor, which is reason. Sometimes human love manifests itself as a force that is divorced from reason and runs parallel to it. Sometimes it manifests itself as a force that gets mixed up with reason and comes into conflict with it. Finally, it expresses itself as a constituent of the harmonized whole where love and reason have been balanced and fused into an integral unity.

Thus human love can enter into three types of combination with reason. In the first type, the sphere of thought and the sphere of love are kept as separate as possible; that is, the sphere of love is practically inaccessible to the operation of reason, and love is allowed little or no access to the sphere of thought. Complete separation between these two aspects of the spirit is of course never possible. But when there is an alternate functioning of love and reason (oscillating in their predominance), we have love that is unilluminated by reason or reason unenlivened by love.

In the second type, love and reason are both simultaneously operative, but they do not work in harmony with each other. Though this conflict creates confusion, it is a necessary phase in the evolution of the higher state where there is a real synthesis of love and reason. In the third type of love, this synthesis between love and reason is an accomplished fact-with the result that both love and reason are so completely transformed that they precipitate the emergence of a new level of consciousness that, compared to the normal human consciousness, is best described as *superconsciousness*.

Human love makes its appearance in the matrix of ego-consciousness, which has countless desires. Love is colored by these factors in many ways. Just as we get an ever-changing variety of designs in a kaleidoscope by the various combinations of simpler elements, we find an almost limitless qualitative variety in the range of love owing to novel combinations of factors. And just as there are infinite shades of color in different flowers, there are diverse, delicate differences in human love.

Qualitative variety in love

Human love is encircled by a number of obstructive factors, such as infatuation, lust, greed, anger, and jealousy. In one sense, even these obstructive factors are either forms of lower love or the inevitable side results of these lower forms of love.

Lower forms of love

Infatuation, lust, and greed might be looked upon as perverted and lower forms of love. In infatuation a person is enamored of a sensual object; in lust he develops a craving for sensations in relation to it; and in greed he desires to possess it. Of these three forms of lower love, greed has a tendency to extend from the original object to the means of obtaining it. Thus a person becomes greedy for money or power or fame, which can be instruments for possessing the different objects that are craved. Anger and jealousy come into existence when these lower forms of love are thwarted or threatened to be thwarted.

These lower forms of love obstruct the release of pure love. The stream of love can never become clear and steady until it is disentangled from these limiting and perverting forms of lower love. The

Lower forms of love enemy of the higher

lower forms are the enemy of the higher. If consciousness is caught in the rhythm of the lower, it cannot emancipate itself from the self-created ruts, finding it difficult to get out of them and advance further. Thus the lower forms of love continue to interfere with the development of the higher form and have to be given up in order to allow for the untrammelled appearance of the higher form of love.

The emergence of higher love from the shell of lower love is helped by the constant exercise of discrimination.

Love and infatuation

Therefore, love has to be carefully distinguished from the obstructive factors of infatuation, lust, greed, and anger. In infatuation, the person is a passive

victim of the spell of conceived attraction for the object. In love there is an active appreciation of the intrinsic worth of the object of love.

Love is also different from lust. In lust there is reliance upon a sensual object and consequent spiritual subordination of oneself to it, whereas love puts one into direct and coordinate relation with the

Love and lust

reality behind the form. Therefore lust is experienced as being heavy, and love is experienced as being light. In lust there is a narrowing down of life, and in love there is an expansion of being. To have loved someone is like adding another life to your own. Your life is, as it were, multiplied, and you virtually live in two centers. If you love the whole world, you vicariously live in the whole world; but in lust there is an ebbing down of life and a general sense of hopeless dependence upon a form regarded as another. Thus, in lust there is the accentuation of separateness and suffering, while in love there is the feeling of unity and joy. Lust is dissipation; love is restoration. Lust is a craving of the senses; love is the expression of the spirit. Lust seeks fulfillment, but love experiences fulfillment. In lust there is excitement, and in love there is tranquility.

Love is equally different from greed. Greed is possessiveness in all its gross and subtle forms. It seeks to appropriate persons and gross objects, as well as such abstract and intangible things as fame and

Love and greed

power. In love, the annexation of another person to one's individual life is out of the question, and there is a free and creative outpouring that enlivens and replenishes the being of the beloved independently of any expectations for the self. We have the paradox that greed, which seeks the appropriation of another object, in fact leads to the opposite result of bringing the self under the tutelage of the object. Whereas love, which aims at giving away the self to the object, in fact leads to a spiritual incorporation of the beloved in the very being of the lover. In greed the self tries to possess the object, but is itself possessed by the object. In love the self offers itself to the beloved without any reservations, but in that very act it finds that it has included the beloved in its own being.

