

GOD TO MAN AND MAN TO GOD
The Discourses of Meher Baba
First Edition (1955)

Edited by

C. B. Purdom

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GOD TO MAN
AND MAN TO GOD

**GOD TO MAN
AND MAN TO GOD**

THE DISCOURSES OF MEHER BABA

Edited by

C. B. PURDOM

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VICTOR GOLLANCZ

1955

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INTRODUCTION

The spiritual discourses contained in the following pages are by one who has been completely silent for thirty years, and has not written a word (except his signature) for more than twenty-eight years. They were dictated to a disciple, by means of a Roman alphabet board, for the benefit of his close followers. At Meher Baba's request I have edited them to be made available for a wider public.

Merwan Sheriarji Irani, known as Meher Baba, was born in Poona, of poor parents on 25 February 1894. He was educated at the (Roman Catholic) St. Vincent's High School at Poona, afterwards at Deccan College. A lively, genial, intelligent boy he was active in sports and interested in poetry, but had no special spiritual interests. At the age of nineteen, when cycling, one morning, he passed an old woman sitting under a tree, who beckoned to him, and when he came to her, embraced him. From that moment he partly lost consciousness and was unable to continue his studies. She was a Moslem holy woman, called Babajan, who died eighteen years later, in 1931, at a great age; her shrine is maintained in Poona. Meher visited her a number of times, and for more than a year was in a deepening state of abnormal consciousness. After two years he was fit to lead an itinerant life, and visited several Sadgurus. He came to the well known spiritual master, Sai Baba of Sherdi, who sent him to another master, Upasni Maharaj of Sakori, who when he first saw Merwan, threw a stone at him, which hitting him on the head brought him to a certain degree of normal consciousness. He stayed nearly seven years with Upasni at Sakori, and in 1921, Upasni said to Merwan, now restored to full normal consciousness, "An Avatar is born in your person, Merwan, you are the Ancient One". He told one of his leading disciples, Gustadji, to follow Merwan (thereafter called Meher Baba), which Gustadji has done ever since.

Other disciples of Upasni at his orders followed Baba, who in

1922 opened an ashram near Arangaon, Ahmednagar, named Meherabad, where he also carried on for some years a free school for boys of all castes and creeds; afterwards a free dispensary, and a Mast ashram for God-intoxicated men not conscious of their physical bodies. He ceased to speak from 10 July 1925, using an alphabet board for communication, and in another eighteen months, on 1 January 1927, he ceased to write. Nevertheless, he was intensely active, physically and in other ways, and travelled all over India, gathering to him disciples without distinction of nationality, caste, religion or sex. He alternated these activities with long periods of seclusion and fasting, and his work has had a number of distinct phases an account of which cannot be given here.

Meher Baba's silence does not mean that he does not speak, for he declares that he speaks to himself; but he speaks to no one else. His work is done in silence, inwardly, and is concerned with awakening people to the unity of spiritual knowledge and the love of God.

Until the spring of 1931 he did not leave the East, but has since paid seven visits to Europe, including five visits to England, and four visits to the United States of America. He has been twice round the world. These journeys were made privately in the course of his spiritual work, and for the sake of contacting individuals. He has given a number of public "darshans", however, the last being at Pandharpur, in the Deccan, on 6-7 November 1954. He had already discontinued the use of the alphabet board on the previous 7 October, reducing all communication to the minimum of gestures, without making signs or using his fingers; he is now retiring into complete privacy, giving up all external activities and communication with the outside world.

The discourses contained in this volume were not, usually, dictated word by word. Baba's method was to state a theme and to indicate a general outline, which was completed by an Indian disciple, though sometimes he would go over every word. The language and methods of illustrating what was said were for Indian hearers and readers; in preparing the discourses for Western publication they have not been re-written, but what seemed to be redundant words or phrases have been eliminated to reduce their length and to make them clearer without, however, any other change. These facts should be borne in mind now that

the discourses are made available to a wider public. A certain amount of repetition that may be found is due to the form of the teaching.

Although these discourses are in the nature of teaching, Baba declares that he has not come to teach, for mankind has plenty of teachers. He is not interested in leading any religious organization, because the world has plenty of religious leaders. He does not provide a substitute for Christianity, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, Judaism, or any other faith; indeed his first word to Christian, Buddhist, Moslem or Jew and every other believer is to practise his own faith.

As the Ancient One, or Avatar, Baba's work is to awaken men and women throughout the world to the love of God and to their true selves as one with God. He carries out that work by providing an example of the life of which he speaks, also in other ways that he does not explain. In particular he has a Circle, which is described in these pages, including a group of devoted men and women disciples who serve and obey him implicitly, live continuously under his active direction, and represent in his immediate presence, the world at large.

In the discourses, dealing with the most profound things in the simplest language, Baba intends to raise the reader to his own level. They are not to be understood as mere contributions to philosophy or religious knowledge or to literature, though they contain explanations intended to aid the seeker after spirituality. What Baba aims at is to bring the reader to a state of being in which there is no separation between knower and known or between being and knowing. He no more aims at imparting theoretical knowledge than at satisfying people's curiosity about himself, or themselves, or the world. He is not against such curiosity, but its satisfaction is not his work. He invites people to look at themselves, to accept their egotistic selves not as good or bad, clever or stupid, successful or unsuccessful, but as illusions of their true selves, and to cease to identify themselves with the illusion. We who read him are all pretenders, so let us give up our pretenses, is what he causes us to say to ourselves, if we read him aright. But Baba does not say what moralists and religious reformers say, which is that in giving up our pretenses we should be ashamed of ourselves for what we are. We are as it were in prison, enchained by our past; but, he says, open the prison door and

come out, breathe the air of infinity, enter into your inheritance, and, he adds, "I will help you."

We all see different worlds but all are illusions. Baba invites us to look inwards with humility at our true selves, to look outwards in love because we are interwoven with others, and to look upwards with rejoicing at the Eternal Being. He also invites us to look at him, to keep him in our mind's eye, so that the illusion which surrounds us may have no power. This may be a stumbling block to those who have not met him but to those who have it is easily understandable; and many who have not met him have come to understand it equally well.

Baba proclaims brotherhood, for we cannot exist without each other; our interests are the interests of all, and our good the good of all. Unless we love each other with self-sacrificing love we shall not be able to enter into our inheritance. Baba points within each heart and says "there is the infinite loving God". And he points to himself as the example of love.

He is thus primarily concerned with the inner life. "No social problems," he says, "are to be solved from a point of view that accepts duality as real". He does not say that social problems do not matter, but that they are the effects of men's ideas about themselves, and that the attitude of men in all these practical affairs would be transformed were they to understand what was real and what was illusion. Baba declares:

“For him no one governs but one world;
To him no one serves but his own self;
For him no one enjoys but Nature's wealth;
To him no one suffers but his own self;
To him no one worships but one God;
For him no one slanders but his own self;
To him no one treads but one path;
To him no one reaches but one goal;
To him no one stores but his own wealth;
For him no one begs but his own lost wealth;
To him no one lives but one life;
To him no one dies but one death.”

Baba proclaims that God is the absolute fullness through whom only is there meaning in anything. God is the inwardness to which the mind of men has to be directed to enable the illusion of the

world to be known. People ask Baba strange questions. When Pilate asked Jesus, "Art thou a king?", Jesus said "Thou sayest it", to the discomfiture of Pilate. When Baba is asked "Are you God?", he makes a similar answer, to the discomfiture of the questioner. No one can read these discourses without realizing that Baba's answer to that question, which he certainly provokes, is "The self in me and the self in you are the one Self". This is declared by St. Paul, "But we all, with unveiled face, reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory . . .".

These discourses cover a wide field, but they begin and end with the reader himself. This is therefore a dangerous book. Baba is dangerous, as all who have been near him know. He will not leave alone anyone who listens to him. This therefore is not a book for those who do not want to be disturbed and who propose to go on living as they have always done. Such readers will not like it. This is not a book for idle reading, but for quiet hours, for solitude, and for those who crave for their lives to be changed.

Baba invites those who listen to him to do the impossible because only the impossible has divine meaning. All that is possible belongs to the world of illusion. The reality is the undreamed of, the hidden ideal, even what it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive. He invites us to be different, looking at each other with different eyes, taking up our work each day with a different impetus and vision from what we have hitherto known, so that we can say as once was said in the world, "The Father who dwelleth in me, he doeth the works". Baba's awakening power is to enable us to experience that our true human being is divine.

C. B. Purdom

NOTE

The reader may find some terms in these discourses with which he may not be familiar. Most of them are explained, but to assist the reader a glossary is combined with the index, which should be consulted should any difficulty arise. For a more complete account reference should be made to *God Speaks*, by Meher Baba (New York, Dodd Mead & Co., 1955).

PART ONE

I

THE NEW HUMANITY

As in all critical periods of human history, humanity is now going through the travail of spiritual rebirth. Great forces of destruction seem to be dominant, but constructive and creative forces, which will redeem humanity, are also being released. And though the working of the constructive forces is silent, they will bring about the transformation of man, for it is a part of the Divine Plan to give to the world a fresh dispensation of the eternal Truth.

The urgent problem with which mankind is faced is to devise ways and means of eliminating the subtle and physical forms of conflict and rivalry in the various spheres of life. Wars are the most obvious among the sources of chaos, but do not in themselves constitute the central problem; they are the external symptoms of inner disorder. Wars and the suffering they bring cannot be avoided by propaganda for peace; if they are to disappear it will be necessary to remove their root-cause. Even when military wars are not being waged individuals or groups of individuals are constantly engaged in economic or some other form of warfare, and military wars with their cruelty arise when these other causes are active.

The root-cause of the chaos which precipitates itself in wars is that people are in the grip of egoism and selfishness, and that they express egoism and self-interest individually as well as collectively. This is the life of illusory values. To face the Truth is to realize that life is one in and through its many manifestations and to lose the limiting self in the realization of unity.

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

things. In the light of the Truth of the unity of all, co-operative and harmonious life is to be perceived, and the chief task before those who are concerned with the rebuilding of human society is to do their utmost to dispel the spiritual ignorance that envelops the mind of humanity.

Self-interest eliminated from all spheres of life

Wars do not arise merely to secure material ends; they are the product of uncritical identification with the narrow interests which are included in that part of the world that is regarded as "mine". Material adjustment is only part of the wider problem of establishing spiritual adjustment, but spiritual adjustment requires the elimination of self not only from the material spheres of life but from the intellectual, emotional and cultural life of man.

To understand the problem of humanity as merely the problem of bread is to reduce humanity to the level of animality. Even when man sets himself to the limited task of securing material satisfaction, he can succeed in that attempt only if he has spiritual understanding. Economic adjustment is impossible unless people realize that there can be no effectively planned and co-operative action in economic matters until self-interest gives place to self-giving love; otherwise with the best of equipment and efficiency in material spheres, conflict and insufficiency cannot be avoided.

The rightful place of science

The New Humanity to emerge out of the travail of present struggle and suffering will not ignore science or its practical applications. It is a mistake to look upon science as anti-spiritual. Science is a help or hindrance to spirituality according to the use to which it is put. Just as art, when rightly practised, is the expression of spirituality, so science is the expression and fulfilment of the spirit. Scientific truths concerning the physical body and its life in the physical world can become a medium for the soul to know itself; but to serve this purpose scientific truths must be set in the larger spiritual understanding and perception of values. In the absence of such understanding scientific truths and applications may lead to destruction and to a life that strengthens the chains that bind the spirit. The progress of humanity is assured only with science and religion hand in hand.

The need for spiritual experience

The coming civilization of the New Humanity will be expressed not in intellectual doctrines, but in living spiritual experience. Spiritual experience belongs to truths inaccessible to mere intellect. Spiritual truths can be stated and expressed through the intellect, and the intellect is of help for the communication of spiritual experience; by itself, the intellect is insufficient for spiritual experience or for its communication to others. No intellectual explanation can be a substitute for spiritual experience; it can at best prepare the ground for that experience.

As spiritual experience involves more than can be grasped by intellect, it is often described as mystical experience. Mysticism is regarded as anti-intellectual, obscure and confused, or impractical, and unconnected with experience; but mysticism is none of these. There is nothing irrational in mysticism, when it is a vision of Reality. It is unclouded perception, and so practical that it can be lived every moment of life and expressed in everyday duties; its connection with experience is so deep that it is the final understanding of all experience. When spiritual experience is described as mystical, one should not assume something supernatural or beyond consciousness; what is meant is that it is not accessible to the human intellect until transcended and illumined by the direct realization of the infinite. Christ pointed the way to this spiritual experience when he said: "Leave all and follow me". This means that man has to leave his limitations including his virtues and vices and get established in the infinite life of God. Spiritual experience not only involves the realization of the soul on higher planes, but a right attitude to worldly duties and everyday life; if it loses its connection with experience or the different phases of life, there is a neurotic reaction, which is far from being a spiritual experience.

Spiritual experience is not born of escape

The spiritual experience that is to enliven and energize the New Humanity is not a reaction to the demands of the realities of life. Those who do not have the capacity to adjust themselves to life have a tendency to recoil from its realities and seek protection in a self-created fortress of illusions. Such reaction is a mechanical attempt to perpetuate one's separate existence by protecting it

from the demands made by life; it can give only a false sense of safety and self-completeness. It is not even an advance towards the solution, but a side-tracking from the Path. Man will again and again be dislodged from his illusory shelters by irresistible waves of life, and will invite upon himself fresh forms of suffering by seeking to protect his separate existence.

Just as a person may seek to hold on to the illusion of his separate experience by attempting to escape from life, so he may seek to hold on to it by identification with forms, ceremonies and, rituals or with traditions and conventions. Forms, ceremonies and rituals, traditions and conventions are fetters to the release of infinite life, they may be an asset for securing the fulfilment of the divine life on earth; but they have a tendency to gather prestige and make claims for themselves, and attachment to them eventually leads to a curtailment and restriction of life. The New Humanity will be freed from the life of limitations and have unhampered scope for the creative life of the spirit; it will break attachment to external forms and subordinate them to the claims of the spirit. The life of illusions and false values will be replaced by life in the Truth; and the limitations through which the separate self lives will wither away.

Identification with a group a form of the limited self

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

Separative existence derives strength from identification with itself and from distinguishing itself from its opposite. A man may seek to protect his separate existence through identification with one ideology rather than another or with his cherished conception of the good, which he contrasts with what he regards as evil. What is found in identification with a limited ideal is not merging of the separate self, only an appearance of it. A real merging of the

limited self in universal life involves the surrender of separative existence in all forms.

Hope for the future

The great majority of people are caught in separative and assertive tendencies, and are thus bound to despair about the future. It is necessary to look deeper into realities to get a correct view of present distress. The possibilities of the New Humanity are hidden from those who look only at the surface of the world-situation; the one outstanding feature of human nature is that in the midst of the working of disruptive forces there exists some form of love.

