

DISCOURSES
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By

Meher Baba

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MEHER BABA

DISCOURSES

BY

MEHER BABA

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1945

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KING'S ROAD
AHMEDNAGAR

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CONTENTS

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	PAGE
1 WE MUST LIVE FOR GOD AND DIE FOR GOD	1
2 WORK FOR THE SPIRITUAL FREEDOM OF HUMANITY	2
3 THE TASK FOR SPIRITUAL WORKERS	7
4 THE INFINITY OF THE TRUTH	14
5 THE DYNAMICS OF SPIRITUAL ADVANCEMENT	21
6 GOOD AND EVIL	29
7 THE DEEPER ASPECTS OF SADHANA	37
8 THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE ASPIRANT (<i>Part I</i>)	48
9 THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE ASPIRANT (<i>Part II</i>)	54
10 THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE ASPIRANT (<i>Part III</i>)	59
11 THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE ASPIRANT (<i>Part IV</i>)	66
12 MAYA (<i>Part I</i>)	72
13 MAYA (<i>Part II</i>)	78
14 MAYA (<i>Part III</i>)	83
15 MAYA (<i>Part IV</i>)	89
16 THE CONDITIONS OF HAPPINESS (<i>Part I</i>)	94
17 THE CONDITIONS OF HAPPINESS (<i>Part II</i>)	102
18 GOD AS INFINITE LOVE	109

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Vol. V

We Must Live for God and Die for God

THIS war is a necessary evil; it is in God's plan, which is to awaken humanity to higher values. If humanity fails to profit by the lessons of war, it will have suffered in vain. This war is teaching that even the man in the street can rise to the greatest heights of sacrifice for the sake of a selfless cause ; and it is also teaching that all the mundane things of the world— wealth, possessions, power, fame, family and even the very tenor of life on earth—are transitory and devoid of lasting value. *The incidents of war shall, through the lessons which they bring, win over man for God, who is the Truth;* and they will initiate him into a new life which is inspired by true and lasting values- People are making unlimited sacrifices and enduring untold sufferings for the sake of their country or political ideology; they are, therefore, capable of the same sacrifices and endurance for the sake of God or the Truth. All religions have unequivocally claimed man for the life in the Truth; and it is sheer folly to fight in the name of religions. It is time that men had a fresh vision of the Truth that all life is one and that *God is the only thing which is real and the only thing that matters*. God is worth living for; and He is also worth dying for: all else is a vain and empty pursuit of illusory values.



Work for the Spiritual Freedom of Humanity

ALL over the world, the spirit of man is crying for Freedom. Love for Freedom and search for Freedom are the principal characteristics of humanity; *in all races and under all climes, in all countries and at all times, the*
The Cry for Freedom *watchword for the groping and struggling humanity has always been Freedom!* But there are very few persons who really understand the full implications of true and unqualified Freedom; and there are many who, in their partial understanding of the real conditions of freedom, strive only for the attainment of that kind of existence which gives them a sense of *relative* Freedom. Thus, *different persons long for different kinds of Freedom according to the different things which they have come to value.*

Freedom of life is sought in all the different departments of life; and *this imperative demand for Freedom usually expresses itself by fastening upon some external conditions of the kind of existence which people*
Kinds of Freedom *wish to lead.* Thus those who identify their being with their country, seek national or political Freedom; those who are animated by economic purposes seek economic Freedom; those who are inspired by religious aspirations of any kind seek Freedom of religion; and those who are enthusiastic about any sociological or cultural ideology seek Freedom of movement and Freedom of expression in respect of the ideals which they cherish and which they wish to propagate. But there are few who realize that the *basic* Freedom which alone gives

WORK FOR THE SPIRITUAL FREEDOM OF HUMANITY 3

the stamp of true value upon any of these different kinds of relative Freedom, is Spiritual Freedom. *Even when all the external conditions of free life are completely fulfilled and guaranteed, the soul of man would still remain in woeful bondage if it has failed to realise Spiritual Freedom.*

All the different types of Freedom which fasten upon some external conditions must, in their very nature, exist within certain limits; for the Freedom which an individual or community or state seeks must be consistent with *similar* Freedom for *other* individuals, communities or states. *National economic, religious or cultural Freedom expresses itself in and by means of the duality of existence: it lives on duality and is sustained by duality: therefore, it has necessarily to be relative and limited and cannot be infinite.* It exists in varying *degrees*; and even when it is won through persistent effort, it cannot be a permanent attainment, since the external conditions which have once been secured are not secured for ever but are capable of deterioration in the course of time.

Only Spiritual Freedom is absolute and unlimited; and when it is won through persistent effort, it is secured for ever. For, though Spiritual Freedom can and does express itself in and through the duality of existence, it is grounded in the realisation of the inviolable unity of all life, and is sustained by it. One important condition of Spiritual Freedom is freedom from all wanting. It is want that fetters life through attachment to the conditions which would fulfil that want; if there is no want, there is no dependence or limitation. The soul is enslaved through wanting. *When the soul breaks asunder the shackles of*

wanting, it emancipates itself from its bondage to the bodies, mind and the ego. This is the Spiritual Freedom which brings with it the final realisation of the unity of all life and puts an end to all doubts and worries.

It is only in Spiritual Freedom that one can have *abiding happiness and unimpaired self-knowledge*; it is only in Spiritual Freedom that there arises the supreme certainty of Truth-realisation: and it is only in Spiritual Freedom that there is the final ending of sorrow and limitation: and it is only in Spiritual Freedom that one can live for all, and yet be detached in the midst of all activities. Any other lesser type of freedom is comparable to a house which is built on sands; and any other lesser type of attainment is fraught with the fear of decay. Therefore, there is no gift greater than the gift of Spiritual Freedom, and there is no task more important than the task of helping others to have Spiritual Freedom. Those who have understood the supreme importance of Spiritual Freedom have not only to strive for it for themselves, but also to share the God-given duty of helping others to win it.

Those who are inspired by the spirit of selfless service are quick to render unto humanity all possible help through the provision of the necessities of life like clothes and shelter, food and medicine, education and other amenities of civilization; and in pursuance of the path of Duty, they are not only prepared to fight for defending the weak against cruel aggression and oppression, but also to lay down their very lives for the sake of others. All these types of service are great and good; but from the ultimate point of view, the help which secures Spiritual Freedom for humanity surpasseth them all, and it is insuperable in importance.

The way to help others in attaining Spiritual Freedom is far different from the way of rendering other types of help. To the hungry, you can provide food; and then they have only to

**The Way to Help
Others in Attaining
Spiritual Freedom**

eat it. To the naked, you can provide clothes; and they have only to wear them; and to the homeless ones, you can provide houses; and they have only to dwell in them. But to those who are in the agonies of spiritual bondage there is no *ready-made provision* which can give them immediate relief. *Spiritual Freedom has to be to be won by oneself for oneself through watchful and unflinching war against the lower self and the lower desires.* Those who would be the soldiers in the cause of Truth have to help all not only in launching upon the thrilling enterprise of attaining victory over oneself, but also in every step which they take towards that attainment; there is no other way of sharing their burden.

Ye my devotees, I have full confidence that you will share this burden. Many of you have, for years together, obeyed my orders and carried out my instructions, through faith in

The Call

me and love for me; you have stuck to me and my Spiritual Cause through storm and stress and thick and thin; and now the time has come for you to offer all your services in my Mission of helping humanity to tread the Spiritual Path for realising God. The eternal Truth that God alone is real has to be clearly understood and unreservedly accepted, and it has to be unequivocally expressed through words and deeds. *In the full realisation of the Truth, man shall attain Spiritual Freedom. No sacrifice is too big for setting man free from spiritual bondage and in helping him to inherit the Truth which alone shall bring abiding*

peace to all and which alone will unfailingly sustain an unassailable sense of universal fellowship, cemented by the ungrudging love of all, for all, as expressions of the same reality.

In this God-willed divinely-planned and predestined task of bringing Spiritual Freedom to humanity, you, my devotees, have to help me, even at the cost of life.

**The Need for Special
Instructions to Each**

In your duty of helping others to find God, you have to welcome every type of suffering and sacrifice. Those, desiring specific instructions in the line of work most suitable to their individual circumstances, may communicate with me.

*

The Task for Spiritual Workers

I am very happy that, in response to my Call, you have gathered to receive my Message for you. In the Path, the most important condition of discipleship is readiness to work for the Spiritual Cause of bringing humanity closer and closer to the Realisation of God. I am glad to note that through faith and love for me, you have whole-heartedly offered yourselves for sharing my universal work of *spiritualising the world*; and I have full confidence that *you will not only inherit for yourself the Truth which I bring, but also become enthusiastic and valiant torch-bearers for the humanity, which is enveloped in deep ignorance.*

Because of its supreme importance for the true and final well-being of humanity, Spiritual Work has a natural and imperative claim on all who love humanity; it is, therefore very necessary to be quite clear about its nature. The whole world is firmly established in *the false idea of separateness*, and being caught up in the illusion of duality, it is subject to all the complexities of duality. *The Spiritual Workers have to redeem the world from the throes of imagined duality by bringing home to it the Truth of the Unity of life.*

The root-cause of the illusion of manyness is that the soul, in its ignorance, identifies itself with its bodies or the ego-mind. The gross and the subtle bodies as well as the ego-minds of the mental bodies are all *mediums* for experiencing the different states of the world of duality; but they cannot be the mediums for knowing the true nature of the soul, which is above

them all. By being identified with the bodies or the ego-mind, the soul gets caught up in the ignorance of manyness. *The soul in all the bodies and ego-minds is really one undivided existence; but as it gets mixed up with these bodies and ego-minds, which are only its vehicles, it considers itself as limited, and looks upon itself as being only one among the many of creation instead of looking upon itself as being the only one reality without a second.*

Every soul is eternally and inviolably one with the one undivided and indivisible universal soul which is the sole reality; and yet *the false identification with the bodies or the ego-minds creates the illusion of manyness and differentiation within the whole in which there is, in fact, no room for any kind of separateness or duality.* Bodies or the ego-minds are only the mediums or the vehicles of consciousness; and as *the soul experiences the different planes of the world through its different mediums or vehicles, it goes through different states of consciousness.*

Most souls are unconscious of their true nature as God, who is the unity and reality of all souls; God-realisation is only *latently* present in them, since in them it has not yet come to be experienced consciously. But those, who have cast off the veil of duality, *experience the soul through itself independently of any mediums or vehicles;* and in this experience, *the soul consciously knows itself as being identical with God, who is the unity and the reality of all souls.* Life in the Truth of the unity of all, brings with it freedom from all limitations and sufferings; it is *the self-affirmation of the infinite as infinite.* In this state of spiritual freedom and perfection, ego-life is finally and completely surrendered in order to experience and release the Divine Life in the Truth; and God is known and affirmed as *the only reality which is worth living for.*

To realise God is to dwell in eternity; it is a *timeless experience*. But spiritual work exists in relation to the souls who are caught up in the mazes of the multiplicity of the creation which is bound by time.

The Importance of Time *Spiritual Workers cannot afford to ignore the element of time in creation; to ignore time would be to ignore the spiritual work itself. It is imperatively necessary to be discriminatively aware of the flow of time in creation; and it is particularly necessary to appreciate fully the supreme importance of the moment which is in near future and which shall witness the universal dispensation of the Truth of Spiritual Wisdom.*

The task for Spiritual Workers is to help me in this universal dispensation of the Truth to suffering humanity. You have not only to prepare humanity in receiving this Truth but

Warning to Spiritual Workers also for getting established in it. But it is extremely important to remember that *you can help others to gain spiritual freedom and to come out of the illusion of duality, only if you yourself do not miss this idea of unity while working for others who are inclined to create divisions where they do not exist and who allow no respite to Spiritual Workers.*

The minds of the people have to be completely purged of all forms of selfishness and narrowness if they are to inherit *Life in Eternity* which I bring; and it is by no means an easy

Obstacles in the Spiritual Work task to persuade people to give up their selfishness and narrowness. It is not by accident that the people are divided into the rich and the poor, the pampered and the neglected, the rulers and the ruled, the leaders and the masses, the oppressors and the oppressed, the high and the low, winners of laurels and the recipients of ignominy. These differences have been created and

sustained by those who, through their spiritual ignorance are attached to them and who are so much settled in *perverse thinking and feeling* that they are not even conscious of their perversity. They are accustomed to looking upon life as divided into inviolable compartments; and they are unwilling to give up their *separative* attitude. *When you launch upon your spiritual work, you will be entering into a field of divisions to which people desperately cling, which they accentuate and fortify and which they strive to perpetuate consciously or unconsciously.*

Mere condemnation of these divisions will not enable you to destroy them. *The divisions are being nourished by separative thinking and feeling; and separative thinking and*

Win Them over for Truth *feeling can yield only to the touch of love and understanding. You have*

to win people to the life of Truth; you cannot coerce them into spirituality. It is not enough that you should have unimpaired friendliness and untarnished goodwill in your own hearts; if you are to succeed in your work, you have to bring home to them the faith and the conviction that you are helping them to redeem themselves from bondage and suffering and in realising the Highest to which they are rightful heirs. There is no other way to help them in attaining spiritual freedom and enlightenment.

Hints for Spiritual Workers

For rendering spiritual help, you should have a clear understanding of the following four points:—

(i) *Apparent descent into the lower level: —*

It may often be necessary for you to *apparently* descend to the lower level of those whom you are trying to help. Though your purpose is to raise people to the higher level of consciousness, they might fail to profit

by what you say, if you do not talk in terms which they understand. What you convey to them through thought-feeling should not go over their heads; they are bound to miss it unless you adapt it to their capacity and experience. However, it is equally important to remember that while doing this, you should not *actually* lose your own high level of understanding. You will change your approach and technique as they gradually arrive at deeper and deeper understanding, and your apparent descent into the lower level will be only temporary.

(ii) *Spiritual understanding ensures all-sided progress:—*

You must not divide life into departments and then begin to deal with each department separately and exclusively. *Departmental thinking is often an obstacle for integral vision.* Thus, if you divide life into politics, education, morality, material advancement, science, art, religion, mysticism and culture, and then think exclusively of only one of these aspects, the solutions which you bring to life can neither be satisfactory nor final. But if you succeed in awakening spiritual inspiration and understanding, progress in all these departments of life is bound to follow automatically. As spiritual workers, you will have to aim at providing a complete and real solution for all the individual and social problems of life.

(iii) *Spiritual progress consists in the spontaneous growth of understanding from within:—*

As spiritual workers, you have also to remember that the spiritual wisdom which you desire to convey to others is already latently present in them, and that you have only to be instrumental in unveiling that spiritual wisdom. *Spiritual progress is not a progress of accumulating from without; it is a process of unfoldment from within. The*

Master is absolutely necessary for any one to arrive at self-knowledge; but the true significance of the help given by the Master consists in the fact that he enables others to come into the full possession of their own latent possibilities.

(iv) *Some questions are more important than answers:—*

You, as spiritual workers, must not lose sight of the real work which the Masters desire to get done through you. When it is clearly understood that the Spiritual Wisdom is latent in all, you will no longer be anxious to provide to others ready-made answers and solutions. In many cases you will be content *to set up for others a new problem or to clarify to others the nature of the problem with which they are faced*. You may have done your duty if you ask them a question which they would not themselves ask, when they are placed in some practical situation; and in some cases, *you will have done your duty if you succeed in putting them in a searching and questioning attitude*, so that they themselves begin to understand and tackle their problems along some more fruitful and creative line. To give them a deeper point of view, or suggest to them a fruitful line of thought and action, may itself mean much more than thrusting upon them the results of your judgment. But the questions which you may help them to formulate for themselves should neither be merely theoretical nor unnecessarily complicated. If they are simple, straight and fundamental, these questions will answer themselves, and people will find their own solutions. But you will have rendered indispensable and valuable service to them, because, without your tactful intervention, they would not have arrived at the solution of their multifarious problems from the *spiritual* point of view.

It has been seen that Spiritual Workers must necessarily be confronted with many obstacles; but

obstacles are meant to be overcome. Even if some of them seem to be insuperable, you have to do *your* best in helping others irrespective of results or consequences.

The Overcoming of Obstacles

Obstacles and their overcoming, success and failure, are all illusions within the infinite domain of Unity; and your task is already done when it is performed whole-heartedly. You are steadfast and one-pointed in your desire to help my Cause of awakening humanity to the sole reality and the ultimate worthwhileness of God and God alone; and you will get many opportunities for Spiritual Work. There is ample scope for work in this field. I am fully confident that you will lend yourself ungrudgingly for this work; and you will help it, if you unreservedly follow the *Spiritual Instructions* which shall be given to you separately.

You have to do your work without worrying about consequences irrespective of success or failure; but you may be sure that the result of work which is done in this spirit and with this understanding is forgone.

The Outcome of Spiritual Work

Through the untiring activities of Spiritual Workers, humanity shall be initiated into the new life of Abiding Peace and Dynamic Harmony, Unconquerable Faith and Unfading Bliss, Immortal Sweetness and Incorruptible Purity, Creative Love and Infinite Understanding.