Infatuation, lust, and greed constitute a spiritual malady, which is often rendered more virulent by the aggravating symptoms of anger and jealousy. Pure love, in sharp contradistinction, is the bloom of spiritual Perfection. Human love is so tethered by these limiting

conditions that the spontaneous appearance of pure love from within becomes impossible. So when such pure love arises in the aspirant, it is always a gift. Pure love arises in the heart of the aspirant in response to the descent of grace from a Perfect Master. When pure love is first received as a gift of the Master, it becomes lodged in the consciousness of the aspirant like a seed in favorable soil; and in the course of time the seed develops into a plant and then into a full-grown tree.

The descent of the grace of the Master is conditioned, however, by the preliminary spiritual preparation of the aspirant. This preliminary preparation for grace is never complete until the aspirant has built into his spiritual makeup some divine attributes. For example, when a person avoids backbiting and thinks more of the good points in others than of their bad

Spiritual preparation for grace

points, and when he can practice supreme tolerance and desires good for others even at cost to himself—he is ready to receive the grace of the Master. One of the greatest obstacles hindering this spiritual preparation of the aspirant is *worry*. When, with supreme effort, this obstacle of worry is overcome, a way is paved for the cultivation of the divine attributes that constitute the spiritual preparation of the disciple. As soon as the disciple is ready, the grace of the Master descends; for the Master, who is the ocean of divine love, is always on the lookout for the soul in whom his grace will fructify.

The kind of love that is awakened by the grace of the Master is a rare privilege. The mother who is willing to sacrifice all and to die for her child, and the martyr who is prepared to give up his very life for his country are indeed supremely noble; but they have not necessarily tasted this pure love born through the grace of the Master.

Even the great yogis who sit in caves and on mountain tops and are completely absorbed in deep *samadhi* (meditative trance) do not necessarily have this precious love.

Pure love awakened through the grace of the Master is more valuable than any other stimulus that may be utilized by the aspirant. Such love not only combines in itself the merits of all the disciplines but excels them all in its efficacy to lead the aspirant to the goal. When this love is born, the aspirant has only one desire—and that is to be

united with the divine Beloved. Such withdrawal of consciousness from all other desires leads to infinite purity; therefore nothing purifies the aspirant more completely than this love. The aspirant is always willing to offer everything for the divine Beloved, and no sacrifice is too difficult for him. All his thoughts are turned away from the self and come to be exclusively centered on the divine Beloved. Through the intensity of this ever-growing love, he eventually breaks through the shackles of the self and becomes united with the Beloved. This is the consummation of love. When love has thus found its fruition, it has become *divine*.

Divine love is qualitatively different from human love. Human love is for the *many* in the One, and divine love is for the *One* in the many. Human love leads to innumerable complications and tangles,

Divine love and human love

but divine love leads to integration and freedom. In divine love the personal and the impersonal aspects are equally balanced; in human love the two aspects are in alternating ascendancy.

When the personal note is predominant in human love, it leads to utter blindness to the intrinsic worth of other forms. When, as in a sense of duty, love is predominantly impersonal, it often makes one cold, rigid, and mechanical. A sense of duty comes to the individual as an external constraint on behavior, but in divine love there is unrestrained freedom and unbounded spontaneity. Human love in its personal and impersonal aspects is limited; divine love with its fusion of the personal and the impersonal aspects is infinite in being and expression.

Even the highest type of human love is subject to the limitations of the individual nature, which persists till the seventh plane of involution of consciousness. Divine love arises after the disappearance

In divine love the lover becomes one with Beloved

of the individual mind and is free from the trammels of the individual nature. In human love the duality of the lover and the beloved persists, but in divine love the lover and the Beloved become one. At this stage

the aspirant has stepped out of the domain of duality and becomes one with God; for Divine Love *is* God. When the lover and the Beloved are one, that is the end and the beginning.

It is for love that the whole universe sprang into existence, and it

is for the sake of love that it is kept going. God descends into the realm of Illusion because the apparent duality of the Beloved and the lover is eventually contributory to His conscious enjoyment of His own divinity. The development of love is conditioned and sustained by the tension of duality. God has to suffer apparent differentiation into a multiplicity of souls in order to carry on the game of love. They are His own forms, and in relation to them He at once assumes the roles of the divine Lover and the divine Beloved. As the Beloved, He is the real and the ultimate object of their appreciation. As the divine Lover, He is their real and ultimate savior, drawing them back to Himself. Thus, though the whole world of duality is only an illusion, that illusion has come into being for a significant purpose.