Even wars require the exercise of co-operative functioning, but its scope is restricted by identification with a limited aim. Wars are carried on by a form of love but a love that has not been understood. For love to come to its own it must be unlimited. Love exists in all phases of human life; but latent or limited and poisoned by personal ambition, racial pride, narrow loyalties and rivalries, and attachments to sex, nationality, sect, caste, or religion. For the resurrection of humanity, the heart of man will have to be unlocked with a new love that knows no corruption and is free from greed.

The New Humanity will come into existence in the release of love through the spiritual awakening brought about by the Masters. Love cannot be born of mere determination, for through the exercise of will one can at best be dutiful. One may through struggle and effort succeed in bringing his external actions into conformity with his conception of what is right, but such action is spiritually barren, without the inward beauty of love. Love springs from within, in no way amenable to force. Love is essentially self-communicative and its own evidence. Those who get love from others make response which is of the nature of love, unconquerable and irresistible, gathering power and spreading until it transforms the whole. Humanity will attain to a new mode of being through the free interplay of love from heart to heart.

Redemption through Divine Love

When men recognize that there are no claims greater than these of the Divine Life, which includes every one and everything

without exception, love will establish peace, harmony and happiness in social, national and international spheres, and shine in its purity and beauty. Divine Love is the expression of divinity, and through Divine Love the New Humanity will be in harmony with the Divine Plan. Divine Love will not only introduce imperishable sweetness and infinite bliss in personal life, but will create a new era. Through Divine Love, the New Humanity will learn the art of co-operative and harmonious life, it will free itself from the tyranny of forms, and release the creative life of spiritual wisdom, it will shed illusions and get established in the Truth, it will enjoy peace and abiding happiness, it will be initiated into the life of Eternity.

II

THE SEARCH FOR GOD

Most people do not even suspect the existence of God. Others, through early upbringing or the influence of tradition, belong to some faith and acquire belief in God's existence from education and their surroundings: their faith keeps them bound to rituals, ceremonies or formal beliefs but rarely brings about a radical change in their lives. There are others, philosophically minded, who have an inclination to believe in the existence of God, either because of their own speculations or because of the assertions of others; for them, God is a probable hypothesis or an intellectual idea. They do not, however, know God from personal knowledge, and God is not to them an object of intense desire.

Direct knowledge of spiritual realities

A genuine aspirant to the knowledge of God is not content with spiritual information based on hearsay, neither is he satisfied with inferential knowledge. For him, spiritual realities are not merely the object of thought and their acceptance or rejection is fraught with momentous implications. He searches for direct knowledge. This attitude may be illustrated from the life of the great sage, who was discussing spiritual matters with a friend who was advanced upon the Path. While they were thus engaged, their attention was directed to a dead body being carried by their side. "This is the end of the body but not of the soul," the friend remarked. "Have you seen the soul?", asked the sage. "No," was the answer. And the sage remained skeptical about the soul, for he insisted upon personal knowledge.

But though the aspirant cannot be content with second-hand knowledge, he does not close his mind to the possibility of spiritual realities that have not come within his experience. In other words, he is conscious of the limitations of his own individual experience

and refrains from making it the measure of every possibility. He has an open mind for things beyond the scope of his experience. If he does not accept them on hearsay he does not entertain active disbelief in them. It is true that the limitations of experience tend to restrict the scope of the imagination, and a person comes to believe that there are no realities other than those within his experience; but as a result of some incidents in his life, he may become open-minded.

This stage of transition may also be illustrated from a story from the life of the same sage who happened to be a Prince. Some days after the incident already referred to, as he was riding on horse-back he came upon a pedestrian coming towards him in his way, and arrogantly ordered the man to let him pass. The pedestrian refused, so the sage got down from his horse and they entered upon the following conversation: "Who are you?" asked the pedestrian. "I am the Prince," answered the sage. "But I do not know you to be the Prince," said the pedestrian. "I shall admit you as a Prince only when I know you to be a Prince and not otherwise." This encounter at once awakened the sage to the fact that God may exist even though he did not know him.

Man indifferent to the existence of God

God either exists or does not exist: if he exists, search for him is justified; even if he does not exist, there is nothing to lose by seeking him. But man does not usually turn to the search for God as a voluntary and joyous enterprise; he has to be driven to this search by a disillusionment about worldly things from which he cannot detach his mind. Ordinarily, man is engrossed in activities concerning the material world, and lives through its experiences of joys and sorrows without suspecting the existence of a deeper Reality; he aims at the pleasures of the senses and avoids suffering. "Eat, drink and be merry" is his philosophy. But he cannot entirely avoid suffering, and even when he succeeds in having pleasures he becomes satiated. While he thus goes through the daily round of experiences, there arise occasions when he asks himself, "What is the end of this?" Such an occasion may present itself in some happening for which he is not mentally prepared; it may be disappointment in some confident expectations, or an important change in his situation demanding radical

readjustment and the giving up of cherished habits. Usually such occasions arise from the frustration of some deep craving of which he is possessed. If that craving has no chance of being satisfied, the psyche receives a shock that may cause it no longer to accept the life that hitherto has been lived without question.

Under such circumstances a person may be driven to despair, and if the tremendous power generated by the psychic disturbance remains uncontrolled it may lead even to serious derangement of mind. Such a catastrophe overcomes those in whom desperateness is allied with thoughtlessness, for they allow impulse to have free sway. Desperateness can only work destruction. But the desperateness of a thoughtful person under similar circumstances is altogether different because the energy released is intelligently harnessed and directed towards a purpose. In the moment of such divine desperateness a man may take the important decision of discovering the aim of life. There thus comes into his life the search for lasting values. Henceforth the question that refuses to be silenced is, "What does my life lead to?"

*Divine desperateness the beginning of spiritual
awakening*

When the psychic energy of man is centred upon finding the goal of life, he is using the power of desperateness creatively. He is no longer content with the fleeting things of this life and is sceptical about the values he has so far accepted. His desire is to find the Truth at any cost and he does not rest satisfied with anything short of it. Divine desperateness is the beginning of spiritual awakening because it gives rise to the aspiration for God-realization. In the moment of divine desperateness, when everything seems to give way, a man may decide to take any risk for realizing the possible significance of his life.

All the usual solaces have now failed him; but at the same time his inner being refuses to reconcile itself with the idea that life is devoid of meaning. If he does not then admit some hidden reality that he has not hitherto known, there is nothing worth living for. The alternatives are that there is a hidden spiritual reality, which prophets have described as God, or that everything is meaningless. The second is unacceptable to a sane man; therefore he must try the other. This man turns to God.

Revaluation of experience

Since there is no obvious access to this hidden reality, he looks upon his experiences as a possible avenue to an explanation, and thus goes back to those experiences with the purpose of gathering light upon them. This involves looking at everything from a new angle of vision and entails a reinterpretation of experience. Now the seeker not only has experience but tries to fathom its spiritual significance: he is not concerned merely with what it is but with what it means in relation to this hidden goal. And this revaluation of experience results in gaining an insight which could not have come to him before.

Revaluation of experience amounts to the acquisition of wisdom, and each addition to spiritual wisdom brings about a modification of the general attitude to life. So the purely intellectual search for God (or the hidden spiritual reality) has its place in the practical life of man; his life now becomes an experiment with perceived spiritual values.

The more he carries on this intelligent and purposive experimentation with his own life the deeper becomes his comprehension of its meaning, until he discovers that in undergoing a transformation of his psychic being he is arriving at the perception of the significance of life.

Coming to one's self

With the clear and tranquil vision of the real nature and worth of life he realizes that God, whom he has been seeking, is no stranger. He is the Reality itself and not a hypothesis; he is the Reality seen with undimmed vision—the Reality in which he has had his being, and with which he is identified. So, though he begins by seeking something new, he arrives at understanding of an ancient thing. The spiritual journey does not consist in gaining what a person did not have, but in the dissipation of ignorance concerning himself and life, and the growth of understanding which begins with spiritual awakening. To find God is to come to one's own self.

III

GOD-REALIZATION

To arrive at self knowledge is to arrive at God-realization. God-realization is different from all other states of consciousness because they are experienced through the medium of the individual mind, whereas God-consciousness is not dependent upon the individual mind. A medium is necessary for knowing anything other than one's self; for knowing one's self no medium is necessary. In fact, the association of consciousness with the mind is a hindrance to the attainment of realization. As the seat of the ego the individual mind is conscious of being isolated. From it arises the limited individuality, which at once feeds and is fed by the illusion of duality, time and change. To know the self as it is, consciousness has to be freed from the limitation of the individual mind. In other words, the individual mind has to disappear while consciousness is retained.

Throughout the life history of the soul its consciousness grows with the individual mind and the workings of consciousness proceed against its background. Consciousness comes to be firmly embedded in the individual mind. So when the mind is in abeyance consciousness also disappears. The interdependence of the individual mind and consciousness is illustrated by the tendency to become unconscious when there is any effort to stop mental activity through meditation.

The explanation of sleep

The phenomenon of sleep is not essentially different from the lull of consciousness experienced during meditation, though it is different in origin. As the individual mind is continuously confronted by the world of duality, it is involved in conflict, and when wearied by its struggle it wants to lose its identity as a separate entity. It then recedes from the world of its own creation and experiences a cessation of consciousness.

The quiescence of mental activity in sleep entails the submerging of consciousness, but this cessation of conscious functioning is temporary because the impressions that are stored in the mind cause it to return to renewed activity, and after some time the psychic stimuli are responsible for reviving conscious functioning. So sleep is followed by wakefulness and wakefulness by sleep, according to the law of alternating activity and rest; but so long as the latent impressions in the mind are not undone there is no annihilation of the individual mind or emancipation of consciousness. In sleep the mind temporarily forgets its identity, but does not lose its individual existence. And when the person awakens from sleep he finds himself subject to his existing limitations. There is resurrection of consciousness, but it remains mind-ridden.

The obstacle of the ego

The limited mind is the soil in which the ego is rooted; and the ego perpetuates ignorance through the many illusions in which it is caught. The ego prevents the manifestation of infinite knowledge already latent in the soul, and is the most formidable obstacle in the attainment of God. A Persian poem says, "It is extremely difficult to pierce through the veil of ignorance; for there is a rock on fire". As the flame of fire cannot rise very high if a rock is placed upon it, a desire to know one's own true nature cannot lead to the truth as long as the burden of the ego lies upon consciousness. Success in finding oneself is rendered impossible by the ego, which persists throughout the journey of the soul. Though more and more detached as the soul advances on the Path, it remains until the last stage of the seventh plane.

The ego is the centre of human activity, and the attempts of the ego to secure its own extinction may be compared with the attempt of a man to stand on his own shoulders. Just as the eye cannot see itself, the ego is unable to end its own existence. All that it does to bring about self-annihilation only adds to its existence, for it flourishes on the very efforts directed against itself. Thus it is unable to vanish through its own activity, though it succeeds in transforming its nature. The vanishing of the ego is conditioned by the melting away of the limited mind which is its seat.

Parallel between sleep and God-realization

The meaning of God-realization is the emancipation of consciousness from the limitations of the mind. When the individual mind is dissolved, the related universe vanishes, and consciousness is no longer tied to it. Consciousness then becomes unclouded and is illumined by the Infinite Reality. While immersed in the bliss of realization the soul is oblivious of objects in the universe and in this respect it is as it were in sound sleep. But there are many important differences between God-realization and sleep. During sleep, the illusion of the universe vanishes since consciousness is in abeyance; but there is no conscious experience of God since this requires the dissolution of the ego and the turning of full consciousness towards the Ultimate Reality. Occasionally when the continuity of deep sleep is interrupted, the soul may have the experience of retaining consciousness without being conscious of anything in particular. There is consciousness, but not of the universe. It is consciousness of nothing. Such experiences anticipate God-realization in which consciousness is freed from the illusion of the universe and manifests the infinite knowledge hidden by the ego.

Difference between sleep and God-realization

In sleep the individual mind continues to exist though it forgets everything including itself, and the latent impressions in the mind are a veil between the submerged consciousness and the Infinite Reality. Thus during sleep consciousness is submerged in the shell of the individual mind, but has not yet been able to emerge out of that shell. So though the soul has forgotten its separateness from God and has attained unity with him, it is unconscious of unity. In God-realization, however, the mind does not merely forget itself but has (with all its impressions) lost its identity; and the consciousness hitherto associated with the individual mind is freed from trammels and brought into direct unity with the Ultimate Reality. Since there is no veil between consciousness and the Ultimate Reality, the soul is fused with the Absolute, and eternally abides in knowledge and bliss.

The manifestation of infinite knowledge and unlimited bliss in consciousness is, however, confined to the soul that has attained God-realization. The Infinite Reality in the God-realized soul has

the knowledge of its own Infinity; but such knowledge does not belong to the unrealized soul, still subject to the illusion of the universe. If God-realization were not a personal attainment, the entire universe would come to an end as soon as one man attained God-realization. This does not happen, because God-realization is a personal state of consciousness belonging to the one who has transcended the domain of the mind. Others continue to remain in bondage, and can attain it only by freeing their consciousness from the burden of the ego and the limitations of the individual mind. Thus, God-realization has a direct significance only for the one who has emerged from the time-process.

What was latent in the infinite becomes manifest

After the attainment of God-realization, the soul discovers that it has always been the Infinite Reality, and that its looking upon itself as finite during the period of evolution and spiritual advancement was an illusion. The soul also finds that the infinite knowledge and bliss that it enjoys have been latent in the Infinite Reality from the beginning of time and that it became manifest at the moment of realization. Thus the God-realized person does not become different from what he was before realization. He remains what he was; the difference that realization makes in him is that while previously he did not consciously know his true nature, he now knows it. He knows that he has never been anything other than what he now knows himself to be, and that he has been through a process of self-discovery.

The process of attaining God-realization is a game in which the beginning and the end are one. The attainment of realization is nevertheless a distinct gain. There are two kinds of advantages. One consists in getting what we did not previously possess; the other consists in realizing what we really are. God-realization is of the second kind. However, there is an infinite difference in the soul that has God-realization and one that has not. Though the soul that has God-realization has nothing it did not already possess, its explicit knowledge makes God-realization of the highest significance. The soul that is not God-realized experiences itself as finite, and is constantly troubled by the opposites of joy and sorrow. But the soul that has realization is lifted out of them and experiences the Infinite.

In God-realization, separate consciousness is discarded and duality is transcended in the abiding knowledge of identity with the Infinite Reality. The world of shadows is at an end and the curtain of illusion is forever drawn. The distress of the pursuits of limited consciousness is replaced by the tranquillity and bliss of truth-consciousness and the restlessness of temporal existence is swallowed up in the peace of eternity.

IV

ASPIRANTS AND GOD-REALIZED BEINGS

Before god-realization advanced aspirants pass through states of consciousness that are akin to the state of God-realization. For example, *Mad-Masts* and saints of the higher planes are completely desireless and immersed in the joy of God-intoxication; since their only concern is God, they become the recipients of the happiness that is characteristic of the God-state. They have no beloved except God. They have no longing except for God. For them, God is the only reality. They are unattached except to God, and remain unaffected by pleasures and pains. They are happy because they are face to face with the Divine Beloved.