*

The Infinity of the Truth

MOST persons are under the impression that anything which can claim to have spiritual importance must necessarily be something very big or great from the worldly point of view. Thus, **The Source of Error in Spiritual Valuation** for them, if an act is to be considered as being spiritual it must have far-reaching effects, or must substantially affect an extensive field of life; and they are constantly judging the worth of an action from the point of view of the magnitude of its consequences. Man is ordinarily so much 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.*

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 **Mathematical Infinity** 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 which have each a fixed and identical value or importance; but such mathematical infinity is actually unreachable even in imagination, because, for any imaginable number, we can conceive a number which would be greater than that number. But, *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 an outcome of an imagination which is activated by false assumptions.

Spiritual infinity is not a result of imaginative additions of the false; it is the reality itself which comes to be perceived, when false imagination is at rest. The infinity of the

Spiritual Infinity Truth cannot suffer any increase through any additions: nor can it suffer any decrease through any 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 the other, small or great. It is *immeasurable, indivisible and integral*.

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 point of view 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 which it brings; but 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, which most aspirants find it difficult to shake, is the belief that the Infinite Truth is an object which has to be attained in some distant future, and that all life is just a means for this attainment. But if the

Spiritual infinity is not an End in Future 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 which 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.

Life is not meant to be rich in spiritual significance at some distant date, but is so at every moment, if only the mind is disburdened of illusions. *It is only through a clear and tranquil mind that the true nature*
The Eternal Now *of spiritual infinity is grasped as something that is not yet to be but which already has been, is and ever will be an eternal self-fulfilment. 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. It is only through such living that the spiritual infinity of the Truth can be realised in life.*

It is not right to deprive the present of all importance by subordinating it to an end in future; for this means the imaginary accumulation of all importance in the imagined
Fullness of Being *future rather than the perception and realization of the true importance of everything that exists. There cannot be ebb and tide in eternity, no meaningless intervals between intermittent harvests, but a fulness of being which cannot suffer impoverishment of 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 it is due to one's own lack of capacity to enter into its full possession.*

Just as it is not right to pile up all spiritual importance for some anticipatory future, it is equally not right to arrogate it exclusively to *things that create ado*. The great and
Great and Grand Things *grand things of life are not the only ones which are surcharged with spiritual meaning. A thing need not be unusual or particularly striking in order to be spiritually significant. The unusual and the striking exist in relation to the usual*

and the habitual; they do not, in themselves, necessarily represent absolute spiritual beauty. Thus it is not necessary that a man should be able to give away huge sums of money for a cause if he is to be spiritually great; a man who is poor may not be able 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; and even a small gift, given with humility and utterly unselfish love, is bestowed with a much greater spiritual value.

Spiritual life is not a matter of quantities but of the inherent quality of living. Spiritual infinity includes in its scope all the phases of life; it comprehends acts which are great, as well as acts which are small. *Being greater than the greatest, spiritual infinity 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 own 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 will not only not be infinite, but will 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 looks upon the love of another with covetous eyes and finds that

instead of his getting the love of that person, some one else has it, there arises the narrowing down and strangling of

the free life of the spirit and an acute consciousness of limitation.

Freedom and the Joy of Non-duality This is the origination of the pain of suffocating *jealousy*. But, if one looks at the situation with a heart which is purged of longing, the love which is received by the other will be seen in its natural beauty; and *in the clarity of perception which comes through non-possessiveness, he will not only taste of the freedom of non-duality, but also of its joy*. Some one else receiving that love is like his own receiving it, since he now no longer insists upon the claims of a single form, but has identified himself with life in all its forms.

In non-duality there is freedom from limitation, and the knowledge and appreciation of things as they are; *and in non-duality alone is there the realisation of true spiritual infinity, that secures abiding*

Realising Spiritual Infinity Through Non-duality *and unfading bliss*. What is true of the limitation of jealousy is true of all other limitations like anger, hate and cravings; they are all one's own creation. *All finiteness and limitation is subjective and self-created; and with the surrenderance of self-will and ego-centered imagination, there arises the 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 non-duality, it also becomes fruitful for the adequate solution of the social problems. The social

Implications of Spiritual Infinity for Social Problems problems can never be adequately solved by a point of view which accepts duality as an irreducible fact. Mere manipulation of *numbers*, howsoever clever, can neither yield right adjustment between the individual and

the society; nor can it yield true harmony between the various groups which come to exist within the society.

If the 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

Minority and Majority In inevitable rivalry and opposition with the minority. On the other hand, in democratic countries, the claims of a general nature are determined by the considerations of majority rather than by the considerations of minority. But this point of view is still within the domain of duality, where there is the existence of the many; and, therefore, the problem of minorities remains unsolved; and since their interests remain unreconciled in this point of view, the minorities remain in inevitable rivalry and opposition to the majority.

As long as the social problem is dominated by the idea of numbers and multiplicity, there is no lasting solution for it; and the lasting solution can come only when it is illuminated

Indivisible Totality by the truth of *an indivisible totality and the intrinsic unity of all. The one in all cannot be contacted through the multiplication of the many, but by shedding the false idea of the many. Any number, howsoever great, is bound to be finite. The spiritual infinity is not a number, howsoever great; it is the sole reality without a rival.*

Where there are many, there is necessarily comparison between them; there is a smaller and a greater; there is hierarchy of claims, privileges and rights; and all valuation

The world of the many 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 every one. But the sameness which is experienced in Realisation is necessarily

different from the principle *of equality* which means that one person is equal to any other single person, in respect of claims, right and worth, but can never be equal to two or more persons.

On the other hand, the spiritual infinity of the Truth has room for the paradox that one person 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. *The one in each and all* *In spiritual infinity all comparison is out of place; there is no smaller or greater; or the hierarchy of claims, privileges and rights; and valuation remains unclouded because of the unmarred perception of the One in Each and All. Since every one in the creation not only is in the spiritual infinity but is that indivisible spiritual infinity, every one is first in importance and no one 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 it discards all the relative values of comparison *in favour of the recognition of the intrinsic worth of everything.* **The New Civilisation** In the civilisation, which is 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, which so often become a shelter of pride and separative ego. Life then will be infinitely simple and integral, because the illusions which create rifts and complexities will all have disappeared.

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The Dynamics of Spiritual Advancement

THE spiritual advancement begins when there is a radical change in the outlook of the worldly man. The worldly man lives mostly for the body; and, even in those pursuits

Subjugation of the Body for the Higher Life

which do not seem to have a direct reference to the body, the ultimate motive power of those pursuits is, in the last analysis, to be found in the desires connected with the body. For example, he lives to eat; he does not eat to live. He has not yet discovered any purpose which is clearly transcendent of the body; and he, therefore, naturally allows the body and its comforts to become the centre of all his pursuits. But, when he discovers a value in which the soul is predominant, the body is at once thrown into the background. The very maintenance of the body now becomes for him merely instrumental for the realisation of a higher purpose. *His body, which had hitherto been a hindrance to the true spiritual life, comes to be subjected for the release of higher life;* and it becomes, after this change in the point of view, less and less of a hindrance, until it becomes merely an instrument. At this stage, he attends to his bodily needs not with any special feeling of self-identification, but in the same spirit as that of the driver of the railway engine, who fills it with coal and water, so that it might be kept going.

The very beginning of spiritual advancement is conditioned by a searching for that goal for which man lives—*the goal for which he unconsciously loves and hates and for which he goes through the variegated joys and*

sufferings. But, though he may be stirred by the pull of of this incomprehensible and irresistible divine destiny, it may take a long time before he arrives at the mountaintop of Truth-realisation; and the path is all the time strewn with pitfalls and slippery precipices. Those who attempt to reach this mountaintop have to climb higher and higher; and, *even if a person has succeeded in scaling great heights, the slightest mistake on his part might mean his falling down from those very great heights*, so that he may have again to start from the beginning. Therefore the aspirant is never safe, unless he has the advantage of the help and guidance of a Perfect Master, who knows the ins and outs of the path, and who cannot only safeguard the aspirant from a possible fall, but lead him to the goal of realisation, without unnecessary relapses.

The aspirant, who has decided to reach the goal, carries with himself all the *sanskaras* which he has accumulated in the past, and, in the intensity of his spiritual longing, they remain half-suspended and ineffective for the time being. But, time and again, when there is the slackening of the spiritual effort, the *sanskaras* which had hitherto been suspended from action, gather fresh strength, and *arraying themselves in new formation, constitute formidable obstacles in the spiritual advancement of the aspirant*.

This might be illustrated by the analogy of the river. The powerful current of the river carries, along with it, great quantities of the worn-out earth, from the source and the banks; and, as long as these quantities are suspended in water, they do not hinder the flow of the river, though they might slow it down. But, when the current becomes

The Blocking of Advancement

The Analogy of the River

slower in the plains, and particularly towards the mouth, these quantities have a tendency to be deposited on the bed, and to form huge islands or deltas, which not only obstruct the current of the river, but often divert it, or even split it into smaller currents, and, on the whole, weaken the former force of the mighty river. Or again, when the river is in flood, it sweeps away all obstacles of trees, bushes and rubbish which it encounters; but, when these accumulate to a certain degree, they can constitute a serious hindrance to the flow of the river. In the same way, *the path of spiritual advancement is often blocked by the obstacles of its own creation, and these can be removed only through the help of the Master.*

The help of the Master is most effective when the aspirant surrenders his ego-life in favour of the unlimited life which the Master represents. Complete self-surrender is most difficult to achieve; and yet, the most essential condition of spiritual advancement is the *lowering down of egoism* to its minimum. **Egoism Must Disappear** The objective of spiritual advancement is not so much "works", but quality of life which is in no way curtailed by ego-consciousness. If the aspirant has many great and grand things to his credit, but has all the time claimed them to be his, his ego fastens itself upon his achievements and constitutes a formidable hindrance for the life unlimited. Hence comes the futility of rituals and ceremonies, acts of charity and good works, external renunciation and penances, when they are rooted in ego-consciousness.

It is, therefore, most necessary for the aspirant to keep free from the idea "I do this, and I do that." This does not mean that the aspirant is to keep clear of all *activity* through fear of developing this form of the ego. He may have to take to the life of action in order to wear

out the ego which he has already developed. So, he is caught up in the *dilemma that if he keeps inactive, he does nothing towards breaking through the prison of his ego-life; and, if he takes to a life of action, he is presented with the possibility of his ego being transferred to these new acts themselves.*

For spiritual advancement, the aspirant has to *avoid these two extremes* and yet to carry on a life of creative action. Treading the spiritual path is not like the riding of a saddled horse, but like walking on the sharp edge of a sword. Once the rider is on the horse-back, he is practically at rest sitting with more or less, ease and requiring very little effort or careful attention to go ahead. But treading the spiritual path requires utmost attention and carefulness, since the path affords no halting places or room for expansion of the ego-life, this way or that way. *He who enters the path can neither remain where he is, nor can he afford to lose his balance either way; he is like one who attempts to walk on the sharp edge of a sword.*

To avoid inaction on the one hand and the pride of action on the other, it is necessary for the aspirant to construct, in the following manner, a provisional and working ego which will be entirely subservient to the Master. Before beginning a thing, the aspirant thinks that it is not *he* who is doing it, and that it is the *Master* who is getting it done through him; and, after doing it, he does not tarry to claim the results of action or enjoy them, but becomes free of them by offering them to the Master. By training his mind in this spirit, he

succeeds in creating a new ego which, though provisional and working, is amply able to become a source of that confidence, feeling, enthusiasm and 'go' which true action must express. But, this new ego is spiritually harmless, since it derives its life and being from the Master who represents Infinity, and since, when the time comes, it can be thrown away, like a garment. There are thus two types of ego—one which can only add to the limitations of the soul, and the other which helps towards emancipation. The passage through the limiting ego of the worldly man to the egolessness of the infinite life lies through the construction of the artificial ego which can be generated through the wholehearted allegiance to the Master. *The construction of a new ego which is entirely subservient to the Master is indispensable in the dynamics of spiritual advancement.*

The aspirant has been accustomed to derive his zest in life from his limited ego; and an immediate transition from the life of egoistic action to that of egoless action is, for him, at once impossible and un-inspiring. *If the aspirant were to be immediately required to avoid all forms of ego-consciousness, he would have to revert to a state of negative passivity, where there is no room for the joy of expression, or he would have to seek expression through activity which is merely automatic, like that of a lifeless machine, so that he cannot derive any sense of fulfilment.* The real problem before the aspirant is that he has to abandon his life of the limited ego and enter into the limitlessness of the egoless life without entering into a *coma* where there would be the ebbing down of all life. Such *coma* may give temporary relief from the limitation of the ego-life, but it cannot, by itself, initiate the aspirant into the infinity of egoless activity. It brings the suffocation of the life

of limitation, without bringing the fulfilment of the egoless life.

This is the reason why, in most cases, the spiritual advancement of an aspirant has to be very gradual and often takes several lives. Those cases, where a person seems to have taken long strides in his spiritual advancement, are either cases where the aspirant has merely re-capitulated the advancement which he had already secured in previous lives, or are cases of special intervention by the Master. But, in normal cases, the advancement of the aspirant has to be gradual. *The distance between the limited life of the ego and the limitlessness of the ego-life has to be covered by gradual stages of ego-transformation, so that egoism is replaced by humility, surging desires are replaced by steadily growing contentment, and selfishness is replaced by selfless love.*

The ego, which is entirely subservient to the Master, is not only indispensable and spiritually harmless, but is directly contributory to the spiritual advancement of the aspirant, because it brings him closer and closer to the Master, through the life of selfless service and love. The constant inward contact with the Master which it secures, makes him particularly amenable to the special help which the Master alone can give. The aspirant who renounces the life of an uncurbed and separative ego, in favour of a life of self-surrender to the Master, is, through this new subservient ego, operating as an instrument in the hands of the Master. It is, in reality, the *Master* who is working through him. And, just as an instrument has a tendency to go wrong during the period of its being put to use, the aspirant is also likely

to get out of order during the period of his working in the world. From time to time, the instrument has to be cleansed, overhauled, repaired and set right; in the same way, *the aspirant who, during his work, may have developed new perversities, entanglements and shelters for the personal ego, has to be put into working order, so that he can go ahead in his spiritual sojourn.*

The aspirant, who enlists himself in the service of the Master, may be compared to the broom by means of which the Master cleanses the world of its impurities. While doing this work, the groom is bound to accumulate the dirt of the world; and, unless he is cleansed again and again and given a new tone, he is to be less efficient in the course of time. Each time the aspirant goes to the Master, he goes to him with a crop of fresh spiritual problems. He might have got caught up in new entanglements connected with craving for honour, riches or other worldly things that allure man. If he pursues these, he might get them; but, he might be far from the goal of experiencing God on Whom he had set his heart. It is only through the active intervention of the Master that such spiritual diseases can be cured. *This task of curing spiritual diseases is comparable to the performance of an operation by a surgeon who promptly removes the very cause which may have been sapping at the vital energies of man. If a person develops physical ailments and complaints, he must go to the doctor or the surgeon; and, if he develops spiritual troubles, he must go to the Master. Recurring contact with the Master is most necessary throughout the process of spiritual advancement.*

The Master helps the aspirant, in his own invincible ways, which have no parallel in the ways of the world.

But if the aspirant is to be the recipient of this help, he must make a real effort to surrender himself to the divine will of the Master. The personal ego which the aspirant renounced in his first surrenderance to the Master might reappear in a new aspect, even within the artificial ego which was meant to be completely subservient to the Master, and create disorder to its smooth working. So, this new resurrection of the limited personal ego of the aspirant requires to be counteracted through fresh surrenderance to the Master. The series of successive resurrections of the personal ego have to be accompanied by a series of fresh acts of surrenderance to the Master.

Progression from one surrenderance to greater surrenderance is a progression from minor conquest to a major one; and the more complete forms of surrenderance represent the higher states of consciousness, since they secure greater harmony between the aspirant and the Master, so that the infinite life of the Master can flow through the aspirant, in more abundant measure. *Spiritual advancement is a story of a succession of one surrenderance after another, until the goal of the final surrenderance of the separate ego-life is completely achieved.* The last surrenderance is the only complete surrenderance. It is the reverse side of the final union, in which the aspirant becomes one with the Master; and, therefore, in a sense *the most complete surrenderance to the Master is equivalent to the attainment of the Truth*, which is the ultimate goal of all spiritual advancement.

Good and Evil

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 received as being pleasant and some unpleasant; some experiences are apprehended as restricting the life of man and some as leading it towards 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 some point of view.*

Man's conception of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable goes on evolving and changing according to the nature of desires which happen to be dominant at any particular moment. But, as long as there is in his mind any kind of desire, he is impelled to appraise his experience in relation to that desire, and divide it into two parts, the one contributing towards 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

which increase the fetters of desire are bad; and those experiences and actions which tend to emancipate the mind from the limiting desires are good. But, since *good experiences and actions also exist in relation to a desire*, they also bind, just in the same way as bad experiences and actions. All binding can truly disappear only when all desires disappear; and, therefore, true freedom comes when good and bad balance each other and get so merged into each other that they leave *no room for any choice by the limited self of desire*.