Love is the reflection of God's unity in the world of duality. It constitutes the entire significance of creation. If love were excluded from life, all the souls in the world would assume complete externality to each other; and the only possible relations and contacts in such a loveless world would be superficial and mechanical. It is because of love that the contacts and relations between individual souls become significant. It is love that gives meaning and value to all the happenings in the world of duality. But while love gives meaning to the world of duality, it is at the same time a standing challenge to duality. As love gathers strength, it generates creative restlessness and becomes the main driving power of that spiritual dynamic which ultimately succeeds in restoring to consciousness the original unity of Being.

The Infinity of the Truth

Most persons are under the impression that anything that can claim to have spiritual importance must necessarily be very great from the worldly point of view. Thus, to be considered spiritual, an act must have far-reaching effects or must substantially affect an extensive area of life. They are constantly judging the worth of an action by the magnitude of its consequences. Man is ordinarily so immersed in the objects of the gross world that the dimensions, magnitudes, and quantities of the gross world unconsciously creep into his estimate of spiritual worth and pervert his evaluation.

Source of error in spiritual valuation

All this confusion is due to the fact that man's mind is often dominated by mathematical ideas, even when it is concerned with estimates of a spiritual nature. But that which is spiritually great is different in kind from that which is mathematically great. The mathematical idea of infinity is constructed by imagining the collection of an infinite number of units, each of which has a fixed and identical value or importance. Actually such mathematical infinity is unreachable even in imagination, because for any imaginable number we can conceive a number that would be still greater. Each unit is false if it is taken to have separate and exclusive existence or importance. The mathematical idea of infinity thus turns out to be a product of an imagination activated by false assumptions.

Mathematical infinity

Spiritual infinity is not a result of imaginative additions of the

false. It is Reality itself, which is perceived when false imagination is at rest. The infinity of the Truth cannot suffer any increase through additions, nor can it suffer any decrease through subtractions. In fact, nothing *can* be added to it and nothing *can* be taken away from it, because it is all-inclusive and leaves no room for any other, small or great. It is immeasurable, indivisible, and integral.

Spiritual infinity

The infinity of the Truth remains unaffected by any changes in the universe. All that happens in the universe is phenomenal and as such amounts to zero from the viewpoint of the Truth. An earthquake, for example, is regarded as an appalling and disastrous calamity by the worldly-minded because of the immense destruction of life and property it brings. However, even a calamity like this cannot in any way touch the infinite Truth, which is at the heart of Reality. In fact, the spiritual infinity of the Truth does not suffer any limitation even if the entire universe is dissolved. Therefore it is futile to measure it in terms of what is great according to the standards of the world.

The illusion that most aspirants find difficult to shake is the belief that infinite Truth is an object that has to be attained in some distant future, and that all life is just a means for this attainment. If Truth were to be confined only to the future and not to the past or the present, it would not be infinite. It would at once become limited as an event that has its origin in time. All that life is and has, is at once deprived of intrinsic significance if it comes to be regarded as merely instrumental to some far-off event. This is definitely a false point of view.

Truth not goal only for future

Life is not meant to be rich in spiritual significance at some distant date, but it can be so at every moment if the mind is disburdened of illusions. Only through a clear and tranquil mind is the true nature of spiritual infinity grasped — not as something that is yet to be but that already has been, is, and ever will be eternal Self-fulfillment. When every moment is rich with eternal significance, there is neither the lingering clinging to the dead past nor a longing expectation for the future but an integral living in the eternal Now. Only through such living can the spiritual infinity of the Truth be realized in life.

Eternal Now

It is not right to deprive the present of all importance by subordi-

nating it to an end in the future. For this means the imaginary accumulation of all importance in the imagined future rather than the perception and realization of the true importance of everything that exists in the eternal Now. There cannot be an ebb and flow

Fullness of being

in eternity, no meaningless intervals between intermittent harvests, but a fullness of being that cannot suffer impoverishment for a single instant. When life seems to be idle or empty, it is not due to any curtailment of the infinity of the Truth but to one's own lack of capacity to enter into its full possession.