Different states of aspirants

Advanced aspirants not only participate in some of the privileges of the divine state, they also possess occult powers and perceptions. They belong to different types according to the kind of powers they possess. For example, on the first plane, the aspirant sees lights and colours, smells perfumes and hears the music of the subtle world. Those who advance further see and hear at any distance. Some see the entire physical world as a mirage. Some take a new body immediately after death. Some have such control over the physical world that they can change their bodies at will; they are called *Abdals* in Sufi tradition. But all these achievements pertain to the phenomenal world; the field of their powers is itself a domain of illusion, and the apparent miracles they perform do not in themselves mean that they are nearer to the God-state.

In their consciousness, too, aspirants belong to various types, get intoxicated with extraordinary powers, and in the temptation of using them have a long pause in their Godward march; they get held up in the consciousness of the intermediate planes. There are some who become dazed, confused and self-deluded. There

are some who get caught up in a coma. There are some who with difficulty try to come down to physical consciousness by repeating some physical action or an identical sentence a number of times. There are some who, in their God-intoxication, are so indifferent to the life of the physical world that their external behaviour appears to be that of mad persons; and there are some who cross the path while performing their worldly duties. Owing to their exalted states of consciousness, some advanced aspirants are adorable but their state is in no way comparable to that of God-realized persons, either in respect of the spiritual beauty and perfection of their inward state of consciousness, or in respect of their powers. All aspirants to the sixth plane, are limited by finite consciousness, and are in the domain of duality and illusion. They are mostly happy, due to their communion with God. For some, the joy of the inward companionship of the Divine Beloved is so great that they become unbalanced in behaviour, and in their unsubdued state of God-intoxication may abuse people, throw stones at them or behave like ghosts. Their state is described as that of the *Unmatta*. Owing to the exuberance of uncontrolled joy in inward contact with the Divine Beloved, they are regardless of worldly standards or values, and owing to the fearlessness which comes to them through complete detachment they may often allow themselves such self-expression as would be mistaken for exaggerated idiosyncrasies.

Poise comes on the seventh plane

Only when the soul attains God-realization on the seventh plane does it get full control over its joy. Only with realization does the unlimited happiness, which is eternally his, in no way unbalance a person, for he is now permanently established in non-duality. No longer for him is the extravagance of newly found love. The occasional unsettlement due to the on-flow of increasing joy at the closer proximity of God is also over because he is now inseparably united with him. He is lost in the Divine Beloved and merged into him, for he is one with the infinite ocean of unbounded happiness.

The happiness entered into by the God-realized person is unconditioned and self-sustained, eternally the same, without ebb and flow. He has arrived at certainty and equanimity. The

happiness of the saints is born of proximity to and intimacy with the Divine Beloved, who, however, remains an externalized Another. In the happiness of the God-realized there is no duality. The happiness of the saints is derivative; the happiness of the God-realized is self-grounded. The happiness of the saints is that of the outpouring of the divine grace; the happiness of the God-realized is the divine grace itself.

Differences in relation to the universe

When a person attains God-realization, he has infinite power, knowledge and bliss. The intrinsic characteristics of inner realization are the same in all the God-realized, irrespective of the differences that give rise to distinguishable types. These differences are extrinsic, belonging not to the relation with God but to the relation with the universe; they do not constitute degrees of spiritual status between the God-realized, who are all perfect. Yet these differences exist only from the point of view of the observer; they do not exist for the God-realized themselves, who are one with each other and with all existence.

From the point of view of the outward creation, however, the differences between the God-realized are not only definite but worth noting. After God-realization, some souls drop their bodies, and remain eternally immersed in God-consciousness. For them, God is the only reality and the entire universe is zero. They are so completely identified with the impersonal Truth that they have no direct link with the world of forms.

Majzubs

Some God-realized souls retain their gross, subtle and mental bodies; but in their absorption of God-consciousness are totally unconscious of the existence of their bodies. Other souls continue to see their bodies and treat them as persons incarnate, but these bodies exist only from the point of view of the observer. Such God-realized persons are called *Majzubs*, in Sufi terminology. The *Majzubs* do not use their bodies consciously, because their consciousness is wholly directed towards God, it is not turned toward their bodies or the universe. For them, their bodies as well as the world of forms have no existence, so there can be no question

of their using their bodies in the world of forms. However, though the *Majzubs* do not use their bodies consciously, they are necessarily the centres for the radiation of the constant overflow of the infinite bliss, knowledge and love, and those who revere these bodies derive spiritual benefit from this radiation of divinity.

Some God-realized persons have the awareness of the existence of others who are in bondage. But they know these souls to be forms of the *Paramatman* and that they are one day destined to have emancipation and God-realization. Being established in this knowledge, they remain indifferent to the provisional and changing lot of those who are in bondage. They know that just as they themselves have realized God, these also will realize him. They are in no hurry to speed up the God-realization of those who are in bondage, for they take no active interest in the time processes of creation.

God-men

Some of the God-realized not only possess God-consciousness but are conscious of creation and their own bodies. They take an active interest in those who are in bondage and use their own bodies consciously for working in creation, so as to help others in their Godward march. Such a God-realized one is called *Sadguru* or the God-man. The *Sadguru* knows himself to be in the centre of the universe, and everyone high or low, good or bad, is at the same distance from him. In the Sufi tradition, this centre is called *Qutub*. Through *Qutub* the universe is controlled.

Avatar

The God-realized one who first emerges through evolution as the God-man and helps others in bondage is known as the *Avatar*. *Sadguru* and *Avatar* have complete God-consciousness, plus full consciousness of the gross, subtle, and mental worlds simultaneously, and have no difficulty in retaining normal human consciousness; but the *Paramhansa* and *Jivanmukta*, who have no duty to perform, have at times great difficulty in keeping their consciousness normal, and have to compel their minds to come towards material things and activities; they may ask for food or pull their hair or slap themselves to remain in the body. The

Avatar has no difficulty in retaining normal consciousness at all times. He does not have to resort to physical activities in order to keep in the physical world.

In fundamental characteristics of consciousness the *Avatar* is like other God-men. None retains a finite and limited mind because after merging in the Infinite the mind becomes universal and the God-man as well as the *Avatar* never loses God-consciousness, although engaged in activities in relation to the creation. Both work through the universal mind when they desire to help others.

THE STATE OF THE GOD-MAN

Of all the objects of human knowledge, God is supreme, but mere theoretical study of God does not take an aspirant far towards knowledge of the purpose of human life, though it is better to study God than to be ignorant about his existence. He who seeks God intellectually is in a better state than a skeptic or an agnostic. But better than to study him through the intellect is to feel for God, though the feeling for him is much less than experience. However, even experience of God does not yield the true nature of divinity, because God as the object of experience remains different from and external to the aspirant. The true nature of God is known only when the aspirant attains unity with him by losing himself in his Being. Thus, it is better to study God than to be ignorant about him: it is better to feel for God than to study him; it is better to experience God than to feel for him; and it is better to become God than to experience him.

The supreme certainty

The state of God-realization is not marred by doubts, which cloud the minds of those in bondage. To be in bondage is to be in a state of uncertainty about "whence" and "whither"; the God-realized are at the heart of creation where the source and end of creation are known. The God-realized knows himself to be God as surely as a man knows himself to be a man. It is for him not a matter of doubt, belief, self-delusion or guess-work; it is a supreme and unshakable certainty, which needs no external corroboration and remains unaffected by contradiction because it is based upon self-knowledge. Such spiritual certainty is incapable of being challenged. A man thinks himself to be what in reality he is not; the God-realized knows what in reality he is.

God-realization is the goal of creation. All earthly pleasure is a shadow of the eternal bliss of God-realization; all mundane

knowledge is a reflection of the absolute truth of God-realization; all human might is but a fragment of the infinite power of God-realization. All that is noble, beautiful and lovely, all that is great and good and inspiring in the universe, is an infinitesimal fraction of the unfading and unspeakable glory of God-realization.

The price of God-realization

The eternal Bliss, the Absolute Truth, the Infinite Power, and the Unfading Glory of God-realization, are not to be had for nothing. The individualized soul has to go through the pain and struggle of evolution and reincarnations before it can inherit this treasure, and the price it has to pay for coming into possession of it is its own existence as a separate ego. The limited individuality must disappear if there is to be entrance into unlimited existence. Individuality which is identified with a name and form creates a veil of ignorance before the God within; for this ignorance to disappear the limited individual has to surrender his limited existence. When he leaves not a vestige of his limited life, what remains is God. The surrender of limited existence is the surrender of the firmly rooted delusion of having a separate existence. It is not the surrender of anything real but of the false.

Two aspects of the God-man

When a person is crossing the inner planes and proceeding towards God-realization, he becomes successively mentally detached from the physical, subtle and mental worlds as well as from his own physical, subtle and mental bodies. But after God-realization some souls again descend and become conscious of the whole creation as well as of their physical, subtle and mental bodies. They are known as God-men. God as God is not consciously man; and man as man is not consciously God; the God-man is consciously God and man.

By becoming conscious of the creation, the God-man does not suffer deterioration in his spiritual status. What is spiritually disastrous is not mere consciousness of the creation, but the fact that the consciousness is caught up in creation because of *sanskaras* and is consequently submerged in ignorance. In the same way, what is spiritually disastrous is not mere consciousness of the bodies but identification with them owing to the *sanskaras*, which

prevent the realization of the ultimate reality.

The soul in bondage is tied to the worlds of forms by the chain of *sanskaras*, which creates the illusion of identifying the soul with the bodies. The disharmony within consciousness, and the perversions of the will arise out of *sanskaric* identification with the bodies, and are not merely due to consciousness of the bodies. Since the God-man is free from *sanskaras*, he is conscious of being different from his bodies, and uses them as instruments for the expression of the divine will in its purity.

The changing shadow of God cannot affect God-consciousness

The God-man knows himself to be infinite and beyond all forms. He remains conscious of the creation without being caught in it. The falseness of the phenomenal world consists in its not being understood as an illusory expression of the Infinite Spirit. Ignorance consists in taking the form as the thing. The God-man is conscious of the true nature of God, as well as of the true nature of creation without consciousness of duality, because for him creation is the changing shadow of God. The God-man, therefore, remains conscious of creation without loss of God-consciousness. He continues to work in the world of forms for the furtherance of the primary purpose of creation, which is to create self-knowledge or God-realization in every soul.

The God-man works through the universal mind

When the God-man descends into the world of forms from the impersonal aspect of God, he knows, feels and works through the universal mind. For him there is no longer the limited life of the finite mind, no longer the pains and the pleasures of duality, no longer the emptiness and vanity of the separate ego. He is consciously one with all life. Through his universal mind, he not only experiences the happiness of all minds, but their sufferings too; and since most minds have a preponderance of suffering, the suffering of the God-man, because of the condition of others, is greater than his happiness. Though his suffering is so great, the bliss of the God-state which he constantly enjoys supports him so that he remains unmoved by it.

The merely individualized soul is without access to the infinite bliss of the God-state because it is affected by *sanskaric* happiness and

suffering through identification with the individual and limited mind. The God-man does not identify himself even with the universal mind. He enters the universal mind for his mission in the world, uses it for his work without identification with it, and thus remains unaffected by the suffering or the happiness which comes to him through it. He dispenses with the universal mind when his work is done; but while working in the world through the universal mind, he knows himself to be the eternal God.

The God-man is not affected by suffering

Even when the God-man comes down into duality for his universal work, he is not separate from God. In his condition as man, he is on the level of men and eats, drinks and suffers as they do, but as he retains his Godhood, he experiences peace, bliss and power. Though Christ suffered on the cross, He knew that everything in the world of duality was illusion and in his suffering was sustained by union with God.

As God, the God-man sees all souls as his own; he sees himself in everything, for the universal mind includes all minds. The God-man knows himself to be one with all other souls in bondage. Although he knows himself to be identical with God and thus eternally free, he also knows himself to be one with the souls in bondage and is thus vicariously bound; though he experiences the eternal bliss of God-realization, he also vicariously experiences suffering through the bondage of other souls. This is the meaning of Christ's crucifixion. The God-man is continuously being crucified, as He is continuously taking birth. In the God-man, the purpose of creation has been realized, and he has nothing to gain of added bliss by remaining in the world; yet he retains his bodies and uses them for emancipating souls from bondage and helping them to attain God-consciousness.

Even while working in the world of duality, the God-man is in no way limited by the duality of "I" and "Thou" which is swallowed up in all-embracing Divine Love. He has consciously descended from the state of seeing nothing but God to the state of seeing God in everything. His dealings in the world of duality not only do not bind him, they reflect the pristine glory of the sole reality which is God, and contribute towards freeing others from their state of bondage.

VI

THE WORK OF THE GOD-MAN

God-realization is the endless end of creation, and the timeless consummation and fructification of unbinding *Karma*. If the self takes an incarnation after God-realization, it is not as an ego-mind, but as the embodiment of the universal mind; so that it is not, like the reincarnating ego-mind, subject to the bondage of *Karma*. Ordinary man takes an incarnation under the irresistible impulsion of creation but the God-man reincarnates by free and spontaneous arising of compassion for those who are still in the world of illusion and bondage. The descent of a God-realized one is fundamentally different from the incarnation of souls in bondage.

Free and unbinding give and take

Those who have not realized God are still in the domain of duality; their dealings of mutual give and take create the chains of *Karmic* debts and dues, from which there is no escape in duality. But the God-man, dwelling in the consciousness of unity, has no such chains, and is thus able to contribute towards the emancipation of others still in ignorance. For the God-man there is none excluded from his own being, he sees himself in every one; he freely gives and freely takes without creating binding for himself or others.

Any person who accepts without reserve the bounty which the God-man showers, creates a link that will stand until he attains the goal of freedom and God-realization. Any person who serves the God-man, offering his life and possessions in his service, creates a link that will be a means of spiritual progress. Indeed, even opposition to the work of the God-man is a beginning to the journey that leads God-ward; while opposing the God-man, the soul is establishing contact with him. Thus everyone who voluntarily or involuntarily comes within the orbit of the God-man's activities becomes subject to a spiritual impetus.

The work of the God-man

The work of the God-man is fundamentally different from that of the priest. It is characteristic of the priests of established religions to attach importance to forms, rituals and conformity with rules, and since they are not themselves free from selfishness, narrowness or ignorance, they may exploit the weak and credulous by holding before them the fear of hell or hope of heaven. The God-man having entered for ever into the eternal life of love, purity, universality and understanding is concerned to bring about the unfoldment of the spirit in all whom he helps. There are those who are themselves in ignorance, who because they have read or listened to the words of a God-man may out of self-delusion or in deliberate selfishness use the same language as he and they may try to imitate the God-man in his way of life; but by the very nature of their spiritual limitations they cannot imitate the God-man in understanding, bliss, or power. If out of self-delusion or hypocrisy they pose as a God-man, their self-delusion or pretense becomes evident in their lives. There are those who believe themselves to be what they are not, and think they know when they do not; when they are sincere they are not to be blamed, though they may become a source of danger to others, and should be recognized for what they are. The hypocrite knows that he does not know, and his pretense creates serious *Karmic* binding for himself; though he is a source of danger to the weak and the credulous, he cannot continue with his deceit.