When human consciousness is fully developed, we already find in it preponderance of bad elements, since at the sub-human stages of evolution, consciousness has been chiefly operating under the limiting tendencies like lust, greed and anger. The experiences and actions which are created and sustained by such ego-centred tendencies have left their imprints on the developing mind; and the mind has already stored these imprints in the same manner as the cinematic 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, minimal 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 of the animal *sanskaras* are good, most of them are bad; and so, at the start, human consciousness finds itself subject to a propelling force, which

Is mostly bad. *Right from the beginning of human evolution, the problem of emancipation consists in cultivating and developing good sanskaras, so that they might overlap and annul the accumulated sanskaras.* The cultivation of good *sanskaras* is achieved by fostering experiences and actions which are 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 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 the pride for his moral attainments.* No one, howsoever 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 not to be able to improve and become good. Every one, however depraved he may be, can gradually become better and better until he becomes the best example for all mankind. There is always hope for every one: *none is utterly lost and none need despair.* But it remains true that *the way to divinity lies through the renunciation of the evil in favour of the good.*

The gradual unfoldment of the good brings, in its train, love, generosity and peace; and the good *sanskaras* deposited by the manifestations of these qualities over-

lap and balance the opposite bad *sanskaras* of lust, greed and anger. *When there is an exact balancing and overlapping of the good and bad sanskaras,*

there is at once a termination of both types of sanskaras and the precipitation of consciousness from the state of bondage to the state of freedom. The credit side and the debit side must be exactly equal to each other if the account is to be closed. But mostly; either the debit side of the account is greater or the credit side of the account is greater, and the account is kept running. It is important to note that the account is kept running not only by the excess of debit side but also by the excess of credit side. It can be closed only when the two sides balance each other. But, in the field of *sanskaras*, such balance is a rare happening. At any particular time, either the bad *sanskaras* are predominant or the good *sanskaras* are predominant. And just as the account can be kept running either by the excess of debit side or by the excess of credit side, the life of the limited self is prolonged and sustained either through the excess of bad *sanskaras* or through the excess of good *sanskaras*. The limited self can linger through good *sanskaras* just in the same way as it can exist through bad *sanskaras*; and what is required for its final extinction is an exact balancing and overlapping of the bad and the 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 had been purely a question of equal quantities, it could be solved only through the persistent accumulation of the good *sans-*

karas. If there is the cessation or the slowing down of the accumulation of bad *sanskaras*, and if, side by side, there is an unceasing accumulation of the good *sanskaras* at a greater rate, sooner or later, good *sanskaras* would be a quantitative match for the accumulated bad *sanskaras*; and they would effect the necessary balancing. But, *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 centre of consciousness, is a *specific* problem according 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 *sanskaras*, there is a possibility of accumulating in some directions an excess of good *sanskaras*, side by side with the existence of bad *sanskaras* 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. And the aspirant is not only likely to ignore the forms of attachments which 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 involving the termination of the limited ego; and even if the other forms of attachments which had remained 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 centre of consciousness is unconsciously gravitating towards the final emancipation of Truth-realisation; and there is a natural tendency in the mind to invite to itself just that opposite which would meet the spiritual requirements of the situation. But it is not a mechanical and automatic process which could be left to itself, independently of the 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 benefit of the unflinching help of the Master, who alone has a direct and unerring insight into what exactly is necessary in a specific case.

It has been seen that the 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 having self-affirmation through an opposite identification with this, rather than that a continuation of separative existence in a new form.* In some cases, this new house which 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; but the loosening of the grip of the good, presents a more difficult problem, since *the good carries a semblance of self-justification through favourable contrast with the bad.* However, in 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 changes the house of identification with the evil for the house of identification with the good, because the latter gives him a greater sense of expansion. But sooner or later the aspirant perceives the new abode to be no less of a limitation; and then, he finds that the process of breaking through it is less difficult than the process of breaking through its former abode of identification with the evil. *The difficulty concerning the abode of evil is not so much of perceiving that it is a limitation, but in actually dismantling it after arriving at such perception: and the difficulty concerning the abode of the good is not so much in dismantling it, as of 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 of accumulation. But 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 the bad *sanskaras* or through the 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 *sanskaras*, or through some good *sanskaras* balancing and overlapping the bad *sanskaras* and some bad *sanskaras* balancing and overlapping the good *sanskaras*. If a dish is filthy, you may cleanse it by covering it with soap and then by washing it with water. This is like the good *sanskaras* overlapping the bad *sanskaras*. Now, if the dish is full

Analogies for the Overlapping of Good and Bad Sanskaras

of grease, one way of getting rid of the grease is to cover it with dust, and then wash it with water. Dust is the most greaseless thing in the world, and is, therefore, the opposite of grease, so that when dust is applied to the dish which is tainted with grease, it is easy to cleanse it. This is like the bad *sanskaras* overlapping the good *sanskaras*.

When there is exact balancing and overlapping of the good and bad *sanskaras*, they both disappear, with the result that what remains is a clean state of mind on

The State of Realisation is Free from all Sanskaras and is Beyond Good and Bad

which nothing is written, and which, therefore, reflects the Truth as it is, without any perversions. Nothing is ever written on the soul.

The *sanskaras* are deposited on the mind and not 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, in Truth. This is Realisation. In this state, the mind itself with all its good and bad sanskaras has disappeared.* It is a state beyond the mind; and, it, therefore, is also beyond the distinction of good and bad. From the point of view of this state, there is only one indivisible existence characterised by infinite love, peace, bliss and knowledge, and *the perpetual strife between the good and the evil has disappeared, because there is neither good nor evil, but only one inclusive and undivided life of God.*

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The Deeper Aspects of Sadhana

FOR most persons, spiritual *Sadhana* consists in the external observance of the rituals and the ceremonies prescribed by their own religion. Such observance has,

Transition from Rituals and Ceremonies to the Deeper Aspects of Sadhana

at the initial stages, its own value as a factor, which contributes towards self-purification and mental discipline; but ultimately the aspirant has to transcend the phase of external conformity and get initiated into the deeper aspects of spiritual *Sadhana*. When this happens, the external aspect of religion falls into the background and the aspirant gets interested in the essentials revealed in all the great religions. *True Sadhana consists in a life which is based upon spiritual understanding*; and it comes to a person who is really keen about spiritual realities.

Sadhana must never be regarded as consisting in the application of rigid laws. In life, there cannot be and need not be strict and unrelieved uniformity. In the spiritual field,

Diversity of Sadhanas

there is ample room for *the diversity of Sadhanas*. The *Sadhana* which is useful for a particular aspirant is bound to be relative to his *sanskaras* (impressions) and temperament and so, although the spiritual goal for all is the same, the *Sadhana* of the aspirant may be peculiar to himself. However, since the goal is the same for all, the differences with regard to *Sadhana* are not of vital importance; and *the deeper aspects of Sadhana have importance for all the aspirants, in spite of their differences*.

Sadhana in the spiritual field is bound to be essentially different from *Sadhana* in the material field, because the

end in the spiritual field is intrinsically different from the end in the material field. The end sought in the material field is a product which has its beginning and end in *time*; the end sought in the spiritual field is completeness, which transcends the limitations of time. Therefore, in the material field, *Sadhana* is directed towards the achievement of something which is yet to be; but *in the spiritual field, Sadhana is directed towards the realisation of that which always has been, will ever be and now IS.*

The spiritual goal of life is to be sought in life itself and not outside life; so, *Sadhana*, in the spiritual field, has to be such that it brings life nearer to the kind of life which we look upon as spiritual. **Sadhana in the Spiritual Field is Different from Sadhana in the Material Field** *Sadhana*, in the spiritual field, does not aim at the achievement of a limited objective which may have its day, and then ingloriously disappear for ever; it aims at bringing about a radical *change in the quality of life*, so that it permanently becomes *an expression of the Truth in the eternal NOW*. *Sadhana* is spiritually fruitful if it succeeds in bringing the life of the individual in tune with the Divine Purpose, which is to enable every one to have conscious enjoyment of the *God-state*. *Sadhana* has to be completely adapted to the nature of this end.

In the spiritual field, every part of *Sadhana* must aim at the realisation of the spiritual goal of *securing godliness in all the phases of life*; therefore, the different aspects of spiritual *Sadhana* will, from one point of view, themselves represent different degrees of approximation to the state of spiritual perfection. *Sadhana* is perfect to the extent to which it expresses the

Sadhana Merges into its Goal

spiritual ideal, *i.e.*, it is perfect according to the degree to which it resembles the perfect life. Thus, the more disparity there exists between the *Sadhana* and the ideal which it aims at, the less perfect it is; the less disparity there exists between *Sadhana* and the ideal which it aims at, the more perfect it is; and *when Sadhana is perfect or complete, it merges into the goal, which is a spiritually perfect life, so that the division of means and end is swallowed up in an inviolable integrity of indivisible being.*

This relation between *Sadhana* and the end sought through it may be contrasted with the relation which obtains between them in the material field. In the material field, the end usually falls more or less entirely outside the *Sadhana* through which it is secured; and there is a clear disparity of nature between *Sadhana* and the end achieved through it. Thus pulling the trigger of a gun may become a means of killing a man; but the killing of man is essentially different in kind from the pulling of the trigger. In the spiritual field, however, the *Sadhana* and the end sought through it cannot be completely external to each other; and there is not any clear disparity of nature between them. In the spiritual field, it is not possible to maintain an unbridgeable gulf between *Sadhana* and the end sought through it, and this gives rise to the fundamental *paradox* that, *in the spiritual field, the practising of a Sadhana in itself amounts to a partial participation in the goal.* Thus, it becomes intelligible why many of the spiritual *Sadhanas* have to be taken seriously *as if* they were, in themselves, the goal.

In its deeper aspects, spiritual *Sadhana* consists in treading (1) the Path of Knowledge (*Dnyana Marga*), (ii) the Path of Action (*Karma Marga*) and (iii) the Path of Love or Devotion (*Bhakti Marga*). The *Sadhana* of

knowledge finds its expression through (a) the exercise of detachment which is born of true understanding, (b) the different forms of meditation and (c) the constant use of discrimination and intuition. Each of these modes through which spiritual knowledge is sought or expressed requires explanatory comments.

The individual soul is entangled in the world of forms and does not know itself as part and parcel of the being of God. This ignorance constitutes the bondage of the soul; and spiritual *Sadhana* must aim at securing emancipation from this bondage. External renunciation of the things of this world is, therefore, often counted among the *Sadhanas* which lead to liberation; but though such external renunciation may have its own value, it is not absolutely necessary. What is needed is an *internal renunciation of craving* for the things of this world; and when craving comes to be given up, it matters little whether the soul has or has not externally renounced the things of this world, because the soul has internally disentangled itself from the illusory world of forms and has prepared itself for the state of *Mukti*. *Detachment is an important part of the Sadhana of Knowledge.*

Meditation is another means through which spiritual knowledge is sought. Meditation should not be regarded as some queer pursuit peculiar to the dwellers of the caves. Every person finds himself meditating on something or another. The difference between such natural meditation and the meditation of the aspirant is that the latter is *systematic and organised thinking about things that have spiritual importance*. Meditation, as *Sadhana*, may be personal or impersonal.

Meditation is personal when it is concerned with some spiritually perfect soul! A suitable object for personal meditation may be taken (according to the inclination of the aspirant) from among the *Avatars* or the Masters of the past or from living Perfect Masters. Through such personal meditation, the aspirant imbibes all the divine qualities or the spiritual knowledge of the masters; and since it involves love and self-surrender, *it invites the Grace of the Master which alone can give final realisation*. So the *Sadhana* of personal meditation not only makes the aspirant like the Master on whom he meditates but also prepares his way for *being united with the Master in the Truth*.

Impersonal meditation is concerned with the formless and infinite aspect of God. This may lead a person towards the realisation of the impersonal aspect of God; but on the whole this meditation becomes barren unless the aspirant has been duly prepared by the pursuit of personal meditation and the life of virtue. In the ultimate realisation of infinity, there is neither the limitation of personality nor the distinction of the opposites of good and evil; but in order to have that realisation, one has to pass from the personal to the impersonal, and from goodness to God, who is beyond the opposites of good and evil. Another condition of attaining Truth through impersonal meditation is that the aspirant should be able to make his mind absolutely still. But this becomes possible only when all the diverse *sanskaras* (impressions) in the mind have vanished; and as the *final wiping out of the sanskaras is possible only through the Grace of a Master*, the Master is indispensable even for success along the path of impersonal meditation.

The *Sadhana* of Knowledge remains incomplete unless the aspirant exercises constant discrimination and unveils his highest intuitions. The realisation of God comes

to the aspirant, who uses discrimination as well as his intuitions about true and lasting values. *Infinite knowledge is latent in every one; but it has to be unveiled. The way to increase knowledge is to put into practice that bit of spiritual wisdom which a person may happen to have.* The teachings, which have come to humanity through the Masters of wisdom and the inborn sense for values which the aspirant brings with himself, shed sufficient light upon the *next* step which the aspirant has to take. The difficult thing is to act upon the knowledge which he has. One of the best methods of adding to one's own spiritual wisdom is to make use of the knowledge which one already has.

If *Sadhana* of knowledge is to be fruitful, it must, at every step, be implemented by due emphasis on action. Everyday life must be guided by discrimination and inspired by highest intuitions.

Importance of Action *Karma Yoga* or the Path of Action consists in *acting up to the best intuitions of the heart without fear or hesitation.* In *Sadhana*, what counts is *practice* and not mere *theory*. Sound practice is far more important than sound theory. Practice which is based upon right knowledge will of course be more fruitful; but *even a mistake in practical direction may have its own valuable lessons to bring.* Mere theoretical speculation, however, remains spiritually barren, even when it is flawless. Thus, a person, who is not very learned but who sincerely takes the name of God and does his humble duties wholeheartedly, may actually be much nearer God than one who knows all the metaphysics of the world but who does not allow any of his theories to modify his everyday life.

The difference between the comparative importance of theory and practice in the field of *Sadhana* may be

brought out by means of a well-known story of an ass.

The Story of an Ass An ass, who was plodding along a path for a long time and was very hungry, happened to see two heaps of grass—one at some distance on the *right* side of the path and the other at some distance on the *left* side of the path. Now, the ass thought that it is of utmost importance to be absolutely certain about which of the two heaps has a clear balance of advantages, before he could intelligently decide upon going to one heap rather than another. If he decided without thorough thinking and without having *sufficient* grounds for his preference, that would be impulsive action and not intelligent action. So, he first considered the amount of distance at which the two heaps were respectively placed from the path which he was treading. Unfortunately for him, after elaborate consideration, he came to the conclusion that both the heaps of grass were at an equal distance from the path. So he began to think of some other consideration which might enable him to make a 'right' choice and began to ponder upon the respective sizes of the two heaps. But, even with regard to this second attempt to be *theoretically sure* before taking an action, his efforts were not crowned with success, because he came to the conclusion that both the heaps of grass were of equal size. Then, with the tenacity and patience of the ass, he considered other things like the quality of the grass; but, as fate would have it, in respect of *all* the points of comparison which he could think of, the two heaps turned out to be equally desirable.

Ultimately it so happened that since the ass could not discover any deciding factor which would make his preference appear theoretically sound, he did not actually go to any of the two heaps of grass but went straight ahead, hungry and tired as before and not a

whit better for having encountered upon two heaps of grass. If the ass had gone to any one heap, without insisting upon theoretical certainty about having chosen wisely, he might perhaps have gone to a heap which was not as good as the other; but in spite of any mistakes in his intellectual judgment, he might have been infinitely better off, from the *practical* point of view. In spiritual life, it is not necessary to have a complete map of the Path in order to begin traveling; on the contrary, insistence upon having such complete knowledge may actually hinder rather than help the onward march. *The deeper secrets of spiritual life are unraveled to those who take risks and who make bold experiments with it;* they are not meant for the idler who seeks guarantees for every step. He, who from the shore speculates above the ocean, shall know only its surface; but, he, who would know the depths of the ocean, must be willing to take a plunge into it.

Fulfillment of the *Sadhana* of *Karma Yoga* requires that action should spring from the perception of the Truth. Enlightened action does not bind because it is not rooted in the ego and is selfless. **Selfless Service** represents ignorance, while selflessness is a reflection of the Truth; and the real justification for the life of selfless service is to be found in this intrinsic worth of such life and not in any ulterior result or consequence. But *the paradox of selfless action is that it actually brings to the aspirant much more than could ever come within the purview of ignorant selfishness.* Selfishness leads to a narrow life, which moves round the false idea of a limited and separate individual; but selfless action contributes towards the dissipation of the illusion of separateness and turns out to be the gateway to the unlimited life where there is the realisation of *All-self-ness*. What a

person has may be lost and what he desires to have may never come to him; but if he parts with something, in the spirit of an offering to God, it has already come back to him. Such is the *Sadhana of Karma Yoga*.