Just as it is not right to save up all spiritual importance for some anticipated future, it is equally not right to arrogate it exclusively to things that create much ado. The great and grand things of life are not the only ones surcharged with spiritual

Great and grand things

meaning. A thing need not be unusual or particularly striking in order to be spiritually significant. The unusual and the striking exist relative to the usual and the habitual, and they are not in themselves necessarily representative of absolute spiritual beauty.

Thus it is not necessary for an individual to give huge sums of money for a cause in order to be spiritually great. A poor person may be unable to do this and yet be none the less spiritual if he gives what he can. It is not the amount that endows the gift with spiritual meaning; it is the spirit in which it is given. In fact, a large donation may often be accompanied with pride or some selfish motive, and then it loses its spiritual value. Even a small gift, given with humility and utterly unselfish love, is endowed with much greater spiritual value.

Spiritual life is not a matter of quantity but of inherent quality of living. Spiritual infinity includes in its scope all phases of life. It comprises acts that are great as well as acts that are small. Being greater than the greatest, spiritual infinity

**Spiritual infinity
comprises greatest
and smallest**

is also smaller than the smallest; and it can equally express itself through happenings irrespective of whether they are outwardly small or great. Thus a smile or a look stands on the same level as offering one's life for a cause, when the smile or the look springs from Truth-consciousness. There are no gradations in spiritual importance when all life is lived in the shadow of Eternity. If life were to consist only of big things and if all the little things were

to be omitted from its scope, it would not only be finite but would be extremely poor. The infinite Truth, which is latent in everything, can reveal itself only when life is seen and accepted in its totality.

Limitation comes into existence owing to ego-centered desires and self-will. Possessiveness in all its forms leads to a life of limitation. For example, if one covets the love of someone but instead of winning the love of that person loses it to another, there ensues a narrowing down and strangling of the free life of the spirit—and one has an acute consciousness of limitation. This is the origin of the pain of suffocating jealousy. But if one looks at the situation with a heart purged of longing, the love that is received by the other will be seen in its natural beauty. In the clarity of perception that comes through nonpossessiveness, one will not only taste the freedom of nonduality but also its joy. When someone else receives that love, it is like oneself receiving it—since no longer does one insist upon the claims of a single form, having identified oneself with life in all its forms.

**Freedom and joy
of nonduality**

In nonduality there is freedom from limitation, as well as the knowledge and appreciation of things as they are. In nonduality alone is there the realization of the true spiritual infinity that secures abiding and unfading bliss. The limitation of jealousy is like all other limitations, such as anger, hate, and cravings: they are all of one's own creation. All finiteness and limitations are subjective and self-created.

**Realizing spiritual
infinity through
nonduality**

With the surrenderance of self-will and ego-centered imagination, there arises a true perception of the infinite worth of that which IS.

When the infinity of the Truth is adequately grasped from the point of view of nonduality, this understanding also becomes fruitful for the adequate solution of social problems based on duality as an irreducible fact. Mere manipulation of numbers, however clever, can neither yield the

Social problems

right adjustment between the individual and society, nor can it yield true harmony between various groups that come to exist within the society.

If social claims of a general nature are determined by the considerations of a small minority, the interests of the vast majority remain unreconciled; and the majority remains inevitably in rivalry and oppo

sition to the minority. On the other hand, in democratic countries the claims of a general nature are determined by consideration of the majority viewpoint rather than by the minority. This point of view, however, is still within the domain of duality, where the many exist; and therefore the problem of minorities remains unsolved. Since their interests remain unreconciled, the minority remains inevitably in rivalry and opposition to the majority.

As long as a social problem is dominated by the idea of numbers and multiplicity, there is no lasting solution for it. The lasting solution can come only when it is illuminated by the truth of the indivisible totality and intrinsic unity of all. The One in all cannot be contacted through the multiplication of the many but only by shedding the false idea of the many. Any number, however great, is bound to be finite. Spiritual infinity is not a number, however great; it is the sole Reality without rival.

Where there are many, there is necessarily comparison between them. There is a smaller and a greater, a hierarchy of claims, privileges, and rights; and all valuation gets twisted by the recognition of gradations of different types. From the spiritual point of view all these are forms of false consciousness, because the same Truth vibrates in everyone. The unity that is experienced in Realization, however, is necessarily different from the principle of equality.