God-man can play the role of the aspirant

In his universal work, the God-man has infinite adaptability. He is not attached to any one method of helping others; he does not follow rules or precedents but is a law to himself. He can rise to any occasion and play any necessary role without being bound by it. A spiritual aspirant cannot act as one who has attained perfection, since the perfect one is inimitable, but the perfect one can for the benefit of others act as an aspirant. One who has passed the highest academic examination, can write alphabets for teaching children, but children cannot do what he can do. For showing others the way to divinity, the God-man may play the role of a devotee of God; he may play the role of a *Bhakta* so that others may know the way. He is not bound to any particular role,

and can adjust his technique to the needs of those who seek his guidance. Whatever he does is for the good of others; for him, there is nothing more to obtain.

Maya used to annihilate Maya

Not only is the God-man not bound to any technique of spiritual help, he is not bound to conventional standards. He is beyond good and evil; but though he may appear to be lawless, what he does is for the good of others. He uses different methods for different persons. He has no self-interest or personal motive, and is always inspired by the compassion that seeks the well-being of others. He uses *Maya* to draw his disciples out of *Maya*, and adopts very different workings for his spiritual task. Nor are his methods always the same with the same person. He may do what shocks others because it runs counter to their expectations; this is intended for a spiritual purpose.

The God-man may seem to be harsh with certain persons who contact him; but onlookers do not know the internal situation and cannot have a right understanding of his behaviour. In fact, his sternness may be demanded by the spiritual requirements of the situation in the interests of those to whom he is harsh. We have an analogy in an expert swimmer who saves a drowning person. He may have to hit the drowning man on the head to minimize the danger in which he is likely to involve his helper. So the sternness of the God-man is to secure the spiritual well-being of others.

Shortening the stages of false consciousness

The soul in bondage is caught in the universe, and the universe is illusion; but since there is no end to illusion he is likely to be held indefinitely within its mazes. The God-man can help to cut short the different stages of false consciousness by revealing the Truth. Through illusion the soul gathers experiences of the opposites. Where there is duality, there is a possibility of restoring balance through the opposite. For example, the experience of being a murderer is counter-balanced by the experience of being murdered; and the experience of being a king, is counter-balanced by the experience of being a beggar. But the soul may wander from one opposite to the other without putting an end to its false consciousness. The God-man can help the soul to perceive the

Truth, cutting short the working of illusion. The God-man helps the soul in bondage by sowing in him the seed of God-realization, but every process of growth takes time. There is, however, a qualification of this statement to be made.

The help of the God-man is more effective than the help that any advanced aspirant may give. When an aspirant helps, he can take a person up only to the point that he himself has reached; and even this limited help becomes effective gradually, with the result that the person who ascends through such help has to stay in the first plane for a long time, in the second plane a long time, and so on. When the God-man chooses to help a person, he may take the aspirant to the seventh plane in one jump, though in that jump the person has to traverse all the intermediate planes.

By taking a person to the seventh plane, the God-man makes him equal to himself, and the person who thus attains the highest spiritual status becomes himself a God-man. This transmission of spiritual knowledge is comparable to the lighting of one lamp from another. The lamp that has been lighted is as capable of giving light as the original lamp itself; and there is no difference between them. The God-man is like the banyan tree, which grows large and mighty, giving shade and shelter to travellers and protecting them from sun, rain and storm; in the fullness of its growth its descending branches strike deep into the ground to create in due time another full-grown banyan tree, which also becomes not only large and mighty, but has the same potential power to create banyan trees. The God-man arouses the God-man latent in others.

Lord and Servant

The God-man may be said to be the Lord and Servant of the Universe at one and the same time. He showers spiritual bounty on all in measureless abundance, and as one who bears the burden of all and helps them through spiritual difficulties, he is the Servant of the Universe. Just as he is Lord and Servant in one, so he is the supreme lover and the matchless Beloved. The love, which he gives or receives frees the soul from ignorance. In giving love, he gives it to himself in other forms, and in receiving love, he receives what has been awakened through his own grace, showered on all. The grace of the God-man is like rain which falls on all lands, barren and fertile, but fructifies only in the lands that have been rendered fertile through toil.

VII

AVATAR

Consciously or unconsciously, every living creature seeks one thing. In the lower forms of life and in less advanced human beings, the quest is unconscious; it is conscious in advanced human beings. The object of the quest is called happiness, peace, freedom, truth, love, perfection, self-realization, God-realization or union with God. Essentially it is a search for all of these, for all are aspects of one thing. Everyone has moments of happiness, glimpses of truth, fleeting experiences of union with God. Everyone wants to make these moments, or glimpses, or experiences permanent, so that he may have abiding reality in the midst of change.

This search is based on a memory, dim or clear, as the individual's evolution may be low or high, of his unity with God; for every living thing is a manifestation of God, conditioned by lack of knowledge of its true nature. The entire process of evolution is from unconscious divinity to conscious divinity, a process in which God himself, eternal and unchangeable, assumes an infinite variety of forms, enjoys an infinite variety of experiences, and transcends an infinite variety of self-imposed limitations. Evolution, from the standpoint of divinity is a divine sport, in which the Unconditioned tests the infinitude of his absolute knowledge, power and bliss in the midst of all conditions. But evolution, from the standpoint of the creature, with limited knowledge, limited power, limited capacity for bliss, is an epic of alternating rest and struggle, joy and sorrow, love and hate, until, in the perfected man, God balances the opposites and transcends duality. Then creature and Creator recognize themselves as one; changelessness is established in the midst of change, eternity is experienced in the midst of time. God knows himself as God, unchangeable in essence, infinite in manifestation, ever experiencing the supreme bliss of Self-realization in continually fresh awareness of himself by himself.

This realization takes place only in the midst of life, for only

in the midst of life can limitation be experienced and transcended, and subsequent freedom from limitation enjoyed. This freedom from limitation assumes three forms.

Most God-realized souls leave the body at once, and forever, and remain eternally merged in the unmanifest aspect of God. They are conscious only of the bliss of union. Creation no longer exists for them. Their round of births and deaths is ended. This is known as *mukti* or liberation.

Those God-realized souls who retain the body for a time, but are not conscious either of their bodies or of creation, experience the infinite bliss, power and knowledge of God, but they cannot consciously use them in creation or help others to attain to liberation. That particular type of liberation is called *videh-mukti* or liberation with the body.

Those God-realized souls who keep the body, yet are conscious of themselves as God in both his unmanifest and his manifest aspects, experience themselves as God apart from creation, as God the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer of creation, and as God who has accepted and transcended the limitations of creation. They enjoy to the full the divine sport of creation. Knowing themselves as God in everything, they are able to help everything spiritually, and to make other souls realize God, either as *Muktas* or *Majzubs*, as they themselves are called.

The God-realized ones though one in consciousness are different in function. For the most part, they live and work apart from and unknown to the general public, but there are always five, who act (in a sense) as a directing body, work in public, and attain public prominence and importance. In *Avataric* periods, the *Avatar*, as a supreme God-realized one, takes his place as the head of this body and of the spiritual hierarchy as a whole.

Avataric periods are the spring-tide of creation. They bring a new release of power, a new awakening of consciousness, a new experience of life—not merely for a few, but for all. Qualities of energy and awareness, which had been used and enjoyed by only a few advanced souls, are then made available for all humanity. Life, as a whole, is lifted to a higher level of consciousness and geared to a new rate of energy. The transition from sensation to reason was one such step; the transition from reason to intuition will be another. In intuition the opposites are resolved.

This influx of the creative impulse through the medium of a

divine personality is an incarnation of God in a special sense and called *Avatar*. This *Avatar* was the first individual soul to emerge from the evolutionary process, and is the only *Avatar* who has ever manifested or will ever manifest. Through him, God first completed the journey from unconscious divinity to conscious divinity; in him he first unconsciously became man in order consciously to become God. Through him, periodically, God consciously becomes man for the liberation of mankind.

The *Avatar* appears in different forms under different names, at different times, in different parts of the world. As his appearance always coincides with the spiritual birth of man, so the period immediately preceding his manifestation is one in which humanity suffers from the pangs of the approaching birth. When man seems more than ever enslaved by desire, more than ever driven by greed, held by fear, swept by anger, when more than ever the strong dominate the weak, the rich oppress the poor, and large masses of people are exploited for the benefit of the few in power, when individual man finds no peace or rest and seeks to forget himself in excitement; when immorality increases, crime flourishes, religion is ridiculed, when corruption spreads throughout the social order, class and national hatreds are aroused and fostered, when wars break out, and humanity grows desperate, when there seems to be no possibility of stemming the tide of destruction—at this moment the *Avatar* appears. Being the manifestation of God in human form, he is a gauge against which man measures what he is and what he may become. He corrects the standards of human values by interpreting them in terms of divine-human life.

The *Avatar* is interested in everything, but not concerned about anything. The slightest mishap commands his sympathy; the greatest tragedy does not upset him. He is beyond the alternations of pain and pleasure, desire and satisfaction, rest and struggle, life and death, for to him, they are equally illusions from which he has come to free those who are bound. He uses every circumstance as a means to lead others towards the realization of the Truth.

He knows that men do not cease to exist when they die, and therefore, is not concerned with death. He knows that destruction must precede construction; that out of suffering is born peace and bliss; that out of struggle comes liberation from the bonds of action. He is concerned only about unconcern.

In those who contact him he awakens a love that consumes

selfish desires in the flame of the one desire to serve him. Those who consecrate their lives to him become identified with him in consciousness. Little by little their humanity is absorbed into divinity, and they become free.

Those who are closest to him are known as his Circle. Every Master has an intimate circle of twelve disciples, who, in realization, are made equal to the Master himself, though they differ from him in function and authority. In *Avataric* periods, the *Avatar* has a Circle of one hundred and twenty disciples, all of whom experience realization, and work for the liberation of others. Their work is not only for contemporary humanity, but for posterity. The unfoldment of life and consciousness for the whole *Avataric* cycle, mapped in the creative world before the *Avatar* took form, is endorsed and fixed in the formative and material worlds during the *Avatar's* life on earth.

The *Avatar* awakens contemporary humanity to a realization of its spiritual nature, gives liberation to those who are ready and quickens the life of the spirit in his time. To posterity is left the stimulating power of his divinely human example, the nobility of life supremely lived, of love unmingled with desire, of power unused except for others, of peace untroubled by ambition, of knowledge undimmed by illusion. He has demonstrated the possibility of the divine life of humanity, the heavenly life on earth. Those who have the necessary courage and integrity follow when they will. Those who are spiritually awake have been aware for some time that the world is at present in the midst of a period such as precedes *Avataric* manifestations. Even unawakened men and women are becoming aware of it. From their darkness they are reaching for light, in sorrow they are longing for comfort, from the midst of the strife into which they have found themselves they are praying for peace and deliverance. Yet they must be patient. The wave of destruction must rise still higher and spread still further. But when, from the depths of his heart, man desires what is more lasting than wealth, more real than material power, the wave will recede. Then peace, joy, light will come.

VIII

THE CIRCLE

When after several lives of search, purification, service and self-sacrifice, a soul meets a God-realized Master, after several lives of close connection with the Master, and love and service for the Master, he enters into his Circle. Those who have entered into the Circle have through their efforts acquired the right (*Adhikar*) of God-realization, and when the moment for realization arrives, they attain realization through the grace of the Master. A Master who takes an incarnation for work brings with him those who are in his Circle.

The use of sanskaras

Actions in the world of duality are prompted by *sanskaras* of duality. Consciousness of duality implies the working of the impressions of duality, which first serve the purpose of evolving and limiting consciousness, so as to facilitate self-knowledge or God-realization. The soul cannot attain consciousness of its own unity unless it goes through the experiences of duality; and these experiences presuppose the corresponding impressions of duality.

From the beginning till the end, the soul is subject to the momentum of impressions which constitutes its destiny. These impressions are called *Prarabdha Sanskaras*. The *Prarabdha Sanskaras* are always in relation to the opposites of experience, e.g. the *sanskaras* of greed and its opposites, the *sanskaras* of lust and its opposite; the *sanskaras* of anger and its opposite, the *sanskaras* of bad thoughts, words and deeds and their opposite.

From the stage of the embryo till the stage of realization of God, the soul is bound by its impressions of duality. All that happens to it is determined by these impressions. When the soul receives realization of God all *sanskaras* disappear. If the soul remains immersed in the experience of divinity without returning

to the normal consciousness of the world, it remains eternally beyond all *sanskaras*.

Yogayoga Sanskaras of the Universal Mind

When the God-realized one returns to normal consciousness he has a universal mind, and in the universal mind he gets superfluous and unbinding *sanskaras* known as *Yogayoga Sanskaras*. In the beyond state, the Master is free from *sanskaras*; and even when he is conscious of creation and is working in creation, he remains unbound by the *Yogayoga Sanskaras*, which sit loosely upon his universal mind. The *Yogayoga Sanskaras* serve as channels of his universal work, they do not form a restricting chain to his consciousness.

The *Yogayoga Sanskaras* are automatic in their working, and all contacts and links that the God-man uses in his working are based upon them. These *Yogayoga Sanskaras* do not create a veil on the universal mind; they do not constitute a cloud of ignorance; they serve only as a necessary framework for the release of positive action. Through them the universal will is particularized in its expressions. Any action that is released in the world of space and time must be in relation to certain definite situations or a set of circumstances, and there must always be some reason why a response is given to one situation rather than to another and why it is given in one way rather than another. The basis for the self-limitation of the actions of a soul in spiritual bondage is in his *Prarabdha Sanskaras*, which are binding; and the basis for the self-limitation of the actions of one who is spiritually free is in his *Yogayoga Sanskaras*, which are not binding.

The work of the Master is subject to the laws of creation

If the God-man were not to get these *Yogayoga Sanskaras* when returning to normal consciousness, he would not be able to do work of a definite nature. The *Yogayoga Sanskaras* help the God-man to particularize and materialize the Divine Will through him and to fulfil his mission. The Master is and knows himself to be infinite in existence, consciousness, knowledge, bliss, love and power and remain infinite in the beyond state, but the work that he achieves in the world of creation is subject to the laws of

creation and is therefore finite. Since his work is in relation to the unveiling of the hidden infinity and divinity, and since the realization of this infinity and divinity is the only purpose of creation, his work is infinitely important; but when measured by the standard of results, it is like any work, so much and no more. But even when the work of the God-man is measured by results, the greatest of souls in spiritual bondage cannot, even in terms of the results, approach the achievements of the God-man. The God-man has within his work the infinite power of God. Sometimes a God-man achieves some limited task, then his incarnation ends not because he is limited in power, but because the work, determined by his *Yogayoga Sanskaras*, is so much and no more. He is in no way attached to the work as such. Having finished the work he is ready to be re-absorbed in the impersonal aspect of the Infinite; he does not tarry in the world of unreality longer than is necessitated by his *Yogayoga Sanskaras*.