Even more important than the *Sadhana* of Knowledge or Action is *Bhakti* or Love. Love is its own excuse for being. It is complete in itself and does not need to be supplemented by anything else. The greatest **Love** of saints have been content with their love for God, desiring nothing else. Love is no love if it is based upon any expectation. In the intensity of Divine Love, the lover becomes one with the Divine Beloved. *There is no Sadhana greater than love: there is no law higher than love; and there is no goal which is beyond love, for love in its divine state becomes infinite.* God and love are identical; and one who has Divine Love has already got God.

Love may be regarded as being at once a part of *Sadhana* and a part of the goal; but the intrinsic worth of love is so patent that it is often considered a mistake to look upon it as a *Sadhana* for some other thing. In no *Sadhana* is the merging into God so easy and complete as in love. When love is the presiding genius, the path to the Truth is effortless and joyous. As a rule *Sadhana* involves effort and sometimes even desperate effort as in the case of the aspirant, who may strive after detachment in the face of temptations. But, in love, there is no sense of effort because it is spontaneous. Spontaneity is of the essence of true spirituality. The highest state of consciousness, in which the mind is completely merged in the Truth, is known as *Sahajawastha* or a state of unlimited spontaneity in which there is uninterrupted *Self-knowledge*. *One of the paradoxes connected with spiritual*

Sadhana is that all the effort of the aspirant is intended for arriving at a state of effortlessness.

There is a beautiful story of a *Kasturi-mriga** which brings out the nature of all spiritual *Sadhana*. Once, while roaming about and frolicking in its home of rugged and mountainous region of hills and dales, the *Kasturi-mriga* happened to receive an exquisitely beautiful scent the like of which it had never known. The scent stirred the inner depths of its soul so profoundly that it was bent upon getting at its source: and so keen was its longing that it went on from place to place, notwithstanding the severest inclemencies of weather. In the severity of cold as well as in the intensity of scorching heat, by day as well as night, it carried on its desperate search for the source of the sweet scent, regardless of rain, storm, thunder or lightening. It knew no fear or hesitation; but, gasping it went on, from dale to dale and from cliff to cliff, until at last it happened to lose its foothold from a dangerous cliff and had a precipitous fall, resulting in fatal injury; and, while breathing its last, the deer found that the scent which had ravished its heart and which had inspired all these efforts, came from its own navel. But this last moment of the life of the deer was the happiest; and there was inexpressible peace on its face.

All spiritual *Sadhana* of the aspirant is like the efforts of the *Kasturimriga*. The final fructification of *Sadhana* involves the termination of the ego-life of the aspirants; but at that moment, there is the realisation that he himself has, in a sense, been the object of all his search and endeavour and that

* The deer whose navel yields musk.

all that he suffered and enjoyed, all his risks and adventures, all his sacrifices and desperate strivings, were intended for having true *self-knowledge*, in which *he loses his limited individuality only to discover that he is really identical with God who is in everything.*

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The Qualifications of the Aspirant

PART I

(ENTERING INTO THE REALITIES OF INNER LIFE)

THOUGH God-realisation is the ultimate destiny of all persons, there are very few who have the necessary preparation for the fulfillment of that glorious destiny. The mind of the worldly-minded is darkened by the thick layer of accumulated *sanskaras* and these *sanskaras* must have been considerably weakened even if the aspirant is to enter the path. The usual method of gradually dissipating the heaps of *sanskaras* is to follow as strictly as possible the external code of religious rituals and ceremonies. This stage of *external conformity* to religious injunctions or traditions is known as the pursuit of *Shariat* or *Karma-marga*; and it covers actions like the offering of daily prayers, the visiting of holy places, the performance of duties prescribed by scriptures and the observance of well-established rules of the ethical codes, generally accepted by the moral consciousness of the times. *The stage of external conformity is in its own way useful as a spiritual discipline; but it is by no means free from evil effects : for, it not only tends to make a man dry, rigid and mechanical, but it often nourishes some kind of subtle egotism.* However, most persons are attached to the life of external conformity, because they find it to be the easiest way of *placating their uneasy conscience*.

The soul often spends several lives in gathering the lessons of external conformity; but there always comes

a time when it gets tired of the stage of external conformity and gets more interested in the realities of inner life. When the worldly man takes to this higher kind of search, he might be said to have become an aspirant. Like the insect, which through metamorphosis passes on to the next stage of existence, the soul transcends the phase of external conformity (*i.e. Shariat or Karma-marga*) and enters upon the path of spiritual emancipation (*i.e. Tarikat or Moksha-marga*). In this higher phase, *the soul is no longer satisfied by external conformity with certain rules, but it wants to acquire those qualifications which would make his inner life spiritually beautiful.*

From the point of view of the realities of inner life, the life of external conformity which satisfies the requirements of conventions and formality, may often be spiritually barren: and a life which deviates from such rigid conformity may often be spiritually rich. In seeking conformity with established conventions and formality, a man is almost always prone to slip into a life of false or illusory values rather than a life which is based upon true and lasting values. What is conventionally recognised need not always be spiritually sound; on the contrary, *many conventions express and embody illusory values, since they have come into existence as a result of the working of average minds which are spiritually ignorant.* Illusory values are mostly conventional because they grow into that matrix of mentality which is most common. This does not mean that conventions necessarily embody nothing but illusory values.

Sometimes people stick to unconventional things for no other reason than that they are out of the way: the

unusual nature of their pursuits or interests enables them to feel their separateness and difference from others and take delight in it. The un-conventional things also often derive their interest merely from their novelty in contrast with the conventional things. *The illusory values of usual things become insipid through familiarity and the mind then has a tendency to transfer the illusion of value to those things which are not usual instead of trying to discover true and lasting values.* Transcending the stage of external conformity does not imply a mere mechanical and thoughtless change from conventionality to unconventionality: such change would be essentially of the nature of *reaction* and it can in no way contribute towards a life of freedom and truth. *The freedom from conventionality which appears in the life of the aspirant is due not to any uncritical reaction but is due to the exercise of critical thought. Those who would transcend the stage of external conformity and enter into the high life of inner realities must develop the capacity to distinguish between the false and the true values irrespective of conventionality or unconventionality.*

The rise from *Shariat* or *Karma-marga* to *Tarikat* or *Moksha-marga* is therefore not to be interpreted as being merely a departure from external conformity. It is *not a change from conventionality to idiosyncrasy*, from the usual to the unusual, but it is a change from a life of thoughtless acceptance of established traditions to a mode of being which is based upon thoughtful appreciation of the difference between the important and the unimportant. *It is a change from the state of implicit ignorance to a state of critical thoughtfulness.* At the stage of mere external conformity, the spiritual ignorance of man is often

Discrimination Between the True and the False

so complete that he does not even realise that he is ignorant. But when the person is being awakened and enters the Path, he begins by realising the need for true Light; and at the initial stages, the effort to this Light takes the form of *intellectual discrimination between the lasting and the transitory, the true and the false, the real and the unreal, the important and the unimportant.*

For the spiritual aspirant, however, it is not enough to have merely intellectual discrimination between the false and the true. *Though intellectual discrimination is undoubtedly the very basis of all further preparation, it yields its fruit only when the newly perceived values are brought into relation with practical life.* From the point of view of spirituality, what matters is not *theory* but *practice*. The ideas, beliefs, opinions, views or doctrines which a person might intellectually 'hold' constitute a superficial layer of human personality. Very often a person believes in one thing and does exactly the opposite. *The bankruptcy of barren belief is all the more pitiable, because the person who feeds upon them often suffers from the delusion that he is spiritually advanced, when in truth, he has not even begun spiritual life.*

Sometimes even a wrong view, which is held with some fervour, may indirectly invite an experience which opens out the gates of spiritual life. Even at the stage of Shariat or *Karma-marga* allegiance to religions is not infrequently a source of inspiration for many selfless and noble acts, because though these dogmas or creeds are blindly accepted, they are often held with a fervour and enthusiasm which supply the dynamic element to the ideology which has been accepted by the person for the moment. Dogmas and creeds as compared with barren views and doctrines

have the distinct advantage of being embraced not only by the intellect but also by the heart: they cover and affect a wider part of personality than purely theoretical 'opinions'.

But dogmas and creeds are at least as much a source of evil as of good, because, in them, the guiding vision which is at the helm of individual life is itself clouded owing to de-

**The Cause of the Evil
Results of Dogmas and
Creeds**

generation or suspension of critical thinking. If allegiance to creeds and dogmas has sometimes done some good to the individual or to the community to which he belongs, it has more often done untold harm to the individual or to others. Though the mind and the heart are *both* involved in the allegiance to dogmas and creeds, the mind as well as the heart are *both* functioning under the serious handicap of suspension of thought; hence dogmas and creeds do not contribute to unmixed good.

In one sense when a person gives up uncritically accepted dogmas and creeds in favour of those views and doctrines to which he has devoted thought, there is a cer-

**The Need for Putting
Theory into Practice**

tain amount of advance in so far as his mind has now begun to think and critically examine its beliefs. But very often the newly held beliefs are seen to lack the fervour and enthusiasm which used to characterise allegiance to dogmas and creeds. If these newly held beliefs lack motive-power, they belong only to the superficial aspect of life, and they hang loosely upon the person like an overcoat. The mind has been emancipated from the domination of uncultured emotionality: but this is often achieved by sacrificing the cooperation of the heart. *If the results of critical thought are to be spiritually fruitful, they must again*

invade and recapture the region of the heart so as to enlist its cooperative functioning. In other words, the ideas which have been accepted after critical examination must again be released into active life if they are to yield their full benefit. In the process of being used in practical life they often themselves undergo healthy transformation and become more sound: and what is more, they are now interwoven with the very fabric of life and no longer merely ornamental.

The transition from external conformity (i.e. Shariat or Sarma-marga) to the life of inner realities (i.e. Tarikat or Moksha-marga) involves two steps: (i) freeing the mind from the inertia of uncritical acceptance based upon blind imitation and stirring it to critical thinking, and (ii) bringing the results of critical and discriminative thinking into practical life. In order to be spiritually fruitful, thinking must be not only critical, but creative. Critical and creative thinking leads to spiritual preparation by cultivating and fostering those qualities which contribute towards the perfection and balancing of the mind and the heart and the release of unfettered divine life.

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The Qualifications of the Aspirant

PART II

(SOME DIVINE QUALITIES)

IF the inner life of man is to be harmonious and enlightened, he has to develop and express many divine qualities, while he is engaged in his daily duties. Each

**The Qualities Necessary
for Spiritual Life are
Interdependent upon
Each Other**

quality, by itself, may not seem to be extremely important; but it is not right to consider it apart from its necessary relation with other important qualities. In spiritual life, all these qualities implement and support each other; and their interconnection is so vital that not one of them can be completely ignored without detriment to many other essential qualities. So, considered in its true function, *each of these divine qualities turns out to be absolutely indispensable for a complete life.*

Every man is a rightful heir to the Truth: but he who would inherit it must be spiritually prepared for it; and this spiritual preparation sometimes takes several lives of

Patience and Persistence

patient and persistent effort. Therefore, one of the first requirements of the aspirant is that he should combine *unfailing enthusiasm with unyielding patience.* Once a man is determined to realise the Truth, he finds that his path is beset with many difficulties, and there are very few who persist with steady courage till the very end. It is easy to give up effort when one is confronted with obstacles. This might be illustrated by a story of a man from Poona. He once read a spiritual book which impressed him so deeply that he felt like renouncing everything. He left

Poona, went to a jungle near the city, and sitting under tree he began to repeat God's name with a rosary in his hand. He kept doing this all day in spite of much inconvenience and dwindling enthusiasm. After sunset, he heard from all sides the cries of frightened animals, and though these cries grew louder and louder in the gathering darkness of the night, he persisted in his determination. But when he saw through the darkness a huge bear coming towards him, he fled away for saving his life and ran for seven miles at top speed until he fell unconscious in a shop in Poona. As he became conscious again, he related his adventure to those who had gathered around him, much to their amusement; but that finished his mood for renunciation.

Spiritual effort demands not only physical endurance and courage, but also unshrinking forbearance and unassailable moral courage. The world is caught up in

**Accepting the World
as It Is**

Maya and is addicted to false values: therefore, the ways of the world run counter to the standard which the aspirant has set for himself. If he runs away from the world, that does not help him: he will again have to come back to the world for developing that quality which would enable him to face and accept the world as it is. Very often his Path lies through the world which he has to serve in spite of his not liking its way. *If the aspirant is to love and serve the world which does not understand him or even is intolerant to him, he must develop infinite forbearance.*

As the aspirant advances on the Path, he acquires, through his contact with the Master, an increasingly deeper understanding of true love; and this makes him painfully sensitive to those impacts from outside which not only do not taste of love, but actually bring

Forbearance

him into contact with cold contempt, cynical callousness, agonising apathy and unabating hatred. All these impacts try his forbearance to the uttermost. Even the worldly man suffers in the world which he occasionally finds indifferent or hostile; but he is thick skinned and his suffering is less acute, because he does not expect anything very much better from human nature and thinks that these things are inevitable and incurable. But, *the aspirant who has tasted of a deeper love knows the hidden possibilities in every soul: and his suffering is very acute because he feels the gulf between that which is and that which might have been if only the world had even faintly appreciated the love which he has begun to understand and cherish.*

The task of forbearance would be easy if the aspirant could get reconciled to the ways of the world and accept them without challenge. But, *having seen the higher, it becomes an imperative duty of the aspirant to stand by it, even if the whole world opposes him.* Loyalty to the higher truth of his own perception demands unshakable moral courage and readiness to face the criticism, scorn and even hatred of those who have not yet begun to open out to the truth; and although in this uneven struggle, he does get unfailing help from the Masters and other co-aspirants, he has to develop the capacity to fight for the truth *single-handed*, without relying upon external help all the time. *This supreme moral courage can only come with supreme confidence in oneself and the Master. To love the world and serve it, in the ways of the Masters, is no game of the weak and the faint-hearted.*

Moral courage and self-confidence should be accompanied by *freedom from worry*. There are very few things in the mind which eat up as much energy as worry: and it is one of the most difficult things not to worry

about anything. Worry is experienced when things go wrong: but in relation to past happenings it is idle merely to wish that they might have been otherwise. *The frozen past is what it is: and no amount of worrying is going to make it other than what it has been.* But the limited ego-mind identifies itself with its *past*, gets entangled with it and keeps alive the pangs of frustrated desires; so worry continues to grow into the mental life of man until the ego-mind is burdened by the past. Worry is also experienced in relation to the *future* when this future is expected to be disagreeable in some way: and in this case, it seeks to justify itself as a necessary accompaniment of the attempt to prepare for coping with the anticipated situations. But, *things can never be helped merely by worrying.* Besides, many of the things, which are anticipated, never turn up or if they turn up at all, they turn out to be much more acceptable than they were expected to be. *Worry is the product of feverish imagination working under the stimulation of desires: it is living through sufferings which are mostly our own creation. Worry has never done anyone any good; and it is very much worse than mere dissipation of psychic energy, for it substantially curtails the joy and fulness of life.*

Among the many things which the aspirant needs to cultivate, there are few which are as important as *cheerfulness, enthusiasm and equipoise*; and these are rendered impossible unless he succeeds in cutting out worry from his life. *When the mind is gloomy, depressed or disturbed, its action is chaotic and binding; hence arises the supreme need of maintaining cheerfulness, enthusiasm and equipoise under all circumstances. All these are rendered impossible unless the aspirant succeeds in cutting out worry from*

his life. But worry is a necessary resultant of attachment to the past or to the anticipated future; and it always persists in some form or other until the mind is completely detached from everything.

The difficulties in the Path can be overcome only if the aspirant has one-pointedness. If the psychic energies are dissipated in worldly pursuits, the progress which he makes is very slow. But one-

**Control and Dispassion
are the Conditions of
One-pointedness**

pointedness implies dispassion concerning all the allurements of the phenomenal world. The mind must have turned away from all temptations, and complete control should have been established over the senses. Thus, *control and dispassion are both necessary for being able to attain one-pointedness in respect of the search for true understanding.*

The supreme condition of sure and steady progress On the Path is the benefit of *guidance from the Master.*

The Master gives just that guidance and help which is necessary according to the im-

**Availing of the Help
from the Master**

mediate needs of the aspirant. All that the Master expects is that the aspirant will try his best for spiritual advancement. He does not expect immediate transformation of consciousness except where the ground is previously ready. Time is an important factor in spiritual advancement as it is in all material endeavours. When the Master has given a spiritual push to the aspirant, he waits till the help thus given is completely assimilated by him. *An overdose of spirituality has always an unhealthy reaction particularly when it is inopportune. The Master, therefore, carefully selects the moment when his intervention is assured of maximum results; and having intervened, he waits with infinite patience till the aspirant really needs further help.*

The Qualifications of the Aspirant

PART III

(READINESS TO SERVE)

THE aspirant has to be always in readiness to serve the cause of humanity. He need not apply himself to any type of work irrespective of his capacity : he has to select that

**Readiness to Serve
According to Individual
Aptitude and Ability**

portion of work which he is qualified to do by virtue of his *individual aptitude and abilities*.