In duality, one person may be equal to any other single person in respect to claims, rights, and worth, but can never be equal within duality to two or more persons. On the other hand, the spiritual infinity of the Truth has room for the paradox that one individual can be regarded as the totality itself. Therefore one person is not only capable of being looked upon as equal in importance to two or more persons but even as equal to all. In spiritual infinity all comparison is out of place. There is no smaller or greater, or hierarchy of claims, privileges, and rights; and valuation remains unclouded because of the unmarred perception of the One in each and all. Since everyone in creation is not only in spiritual infinity but *is* that indivisible spiritual infinity, then everyone is first in importance and no one is second.

In social life the recognition of the spiritual infinity of the Truth will mean a challenge to individualism as well as to collectivism. It initiates a new way of thinking in terms of an indivisible totality, and

**Civilization based on
infinity of Truth**

it discards all the relative values of comparison in favor of the recognition of the intrinsic worth of everything. In a civilization based upon a true idea of the spiritual infinity of the Truth, there will therefore be no problems of majority and minority, of rivalry and competition, and of those comparisons and laborious assessments that so often become a shelter for pride and separative ego. Life then will be infinitely simple and integral, because the illusions that create rifts and complexities will all have disappeared

The Search for God

Most persons do not even suspect the real existence of God, and naturally they are not very keen about God. There are others who, through the influence of tradition, belong to some faith or another and acquire the belief in the existence of God from their surroundings. Their faith is just strong enough to keep them bound to certain rituals, ceremonies, or beliefs; and it rarely possesses that vitality which is necessary to bring about a radical change in one's entire attitude toward life. There are still others who are philosophically minded and have an inclination to believe in the existence of God, either because of their own speculations or because of the assertions of others. For them, God is at best an hypothesis or an intellectual idea. Such lukewarm belief in itself can never be sufficient incentive for launching upon a serious search for God. Such persons do not know of God from personal knowledge, and for them God is not an object of intense desire or endeavor.

A true aspirant is not content with knowledge of spiritual realities based on hearsay, nor is he satisfied with pure inferential knowledge. For him the spiritual realities are not the object of idle thinking, and the acceptance or rejection of these realities is fraught with momentous implications for his inner life. Hence he naturally insists upon direct knowledge about them. This may be illustrated from an occurrence in the life of a great sage. One day he was discussing spiritual topics with

True aspirant seeks direct knowledge of spiritual realities

a friend who was quite advanced upon the path. While they were engaged in this discussion their attention was diverted to a dead body that was being carried past them. "This is the end of the body but not of the soul," the friend remarked. "Have you *seen* the soul?" asked the sage. "No," the friend answered. And the sage remained skeptical about the soul, for he insisted upon *personal* knowledge.

Although the aspirant cannot be content with secondhand knowledge or mere guesses, he does not close his mind to the possibility that there could be spiritual realities that have not come within his experience. In other words, he is conscious of the limitations of his own individual experience and refrains from making it the measure of all possibilities. He has an open mind toward all things that are beyond the scope of his experience. While he does not accept them on hearsay, he also does not rush to deny them. The limitation of experience often tends to restrict the scope of imagination; and thus a person comes to believe that there are no realities other than those which may have come within the ken of his past experience. But usually some incidents or happenings in his own life will cause him to break out of his dogmatic enclosure and become really open-minded.

This stage of transition may also be illustrated by a story from the life of the same sage, who happened to be a prince. Some days after the incident mentioned above, as he was riding on horseback, he came upon a pedestrian advancing toward him.

Illustrative story Since the way of the horse was blocked by the presence of the pedestrian, the sage arrogantly ordered the man out of the way. The pedestrian refused, so the sage dismounted and the following conversation was held: "Who are you?" asked the pedestrian. "I am the prince," answered the sage. "But I do not *know* you to be the prince," said the pedestrian and continued, "I shall accept you as a prince only when I know you to be a prince and not otherwise." This encounter awakened the sage to the fact that God *may* exist even though he did not know Him from personal experience, just as he was actually a prince although the pedestrian did not know it from his own personal experience. Now that his mind was open to the possible existence of God, he set himself to the task of deciding that question in earnest.