The Avatar and his Circle

When the *Avatar* takes an incarnation he has before him a definite mission, the plan of which is adjusted to the flow of time. The process of the incarnation of the *Avatar* is unique. Before taking on the physical body and descending in the world of duality, he gives to himself and the members of his Circle special types of *sanskaras*, which are known as *Vidnyani Sanskaras*. The Circle of the *Avatar* always consists of one hundred and twenty members; all have to take an incarnation when the *Avatar* takes an incarnation. The taking on of the *Vidnyani Sanskaras*, before incarnating in the physical body, is like the drawing of a veil upon himself and his Circle. After incarnation the *Avatar* remains under this veil of *Vidnyani Sanskaras* until the time comes which has been fixed by himself that he experiences his own original divinity and begins to work through the *Vidnyani Sanskaras* transmuted into the *Yogayoga Sanskaras* of the Universal Mind.

Vidnyani Sanskaras are the ordinary *sanskaras* of duality, though essentially different in nature. The *Vidnyani Sanskaras* prompt activities and experiences caused by ordinary *sanskaras*, but while these activities and experiences have a general tendency to strengthen the grip of duality, the activities and experiences caused by *Vidnyani Sanskaras* work towards loosening that grip.

The logic of the working out of the *Vidnyani Sanskaras* necessarily invites the realization of the oneness of existence; they are, therefore, known as a threshold to unity.

The members of the Circle remain under the veil of *Vidnyani Sanskaras* until they get realization of God at the time fixed by the *Avata*; then the *Vidnyani Sanskaras* they have brought with them become *Yogayoga Sanskaras*, serving as an instrument for the fulfilment of the Divine Plan on earth.

Difference between Vidnyani Sanskaras and Yogayoga

There is an important difference between *Vidnyani Sanskaras* and *Yogayoga Sanskaras*. Though *Vidnyani Sanskaras* work towards the realization of unity, they bring about the experience of being limited; but the *Yogayoga Sanskaras*, which come after realization do not interfere with the experience of infinity; they serve as instruments for responses and activities in the dual world. The working out of *Vidnyani Sanskaras* contributes towards one's own realization, while the working out of *Yogayoga Sanskaras* contributes towards the realization of others who are still in bondage.

In the beyond-state time, space and the world of phenomena are non-existent; it is only in the phenomenal world of duality that there is space or time or the operation of the law of cause and effect. So when the Master works in the sphere of duality to uplift humanity, his work becomes subject to the laws of time, space and causality; and from the point of view of external work, he appears to be limited, though, in reality, he is experiencing the oneness and infinity of the beyond-state. However, though himself beyond time when he works for those who are in duality, time counts.

Special working for the Circle

The Master's work towards humanity goes on without break through the higher bodies; but when he works for the members his Circle his action is subject to a time, which he himself fixes for a precise and definite intervention in the mechanical working out of their *sanskaras*. Therefore, those who follow the instructions received from the Master and abide by the time given by him have the benefit of his special working. For the task the Master sets before himself time becomes an important factor. The working

which the Master undertakes in relation to the members of his Circle not only touches and affects them but affects others closely connected with them.

The Circle constitutes the most important particular feature in relation to which and through which the Master carries out his spiritual duty to humanity and comes into existence as a result of the links of several lives. Every Master has a Circle of very close disciples; that does not create a limitation in his inward consciousness. In his God-state, the Master finds himself in the centre of the universe, and no Circle circumscribes his being. In the infinity of non-duality, there are no preferences; the Circle exists only in relation to the work the Master has undertaken in the phenomenal world. But from the point of view of spiritual work in the phenomenal world, the Circle is as much a reality as the Himalayas.

IX

THE WAYS OF THE MASTERS

The Masters are impersonal and universal in their consciousness; but for spiritual purposes they limit the scope of their work and allow their manifested personalities to become the centre of the aspirations of their disciples. They use personal relationships as channels to pass on their help to those aspirants who are connected with them. The Masters are on the look out for those who need their help and no spiritual yearning is overlooked. They foster the advancement of all aspirants in various ways, although these ways may not be intelligible to others.

The Masters' Help

The help of the Master consists in making the spiritual journey of the aspirant sure, and in shortening the time that he might otherwise take for arriving at the goal. The aspirant may go far by independent search, but is unable to cross the sixth plane without the help of a Master. Even on the intermediate planes such help is valuable, because the Master prevents the aspirant from being detained and protects him from pitfalls. Kabir has compared the three stages of the Path to the three phases of fire. Just as at first there is smoke and no fire, then fire enveloped in smoke, and lastly fire without smoke, so the beginnings of the Path are enveloped in ignorance, in the middle there is confused perception of the goal, and finally there is the realization of the truth without illusion. Since the Path lies through illusions of many kinds, the aspirant is never safe without the guidance of the Master who knows the stages of the Path and can take him through them.

Before the opening of the inner eye, the mind conceives of the goal as the Infinite. This conception is based upon some symbolic image of Infinity such as the sky or ocean, which suggests vastness. But such concepts have to be superseded by direct perception of

the Infinite. The aspirant sees the Self directly when his inner eye is opened. But when this happens, the mind is dazed by the perception of the Self, it loses the capacity to think clearly and mistakes the seeing of the Self for realization. Hence the illusion of being at the end of the Path while traversing it. In *Sufi* this particular part of the Path is known as *Mukameafasan* or the Abode of Delusion; it is in such difficult phases of the Path that the Master gives a push to the aspirant, so that he passes on instead of getting caught up on the way.

There is danger to the aspirant of being detained on each of the inner planes, because each is alluring and a trap. But the Master takes the aspirant through them without delay. The aspirant has to walk his own way, but the contribution of the Master is in confirming and consolidating the previously acquired intuitions and perceptions and in precipitating the aspirant's consciousness into the next stage.

Unquestioning Faith

As the Master uses *Maya* to take the disciples out of *Maya*, and as he is himself beyond good and evil, he may often require things that are unacceptable to the good sense of his disciples. The disciple should none the less follow the instructions of the Master with implicit faith. The following well known instances illustrate the point: Abraham being called upon to sacrifice his son Isaac was about to slaughter him when the boy was miraculously saved by being replaced by a goat. Shams-e-Tabriz ordered Maulana Rumi, his disciple, to fetch wine for him, which he complied with though Maulana at the time had a large following of Moslem divines, on account of his reputation as a great theologian of the Islamic world, and wine is religiously prohibited to Moslems. Hence it was a crucial test for Maulana to carry a jar of wine through the streets, but he did it. Ghousali Shah was asked by a Master who lived in a hut by the side of the river Ganges to get a vessel full of water from mid-stream for drinking. It was about midnight and the river was in heavy flood because of the monsoon. The disciple hesitated, but gathered courage to attempt the impossible. No sooner had he stepped into the water than he witnessed a wonderful transformation of the scene. Instead of waves and the floods, the river turned into a thin stream and the vessel to be filled almost touched the river bed. The disciple crossed the

river to the opposite bank in search of the mid-stream. While thus occupied the Master appeared and enquired the reason of his delay. The disciple explained that he could not find the mid-current and the Master allowed him to fill the vessel by handfuls and himself helped. The Master then left the disciple on some pretext asking him to follow after filling the vessel. When Ghousali Shah returned to the hut with the vessel full of water, he discovered that the Master had never left the hut but had been talking all the while.

These stories show how the Master, on rare occasions, may use his occult powers to break down the ego of his disciples or help them. But the Masters are very sparing in the use of such powers. Ordinarily, they secure their purposes through normal ways but they exhibit understanding, sense of humour, unending patience and consummate tact, and also take great trouble to help their disciples adjust themselves to the needs of any situation.

The story of Bahlul

The great mystic Bahlul wanted to contact certain notables of Persia for reasons of his own. The only way of doing so was to go to the Prince's party attended by these notables. Unfortunately, Bahlul was bald-headed, and in those days no one without hair was allowed to attend any party given by the Prince, for the Prince had lost his own hair; and to see others without hair prevented him from enjoying the party. And so, when Bahlul went to the party he was thrown out. As the party lasted for three days, Bahlul borrowed clothes and a wig and disguised himself, and went again on the following day. No one recognized him in his fine clothes, he made a great impression, and was liked so much that the Prince invited him to sit near him. No sooner was Bahlul seated, than he winked at the Prince. This the Prince did not understand but vaguely felt that such a gesture from an illustrious man must mean something important; thinking that it merited a suitable response, he winked back. Those who were near saw this exchange of winking and were impelled to imitate it. Soon the winking spread throughout the company. Then Bahlul cried, "Stop! O you wise men. Why do you wink?" And the notables replied, "We are winking because you great men were winking. We only imitate you." Then Bahlul took off his wig and

said, "We two are both bald. Imitate us!" The notables went away and on the third day returned with shaved heads. Then Bahlul turned to the Prince and said, "We are permanently bald, these men will have to shave their heads daily to remain bald". Thus through his sense of humour, Bahlul secured access to those whom he wanted to help.

Dealing with failings

The Master takes infinite pains to win the disciple for spiritual life. Since progress is secured only if love for the Master is not allowed to decrease, he takes care to remove obstacles in the way of whole-hearted devotion. And sometimes he is seen to humour the disciple, even to feed the ego of the disciple, but this is to give a long rope to ignorance in preparation for the final extinguishing of the ego. The Master is not perturbed by the failings of the disciple, which he tolerates with patience and infinite capacity to wait, knowing that when the disciple gets established on the Path, these failings will disappear.

Once the Master is satisfied that the disciple is firmly established, he cleanses the mind of the disciple of blemishes and often achieves this at the risk of appearing ruthless. The usual method of the Master, however, is as sweet and agreeable as it is effective.

Solution of problems

Since the Master is for the aspirant a symbol of the Supreme Self the problem of adjustment with the Master is the problem of realizing his own inner divinity and arriving at adjustment with all other forms of the Supreme Self. Through his allegiance to the Master, the aspirant realizes that all problems of life are aspects of one problem, so that he arrives at integration, which is different from mere compromise. To be able to help the disciple to achieve this difficult task, the Master becomes the nucleus of the spiritual idealism of the aspirant, because intensive concentration of psychic energy is necessary if the aspirant is to break through the many barriers that lie between him and his goal.

The supremacy of the claim of the Master is not to be challenged even by the reverence the disciple feels for Masters other than the one who has accepted him. All Masters are one in

consciousness. One Master is not greater than another, the disciple must, however, place his own Master above other Masters, until he transcends the domain of duality and realizes unity. Psychic energy would be dissipated unless there was recognized a supremely imperative claim among the many claims of life; and exclusive concentration upon one Master is usually indispensable for gathering up the psychic energy of the disciple. In rare cases, owing to special circumstances, the Masters may decide to share the spiritual work in relation to a particular disciple; and there are cases of disciples who have had to affiliate themselves to two or more Masters. But this is an exception rather than a rule; for Masters arrange the distribution of their work so that there is no conflict of loyalties.

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE ASPIRANT

1. ENTERING INTO THE REALITIES OF THE INNER LIFE

Though God-realization is the ultimate destiny of all, the mind of the worldly minded is darkened by accumulated *sanskaras*, which must be weakened even before the aspirant enters the Path. The usual method of dispersing *sanskaras* is to follow 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 covers such actions as the offering of daily prayers, the visiting of holy places, the performance of duties prescribed by scriptures and the observance of recognized ethical codes. Though the stage of external conformity is useful as spiritual discipline, it is by no means free from evil effects; for it not only tends to make one dry, rigid and mechanical, but it often nourishes some kind of subtle egotism. Most persons are attached to the life of conformity because they find it to be the easiest way of placating an uneasy conscience.

The soul may spend several lives in gathering the lessons of external conformity, but the time comes when it longs for the realities of the inner life. When the worldly man starts upon this search, he may 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 (*Shariat* or *Karmakanda*) and enters upon the path of spiritual emancipation (*Tarikat* or *Moksha Marga*). In this higher phase, the soul is no longer satisfied by external conformity but seeks to acquire the qualifications that belong to the inner life.

Limitations of conventions

From the point of view of the realities of the inner life, a life that

deviates from conformity may often be spiritually rich. In seeking conformity with established conventions a man is almost always prone to a life of false or illusory values. What is conventionally recognized need not be spiritually sound; on the contrary, many conventions express illusory values, since they have come into existence as a result of the working of minds that are spiritually ignorant. Illusory values are conventional because they belong to a mentality that is most common. This does not mean that conventions necessarily embody illusory values.

Some people adopt the unconventional for no other reason than that it is unusual and they are enabled to feel their separateness and difference from others and to delight in it. In this there is no merit. Others become unconventional through the exercise of critical thought. Those who would transcend external conformity and enter into the life of inner realities must indeed develop the capacity to distinguish between false and true values.

Discrimination

The rise from *Shariat* or *Karma Marga* to *Tarikat* or *Moksha Marga* is, however, not to be interpreted as a mere departure from external conformity. It is not a change from conventionality to idiosyncrasy, from the usual to the unusual, but a change from a life of thoughtless acceptance of traditions to a mode of "being" based upon thought. It is to change from implicit ignorance to critical thoughtfulness. At the stage of external conformity, spiritual ignorance is often so complete that people do not realize that they are ignorant, but when awakened they begin by realizing the need for Light, and the effort to reach this Light takes the form of discrimination between the lasting and the transitory, between 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 intellectual discrimination. Though the basis of all further preparation, it yields its fruit only when the newly perceived values are brought into relation with practical life. In spirituality, what matters is not theory but practice. The ideas, beliefs, opinions, views or doctrines that a person may intellectually "hold" constitute a superficial layer of human personality,

Sometimes a wrong view held with fervour may indirectly

invite an experience which opens the gates of spiritual perception. Even at the stage of *Shariat* or *Karma Marga* allegiance to religions is not infrequently a source of inspiration for self-less and noble acts, and though dogmas or creeds are blindly accepted they may be held with dynamic fervour and enthusiasm. Dogmas and creeds have the distinct advantage, when embraced not only by the intellect but also by the heart, of affecting more of the personality than theoretical opinions.

But dogmas and creeds are as much a source of evil as of good because in them the guiding vision is clouded by the suspension of critical thinking. If allegiance to creeds and dogmas has sometimes done good to the individual or to the community to which he belongs, it has more often done harm. Though the mind and heart are involved both are functioning under the handicap of suspension of thought; hence dogmas and creeds do not contribute unmixed good.

Putting theory into practice

When a person gives up accepted dogmas and creeds in favour of views and doctrines to which he has devoted thought, there is a certain advance in so far as his mind has now begun to think and to examine its beliefs. But very often the newly held beliefs lack the fervour and enthusiasm that characterize allegiance to dogmas and creeds. If these newly held beliefs lack motive-power, they belong only superficially to the new life. The mind has been emancipated from the domination of uncultured emotion, but this is often achieved by sacrificing the co-operation of the heart. If the results of critical thought are to be spiritually fruitful, they must again invade and recapture the heart. In other words, the ideas that have been accepted after critical examination must be released in active life if they are to yield full benefit; in the process of practical life they often undergo transformation and become interwoven with the fabric of life.