But whatsoever service he can render by virtue of his capacity, he renders even when the circumstances are most trying.

The ordeals through which he may have to pass are many: but his determination to serve whenever possible must remain unshaken. But *he is not in any way attached*

**No Claims of the
Limited 'I'**

to the idea of service in the sense of maximum results being secured through himself alone.

If there is any service which needs to be rendered, he is willing to render it with any amount of sacrifice: but he never is bound by the false idea, 'I' alone should have the credit of doing it. If the privilege of rendering the service falls to the lot of someone else, he is not envious. If he were to seek for himself opportunities for rendering service, it would be a form of selfishness, while in the service, which really counts in spiritual life, there can be no thought of the self at all. There should be no felt necessity for something for oneself or for being the one who can give something to others. *The self in all its form has to be entirely out of the picture. Service should spring out of the spontaneity of*

freedom if and when it is necessary: and it has to come in the cooperative spirit in which there is no insistence upon the claims of the limited 'I'.

If the aspirant is completely detached from all works and their results, he becomes free from the vitiating opposites of the great things and small things. *The worldly minded feel their separative existence through achievement.* Therefore, **Freedom from the Opposites of Great and Small Things** they have a natural tendency to judge their achievements in terms of the tangible quantities; they grasp at great things and avoid the little things. But, *from the spiritual point of view, the so-called little things are often seen to be as important as the so-called great things.* The aspirant has no motive to eschew the one and seek the other: therefore, he attends to little things with as much zest as to great things.

In spiritual life, even the little things matter as much as great things. But the conventions of the world usually fail to recognise this simple truth. By following the conventionally accepted ideas, *the scope of possible service to fellow beings gets artificially restricted to those things which are conventionally regarded as important;* and many things, which are really of vital importance to life, come to be neglected with the result that life is spiritually impoverished.

Thus, in a society, which is dominated by merely material conceptions of life, service is interpreted in terms of affording facilities for bread or clothes or other physical amenities of existence; in a society, which is responsive to the value of intellectual culture, service is interpreted in terms of spreading learning in different

forms; in a society which has developed taste for beauty, service is interpreted in terms of organizing the production and distribution of works of art; in a society which is responsive to the ineffable values of the heart, service is interpreted in terms of constructing those channels which will facilitate the culture and expression of the heart; and in a society which is alive to the supreme importance of the life of the spirit service is interpreted in terms of imparting spiritual understanding. Of these different types of service, the service which is concerned with spiritual understanding is the highest, because *spiritual understanding includes the right perspective to all human problems and promotes a solution of them all.*

But, if there is no spiritual understanding, the desire for rendering service to others is harnessed by limited conceptions. *Service is of two kinds: it consists in adding to the lives of others those things which, are really worthwhile, or it consists in removing from the lives of others those, handicaps which prevent them from having things which are worthwhile: and if our ideas of things which are worthwhile are narrow the scope of possible service also becomes correspondingly narrow.*

The scope of service is not completely exhausted by great gestures like giving big donations to public institutions; *they also serve who express their love in little things.* A word that gives courage to a dropping heart or a smile that brings hope and cheer in gloom, have as much claims to be regarded as service, as onerous sacrifices, and heroic self-denials. A glance which wipes out bitterness from the heart and sets it throbbing with a new love is also

service, although there may be no thought of service in it. When taken by themselves, all these things seem to be small: but life is made of many such small things; and *if these small things are ignored, life would be not only unbeautiful but unspiritual.*

Just as the worldly minded have a tendency to judge positive contributions in terms of magnitudes, they also make a similar mistake in judging obstacles, handicaps and adversities. Thus, **Element of Error in the Estimates of the World** for most persons, the adversity of another must assume colossal forms if it is to deserve notice. It is characteristic of the worldly minded that *they give more importance to things that take shape in external and tangible ways than to things which are silent elements in inner life.* Devastating war is, for example, considered to be a greater calamity than lingering lives filled with bitter hatred, though from the purely spiritual point of view, lives filled with bitter hatred are not in any way less evil than devastating [war]. War assumes so much importance because of the many visual instances of cruelty; but hatred is equally unbeautiful even when it does not materialise itself in outward actions. In the same way, epidemics, injuries and the sufferings of the deathbed invite more attention from the worldly minded than the agonies of the heart which is heavy with the burden of unquenchable desire.

But, for the aspirant, who is eager to serve without any desire for recognition and credit, *everything that thwarts or perverts the release of full life is worthy of attention, irrespective of whether it is great or small according to the usual estimates of the world.* Just as the building up or the collapse of empires has a place in the flow of universal life, the

Field of Service is Life as a Whole

fleeting moments of sadness or sweetness have also their own place in it; the importance of the one should not be measured in terms of the other, and the claims of the one should not be ignored as against the claims of the other. *The aspirant looks at life as an integral whole, without allowing any parts to monopolise his attention at the cost of other parts.*

Even when the aspirant is rendering a service which is selfless, he keeps constant guard upon his mind. The aspirant must be humble, honest and sincere. The service, which he renders, must not be for the sake of mere show and it should be an outcome of true love. *If the aspirant is inspired by love, his love shall enable him to be in entire harmony with other co-workers without being jealous.* If there is no complete harmony amongst the co-workers, the service which is rendered falls short of the spiritual ideal. Further, if the aspirant renders the outward service without the spirit of love, he is acting from a sense of duty, as in many worldly institutions where there are paid workers. In the institutions of the world, people work for pay; at best, it is a cold sense of duty which prompts them to be efficient. Their work cannot have the inward beauty of work which is spontaneously done out of love.

The aspirant can best assimilate the lessons of true service, if he has the good fortune to be in contact with the Master. The Master teaches not through preaching but through example; and when the Master is seen in his capacity of rendering service to humanity, the aspirant is quick to catch that spirit because of his love for the Master. Contact with the Master is also helpful in imbibing the spirit of co-

**Service which Springs
from Love ensures Har-
mony with Co-workers**

**Importance of Contact
with the Master**

operation which the aspirants cultivate easily because of their common love for the Master. They serve because the Master wants it; they do the Master's work, not their own; and they do it not of their own accord but because they have been entrusted with that work by the Master. Therefore, *they are all free from any ideas of individualistic claims, rights or privileges, being keen only about the Master's work, ready to serve his cause to the best of their ability, when they are called upon to do so and equally ready to hand over that work to another co-aspirant if he can do it better.*

In co-operation of this type, the aspirants are in a way serving each other, because the Master's work is accepted by them all as their own, and in being useful to a co-aspirant for doing the Master's work, the aspirant is rendering a service to him as much as to the Master. But in such service there can be no bossing, because the aspirant is always conscious that it is the Master's work which he has accepted as his own that he is doing: he further knows that, as aspirants, they are all equal, and it is easy for him to cultivate the habit of serving in the spirit of utter humility. If service makes him proud, he might as well not have served. *One of the most difficult things to learn is to render service without bossing, without making fuss about it and without any consciousness of high and low. In the world of spirituality, humility counts at least as much as utility.*

When the Master serves others, he does so not because he is attached to the work but in order to help and also to set his disciples the example of selfless service; and while serving others, he sees himself in them and experiences having served himself. *In his unwaning blissful feeling of oneness, the Master knows himself to be at once the Lord of all and the Servant of all; he, therefore,*

exemplifies an ideal of service, in which there is no enslavement either of him who receives service or of him who renders it. The aspirant can speedily realise the ideal of true service if he has before him the example of the Master: but the spiritual preparation of the aspirant can never be said to be complete unless he has learnt the art of rendering service, which gives not boredom but joy, which brings not enslavement but freedom, which does not set claims and counter-claims but springs from the spontaneity of free give and take, which is free from the burden of personal want, and which is sustained by the sense of ever-renewed fulfilment.

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The Qualifications of the Aspirant

PART IV

(FAITH)

ONE of the most important qualifications for the aspirant is faith. Of Faith there are *three* kinds: (i) *faith in oneself*, (ii) *faith in the Master and* (iii) *faith in life*.

The Value of Faith and its Forms

Faith is so indispensable to life that unless it is present in some degree, life itself would be impossible. *It is because of faith that cooperative and social life becomes possible. It is faith in each other that facilitates a free give and take of love, a free sharing of work and its results.* When life is burdened with unjustified fear of each other, it gets cramped and restricted.

Children have a natural faith in their elders; they look to them for protection and help instinctively without requiring any introductory letters. This quality of trusting

Faith in each other and its essential counterpart

others persists in later life unless the person receives a rude shock of being deceived or exploited by others for their self-interest: so, though faith is natural to man, it grows and flourishes in a society where men are reliable and honest and worthy of faith, and it fades in a hostile environment. Faith in each other becomes complete and steady when it finds its counterpart in those qualities which invite and confirm faith. *Being worthy of faith which others place in us and having faith in others are two complementary virtues; they are the condition of an unhampered flow and development of individual and collective life.*

Unqualified and implicit faith in each other belongs to the world of ideals; in actual practice it exists only in some special cases. Though it is very much to be desired, it

**Importance of Faith
in Oneself**

cannot come unless the world is peopled with persons who deserve unlimited faith; and this condition requires a perfect development of the qualities of being reliable, steadfast and invariably helpful. But these qualities which foster mutual faith remain undeveloped unless a person has supreme faith in oneself. *If a man has no faith in himself, he cannot develop those qualities which invite and foster faith from others.* The confidence that you can, under all sorts of trying circumstances, remain loyal to your own perception of the Best, is the very foundation of the superstructure of a reliable character.

But unshakable faith in oneself is as rare as implicit faith in some other person; few have developed it to the degree which ensures effective and constructive control

**Secure Basis of
Self-confidence**

of oneself. In most persons faith in oneself is always being challenged and undone by the constant experience of one's own frailties and failings, which often prove to be unyielding, even when the man knows what is right. *The self-confidence, which is thus in perpetual danger of being shattered, can be securely established only when the man has in front of him the vision of the living example of perfection and has faith in it.*

Faith in the Master becomes all important because it nourishes and sustains faith in oneself and faith in life, in the very teeth of set-backs and failures, handicaps and difficulties, limitations and failings.

Faith in the Master

Life, as man knows, in himself, or in most of his fellow-men, may be narrow, twisted and perverse; but life, as he sees it, in the

Master, is unlimited, pure and untainted. *In the Master, man sees his own Ideal as realised; the Master is what his own deeper self would rather be; he sees in the Master the reflection of the Best in him, which is yet to be, but which he will surely one day attain. Faith in the Master, therefore, becomes the chief motive-power for realising the divinity, which is latent in man.*

True faith is grounded in the deeper experiences of the spirit and the unerring deliverances of purified intuition. It is not to be regarded as anti-thesis of critical reason but as

Faith and Critical Reasoning the unfailing guide of critical reason.
When critical reason is implemented by a deep and living faith, based on

pure intuition, its functioning becomes creative, fruitful and significant instead of barren, ineffective and meaningless.

On the other hand, many forms of naive *credulity* cannot be broken through except by the fearless and free working of critical reason. However, it remains true that critical reason can touch and inform only those forms of faith, which are not based upon pure intuition. True faith, grounded on pure intuition, always remains an imperative, which cannot be ultimately reduced to the conclusions of ratiocinative intellect. It is not derived from the limited intellect, but is more fundamental and primary, with the result that it cannot be silenced by any intellectual acrobatics. But this does not mean that faith, at any stage, need be blind, in the sense that it is not allowed to be examined by critical intellect. *True faith is a form of sight and not of blindness; it need not be afraid of the free functioning of critical reason.*

The right of testing the Master, through critical reasoning, has been always conceded to the disciples; but *if after testing and being satisfied about the perfection of the Master, the disciple shows any wavering of faith, it is a result*

of a deplorable deficiency in his sincerity of approach and integrity of purpose. Just as there are many cases of un-

Analysis of Credulity critical and undeserved credulity placed in the claimants for
and Doubt spiritual wisdom, there are many

cases of an unjustified wavering of faith in spite of a convincing basis in one's own experience; and just as uncritical credulity is ultimately the result of an unconscious operation of many worldly wants, unjustified wavering of faith is also due to the unconscious operation of desires, which run contrary to the effective manifestation of a rationalised faith. *In the first case wish is the father of unwarranted belief; and in the second case wish is the father of unwarranted doubt.*

Cravings have a tendency to pervert the functioning of critical reason; and *an unwavering faith, which is grounded*

Wavering of faith if *in pure intuition, can come only to a*
often due to uncon- *mind, which is free the pressure of*
scious operation of *diverse wants.* True faith is,
Cravings therefore, a matter of gradual

growth; it grows in proportion to the success which the disciple attains in freeing his consciousness from diverse cravings.

Faith must be carefully distinguished from a mere intellectual belief or 'opinion'. When a person has good opinion about someone, he is said to have a certain kind

Beliefs and opinions of faith in him. But this kind of opinion does not have that spiritual

potency which belongs to a living faith in the Master. The beliefs and opinions, which a person has, often constitute a very superficial layer of the human psyche; they do not have any integral relationship with the deeper psychic forces: *they remain in one region of the mind without bringing*

about any radical changes in the core of personality, which determines the attitude to life. People hold such beliefs just as they wear clothes; in times of emergency, they show the tendency to change their clothes to suit their immediate purposes. In such cases, *beliefs are unconsciously determined by other purposes; the purposes are not consciously determined by beliefs.*

Living faith, on the other hand, has the most vital and integral relation with all the deeper forces and purposes of the psyche. It is not 'held' superficially: nor does it hang, like mere intellectual beliefs, in the periphery of consciousness. On the contrary, living faith becomes a powerful factor that reconstructs the entire psyche; it is *creatively dynamic*. *There is not a thought but is enlivened by it; there is not a feeling, but is illumined by it; there is not a purpose but is recast by it.* Such living faith in the Master becomes, for the disciple, a supreme source of inspiration and unassailable self-confidence; and it expresses itself primarily through the spirit of active reliance upon the Master and not merely through some opinion about him. *Living faith is not a sort of certificate given by the disciple to the Master; it is an active attitude of confidence in the Master, expressing itself not only through implicit and trustful expectation of help from the Master, but also through the spirit of self-surrender and dedication.*

Such fruitful and living faith in the Master is always born of some deep *experience* which the Master imparts to the deserving disciple; it is fundamentally different from the beliefs which people have either through *uncritical acceptance* or *superficial thinking*. Mere intellectual beliefs have, for the most part, very little spiritual importance. The Master,

**Living faith is grounded
In Experience**

therefore, is utterly unconcerned with whether the disciple believes in him or in some one else; and he is equally unconcerned with whether the disciple, at any moment, does or does not believe in him. If in some fortunate cases, the Master, through his benign intervention, wins for himself the living faith of the disciple (as distinguished from mere belief), it is because he knows that the disciple will be helped through it.

Just as the disciple is testing the Master in respect of his capacity to guide him, the Master, in his turn, is testing the disciple in respect of his integrity of purpose. The Master is

Testing the Disciple unconcerned about whether the disciple doubts him or has faith in him; what he tests is whether the disciple is or is not sincere and whole-hearted in his spiritual search and pursuit. *The Master is not at all interested in giving proof of his own divinity to the disciple, except when he feels that any such proof is likely to be unfailingly useful and unavoidably necessary for the spiritual benefit of one who has surrendered himself to him.*

*

Maya

PART I

(FALSE VALUES)

EVERY one wants to know and realise the Truth; but Truth cannot be known and realised as Truth unless ignorance is known and realised as being ignorance.

Importance of Understanding the Falsehoods of Maya

Hence arises the importance of understanding *Maya* or the principle of ignorance. People read and hear so much about *Maya*, but few understand what it really is. It is not enough to have superficial understanding of *Maya*; it, is necessary that *Maya* should be understood as it is, *i.e.*, in its reality. *To understand Maya or the principle of ignorance is to know half of the Truth of universe.* Ignorance in all its forms must disappear if the soul is to be established in the state of self-knowledge; therefore, *it is imperatively necessary for man to know that which is false, to know it as being false and to get rid of the false by knowing it to be false.*

What is the essential nature of a falsehood? If the true is known as being true or if the false is known as being false, there is no falsehood but only a form of knowledge;

The Essence of a Falsehood

falsehood consists in taking the true as being false or the false as being true, i.e., in considering something to be other than what it really in itself is. So falsehood is an error in judging the nature of things.

Broadly speaking there are *two* kinds of knowledge: (i) purely intellectual judgments about the facts of existence

Two kinds of Knowledge

and (ii) judgments of valuation which imply the appreciation of the worth or importance of things. Purely intellectual judgments or beliefs derive their im-

portance from their being related to values in some way: if they are divorced from values, they have very meagre importance in themselves. For example, no one takes much interest in counting exactly the number of leaves which exist on a particular tree, although from the purely theoretical point of view such information will be a form of knowledge. But such information or knowledge is treated as unimportant because it is not vitally connected with other values. Intellectual knowledge becomes important (i) when it enables man to realise certain values by giving control over the *means* to their realisation, or (ii) when it *enters into valuation itself as an important factor, modifying or in some other way affecting the accepted values.*

Just as there are two kinds of judgment, there are two kinds of falsehood:—(i) mistakes in taking as facts those things which are not facts, and (ii) mistakes in valuation. Mistakes in valuation can be committed in three ways:—(a) in taking as important that which is unimportant, or (b) in taking as unimportant that which is important, or (c) in giving to a thing an importance which is other than the importance which it really has. All these falsehoods are creations of *Maya*.