God either exists or does not exist. If He exists, the search for Him

is amply justified. And if He does not exist, there is nothing to lose by seeking Him. However, man does not usually turn to a real search for

Ordinary person God as a matter of voluntary and joyous enterprise. He has to be driven to this search by disillusionment with those worldly things that allure him and from which he cannot deflect his mind. The ordinary person is completely engrossed in his activities in the gross world. He lives through its manifold experiences of joys and sorrows without even suspecting the existence of the deeper Reality. He tries as best he can to have pleasures of the senses and to avoid different kinds of suffering.

indifferent to existence of God

“Eat, drink, and be merry” is the ordinary individual’s philosophy. But in spite of his unceasing search for pleasure, he cannot altogether avoid suffering; and even when he succeeds in having pleasures of the senses, he is often satiated by them. While he thus goes through the daily round of varied experiences, there often arises some occasion when he begins

Occasions that provoke thought

to ask himself, “What is the point of all this?” Such a thought may arise from some untoward happening for which the person is not mentally prepared. It may be the frustration of some confident expectation, or it may be an important change in his situation demanding radical readjustment and the giving up of established ways of thought and conduct. Usually such an occasion arises from the frustration of some deep craving. If a deep craving happens to meet an impasse so that there is not the slightest chance of it ever being fulfilled, the psyche receives such a shock that it can no longer accept the type of life that may have been accepted hitherto without question.

Under such circumstances a person may be driven to utter desperation. And if the tremendous power generated by this disturbance of the psyche remains uncontrolled and undirected, it may even lead to serious mental derangement or attempts to

Unharnessed power of desperateness is destructive commit suicide. Such a catastrophe overcomes those in whom desperateness is allied with thoughtlessness, for they allow impulse to have free and full sway. The unharnessed power of desperateness can only work destruction. The desperateness of a thoughtful person under similar circumstances is altogether different in results because the energy it releases is intelli-

gently harnessed and directed toward a purpose. In the moment of such *divine* desperateness, a person makes the important decision to discover and realize the aim of life. There thus comes into existence a true search for lasting values. Henceforth the burning query that refuses to be silenced is, “What does it all lead to?”

When the mental energy of an individual is thus centered upon discovering the goal of life, he uses the power of desperateness creatively. He can no longer be content with the fleeting things of this life,

**Divine desperateness
the beginning of
spiritual awakening**

and he is thoroughly skeptical about the ordinary values he had so far accepted without doubt. His only desire is to find the Truth at any cost, and he does not rest satisfied with anything short of the Truth.

Divine desperateness is the beginning of spiritual awakening because it gives rise to the aspiration for God-realization. In the moment of divine desperateness, when everything seems to give way, the person decides to take any risk to ascertain what of significance to his life lies *behind* the veil.

All the usual solaces have failed him, but at the same time his inner voice refuses to reconcile itself completely with the position that life is devoid of all meaning. If he does not posit some hidden reality he

God or nothing

has not hitherto known, then there is nothing at all worth living for. For him there are only two alternatives: either there

is a hidden spiritual Reality, which prophets have described as God, or everything is meaningless. The second alternative is utterly unacceptable to the whole of man’s personality, so he must try the first alternative. Thus the individual turns to God when he is at bay in worldly affairs.

Now since there is no direct access to this hidden reality that he posits, he inspects his usual experiences for possible avenues leading to a significant *beyond*. Thus he goes back to his usual experiences

**Reevaluation of
experiences in light
of posited Reality**

with the purpose of gathering some light on the path. This involves looking at everything from a new angle and entails a reinterpretation of each experience. He now not only has experience but tries to fathom its

spiritual significance. He is not merely concerned with what it is but with what it *means* in the march toward this hidden goal of existence.

All this careful reevaluation of experience results in his gaining an insight that could not come to him before he began his new search. Reevaluation of an experience amounts to a new bit of wisdom, and each addition to spiritual wisdom necessarily brings about a modification of one's general attitude toward life. So the purely intellectual search for God-or the hidden spiritual Reality-has its reverberations in the practical life of a person. His life now becomes a real experiment with perceived spiritual values.

The more he carries on this intelligent and purposive experimentation with his own life, the deeper becomes his comprehension of the true meaning of life. Until finally he discovers that as he is undergoing

**Finding God is coming
to one's Self**

a complete transformation of his being, he is arriving at a true perception of the real significance of life as it is. With a clear and tranquil vision of the real nature and worth of life he realizes that God, whom he has been so desperately seeking, is no stranger nor hidden and foreign entity. He is Reality itself and not a hypothesis. He is Reality seen with undimmed vision-that very Reality of which he is a part and in which he has had his entire being and with which he is in fact identical.

Thus, though he begins by seeking something utterly new, he really arrives at a new understanding of something ancient. The spiritual journey does not consist in arriving at a new destination where a person gains what he did not have or becomes what he was not. It consists in the dissipation of his ignorance concerning himself and life, and the gradual growth of that understanding which begins with spiritual awakening. The finding of God is a coming to one's own Self.