The transition from external conformity (*Shariat* or *Karma Marga*) to the life of inner realities (*Tarikat* or *Moksha Marga*) involves two steps: (i) freeing the mind from the inertia of uncritical acceptance based upon blind imitation and arousing it to critical thinking, and (ii) bringing the results of critical thinking into practical life. To be spiritually fruitful, thinking must be not only critical but creative. Critical and creative thinking leads to

spiritual preparation by cultivating those qualities that contribute to the perfection and balancing of the mind and the heart and the release of divine life.

2. SOME DIVINE QUALITIES

If the inner life is to be harmonious and enlightened, divine qualities have to be developed and expressed in daily life. Any one quality may not seem to be extremely important, but it is necessary to consider it in relation with other qualities. In spiritual life, all qualities implement and support each other, and their inter-connection is vital.

Every man is a rightful heir to the Truth; but he who would inherit it must be spiritually prepared, and this spiritual preparation sometimes takes several lives of persistent effort. Therefore, one of the first requirements of the aspirant is that he should combine enthusiasm with patience. Once a man is determined to realize the Truth, he finds that his path is beset with difficulties and there are few who persist with steady courage until the end.

Accepting the world as it is

Spiritual effort demands not only physical endurance and courage, but forbearance and moral courage. The world is caught in *Maya* and false values; therefore, the ways of the world run counter to the standards the aspirant has set for himself. If he turns away from the world, it does not help him; he will have to return to the world and develop the ability to face and accept it as it is. Very often his Path lies through the world, which he has to serve despite not liking its ways. If the aspirant is to love and serve the world, which does not understand him or is intolerant of him, he must develop forbearance.

As the aspirant advances on the Path he acquires through contact with the Master an increasingly deeper understanding of love, which makes him sensitive to contempt, callousness, apathy and hatred. This will try his forbearance to the uttermost. Even worldly men find the world indifferent or hostile, but their suffering is less acute, because they do not expect anything from human nature and think these things inevitable. But the aspirant knows the hidden possibilities in every soul, and his suffering is acute

because he feels the gulf between that which is and that which might have been.

Moral Courage

Forbearance would be easy if the aspirant could accept the ways of the world. Loyalty to the truth of his own perception demands moral courage and readiness to face the criticism, scorn and hatred of those who do not yet perceive the truth; and though in this struggle he gets help from Masters and co-aspirants, he has to develop the capacity for the truth single handed, without relying upon other help. This moral courage grows with confidence in oneself and the Master. To love the world and serve it in the ways of the Masters is not for the weak and faint-hearted.

Freedom from worry

Moral courage and self-confidence are accompanied by freedom from worry. There are few things that exhaust energy so much as worry. The ego-mind that identifies itself with its past gets entangled with it and keeps alive frustrated desires. In that way, worry continues to eat into the life of man. Worry is also experienced in relation to the future, and the mind seeks to justify itself in the attempt to prepare for anticipated situations. Worry is the product of imagination working under the stimulation of desires, living through sufferings that are our own creation. Worry is a serious dissipation of psychic energy. When the mind is gloomy, depressed or disturbed its action is chaotic and binding. The cure for worry and depression is detachment, the practice of separating oneself from the illusion of existence.

Help from the Master

The condition of progress on the Path is guidance from the Master according to the immediate needs of the aspirant. What the Master expects is that the aspirant will do his best. He does not expect immediate transformation of consciousness. Time is an important factor in spiritual advancement as in material endeavours, and when the Master has given a spiritual impetus to the aspirant he waits until the help thus given is assimilated. Too much spirituality may have unhealthy reactions. The Master

selects the moment when his intervention is beneficial, and having intervened he waits with patience till the aspirant needs further help.

3. READINESS TO SERVE

The aspirant has always to be in readiness to serve the cause of humanity. He has to select that kind of work which he is qualified to do by his individual aptitude and abilities. But whatever service he can render he must faithfully carry out.

The trials through which he has to pass may be many, but the determination to serve remains unshaken. Yet he must not become attached to the idea that service brings results. He is willing to render service no matter what the sacrifice but is not bound by the false idea that "I" should have the credit. If the privilege of rendering a particular service falls to the lot of someone else he is not envious, for in the spiritual life there is no thought of self. The self in all its forms is eliminated. Service springs out of the spontaneity of freedom, in the co-operative spirit in which there is no insistence upon the claims of "I".

If the aspirant is detached from his own works and their results, he becomes free from the opposites. The worldly minded realize their existence through achievements, which they judge tangible, so that they grasp at what they consider great things and avoid little things. But from the spiritual point of view, the so called little things are often as important as the great things.

Accepted values and fields of service

In a society dominated by material conceptions of life, service is interpreted as affording facilities for food or clothes, or some other physical necessity or welfare. In a society in which intellectual culture is appreciated, service is interpreted as spreading learning in different forms; in a society with a developed taste for beauty, service is interpreted in terms of the production and distribution of works of art; in a society responsive to the values of the heart, service is interpreted in terms of providing channels to facilitate the culture and expression of the heart; and in a society alive to the supreme importance of the life of the spirit, service is interpreted in terms of spiritual understanding. If there is no spiritual understanding, the desire for rendering service to

others is limited. Service is of two kinds: in adding to the lives of others those things which are worth while; or in removing from the lives of others those handicaps which prevent them from having that which is worth while; if our ideas of things that are worth while are small, the scope of possible service also becomes narrow.

Just as it is habitual to misjudge positive contributions so it is usual to make a similar mistake in judging obstacles, handicaps and adversities. It is characteristic to allow more importance to external and tangible things than to what belongs to the inner life. War is considered to be a greater calamity than lives filled with hatred, though from the spiritual point of view such lives are not less evil. War assumes great importance because of its cruelty; but hatred is equally important even when not materialized in outward actions. Epidemics, injuries and death invite more attention than the agonies of the heart heavy with the burden of desire.

But for the aspirant eager to serve without recognition or credit, everything that thwarts or perverts the release of life is worthy of attention, irrespective of whether it is great or small. Just as the building up or the collapse of empires has a place in the flow of human existence, the moments of sadness or sweetness in individual experience have their place in it; the importance of one is not to be measured in terms of the other. The aspirant looks at life as a whole.

Service which springs from love

Even when the aspirant renders a service that is self-less he keeps guard upon his mind. He must be humble, honest and sincere. The service he renders must not be for the sake of show, and should be an outcome of love. If the aspirant is inspired by love, his love will enable him to be in harmony with his co-workers without jealousy. If there is not harmony amongst co-workers, the service that is rendered falls short. Further, if the aspirant renders outward service without the spirit of love, he is merely acting from a sense of duty. In the world, people work for pay; at best, it is a sense of duty that prompts them to be efficient. Their work does not have the inward beauty of work done out of love.

Contact with the Master

The aspirant can best maintain the practice 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 rendering service to humanity, the aspirant is quick to catch his spirit. Contact with the Master is also helpful in encouraging the spirit of co-operation. The aspirants do the Master's work, not their own, and they do it because they have been entrusted with it by the Master. They are free from ideas of individual merits, rights and privileges.

In co-operation of this kind the aspirants serve each other, because the Master's work is accepted by each as his own. In being useful to a co-aspirant, the aspirant is rendering a service to the Master. But in such service he knows that all are equal, and it is easy for him to cultivate the habit of serving in the spirit of humility. If service makes him proud, he knows that he might as well have not served. One of the most difficult things to learn is to render service without fuss and without pride. In the world of spirituality, humility counts as much as utility.

When the Master serves others, he does so not because he is attached to the work but to help and to set his disciples the example of self-less service. In his feeling of oneness, the Master knows himself to be at once the Lord of all and the Servant of all. The aspirant realizes the ideal of true service when he has before him the example of the Master; but the spiritual preparation of the aspirant is never complete until he has learnt the art of rendering service with joy.

4. FAITH

One of the most important qualifications is Faith, of which there are three kinds: (i) faith in oneself; (ii) faith in the Master and (iii) faith in life. Faith is so indispensable that unless it is present in some degree, life is impossible. Children have a natural faith in their elders, looking to them for protection and help. This habit of trust persists until the shock of being deceived or exploited is received. Faith is strengthened when it finds those qualities which invite and confirm it. Being worthy of faith and having faith in others are complementary, they are the conditions of the development of individual and collective life.

Faith in oneself

Unqualified and implicit faith belongs to the world of ideals; in practice it exists only rarely. Faith remains undeveloped, however, unless one has faith in oneself. A man without faith in himself, cannot develop those qualities that invite and foster it in others. The confidence that you can, under all circumstances, remain loyal to your own perception of the best is not only the foundation of a reliable character but of co-operation with others.

But unshakable faith in oneself is as rare as implicit faith in some other person; few have developed it to the degree that ensures effective control of themselves. In most persons faith in themselves is undone by the experience of their own frailties and failings. Self-confidence is thus in constant danger of being shattered and can be established only when a man has before him a living example of perfection.

Faith in the Master

Faith in the Master nourishes faith in oneself and faith in life, in the teeth of set-backs and failures, handicaps and difficulties. Life as one knows it in oneself or in most of one's fellow-men, is narrow, twisted and perverse; but Life as seen in the Master, is unlimited, pure and self-contained. In the Master, a man's own ideal is realized; the Master is what his own deeper self would be; he sees in the Master the reflection of the best that is yet to be, which he will surely attain. Faith in the Master, therefore, becomes the chief motive-power for realizing one's latent divinity.

Faith and critical reasoning

True faith is grounded in the deeper experience of the spirit and purified intuition. It is not to be regarded as the antithesis of critical reason but as its guide. When critical reason is implemented by living faith, based on pure intuition, its functioning becomes creative and fruitful. Many forms of credulity cannot be removed except by the free working of the critical reason. However, critical reason can clarify only those forms of faith that are not based upon pure intuition. True faith, grounded on pure intuition, is an imperative, which cannot be made subject to reason, for it transcends the limits of the mind and is fundamental

and primary. This does not mean that faith at any stage need be blind in the sense that it is not to be examined by the critical intellect. True faith is a form of sight not of blindness and need not be afraid of the functioning of critical reason.

The right of testing the Master through critical reasoning has always been conceded to disciples; but if after testing and being satisfied about the perfection of the Master the disciple shows wavering, it is the result of a deficiency in his sincerity of approach and integrity of purpose. There are many instances of uncritical credulity in the claimants for spiritual wisdom, and many instances of unjustified wavering of faith despite a convincing basis in one's own experience; and just as credulity is the result of the unconscious operation of worldly wants, unjustified wavering of faith is due to the unconscious operation of desires that run contrary to the manifestation of faith. The first is the father of unwarranted belief, and the second the father of unwarranted doubt.

Cravings pervert the functioning of critical reason, and an unwavering faith, grounded in pure intuition, comes only to a mind that is free from the pressure of unsatisfied wants. True faith is, therefore, a matter of growth; it increases in proportion to the success of the disciple in freeing his consciousness from cravings.

Faith must be distinguished from intellectual belief or opinion. When a person has a good opinion about someone, he is said to have a certain faith in him. But this kind of opinion does not possess the spiritual potency of living faith in the Master. Beliefs and opinions exist in a superficial layer of the human psyche, they do not have integral relation with the deeper psychic forces; they remain in the mind without bringing about those radical changes in the personality which determine the attitude to life. People hold beliefs as they wear clothes; in times of emergency they change their clothes to suit an altered situation.

Living faith creatively dynamic

Living faith has a vital relation with all the deeper forces and purposes of the 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 that is not recast by it. Living faith in the Master becomes a supreme source of inspira-

tion and unassailable self-confidence for the disciple, and expresses itself primarily through active reliance upon the Master, not merely through the opinion held about him. Living faith is an active attitude of confidence in the Master, expressing itself not only through trustful expectation of help, but 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 disciple. Just as the disciple tests the Master in respect of his capacity to guide him, so the Master tests the disciple in respect of his integrity of purpose. The Master is unconcerned about whether the disciple doubts him or has faith in him; what he is concerned about is whether the disciple is or is not sincere and whole-hearted in his spiritual search. The Master is not interested in giving proof of his own divinity except when he feels that such proof is necessary for the spiritual benefit of one who has surrendered himself to him.

XI

DISCIPLESHIP

When an aspirant becomes affiliated to a Master, he is said to have become a disciple. But merely formal affiliation does not constitute discipleship. The relationship between disciple and Master is utterly different from legal relations that create rights and liabilities through verbal understandings or formal agreements. Such transactions are inwardly determined by *sanskritic* ties and *karmic* laws, and are not devoid of significance; but these relations are in their nature provisional and superficial, in no way comparable to the bond of discipleship that gives substance and direction to the life of the aspirant. Discipleship belongs to the basic law of the spiritual life. It is therefore of much greater significance than the relations that arise within the context of ordinary life from associations or contracts. Many of these earthly relations do not enter into the spiritual fabric of the life of the aspirant.

The relation between Master and disciple is primarily a relation between the lover and his Divine Beloved, the most important relationship into which a person can enter. Earthly love in discipleship is the love of God-unconscious for God-conscious.

The love the aspirant has for the Master is the response evoked by the love of the Master. Love for the Master becomes a central element in the life of the aspirant; because he knows the Master to be an embodiment of the infinite God, all his thoughts and aspirations are centred upon the Master. All other streams of love join this great river of love and disappear in it. Majnu loved Laila. He loved her so intensely that every moment of his life he was filled with thoughts about her. He could neither eat, drink nor sleep without thinking of her, and all he wanted was the happiness of Laila. He would gladly have seen her married to some other person had he known it would be in her interest, and he would even have died for her husband had he thought she would thereby be

happy. The self-denial and sincerity of his love led him to the Master. Because he thought only of the beloved, his love was lifted from the physical and intellectual level to the spiritual.

Purification through love and self-surrender

When the disciple meets his Master, all he has to do is to love him; for loving the Master out of the fullness of his heart, the disciple's union with him is assured. He does not worry about the quality of his love. He loves in spite of weaknesses and does not wait till he can purify his heart. The Master is the source of purity and to set one's heart on the Master is the beginning of self-purification. When the disciple has whole-hearted devotion to the Master, he opens himself for the reception of the Divine Love, which the Master pours upon him; his weaknesses are consumed in this Divine Love. But if the disciple is to be free from weaknesses and attain purity, he has to dedicate his life to the Master without reservation. He must offer his weaknesses as well as his strengths, his virtues as well as his vices, his merits as well as his sins. His self-surrender must be so complete as to allow no room for a shadow of secret self-desire.

Complete self-surrender and unquestioning love become possible when the disciple has faith in the Master. Once God is realized there is no question of faith, but, until realization, the faith that the disciple places in the Master is his guide. It is not for nothing that all religions are referred to as "faiths".