Although *Maya* covers all falsehoods from the spiritual point of view, there are some falsehoods which count and some falsehoods which do not very much count. If a person takes a throne to be slightly taller than what it is, it would be a falsehood; but it would be falsehood which does not very much matter. On the other hand, if a person takes the throne to be the be-all and the end-all of his life, that also would be a falsehood; but it would be a falsehood which affects the course and significance of his life

substantially. *On the whole, mistakes in valuation are far more effective in misguiding, perverting and limiting life, than mistakes in purely intellectual judgments about certain objective facts.*

Mistakes in valuation arise owing to the influence of subjective desires or wants. *True values* are values which belong to things *in their own right*: they are *intrinsic*: and because they are intrinsic they are *absolute* and *permanent* and are *not liable to change from time to time or from person to person*. But, *false values* are *derived from desires or wants*; they are *dependent upon subjective factors*: and because they are dependent upon subjective factors, they are *relative* and *impermanent* and are *liable to change from time to time and from person to person*.

For example, a man, who is very thirsty and is in a desert like Sahara, thinks that there is nothing more precious than water, while the man, who has at his hand abundance of water and who is not very thirsty, does not attach the same importance to water. In the same way, the man, who is hungry, considers food as very important: but a man, who has had his full dinner, does not even think of food until he is hungry. The same thing applies to other lusts and longings which *project imaginary and relative value* to those objects which will fulfil those lusts and longings.

The value of sense-objects is great or small according to the intensity or urgency of these lusts and longings. If these lusts and longings increase in intensity or urgency, the corresponding objects assume great importance; if they subside in their intensity or urgency, the objects also lose much of their importance; and if the lusts and longings appear

intermittently, those objects retain *possible* value, when the lusts and longings are latent, and they have *actual* value, when they are manifesting themselves. But all these values are false values, because they do not belong to the objects themselves; for, when in the light of true knowledge, all the lusts and longings disappear completely, objects which were vested with importance through the working of these lusts and longings, are immediately deprived of all their borrowed importance and are seen to be empty or unimportant.

Now, *just as a coin, which does not have currency, is treated as being false, though it has a kind of existence, the objects of lusts and longings, which are seen in their emptiness, are treated as false, though these objects might continue to have some kind of recognition.* They are all there, in a sense; and they might also be known and seen to be in existence; but they no longer *mean* the same thing; they do not have the same importance; they are empty. They hold false promise of fulfillment to an imagination which is perverted by lusts and longings; but to the tranquil and steady perception they are seen to have no importance, when they are taken apart from the soul.

When a beloved one dies, there is sorrow and loneliness; but this feeling of missing someone, whom one has often seen, is rooted in attachment to the form independently of the soul. It is the form which has vanished, not the soul. The soul is not dead; in its true nature, it has not even passed away; for it is everywhere. But through attachment to the body, the form was considered as important; all longings, desires, emotions, thoughts were centred upon the form: and when, through death,

**Taking as important
that which is
unimportant**

the form disappears, there is a vacuum which expresses through missing the departed one. *If the form, as such, had not come to be surcharged with false importance, there would be no sorrow for missing the one who has passed away.* The feeling of loneliness, the lingering memory of the beloved, the longing that he should still have been present, the tears of bereavement and the sighs of separation - they are all due to false valuation; they are the working of *Maya*. When an unimportant thing is regarded as important, we have one principal manifestation of the working of *Maya*. From the spiritual point of view, it is a form of ignorance.

On the other hand, the working of *Maya* also expresses itself by *making an important thing look unimportant*. From the spiritual point of view, the only thing which has importance is God. But very few persons are really interested in God for his own sake. If worldly minded turn to God at all, it is mostly for their own selfish and mundane purposes. *They seek the gratification of their own desires, hopes and even revenges through the intervention of God of their imagination; they do not seek God as Truth.* They long for all things except the only Truth, which they regard as unimportant. This again is the blinding up of vision caused by the working of *Maya*. *People pursue their happiness through everything except God, who is the only Unfailing Source of Abiding Joy.*

The working of *Maya* also expresses itself by making the mind *give to a thing an importance which is other than the importance which, it really has.*

Giving wrong importance to a thing This happens when rituals, ceremonies and other external religious practices are considered to be ends in themselves. They have their own value as

means, as vehicles of life, as a medium of expression; but as soon as they assume claims in their own right, they are being given an importance which is other than the one which belongs to them. And when they are considered important in themselves, they bind life, instead of serving the purpose of expressing it. *When the inessential is allowed to predominate over the essential, we have the third principal form of Ignorance concerning valuation.* This again is the working of *Maya*.

*

Maya

PART II (FALSE BELIEFS)

THE shackles, which hold the soul in spiritual bondage chiefly consist of wrong values of falsehoods concerning valuation. But some falsehoods, which are of the nature of wrong beliefs, also play an important part in holding the soul in spiritual bondage. **False Values and False Beliefs are the Clutches of Maya** False beliefs implement false values; but they also in their turn gather strength from false values in which the soul has been stuck up. All false beliefs are as much creations of *Maya* as false values; and *false beliefs as well as false values are among the clutches which Maya uses in order to hold the soul in ignorance.*

Maya becomes irresistible by taking possession of the very seat of knowledge, which is human intellect. It is difficult to surmount *Maya*, because, when the intellect is under the sway of *Maya*, it creates and upholds false beliefs and illusions; it creates barriers to the realisation of the Truth, by the persistent attempt to sustain and justify erroneous beliefs. *The intellect which functions in freedom prepares the way to the Truth; but the intellect which plays into the hands of Maya creates obstacles to true understanding.*

The false beliefs created by *Maya* are so deep-rooted and strong that they seem to be self-evident; they take on the garb of veritable truths; they are accepted without question. For example, man believes that he is his physical body. Ordinarily, it never occurs to him that he may be something other than his body. Identification with

False Beliefs may seem Self-Evident

the physical body is assumed by him instinctively without requiring proof; and he holds the belief all the more strongly because it is *independent of rational proof*.

Man's life has been centred round the physical body and its desires. To give up the belief that he is the physical body involves the giving up of all the desires pertaining to the physical body and the false values which they imply. The belief that he is his physical body is conducive to the physical desires and attachments; but the belief that he is other than his physical body runs counter to the accepted desires and attachments. Therefore, the belief that he is his physical body becomes *natural*; it is easy to hold and difficult to uproot. On the other hand, belief that he is something other than his physical body, seems to call for convincing proof; it is difficult to hold and easy to resist. But all the same, when the mind is unburdened of all physical desires and attachments, the belief that he is his physical body is seen to be false and the belief that he is something other than his body is seen to be true.

Even when a person succeeds in shedding the false belief that he is the physical body, he remains a victim of the false belief that he is his *subtle body*. His life is centred round the subtle body and its desires. To give up the belief that he is the subtle body involves the giving up of all the desires pertaining to the subtle body and the false values which they imply. Therefore, for him, now the belief that he is his subtle body, becomes natural; and the belief that he is something other than his subtle body seems to call for a convincing proof. But when the mind is unburdened of all desires and attachments pertaining

to the subtle body, the person gives up the false belief that he is his subtle body, as readily as he gives up the false belief that he is his physical body.

But this is not the end of false beliefs. Even when a person drops the false belief that he is his subtle body he cherishes the illusory belief that he is his ego-mind or the mental body. *Man cherishes false belief because he relishes it. Throughout his long life as an individual soul, he has fondly clung to the false idea of his separate existence: all his thoughts and emotions and activities have repeatedly assumed and confirmed but one affirmation, viz., the existence of the separate 'I'. To surrender the false belief that he is the ego-mind is to surrender all that has seemed to constitute his very existence.*

In surrendering the false belief that he is his physical or subtle body, it is necessary to surrender various desires and attachments; it is the giving up of something one has had for a long time. But in surrendering the false belief that he is his ego-mind, he is called upon to surrender the very core of what he thought he has himself been. To shed this last vestige of falsehood is, therefore, the most difficult thing. *But this last falsehood is no more lasting than the earlier falsehoods, which seemed to him to be unchallengeable certainties: it also has its ending; and, it comes to be shed when the soul renounces its craving for separate existence.*

When the soul knows itself to be different from the physical and gross bodies as well as the mind, it knows itself to be Infinite; but *as soul, it does nothing, it merely IS.* When the mind is added on to the soul, it appears to think; when the subtle body is added on to the soul with the mind, it

appears to desire; and when the gross body is added on to all these, the soul appears to be engaged in actions. The belief that the soul is doing anything is a false belief. For example, a man believes that *he* is sitting in the chair; but in fact, it is the body which is sitting in the chair. The belief that the soul is sitting in the chair is due to identification with the physical body. In the same way, a man believes that *he* is thinking, but in fact, it is the mind which is thinking. The belief that the soul is thinking is due to identification with the mind. It is the mind which thinks and the body which sits; the soul is neither engaged in thinking nor in any other physical actions.

Of course, it is not mere mind or mere body which does the thinking or other physical actions: for, mere mind and mere body do not exist. They exist as illusions of

**The Belief that the Soul
is the Agent of Actions
is False**

the soul and it is when the soul falsely identifies itself with them, that there arises the thinking or the doing of things. *The soul and the mind and the body taken together constitute the agent of actions or the limited 'I'*. But the soul in its true nature is neither responsible for thinking nor for actions. The illusion that the soul is the mind or the body and the illusion that the soul is the agent of thinking or actions is created by *Maya* or the principle of ignorance.

In the same way, the belief that the soul experiences the pleasures and the pains of life or is going through the

**The Belief that the Soul
is the Subject of Dual
Experience is False**

opposites of experience is also false. The soul is beyond the opposites of experience. But it does not know itself as such; and it takes on the experiences which are characteristic of the opposites because of the identifica-

tion with the mind and the body. The soul which is mixed up with the mind and the body, becomes the recipient of pains and pleasures: so all the pleasures and the pains to which a man is subject are rooted in ignorance. *When a man thinks that he is the most miserable person in the world, he is embracing an illusion which comes into existence through ignorance or Maya.* He is really not unhappy but imagines that he is unhappy, because he has got mixed up with the mind and the bodies. Of course, it is not the mind by itself or the bodies by themselves which can have any experiences of the opposites. *It is the soul and the mind and the bodies taken together that become the Subject of dual experience; but the soul, in its true nature, is beyond the opposites of experience.*

Thus, it is the mind and the bodies that constitute the Agent of activities and the Subject of dual experiences. However, they do not assume this double role in their own

**The Nature of the
Ensoulment of the mind
and the Bodies**

right, but only when they are taken along with the soul. *It is the mind and the bodies, which are 'ensouled' that become the Agent of activities or the Subject of dual experience. But the process of 'ensoulment' is based upon ignorance, the soul, in its true nature, is eternally un-qualified, unmodified and unlimited; it appears to be qualified, modified and limited through Ignorance or the working of Maya.*

★

Maya

PART III

(TRANSCENDING THE FALSEHOODS OF MAYA)

COUNTLESS are the falsehoods which a *maya*-ridden man embraces in the stupor of his Ignorance: but, *from the very beginning, falsehoods carry upon themselves the stamp of their own insufficiency and, bankruptcy;* and sooner or later they are known to be falsehoods. This brings us to the question; 'How do we discern the falsehood as falsehood?' There is no way out of the falsehood except by knowing it as a falsehood: but this knowledge of falsehood as falsehood would never come unless it were in some way latent in the falsehood, from the very beginning.

The acceptance of the falsehood is always a bed-ridden compromise. Even in the very depths of Ignorance, the soul does give some kind of challenge to the falsehood; and howsoever feeble and inarticulate it might seem to be in its initial stages, it is the beginning of that search for the Truth which ultimately annihilates all falsehood and all ignorance. *In the acceptance of a falsehood there is an ever-growing restlessness - a deep suspicion and a vague fear.* For example, when a man considers himself and others to be identical with the gross body, he cannot completely reconcile himself to this belief. In embracing this false belief, there is fear of death and the fear of losing others. If a man depends for his happiness only upon the possession of forms, he knows in the heart of his heart that he is building his castles on slippery sands, that this surely is not the way to abiding happiness, that the

support to which he so desperately clings may any day give in. So, he is deeply suspicious of his grounds.

Man is restlessly aware of his own insecurity. He knows that something is wrong somewhere and that he is counting upon *false* hopes. Falsehood is treacherously unreliable; he simply cannot afford to embrace it for ever; he might as well garland himself with a poisonous snake or go to sleep on the top of a volcano which is only temporarily inactive. *The falsehood bears the hallmark of being incomplete and unsatisfactory, temporary and provisional: it points out to something else: it comes to the person as hiding something which is greater and truer than what it seems to be at its face value. Falsehood betrays itself: and it leads man on to know the Truth.*

False beliefs are of two types: (I) Those which arise owing to *irregular and loose* thinking, and (II) those which arise owing to vitiated thinking. Falsehoods which arise due to irregular thinking are less harmful than falsehoods which arise from vitiated thinking. The untruths of a purely intellectual nature arise because of some *mistake in the application of the intellect*: but the falsehoods which count from the spiritual point of view arise because of *the vitiation of the intellect, through the operation of blinding and unarguing desires*.

The difference between these two types of falsehoods may be brought out by a *physiological analogy*. Some troubles of the vital organs of the body are *functional* and some troubles are *structural*. **Analogy of Functional and Structural Troubles** Functional diseases arise because of some irregularity in the functioning of a vital organ; in these cases, there is nothing seriously wrong with the struc-

ture of the vital organ; it has merely become sluggish or irregular and needs only slight stimulation or correction in order to function properly. In structural diseases the disease comes into existence because of the development of some deformity in the structure or constitution of the vital organ. In these cases, the fault of the vital organ is of a much graver nature; it has become damaged or rendered inefficient due to some tangible factor which has entered into the very constitution of the vital organ. When the kidney is sluggish, the trouble is merely functional; but when there is a stone in the kidney, the trouble is structural. Both types of troubles can be corrected; but it is far easier to correct merely functional troubles than to correct structural troubles.

Falsehoods which arise due to some irregularity in the application of the intellect are like functional troubles; and the falsehoods which arise due to the vitiation of the intellect are like structural troubles.

Importance of Purifying Intellect

Just as functional troubles are easier to correct than structural troubles, falsehoods arising out of irregularity in the application of the intellect are easier to correct than the falsehoods which arise due to the vitiation of intellect. In order to correct the functional troubles of the kidney, all that is necessary is to give it a better tone and strength; but if there is a structural trouble like the formation of a stone, it is often necessary to perform an operation. In the same way, if falsehoods arise due to some mistakes in the application of the intellect, all that is necessary is more *carefulness* in the application of the intellect; but if falsehoods arise due to vitiation of the intellect, it is necessary to have *purification* of the intellect, which requires the painful process of *cutting out those desires and attachments which are responsible for vitiating the intellect.*

The falsehoods of vitiated thinking spring from initial mistakes in valuation; they arise as a *side-product* of a psychic activity, which consists in the pursuit of certain accepted values; they come into existence as a part of *rationalisation* and justification of the accepted values; and they owe their hold upon the human mind owing their appearing to support those accepted values. If they did not affect human values or their realisation, they would immediately dwindle into insignificance, and lose their grip upon the mind. When false beliefs derive their being and vitality from deep-rooted wishes, they are nourished by false seeking. If the error in false beliefs is purely intellectual, it is easy to set it right. But *the false beliefs, which are nourished by false seeking, are the citadels of Maya*; they involve much more than intellectual error; and they do not suffer any appreciable shock by mere counter-assertion of a purely intellectual nature.

The cutting out of the desires and attachments which vitiate thinking is not primarily a matter of merely intellectual propositions; it requires right effort and right action. Not in arm-chair speculation, but in the doing of right things, shall spiritual truths be discovered; honest action is a preliminary to the elimination of spiritual falsehoods. The perception of spiritual truths requires not merely strenuous and furious thinking, but clear thinking, and *true clarity of thought is a fruit of a pure and tranquil mind*.

Not till the stripping off of last vestige of *Maya* created falsehood, is God known as *the Truth*: only when *Maya* is completely crossed, there arises the supreme know-

ledge that God is the only Truth. God alone is real. All that is not God, all that is impermanent and finite, and all that seems to exist within the domain of duality is false. **God as Truth is Known after Transcending Falsehoods** God is one Infinite Reality; all divisions which are conceived within this Reality are falsely conceived; they do not actually exist.

When God is considered as something divisible, it is due to *Maya*. The variegated world of multiplicity does not effect the partitioning of God into several different portions.