The story of Kalyan

The faith of the disciple must be grounded on his experience of the divinity of the Master. The story of Kalyan brings out the meaning of this. Kalyan was a disciple of Swami Ramdas who was a Perfect Master at the time of Shivaji. The Master loves all disciples alike; but some are particularly dear to him. Swami Ramdas had many disciples; but the favourite was Kalyan. Other disciples did not understand why Kalyan should be so dear to the Master. Once Swami Ramdas made a test of the devotion of his disciples when he carefully pretended to be so sick as to be on the point of death. He had placed a mango on the joint of his knee and covered it by a bandage so that it looked like a huge swelling.

Swami Ramdas pointed to this swelling, said that it was a malignant tumour, and that there was no chance of his living unless some one sucked out the poison. At the same time he made it clear that whoever sucked out the poison would die. Then he asked whether any disciple was prepared to do this. All the disciples hesitated except Kalyan who arose immediately and began to suck from the swelling. He found that what he sucked was mango juice not poison. To be willing to die for the Beloved is true love. Such faith, love and loyalty as that of Kalyan comes to the disciple only through the grace of the Master.

The Master realized through service

Undivided loyalty to the Master does not introduce narrowness in the life of the disciple. To serve the Master is to serve your own self in every other self. The Master dwells in Universal Consciousness and wills universal spiritual well-being; to serve the Master is to participate in his cause, which is to serve all life. While sharing the work of the Master, the disciple may be required to be in touch with the world; but though moving in the world he is in inward contact with the Master as Infinite Being. Therefore, by sharing the work of the Master, the disciple comes closer to him. Serving the Master is the quickest means of realizing him. Service of the Master is a joy for the disciple even when an ordeal is involved that tries body or mind. Service offered under conditions of discomfort or inconvenience is the test of the devotion of the disciple. The more trying such service the more welcome it is, and as he voluntarily accepts physical and mental suffering, the disciple experiences the bliss of spiritual fulfilment.

Conflict

The sense of undivided loyalty to the Master is made possible by right understanding of what the Master is and what he stands for. If the disciple has an imperfect grasp of the status and function of the Master he is likely to set up a false antithesis between his own Higher Self and the Master, and as a consequence he may have in his mind an imaginary conflict between the claims of the Master and other claims. But a disciple should from the beginning realize that the Master requires only that the disciple should realize his

own Higher Self. In fact, the Master is no other than this Higher Self. This, however, does not mean that formal allegiance to the Higher Self is a substitute for allegiance to the Master. The disciple cannot have a clear perception of his own Higher Self until he is God-realized, and what comes to him as duty is a prompting of *sanskaras* interpolating themselves between the Higher Self and his field of consciousness. The Master as one with the Higher Self makes no mistake about right valuation.

The disciple, therefore, must test his own promptings by means of the orders given by the Master and in the event of conflict he should re-examine his own ideas. Almost always a little reflection is sufficient to enable him to perceive the harmony between his own Higher Self and the requirements of the Master. If, however, the disciple is unable to reconcile the two, he may be sure that he has not grasped what the Master says. Under such circumstances the Master requires the disciple to follow his conscience at any cost. The Master may sometimes give instructions with a view to preparing the disciple for a higher mode of life when the disciple may find himself confronted by an apparent variance between his inclinations and the instructions received from the Master. But the Master does not give instructions for which the disciple has not had inward preparation.

The Master is supremely impersonal, his only concern is to remove the veils between the consciousness of the disciple and his Higher Self. So there is never any real conflict. At the end of his search, the disciple discovers the Master to be none other than his Higher Self. In his impersonality the Master desires that the disciple should reconstitute himself in the light of the Higher Self. This is the meaning of discipleship.

XII

THE FORMATION, FUNCTION AND REMOVAL OF SANSKARAS

I. THEIR FORMATION AND FUNCTION

There are two aspects of human experience—the subjective and objective: the mental processes which contain the essential elements of experience, and the objects to which they refer. The mental processes are dependent partly upon the immediate objective situation, and partly upon the functioning of the accumulated *sanskaras* or impressions of previous experience. The human mind thus finds itself between past *sanskaras* and the objective world.

From the psycho-genetic point of view, human actions are based upon the operation of the impressions stored in the mind through previous experience. Every thought emotion and act is grounded in groups of impressions, which are modifications of the mind stuff of man. These impressions are deposits of previous experience, and become the most important factors in determining the course of present and future experience. The mind is constantly creating and gathering them. When occupied with the physical objects of this world, such as the body and nature, the mind is, so to say, externalized, and creates physical impressions; and when it is busy with its own subjective mental processes it creates subtle and mental impressions. The question whether these impressions (or *sanskaras*) or experience come first is like the question whether the hen was first or the egg. Both are conditions of each other and develop simultaneously. The problem of understanding the significance of human experience, therefore, turns upon the problem of understanding the formation and function of *sanskaras*.

Natural and non-natural sanskaras

The *sanskaras* are of two main types—natural and the so-called

non-natural—according to the manner in which they come into existence. The *sanskaras* gathered during the period of organic evolution are natural. They gather round the soul as it successively takes up and abandons the various sub-human forms, passing from the apparently inanimate stone or metal to the human, where there is full development of consciousness. All the *sanskaras* which cluster round the soul before attaining the human form are the product of natural evolution, and are therefore, referred to as natural *sanskaras*. They should be distinguished from the *sanskaras* cultivated by the soul after the attainment of the human form, treated under the moral freedom of consciousness with its responsibility of choice between good and evil. They are, therefore, referred to as non-natural *sanskaras*. For, though these post-human *sanskaras* are directly dependent upon the natural *sanskaras*, they are created under fundamentally different conditions. The difference in the length of the periods through which they have been gathered and the conditions under which they are formed is responsible for the difference in the degree of firmness with which the natural and non-natural *sanskaras* are attached to the soul. The non-natural *sanskaras* are not as difficult to eradicate as the natural *sanskaras*, which have an ancient heritage, and are more firmly rooted. The obliteration of the natural *sanskaras* is practically impossible unless the neophyte is the recipient of the grace of a Master.

*Manifest life arises owing to the will-to-be-conscious
in the Absolute*

An important question is, "Why should the manifested life at the different stages of evolution emerge out of the Absolute Reality, which is infinite?" The answer is that manifested life arises out of the impetus in the Absolute to become conscious of itself. The progressive manifestation of life through evolution is ultimately brought about by the will-to-be-conscious inherent in the Infinite. In order to understand creation in terms of thought, it is necessary to imagine this will-to-be-conscious in the Absolute prior to the act of manifestation.

Though for the purpose of an intellectual explanation of the creation, the impetus in the Absolute is to be regarded as a will-to-be-conscious, to describe it as an inherent desire would be

incorrect. It is better described as an inexplicable, spontaneous and sudden impulse. Since all intellectual categories are necessarily inadequate, the nearest approach to understanding the mystery of creation is not through an intellectual concept but through an analogy. A wave across the surface of the ocean produces a stir of innumerable bubbles, and the impulse creates myriads of individuals out of the infinity of the One Being. But the abounding Absolute or One Being is the substratum of individuals. Individuals are the creation of a spontaneous impulse, and have, therefore, no anticipation of their continuity of existence throughout the cyclic period until the subsiding of the initial tremor. Within the undifferentiated being of the Absolute is a mysterious point through which comes forth the variegated creation, and the deep, which once was icy-still, is astir with the life of innumerable selves who secure their separateness of a definite size and shape through self-limitation upon the surface of the ocean.

The Absolute is unaffected by the illusion of manifestation

This is mere analogy. It would be a mistake to imagine that some real change takes place in the Absolute when the impulse of the involved will-to-be-conscious brings into existence the world of manifestation. There can be no act of involution or evolution within the being of the Absolute; and nothing real can be born from the Absolute. The change implied in the creation of the manifested world is not an ontological change or a change in the being of the Absolute Reality, it is an apparent change. In one sense, the act of manifestation must be regarded as an expansion of the illimitable being of the Absolute, since through that act the Infinite, which is without consciousness, seeks to attain consciousness. But since this expansion of Reality is effected through its self-limitization into various forms of life, the act of manifestation might also be called the process of timeless contraction. But whether the act of manifestation is looked upon as an expansion of reality or as its timeless contraction, it is preceded by an initial urge or movement which might in terms of thought be regarded as an inherent and involved desire to be conscious. The manifoldness of creation and the separateness of individuals exist only in imagination. The existence of creation or the world of

manifestation is grounded in illusion, so that, in spite of the manifestation of numberless individuals, the Absolute remains the same without any real expansion or contraction, increment or decrement. But though the Absolute undergoes no modification, there comes into existence its apparent differentiation into many individuals.

The original illusion in the stone

The original illusion marks the beginning of the formation of *sanskaras*, which starts in the finite centre which becomes the first focus for the manifestation of individuality. In the physical sphere, this first focus of manifestation is represented by the tri-dimensional and inert stone, which has rudimentary and partial consciousness sufficient only to illumine its own shape and form. Whatever illumination exists in the stone phase is derived from the Absolute, not from the body of the stone. But consciousness is unable to enlarge its scope independently of the body of the stone, because the Absolute is first identified with consciousness and through it to the stone. And as all further development of consciousness is arrested in the body of the stone, evolution of the higher forms of manifestation becomes indispensable. The development of consciousness has to proceed with the evolution of the body by which it is conditioned. Therefore, the will-to-be-conscious which is inherent in the Absolute seeks by divine determination a progressive evolution of the vehicles of expression.

Evolution of consciousness and forms

Thus the Absolute forges for itself a new vehicle of expression in the metal form, in which it becomes more intensified. But even at this stage it remains rudimentary. It has to get transferred to forms of vegetation in which there is an appreciable advance in the development of consciousness through the maintenance of the vital processes of growth, decay and reproduction. Emergence of a still more developed form of consciousness becomes possible when the Absolute seeks manifestation through the instinctive life of insects, birds and animals, which are aware of their bodies and respective surroundings, which develop a sense of self-protection, and aim at establishing mastery over their environment. In the higher animals mind or thought appears, but its working is

limited by such instincts as those of self-protection and the care and preservation of the young. So even in animals, consciousness has not its full development, with the result that it is unable to serve the purpose of the Absolute to attain self-illumination.

Human consciousness

The Absolute finally takes the human form in which self-consciousness appears. At this stage the capacity of reasoning develops, the scope of which is unlimited, but as human consciousness is identified with the physical body, this consciousness does not serve the purpose of illuminating the nature of the Absolute. However, in the human form, consciousness has the potentiality for self-realization, and detachment from the body and its environment, and the will-to-be-conscious with which evolution started becomes fructified in the Masters or Man-Gods.

The development of sanskaras

The Absolute cannot reach self-knowledge through ordinary human consciousness, because that consciousness is enveloped in a multitude of *sanskaras*. As consciousness passes from the apparently inanimate state of stone or metal to vegetative life, then to the instinctive state of insects, birds and animals, and finally to the consciousness of man, it is continually creating new *sanskaras* and getting enveloped in them. These natural *sanskaras* get added to after the human state is attained by the creation of non-natural *sanskaras*, through human experience. Thus the acquisition of *sanskaras* is unceasing during the process of evolution as well as during the later period of human activities. This acquisition of the *sanskaras* may be likened to the winding up of a piece of string round a stick, the string representing the *sanskaras*, the stick representing the individual mind. The winding up starts from the beginning of the creation and persists through all the evolutionary stages and the human form; the wound string represents all the positive *sanskaras*—natural as well as non-natural.

The winding of sanskaras

The *sanskaras* constantly created in human life are due to the various objects and ideas with which consciousness finds itself confronted, and the thoughts and actions that follow; these

sanskaras bring about important transformations in the various states of consciousness. The impressions created by beautiful objects arouse the capacity for appreciating and enjoying beauty, so that when one hears a good piece of music, or sees a beautiful landscape, there is a feeling of exaltation. When one contacts the personality of a thinker, one may enter new spheres of thought and be inspired with enthusiasm. Not only the impressions of objects or persons but also the impressions of ideas and superstitions determine the conditions of consciousness.

The power of the impressions of superstitions might be illustrated as follows. During the Moghul rule in India, a highly educated man who was skeptical about ghosts made up his mind to verify the truth of their existence from personal experience. He had been warned against visiting a certain graveyard on the darkest night of the month, for it was reported to be the habitation of a dreadful ghost who made his appearance whenever an iron nail was hammered into the ground within the limits of the graveyard. With hammer in one hand and a nail in the other he walked into the graveyard on the darkest night of the month and chose a spot uncovered by grass to drive a nail in the ground. When he sat on the ground to hammer in the nail, an end of his black cloak got tied to the nail. He finished hammering and felt he was successful with the experiment without encountering the ghost, but as he tried to rise he felt a strong pull towards the ground, and became panic-stricken. Owing to the operation of previous impressions he could think of nothing but the ghost, who, he thought, had secured him at last. And the shock of the thought was so great that the man died of heart-failure.

The power and effect of impressions can hardly be over estimated. An impression is hardened, and its inertness makes it durable. It can become so engraved upon the mind that despite a sincere desire to have it eradicated it works itself into action directly or indirectly. The mind contains many heterogeneous *sanskaras*, and, while seeking expression in consciousness, they often clash with each other. The clash of *sanskaras* is experienced in consciousness as a mental conflict. Experience is bound to be chaotic and enigmatic, full of oscillations, confusion and tangles, until consciousness is freed from *sanskaras* – good and bad. Experience can become truly harmonious only when consciousness is emancipated from subjection to impressions.

The three types of sanskaras give rise to three different states of consciousness

Sanskaras can be classified, according to the essential differences in the nature of the spheres to which they refer, as of three kinds: (1) Physical *sanskaras*, which enable the individual to experience the physical world through the physical medium and compel it to identify itself with the physical body. (2) Subtle *sanskaras*, which enable the individual to experience the subtle world through the subtle medium and to identify itself with the subtle body. (3) Mental *sanskaras*, which enable the individual to experience the mental world through the mental medium and compel it to identify itself with the mental body. The differences between the states of individuals are due to the differences existing in the kind of *sanskaras* with which their consciousness is loaded. Thus merely physically conscious individuals experience only the physical world; the subtle-conscious only the subtle world; and the mental-conscious only the mental world. The qualitative diversity in the experience of these three types of individuals is due to the difference in the nature of their *sanskaras*.

The self-conscious individuals are, however, different from all others, because they experience the Absolute through the medium of the self, whereas other individuals experience only their bodies and the corresponding worlds. And this difference is due to the fact that whereas the consciousness of others is conditioned by some kind of *sanskaras*, the consciousness of self-conscious individuals is free from *sanskaras*. It is only when consciousness is unobscured and unconditioned by *sanskaras* that the initial will-to-be-conscious arrives at its fruition, and the infinity and indivisible unity of the Absolute is consciously realized. The problem of deconditioning the mind through the removal of *sanskaras* is, therefore, extremely important.