God is Indivisible There are different ego-minds, different bodies, different forms, but only one soul. *When the one soul is taken along with different ego-minds and bodies, we get different individualised spirits;* but this does not introduce any multiplicity within the soul itself. The soul is and always remains indivisible. The one indivisible soul serves the purpose of a background for different ego-minds, which do the thinking and doing of various types and which go through numberless types of dual experiences; but the one indivisible soul is and always remains beyond all thinking and doing and beyond all dual experience.

The different types of opinions or the different types of thinking do not introduce any, variety or multiplicity within the one indivisible soul for the simple reason that there are

Differences of thinking do not create Divisions within the Soul no opinions or any types of thinking within the soul. All the activity of thinking along with its conclusions, is within the ego-mind, which is finite. *The soul does not think; it is only the ego-mind, which thinks with the background of the soul.* Thinking and the knowledge which comes through thinking, are both possible in the state

of imperfect and incomplete knowledge which belongs to the finite ego-minds. In the soul itself, there is neither thinking nor the knowledge that comes through thinking.

The soul is infinite thought and infinite intelligence itself; but in this infinite thought and intelligence there is no division of the thinker, the thinking and the conclusions of thinking, nor the duality of the subject and object. It is only the ego-mind with the background of the soul that can become the thinker. The soul, which is infinite thought and infinite intelligence, does not think or have any activity of the intellect. Intellect and its limited thinking comes into existence only with the finite ego-mind; *in the completeness and sufficiency of the infinite intelligence, which is the soul, there is no need for the intellect or its activities.*

With the shedding of the last vestige of falsehoods created by *Maya*, the soul not only knows its reality to be different from the gross, the subtle or the mental body, but it knows itself to be God, **God is the Only Reality** which is the *only* reality. It knows that the mind, the subtle body and the physical body were all equally the creations of its own imagination, that in reality they never existed, that it was through ignorance that it conceived *itself* as the mind or the subtle body or the physical body, and that it, as it were, itself became the mind, the subtle body or the gross body and *then* identified itself with all these *self-created illusions*.

*

Maya

PART IV

(GOD AND MAYA)

GOD is infinite by being above the limiting opposites of duality. He is above the limited aspects of good and bad, small and great, right and wrong, virtue and evil, happiness and misery; therefore **God is beyond Duality** he is infinite. If God were good rather than bad or bad rather than good, or if he were small rather than great or great rather than small, or if he were right rather than wrong or wrong rather than right, or if he were virtuous rather than evil or evil rather than virtuous, or if he were happy rather than miserable or miserable rather than happy, he would be finite and not infinite. *Only by being above duality is God infinite.*

Whatever is infinite must transcend duality; it can never be one term in a duality; therefore that which is truly infinite cannot be considered to be the dual part of the finite. *If the infinite is regarded as existing side by side with the finite, it is no longer infinite, for it then becomes the second part of duality. God, who is infinite, cannot descend within duality. So, the apparent existence of the duality is an Infinite God and the finite world is illusory. God alone is real; he is Infinite, one without a second.* The existence of the finite is only apparent; it is false; it is not real.

How does the false world of finite things come into existence? Why does it exist? It is *created by Maya or*

the principal of ignorance. *Maya* is not illusion; it is the creator of illusion. *Maya* is not false; it is that which gives false impressions. *Maya is not unreal; it is that which makes the real appear unreal and the unreal appear real.* *Maya* is not duality; it is that which causes duality.

For the purposes of intellectual explanation, *Maya* must be looked upon as being infinite. *It creates the illusion of finiteness; it is not itself finite.* All the illusions which are created by *Maya* are finite; and the entire universe of duality, which appears to exist due to *Maya*, is also finite. Universe may seem to contain innumerable things but that does not make it infinite. Stars may be countless; they are a huge number; but the collection of stars is all the same finite. Space and time might seem to be infinitely divisible; but they are nevertheless finite. Everything which is finite and limited belongs to the world of illusion; but the principle which causes this illusion of finite things must, *in a sense*, be regarded as not being an illusion.

Maya cannot be considered as being finite. A thing becomes finite by being limited in time, *Maya* does not exist in space and cannot be limited by it. *Maya cannot be limited in space, because space is itself the creation of Maya.*

Maya is not Limited by Space Space, with all that it contains, is an illusion and is dependent upon *Maya*; *Maya* is in no way dependent upon space. So *Maya* cannot become finite through any limitations of space.

Nor can *Maya* become finite because of any limitations of time. Though *Maya* comes to an end in the state of

super-consciousness, it need not be considered finite for that reason. *Maya* cannot have a beginning or end *in* time, because time itself is a creation of *Maya*. Any view that makes *Maya* a happening that takes place at some time and disappears after some time, places *Maya* in time and not time in *Maya*. *Time is in Maya; Maya is not in time*. Time as well as all the happenings in time are the creations of *Maya*; time comes into existence because of *Maya* and disappears when *Maya* disappears. *God is a timeless reality and the realisation of God and the disappearance of Maya is a timeless act*. So, *Maya* is in no way limited by time.

Nor can *Maya* be considered to be itself finite for any other reasons; for, if it is finite, it would be an illusion; and being an illusion it would not have any potency to create other illusions. *For the purposes of intellectual explanation, Maya is best regarded as being both real and infinite, just in the same way as God is usually regarded as being both real and infinite*.

Among all possible intellectual explanations, the explanation that *Maya*, like God, is both real and infinite is most acceptable to the intellect of man. But *Maya* cannot be ultimately true. *Wherever there is duality, there is finiteness on both sides; the one thing limits the other. There cannot be two real infinities*. There can be two huge things; but there cannot be two infinite entities. If we have the duality of God and *Maya* and if both are regarded as coordinate existents, then the infinite Reality of God is considered as the second part of a duality. Therefore, *the intellectual explanation that Maya is real does not have the stamp of final knowledge, though it is the most plausible explanation*.

There are difficulties in regarding *Maya* as illusory and there are also difficulties in regarding *Maya* as *ultimately* real. Thus, *all attempts of the limited intellect to understand Maya lead to an impasse.*

Intellectual Difficulties in understanding Maya On the one hand, if *Maya* is regarded as finite, it itself becomes illusory and then it cannot account for the illusory world of finite things; therefore *Maya* has to be regarded as being both real and infinite. But on the other hand, if *Maya* is regarded as being ultimately real, it itself becomes a second part of the duality of another Infinite Reality, namely God; and from this point of view, therefore, *Maya* actually seems to become finite and therefore unreal. So *Maya cannot be ultimately real though it has to be regarded as such in order to account for the illusory world of finite objects.*

In whatsoever manner the limited intellect tries to understand *Maya*, it falls short of true understanding. It is not possible to understand *Maya* through the limited intellect; it is as unfathomable as God.
Maya is God's Shadow *God is unfathomable, un-understandable; so is Maya unfathomable, un-understandable.* So, they say: "*Maya* is God's shadow." Where a man is, there is his shadow also; so where God is, there is this inscrutable *Maya*.

But though God and *Maya* are inscrutable for the limited intellect working under the domain of duality, they can be thoroughly understood, in their true nature, in the *final knowledge of realisation.*
The Enigma of Maya is solved after Realisation *The enigma of the existence of Maya can never be finally solved until realisation, when it is known that Maya, does not exist in reality.*

Maya does not exist in two states. In the original unconscious state of Reality there is no *Maya* and in the

self-conscious or super-conscious state of God also there is no Maya. It exists only in God's consciousness of the phenomenal world of duality i.e. when there is the consciousness of the gross world, or the consciousness of the subtle world, or the consciousness of the mental world. Maya exists when there is no self-consciousness but only the consciousness of the imagined other, and when consciousness is helplessly dominated by the false categories of duality.

Maya exists only from the point of view of the finite. It is only for illusion that Maya exists as a real and infinite creator of unreal and finite things. From the point of view of the last and the only Truth of realisation, nothing exists except the Infinite and Eternal God; there, the illusion of finite things as separate from God has vanished, and with it has also vanished Maya or the creator of this illusion.

Self-knowledge comes to the soul by looking within, and by crossing Maya; and in that self-knowledge, it not only knows that the different ego-minds and bodies never existed, but also that the entire universe and Maya itself never existed as a *separate* principle. Whatever reality Maya ever had is now swallowed up in the indivisible being of the one soul. *The soul knows itself to be what it has always been—eternally self-realised, eternally infinite in knowledge, bliss, power and existence, and eternally free from duality.* But this highest form of self-knowledge is inaccessible for the intellect and it is incomprehensible except to those who have attained to the heights of final realisation.

D. V. 24

The Conditions of Happiness

PART I

(REMOVAL OF SUFFERING THROUGH DETACHMENT)

EVERY creature in the world is seeking happiness, and man is no exception. Seemingly man seems to set his heart on many kinds of things; but all that he desires or undertakes to do is for the sake of happiness. If he is keen about having power, it is because he expects to derive happiness from its use; if he strives after money, it is because he thinks that it will secure for him the conditions and the means of his happiness; if he seeks knowledge, health or beauty, science, art or literature, it is because he feels that his pursuit of happiness is directly dependent upon them; if he struggles for worldly success and fame, it is because he hopes to find his happiness in their attainment. *Through all his endeavours and pursuits, man wants to be happy; and happiness is the ultimate motive-power which drives him to all that he does.*

Everyone seeks to be happy; yet most persons are immersed in some kind of suffering; and if they do, at times, get small instalments of happiness in their lives, these instalments are neither unadulterated nor abiding. *Man's life is never a series of unmixed pleasure; it moves between the opposites of pain and pleasure, which are intertwined with each other like darkened clouds and shining rainbows:* and, the moments of pleasure, which occasionally appear in the life of man, soon vanish, like the rainbows, which shine, in their

splendour, only to disappear from the sky. And if these moments of pleasure leave any trace, it is that of a memory which only augments the pain of having lost them; such memory is an invariable legacy of most pleasures.

Man does not seek suffering; but it comes to him as an inevitable outcome of the very manner in which he seeks happiness. He seeks happiness through the fulfilment of his desires; but such fulfilment is never an assured thing, so that in the pursuit of desires, man is also unavoidably preparing for the suffering of their non-fulfilment. *The same tree of desire has two kinds of fruit; one kind of fruit, which is sweet, is pleasure; and the other kind of fruit, which is bitter, is suffering.* If the tree is allowed to flourish, it cannot be made to yield only one kind of fruit; one who has given a bid for one kind of fruit must also be ready to have the other also. Man pursues pleasure furiously and clings to it fondly when it comes; and he tries to avoid impending suffering desperately and smarts under it with resentment; but his fury and fondness are not of much avail, because the pleasure he gets is doomed to fade and disappear one day; and his desperateness and resentment are equally of no avail, because he cannot escape enduring the suffering which comes to his lot.

Goaded by multifarious desires, man seeks the pleasures of the world, with unyielding hope; but his zest for the pleasures does not remain uniform, because, even while he is reaching out of his hand for the cup of pleasures, he has often to gulp down the doses of sufferings. His enthusiasm for pleasures gets abated by the experience of sufferings, which often follows in

their wake. He is often subject to sudden moods and impulses. Sometimes, he is happy and elated; at other times, he is very unhappy and down. His moods change according to whether his desires are fulfilled or frustrated. *Satisfaction of some desires yields momentary happiness, but this happiness does not last, and it soon leads to the reaction of depression.* His moods admit of ups and downs and are subject to constant variation.

Fulfillment of desires does not lead to their termination; in fulfillment, they get submerged for a while only to reappear again with added intensity. When a person is

**Suffering is caused
by desires**

hungry, he eats to satisfy the desire, but soon feels hungry again. If he eats too much, even in the fulfillment of his desire, he experiences pain and discomfort. It is the same with all the desires of the world: they can only yield the happiness which is fleeting; and even in the very moment of fulfillment, the happiness which they yield has already begun to fade and vanish. *Worldly desires can, therefore, never lead to abiding happiness; on the contrary, they invariably invite unending suffering of many kinds.* When a man is full of worldly desires, plentiful crop of suffering is unavoidably in store for him. Desire is inevitably the mother of many sufferings; this is the law.

If a person experiences or visualises the suffering which waits upon desires, his desires get mitigated. Sometimes intense suffering makes him detached from worldly life;

**Mitigation of Desires
through the sight of
Suffering**

but this detachment to worldly objects is often again set aside by the fresh flood of desires. Many persons temporarily lose their interest in the worldly objects, owing to the impact of acute suffering brought by

desires; but the detachment must be lasting if it is to pave the way for freedom from desires. There are *varying degrees of detachment*: but not all of them are lasting.

Sometimes, a person is greatly moved by an unusually strong experience, as when he sees on the road a corpse being carried to the burial ground, or when he sees the corpse being buried or burnt.

Temporary Detachment Such experiences are thought-provoking and they initiate long trains of ideas about the futility and emptiness of worldly existence. Under the pressure of such experiences, the person realises that one day he must die and take leave of all the worldly objects which are so dear to him. But such thoughts, as well as the detachment born thereof, are both short-lived: they are soon forgotten; and the person resumes his attachment to the world and its alluring objects. The temporary and passing mood of detachment is known as *Smashan-vairagya*, because it is usually in the burial ground that such passing thoughts of detachment arise, and they stay in the mind only as long as the person is in the presence of the corpse. *Such mood of detachment is as temporary as it is sudden*. It seems to be strong and effective while it lasts: but it is sustained by the vividness of some experience; and when the experience vanishes, the mood of detachment also quickly flitters away, without seriously affecting the general attitude to life.

The passing mood of detachment might be illustrated by the story of a person who once saw at the theatre a spiritual drama about Gopichanda. The drama impressed

Illustrative Story him so deeply that disregarding all his duties to his family, he joined a band of *Bairagis* (wandering ascetics) belonging to the cult of

Gopichand. Renouncing all his former modes of life, he dressed himself as a *Bairagi*, shaved his head and sat under a tree, as advised by the other members of the group. At first he found himself plunged, in deep meditation. But with the heat of the Sun growing stronger, his enthusiasm for meditation began to cool down; and as the day went on, he began to feel hungry and thirsty and became very restless and miserable. When the members of his family noticed his absence from home, they became worried about him; and, when after some search, they traced him, they found him, sitting under the tree, in this miserable plight. He had grown haggard and was plainly unhappy. His wife, who saw him in this strange condition, was so furious that she rushed at him for assault. But his mood of detachment had all fluttered away; and as he had got thoroughly tired of his new condition of life, he took the approach of his wife as a boon from heaven. So, silencing her quickly, he put on his *pagri* and ordinary clothes, and meekly followed her home.

Sometimes, the mood of detachment is more lasting; and it not only endures for a considerable time, but also seriously modifies the general attitude to life, for sometime. This is called *Tivra-Intense Detachment* *vairagya* or intense dispassion. Such intense dispassion usually arises owing to some great misfortune—as the loss of one's own dear ones or the loss of property or reputation; and under the influence of the wave of detachment, the person renounces all worldly things. *Tivra-vairagya* of this type has its own spiritual value; but it is also likely to disappear, in the course of time, or is likely to be upset by the onset of a recurring flood of worldly desires. The disgust for the world, which a person feels in such cases, is due to a powerful impression left by a

misfortune; and it does not permanently endure, because it is not born of understanding. It is only a severe *reaction* to life.

The kind of detachment which really lasts is due to the understanding of suffering and its cause; it is securely based upon the unshakable knowledge that all things of this world are momentary and

Complete Detachment *passing and that any clinging to them is bound to be eventually a source of pain.* Man seeks the worldly objects of pleasure and tries to avoid things that bring pain, without realising that he cannot have the one and eschew the other, since, as long as there is attachment to the worldly objects of pleasure, he must perpetually invite upon himself the suffering of not having them, and the suffering of losing them, after having got them. Lasting detachment which brings freedom from all desires and attachments is called *Purna Vairagya* or complete dispassion. Complete detachment is one of the essential conditions of lasting and true happiness; for he who has complete detachment no longer creates for himself the suffering which is due to the unending thralldom of desires.

Desirelessness makes a man firm like a rock; he is neither moved by pleasure nor by sorrow; he is not upset by the onslaughts of opposites. He who is affected by agreeable things is bound to be affected by disagreeable things. If a person is encouraged in his endeavours by the occurrence of an omen which is considered auspicious, he is bound to be discouraged by the occurrence of an omen which is considered to be inauspicious; he cannot keep himself proof against the discouraging effect of an inauspicious omen as long as he is deriving strength from the auspicious omen. The only way of

not being upset by omens is to be indifferent to auspicious as well as inauspicious omens.

The same is true of the opposites of praise and blame. If a person is pleased by receiving praise, he is bound to be miserable when he receives blame; he cannot keep himself steady under the shower of blame, as long as he is inwardly delighted by the receiving of praise. *The only way of not being upset by blame is to be detached from the praise also*; it is only through complete detachment that a person can keep unmoved by the opposite of praise and blame. Then, he does not lose his equanimity either by the receiving of praise or by the receiving of blame. The steadiness and equanimity which remain unaffected by any opposites is possible only through complete detachment. Complete detachment is an essential condition of lasting and true happiness. He who has complete detachment is not at the mercy of the opposites of experience; and being free from the thralldom of all desires, he no longer creates his own sufferings.

Man is subject to many sufferings. Some sufferings are physical and others are mental; of these two kinds of suffering, mental suffering is more acute. Those who have limited vision think that suffering can only be physical: and their idea of suffering is some kind of illness or torture of the body. *But mental suffering is worse than physical suffering*; and in relation to mental suffering, physical suffering sometimes comes as a blessing, because it serves the purpose of easing mental suffering, by weaning a way man's attention from the mental suffering.

It is not right to make much of merely physical suffering; it can be borne through the exercise of will-

power and endurance. But true suffering that counts is mental; and even *yogis* who can endure great physical suffering without being affected by it find it difficult to keep free from mental suffering which is rooted in the frustration of desires. If a man does not want anything he is not unhappy under any adverse circumstances, not even in the jaws of a lion. The state of complete desirelessness is *latent in every one*: and when, through complete detachment, one reaches the state of wanting nothing, he taps the unfailing inner source of eternal and unfading happiness, which is not based upon the objects of world, but is sustained by self-knowledge and self-realisation.

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The Conditions of Happiness

PART II

(CONTENTMENT, LOVE AND GOD-REALISATION)

MOST of the suffering of man is created by him for himself through his ungoverned desires and impossible demands; it is unnecessary because these desires and

Contentment cuts out the Harassment of Self-created Problems demands are not necessary for self-fulfilment. If man becomes desireless and contented, he will be free from his self-inflicted suffering;

his imagination will not be constantly harassed by feverish reaching out towards things that really do not matter; and he will be established in unassailable peace.

When man is contented, he does not require any solutions to problems, because the problems which confront worldly persons have themselves disappeared from life. He has no problems; therefore, he does not have to worry about their solution. For him, the complexities of life do not exist, because his life becomes utterly simple in the state of desirelessness.

When a person understands desires as being merely the bondage of the spirit, he decides to give them up; but this giving up of desires, even when voluntary, is often a painful process. The suffering of purging the mind from its many desires exists, even when the

The Suffering of Renunciation soul may be ready to renounce them, because this decision of the soul goes counter to the inclination of the ego-mind to persist through the desires to which it is habituated. *The renunciation of desires is the curtailment of the very life of the ego-mind; therefore, it is a process which is invariably accompanied by*

much acute suffering. But such suffering is wholesome for the soul, because it has come to liberate the soul from bondage.

Not all suffering is bad. When suffering leads to the eternal happiness of desirelessness, it should be regarded as a blessing in disguise. Just as a patient may have to undergo the suffering of an operation at the hands of a surgeon in order to free himself from the persistent and malignant pain of a physical malady, the soul has to welcome the suffering of renouncing desires in order to free himself from the recurrent and unending suffering caused by desires. The suffering which the soul has in renouncing desires may be very acute; but, *this suffering is sustained by the sense of greater freedom which begins to express itself as desires gradually disappear from the mind.* If a swelling on the body is opened and allowed to run out, it gives much pain, but is also accompanied by equal relief; so, the suffering of renunciation of desires is accompanied by the compensating relief of progressive initiation into the limitless life of freedom and happiness.

The simple life of freedom and happiness is one of the most difficult things to have. Man has complicated his life by the growth of artificial and imaginary desires; and going back to simplicity amounts to the renunciation of desires. Desires have become a part and parcel of the limited self of man, with the result that he is reluctant to leave them, unless the lesson that desires are born of ignorance is impressed upon his mind through acute mental suffering. *When a man is, through his desires, confronted with great suffering, he understands their true nature; so when such suffering comes, it should be welcome. Suffering may come in order to eliminate*

further suffering; thorn may be taken out by thorn, and suffering by suffering. Suffering has to come, when it is of use in purging the soul of its desires: it is then as necessary as medicine is to a sick man.

However, ninety-nine percent of human suffering is not necessary; through obstinate ignorance people inflict suffering upon themselves and their fellowmen, and then strangely enough, they ask: **Chief Suffering is Discontent** "Why should we suffer?" The general idea of suffering is symbolised by the scenes of war, devastated houses, broken and bleeding limbs, the agonies of torture and death; but war does not embody any special suffering. *People really suffer all the time. They suffer because they are not satisfied. They want more and more; and war is more an outcome of the universal suffering of dissatisfaction, than an embodiment of representative suffering.* Through his greed, vanity and cruelty, man brings untold suffering upon himself and others.

Through desires, man creates most of his suffering; and he is not content to create suffering for himself, but is, often out of his selfishness, relentlessly zealous in creating suffering for his fellowmen. Man seeks his own happiness, even at the cost of the happiness of others, thus giving rise to cruelty and the unending wars in which there is utter disregard for the well-being of others. But as long as he thinks of his own happiness to the exclusion of the happiness of others, he does not find it. In the pursuit of his own individual happiness, the limited self of man becomes accentuated and burdensome. *When man is merely selfish, he can, in the false pursuit of separate and exclusive happiness, become utterly callous and cruel to others; but this recoils upon him-*

self, by poisoning the very spring of his life. Loveless life is most unlovely; only a life of love alone is worth living.

If a man is desireless, he will not only eliminate much suffering which he causes to others, but he will also eliminate much of his own self-created suffering. But mere desirelessness cannot yield positive happiness, though it protects man from self-created suffering and goes a long way towards making true happiness possible. *True happiness begins to come when a man learns the art of right adjustment to other persons; and right adjustment involves self-forgetfulness and love.* Hence arises the spiritual importance of transforming a life of the limited self into a life of love.

Pure love is rare, because in most cases love comes to be adulterated with selfish motives which are surreptitiously introduced in consciousness by the operation of accumulated bad *sanskaras*. *It is extremely difficult to purge, consciousness of the deep-rooted ignorance expressing itself through the idea of 'I' and 'Mine'.* For example, even when a man says that he wants his beloved, what he often means is that he wants his beloved to be with him. The feeling of 'I' and 'Mine' is notably present even in the expression of love. If a man sees his own son wearing tattered clothes, he does all that he can to give him good clothes and will be anxious to see him happy; and under these circumstances he would consider his own feeling towards his son as that of pure love. But, in determining his quick response to the distress of his son, the part played by the idea of 'Mine' is by no means inconsiderable. If he happens to see, in the street, the son of some stranger, wearing tattered clothes, he would

not respond as he did in the case of his own son. This shows that though he may not be fully conscious of it his behaviour towards his own son was, in fact, largely selfish; the feeling of 'Mine' is there in the *background* of the mind, though it can be brought to the surface only through searching analysis. If his response to the son of the stranger is the same as in the case of his own son, then alone can he be said to have pure and selfless love.

Pure love is not a thing that can be forced upon someone; nor is it something which can be snatched away from another by force. It has to manifest itself from within,

Pure Love is Both with unfettered spontaneity. But,
Easy and Difficult what *can* be achieved through bold decision is the removal of those factors which prevent the manifestation of pure love. The achievement of selflessness may be said to be at once *both difficult and easy*; it is difficult for those who have not decided to step out of the limited self; and it is easy for those who have decided to do so. In the absence of firm determination, the attachments connected with the limited self are too strong to break through; but, if a person resolves to set aside selfishness at any cost, he finds an easy entry into the domain of pure love.

The limited self is like an external coat worn by the soul; just as a man may take off his coat by the exercise of will, he can, through a bold decisive step, make up his mind to

The Need for Bold shed the limited self and get rid of it
Decision once for all. The task which would be otherwise difficult becomes easy through the exercise of *bold and unyielding decision*. But such decision can be born in his mind only when he feels an intense longing for pure love. Just as a man,

who is hungry, longs for food, the aspirant, who wants to experience pure love, has an intense longing for it.

It is when the aspirant has developed this intense longing for pure love, that he may be said to have been prepared for the intervention of the Master, who through proper direction and necessary help ushers him into the state of Divine Love. Only a Master can awaken love through the Divine Love which he imparts; there is no other way. *Those, who want to be consumed in love, should go to the eternal flame of love.* Love is the most significant thing in life. It cannot be awakened except by coming into contact with the Incarnation of Love. Merely theoretical brooding on love will result in the weaving of a *theory* about love; but the heart will, in such cases, remain as empty as before. *"Love begets love;" it cannot be awakened by any other mechanical means.*

When true love is awakened in man, it leads him to the realisation of God and opens up an unlimited field of lasting and unfading happiness. The happiness of God-realisation is the goal of all creation; and it is not possible for a person to have the slightest idea of that inexpressible happiness without actually having the experience of Godhood. The idea which the worldly man has of suffering or happiness is entirely limited. *The real happiness which, comes through realising God is worth all the physical and mental suffering in the universe; then all suffering is as if it were not.*

Even those who are not God-realised can, through Yoga, control their minds to such an extent that

nothing makes them feel pain and suffering; they can remain untouched by suffering, even if they are buried or thrown in boiling oil. But though the advanced *yogis* can brave and annul any suffering, they do not experience the happiness of realising God. When one becomes God, everything else is zero; the happiness of God-realisation, therefore, does not suffer curtailment by anything. *The happiness of God-realisation is self-sustained, eternally fresh and unfading, boundless and indescribable; and it is for this happiness that the world has sprung into existence.*

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God as Infinite Love

THOSE, who try to understand God through the intellect alone, arrive at some cold and dry concept which misses the very essence of the nature of God. It is true that God is Infinite Knowledge, Infinite Existence, Infinite Power and Infinite Bliss. But God is not understood in his essence until he is also understood as *Infinite Love*. In the Beyond State, from which the entire universe springs and into which it ultimately merges, God is *eternally* Infinite Love; it is only when God's Love is taken in the limited context of *forms* (which arise in the interim period of the appearance of the illusory universe of duality) that its infinity *seems* to have been impaired.

When God's Love comes to experience itself *in* and *through* the manifested forms of the universe, it goes through the following phases:—(i) experiencing itself as extremely limited, (ii) experiencing itself as becoming less and less limited and becoming more and more like Infinite Love, and (iii) experiencing itself to be, what it really is, infinite in essence and existence. *The experience of delimitation in Love arises owing to ignorance caused by the sanskaras (which are the by-product of the evolution of consciousness); and the process of love becoming infinite is characterised by the shedding of these limiting sanskaras.*

After going through the almost unconscious stages of the mineral kingdom, Love becomes conscious of itself as lust in the animals; and its first appearance in human consciousness is also in the form of lust. *Lust is*

the most limited form of Love in human consciousness. In spite of the clear reference which lust has to other persons, it is indistinguishable from undiluted selfishness, because all the objects to which lust clings are desired for the sake of and from the point of view of the limited and separate self. But it is at the same time a form of Love, because it has in it some kind of appreciation about others, though this appreciation is completely vitiated by thick ignorance about the true Self.

When human consciousness is completely caught up in the duality of the gross sphere of existence, Love cannot express itself as anything other than lust of some type. A

Lover of the Gross Sphere man likes curry and enjoys it for the reason that it tickles his palate. There are no higher considerations in this; therefore, it is a form of lust. It is only a craving for the sensations of taste. In the same way, mind has cravings for the bodily sensations of sight, smell, sound and touch; and it nourishes its crude ego-life through the excitement derived from these sensations. *Lust in all its forms is an entanglement with the gross forms, independently of the spirit behind them; it is an expression of mere attachment to the objects of sense: and since, in all the forms of lust, the heart remains unfed and unexpressed, it becomes a perpetual vacuum and is in a state of unending suffering and non-fulfillment.*

Love, which expresses itself as *undiluted* or cent per cent lust, is in a state of extreme limitation, because it is

Undiluted Lust is a State of Extreme Limitation helplessly caught up in ceaseless craving. *When the heart is in the clutches of lust, the spirit remains, as it were, in a state of delusion or stupor: its functioning is severely curtailed and perverted because of the limiting ignorance to which it is*

subject; its higher potentialities are denied expression and fulfilment; and this thwarting and suppression of the life of the spirit, entails a state of utter bondage.

Lust is the most limited form of Love functioning under the thralldom of ignorance; but the unambiguous stamp of insufficiency which lust invariably bears upon itself is itself

In Lust the Self-Assertion of Infinity is Indirect

a sign that it is an incomplete and inadequate expression of something deeper, which is vast and unlimited.

Through the manifold and unending sufferings which are attendant upon undiluted lust and the continued experiences of frustration which it brings, the spirit is ceaselessly registering its unyielding protest against the utter superficiality of the life of unqualified lust; they are the many irrepressible voices through which the Infinity of God's Love is indirectly asserting the imperative claims of its unexpressed but unimpaired reality.

Even in the lowest lustful life of the *gross* sphere, God is experiencing himself as a Lover: but it is a state of a Lover who is completely ignorant about the true Nature of him-

Three Stages of the Lover

self or the Beloved; and it is a state of a Lover who is

inevitably separated from the Beloved by the opaque curtain of un-understood duality. It is nevertheless a beginning of a long process by which *the Lover breaks through the enveloping curtain of ignorance and comes into his own Truth as Unbounded and Unhampered Love.* But in order to get initiated into Infinite Love, the Lover has to go through two other stages which are characteristic of the *subtle* and *mental* spheres.

The Lover of the *subtle* sphere is not free from lust: but the lust which he experiences is not undiluted as in the *gross* sphere. The intensity of lust in the *subtle*

sphere is about half of the intensity of lust in the gross sphere. Besides, in the case of the Lover of the subtle sphere, there is no gross expression of lust, as there is in the case of the Lover of the gross sphere. The Lover of the gross sphere is inextricably entangled with the gross objects; hence, his lust finds gross expression. But the lover of the subtle sphere has got loosened from the attachment to the gross objects; hence, in his case, lust remains unexpressed in the gross form. His lust has other *subtle* expressions; but it cannot have gross expression. Besides, since about half of original lust of the gross sphere gets sublimated in the subtle sphere, the Lover of the subtle sphere experiences Love not as undiluted lust, but in a, higher form as *Longing for being united with the Beloved*.

Thus, in the gross sphere, Love expresses itself as Lust; and in the subtle sphere, it expresses itself as *Longing*. Lust is a craving for sensations and as such is completely selfish in motive: it is utterly disregarding of the well-being of the Beloved. But in Longing, there is less of selfishness: and though it continues to be, in a way, *possessive*, the Beloved comes to be recognized as having worth and importance in his own right. Longing is a less limited form of Love than Lust: and in Longing, the curtain of duality has become more transparent and less obstructive, since the duality between the Lover and the Beloved is now consciously sought to be overcome by securing the presence of the Beloved. *In lust, the emphasis is solely on the limited self and the Beloved is completely subsidiary to the gross needs of the self; but in longing, the emphasis is equally distributed on the self and on the Beloved, and the Lover realises that he exists for the Beloved just in the same way as the Beloved exists for him.*

The Lover of the *mental* sphere has even a higher and freer expression of Love. In his case, though Lust has completely disappeared, it is mostly sublimated. Only about one-fourth of the original Lust of the gross sphere remains; but it remains in a latent form without any expression. *In the mental sphere, Lust does not have even subtle expression.* The lover of the mental sphere is detached from subtle objects; and he is *free from the possessive Longing for the Beloved*, which is characteristic of the Lover of the subtle sphere.

In the mental sphere, Love expresses itself as *complete resignation to the will of the Beloved*. All selfish desire including longing for the presence of the Beloved has disappeared. Now the emphasis is solely on the worth and will of the Beloved, selfishness is utterly wiped out and there is a far more *abundant release of Love, in its pure form*. However, even in the mental sphere, Love has not become infinite, since there is still present the thin curtain of *duality* which separates the Lover from the Beloved. Love is no longer in the clutches of selfishness; but it is still short of being infinite, because it is *experienced through the medium of the finite mind*, just in the same way as in the lower spheres, it is experienced through the medium of the lower bodies.

Love becomes consciously infinite in being as well as in expression, when the individual mind is transcended. Such Love is rightly called Divine, because it is characteristic of the God-state in which all duality is finally overcome. In Divine, Love, Lust has completely disappeared: it does not exist even in a latent form.

Divine Love is unlimited in essence and expression, because it is experienced by the soul through the soul itself. In the gross, subtle and mental spheres, the Lover is conscious of being separated from the Beloved; but when all these spheres are transcended, the Lover is conscious of his unity with the Beloved. The Lover loses himself into the being of the Beloved and knows that he is one with the Beloved. Divine Love is entirely free from the thralldom of desires or limiting self: and *in this state of Infinity the Lover has no being apart from the Beloved: he is the Beloved himself.*

We thus have God as Infinite Love, first delimiting himself in the forms of creation, and then recovering his infinity through the different stages of creation. All the stages of God's experience of being a finite Lover ultimately culminate in his experiencing himself as the Sole Beloved. *The sojourn of the Soul is a thrilling Divine Romance, in which the Lover, who in the beginning is conscious of nothing but emptiness, frustration, superficiality and the gnawing chains of bondage, gradually attains an increasingly fuller and freer expression of Love and ultimately disappears and merges into the Divine Beloved to realise the unity of the Lover and the Beloved in the Supreme and Eternal Fact of God as Infinite Love.*

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