2. THE CESSATION OF SANSKARAS

Human beings do not have self-illumination, because their consciousness is clouded. The will-to-be-conscious with which evolution started has succeeded in creating consciousness, but without knowledge of the One Being the individual is impelled to use consciousness for experiencing its own nature. The existence of *sanskaras* keeps the individual confined to the illusion of being a

finite body trying to adjust itself in the world of things and persons.

Individuals are like drops in the ocean. Just as each drop is fundamentally identical with the ocean, the soul which is individualized is still the One Being, and does not really become separate. Yet the envelope of *sanskaras* in which consciousness is covered prevents the individual from having knowledge of the self and keeps it within the domain of *Maya*. So that the individual should consciously realize his identity with the One Being, it is necessary that consciousness should be retained and *sanskaras* removed. The *sanskaras* which are contributory to the evolution of consciousness themselves become impediments to illuminating the nature of the One Being. Henceforth, the problem with which the will-to-be-conscious is confronted is that of the release of the individual from *sanskaras*. This is accomplished in the following way.

Five ways of release from sanskaras

(1) *To cease creating new sanskaras* by putting an end to those unconscious activities that form them. If the formation of *sanskaras* is compared to the winding of a string round a stick, this step amounts to the stopping of the further winding of the string.

(2) *The wearing out of old sanskaras*. If *sanskaras* are withheld from expressing themselves in action and experience, they are gradually worn out.

(3) *The unwinding of past sanskaras*. This process consists in annulling past *sanskaras* by mentally reversing the process which leads to their formation.

(4) *The dispersion and exhaustion of some sanskaras*. If the psychic energy which is locked up in *sanskaras* is sublimated and diverted to other channels, they get dispersed and disappear.

(5) *The wiping out of sanskaras*. This consists in completely annihilating *sanskaras*. In the analogy of the string, this is comparable to the cutting of the string. The wiping out of *sanskaras* can be effected only by the grace of a Perfect Master.

It should be noted that many methods of undoing *sanskaras* are effective in more than one way, and the five ways mentioned are not meant to be sharply distinguished. They represent the different principles characterizing the psychic processes that take place while *sanskaras* are being removed. For the sake of convenience, only those methods that pre-eminently illustrate the first

three principles (viz., the cessation of fresh *sanskaras* and the wearing out as well as the unwinding of past *sanskaras*) are mentioned here. The methods that predominantly illustrate the last two principles (viz., the dispersion and sublimation of *sanskaras* and the wiping out of *sanskaras*) will be explained later.

Renunciation

If the mind is to be freed from the bondage of accumulating *sanskaras* it is necessary that there should be an end to the creation of new ones. New *sanskaras* can be stopped through renunciation. Renunciation may be external or internal. External or physical renunciation consists in giving up everything to which the mind is attached, viz., home, parents, wife, children, friends, wealth, comforts and enjoyments. Internal or mental renunciation consists in giving up all cravings, feelings of self-importance, opinions, habits and attitudes. Though external renunciation is not necessarily accompanied by internal renunciation, it often paves the way for it. Spiritual freedom consists in internal renunciation, not in external renunciation; but external renunciation is an aid in achieving internal renunciation. The person who renounces his possessions disconnects himself from a potent source of fresh *sanskaras*. He thus takes an important step towards emancipating himself; but this is not all that is achieved through external renunciation. With the renouncing of everything he also renounces his past bindings. The old *sanskaras* connected with his possessions get detached from his mind, and since they are withheld from expressing themselves, they get worn out.

External renunciation creates a favourable atmosphere for the wearing out of *sanskaras*; as for instance a man who possesses money and power is exposed to a life of indulgence and extravagance, his circumstances are favourable to temptations. Man is mostly what he becomes by being shaped by environment. Whether or not he surmounts his surroundings depends upon strength of character; if strong, he remains free in thought and action in the midst of action and reaction with his environment; if weak, he succumbs to their influence. Even if he be strong, he is likely to be swept off his feet by the collective mode of life and thought. It is difficult to withstand the onslaught of a current of ideas and to avoid falling a prey to circumstances. One who

resists circumstances is still in danger of being carried away by some wave of collective passion and caught up in modes of thought he is unable to renounce. Many persons would live a different life were they not surrounded by luxuries. The renunciation of superfluous things helps the wearing out of *sanskaras* and is contributory to the life of freedom, and awakening of consciousness.

Solitude and fasting

Two important forms of external renunciation that have special spiritual value are (1) solitude and (2) fasting. Withdrawal of oneself from worldly activities and occasional retirement into solitude are valuable for wearing out the *sanskaras* connected with the gregarious instinct. But this is not a goal in itself. Like solitude, fasting has great spiritual value. Eating is satisfaction; fasting is denial. Fasting is physical when food is not taken despite the craving for the enjoyment of eating; it is mental when food is taken not for its delights but for the survival of the body. External fasting consists in avoiding direct contact with food so as to achieve mental fasting.

As food is a necessity of life its continued denial is bound to be disastrous. Therefore, external fasting should be for a short time only. It has to be repeated until there is victory over the craving for food. By bringing into action the vital and psychic forces to withstand the craving for food, it is possible to free the mind from attachment to it. External fasting has no spiritual value when undertaken with the motive of improving the body or for the sake of self-demonstration. It should neither be used as an instrument for self-assertion, nor carried to such an extreme that the body is reduced to its limits. Self-mortification through prolonged fasting does not necessarily promote freedom from the craving for food. On the contrary it may invite re-action to a life of extravagant indulgence. If, however, external fasting is undertaken in moderation and for spiritual purposes it facilitates the achievement of internal fasting; and when external and internal fasting are whole-hearted, they bring about the unwinding of the *sanskaras* connected with the craving for food.

Penance

The unwinding of many *sanskaras* can be brought about through

penance. This consists in augmenting the feeling of remorse when one has done wrong. Repentance consists in mentally reviving the wrongs with severe self-condemnation. It is not mere regret or sorrow for the wrong. Penance is facilitated by remaining vulnerable during periods of emotional outbursts, or by deliberate efforts to recall the past with deep disapproval. Such penance unwinds the *sanskaras* which are responsible for the action. Self-condemnation, accompanied by deep feeling, can negate the *sanskaras* of anger, greed and lust. Sometime or other a man is bound to experience the reaction of remorse and suffer the pricks of conscience. If, at that time, he vividly realizes the evil for which he was responsible, the intensity of emotional awareness by which it is accompanied consumes the tendencies for which he stands self-condemned.

Self-condemnation sometimes expresses itself through forms of self-mortification. Some saints inflict wounds on their body when they are in a mood of penitence, but such expressions of remorse are to be discouraged. Some Hindu aspirants cultivate humility by making it a rule to fall at the feet of every one whom they meet. To a man of strong will and stable character penance can bring the desired good effect through any form of self-humiliation which unwinds the *sanskaras* connected with good and bad actions. Others, feeble in will power, derive benefit from penance if they are under sympathetic direction. When penance is carefully nourished and practiced it inevitably results in the psychic revocation of undesirable modes of thought and conduct and brings a man into a life of purity and service.

It should, however, be noted that there is always in penance the danger that the mind may dwell too long upon the wrongs done, and thus develop a morbid habit of regretfulness, and even take pleasure in it. Such sentimentality is a waste of psychic energy, and in no way helpful for the wearing out of *sanskaras*. Penance should not be the everyday regret that follows everyday weaknesses. It should not become a sterile habit of immoderate gloomy pondering over one's failings. Sincere penance does not consist in perpetuating grief for wrongs one has done but in resolving to avoid them in future. If it leads to lack of self-respect or self-confidence, it has not served its purpose, which is to render impossible the repetition of certain actions.

Withholding desires from fulfillment

The wearing out and the unwinding of *sanskaras* can also be effected by denying to desires their expression and fulfillment. People differ in their capacity and aptitude for rejecting desires. Those in whom desires arise with strong impulse are often unable to curb them at their source, but they can refrain from seeking their fulfillment through action. Even if a man has no control over the surging of desires, he can prevent them from being translated into action. Rejection of desires by controlling actions avoids the possibility of sowing the seeds of future desires. On the other hand, if a man translates his desires into action, he may exhaust some impressions but will create fresh impressions, thus sowing seeds for future desires, which, in their turn, demand satisfaction. The process of speeding up or exhausting impressions through expression and fulfillment does not in itself contribute towards securing release from *sanskaras*.

When desires arise and their release into action is barred, there is plenty of opportunity for cogitation upon them; and this cogitation results in the wearing out of the corresponding *sanskaras*. It should, however, be noted that such spontaneous cogitation does not bring about the desired result if it takes the form of mental indulgence in the thought of the desires. When there is an attempt to welcome and harbour the desires, cogitation will not only have no spiritual value but may be responsible for creating subtle *sanskaras*. Mental cogitation should not be accompanied by any conscious sanction for the desires which arise in consciousness; and there should be no effort to perpetuate their memory. When desires are denied their expression and fulfillment in action, and are allowed to pass through the intensity of the fire of cogitative consciousness which does not sanction them, the seeds of these desires get consumed. The rejection of desires and the inhibition of physical response effect in time a negation of past *sanskaras*.

Desirelessness

Rejection of desires is a preparation for desirelessness or the state of non-wanting, which alone brings freedom. Wanting is binding, whether fulfilled or not. When it is fulfilled, it leads to further wanting, and this perpetuates the bondage of the spirit; when unfulfilled, it leads to disappointment and suffering which

through their *sanskaras* fetter the spirit. There is no end to wanting, because the external and internal stimuli of the mind are constantly alluring it either into wanting or into disliking (which is another form of wanting). The external stimuli are the sensations of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch; the external stimuli arise in the mind from memories of the present life and the totality of *sanskaras* gathered by consciousness during the evolutionary period and human lives. When the mind is trained to remain unmoved and balanced in the presence of all external and internal stimuli, it arrives at the state of non-wanting, when it is possible to unwind the *sanskaras*.

Wanting is a state of disturbed equilibrium of mind, and non-wanting a state of poise. The poise of non-wanting can be maintained only by a disentanglement from all stimuli, whether pleasant or painful, agreeable or disagreeable. To remain unmoved by the joys and sorrows of this world, the mind must be completely detached from external and internal stimuli. Though the mind is constantly fortifying itself through its own constructive activity, there is always the chance of these outposts of defence being washed away by a sudden wave in the ocean of natural mental environment. When this happens, you may for the time feel lost, but the attitude of non-attachment keeps you safe. This attitude consists in the application of the principle of denial. Watchful effort is needed to maintain detachment from the opposites of experience. It is not possible to deny only the disagreeable and to remain inwardly attached to those that are agreeable, if the mind is to remain unmoved. The equipoise consists in meeting both alternatives with detachment.

The "yes" meaning of the positive *sanskaras* can be annulled only through the negative assertion of "no", "no". This negative element is necessarily present in all aspects of asceticism, as expressed through renunciation, solitude, fasting, penance, withholding desires from fulfillment, and non-wanting. The blending of these methods and attitudes creates a healthy form of asceticism, but to ensure this, the negative element must be without any perversions or further limitations.

The limit of the negative element

It is useless to try to coerce the mind to a life of asceticism. Any

forcible adjustment of life in the ascetic way is likely to stunt the growth of good qualities. When the healthy qualities of human nature are allowed to develop slowly, they unfold knowledge of relative values, and thereby pave the way for a spontaneous life of asceticism, but any attempt to force them will invite reaction.

The process of being freed from attachments is often accompanied by the formation of some other attachments. The grossest form of attachment is that which is directed towards the world of objects. But when the mind is becoming detached from the world of objects, it has a tendency to arrive at finer attachments of a subjective kind. After the mind has succeeded in cultivating a certain degree of detachment, it may develop that subtle form of egoism which expresses itself through aloofness and superiority. Detachment should not be allowed to form any nucleus on which the ego may fasten itself; at the same time it should not be an expression of one's inability to cope with the stress of worldly life. Further, detachment does not consist in clinging to the mere formula of denial which may become an obsession of the mind without deep-felt longing for enlightenment. Such interest in the formula of negation often exists with an inward dwelling on the temptations.

The negative sanskaras must also disappear

The negative assertion of "no", "no", is the way of unwinding the positive *sanskaras* gathered through evolution and human lives. But though this process destroys the positive *sanskaras*, it results in the formation of negative *sanskaras*, which also condition the mind and create new problems. The assertion of "no", "no" has to be sufficiently powerful to effect the eradication of the physical, subtle and mental *sanskaras*; but after it has served its purpose it must be abandoned. Spiritual experience does not consist of negation. A negative attitude is equivalent to an intellectual concept, used to condition the mind, but it must be renounced. Thought has sometimes to be used to overcome limitations set up by its own movement, but when this has been done, it has itself to be given up. This is the process of going beyond the mind, which becomes possible through non-identification with the mind and its desires. To look upon the body as well as all thoughts and impulses, objectively, is to get established in detachment and to negate the *sanskaras*. This means freeing the soul from its self-

imposed illusions such as "I am the body", "I am the mind" or "I am desire" and gaining ground towards the enlightened state of "I am God", "*Anel Hague*", or "*Aham Brahmasmi*".

3. EXHAUSTION OF SANSKARAS

Those methods of removing *sanskaras* that have been explained depend chiefly on the principle of negating those positive *sanskaras* that veil the truth from consciousness and prevent self-illumination. These methods are based upon the control of the body and mind. The control of the habitual tendencies of the mind is much more difficult than the control of physical actions. Fleeting and evasive thoughts can be curbed only with great patience and persistent practice; but the restraint of mental processes and reactions is necessary to check the formation of new *sanskaras* and to wear out or unwind the old.

Control is a conscious activity and involves effort as long as the mind attempts to recondition itself through the removal of *sanskaras*; but after release from the *sanskaras* the activity is spontaneous, because the mind is functioning in freedom. Such control is born of strength of character and health of mind, and brings with it immense peace. The mind which appears feeble when uncontrolled becomes a source of great strength when controlled. Control is indispensable for the conservation of the psychic energy and the economical use of thought-force for creative purposes.

If, however, control becomes mechanical it defeats its own purpose, which is to make possible the free and unconditioned functioning of the mind. The control that has spiritual value does not consist in the repression of thoughts and desires, but is the restraint exercised by the perception of positive values discovered during experience. Control is essentially, therefore, not merely negative. When positive values enter consciousness, they generate psychic energy, which removes the mental tendencies that interfere with free expression. Thus, the tendencies towards lust, greed and anger are removed through the recognition of the value of a life of purity, generosity and kindness.

The mind that is accustomed to certain habits of thought and responses does not find it easy to adjust itself to these new results of its own perceptions, owing to the inertia caused by the impres-

sions of previous modes of thought and conduct, and this process of readjustment in the light of true values is what we call controlling the mind. But this control is never mechanical. It is an effort of the mind to overcome its own inertia. It is fundamentally creative.

Dispersion through sublimation

Creative control is possible because the source of light is within, and though self-illumination is prevented by the veil of *sanskaras*, there is not, even within the boundaries of ordinary human consciousness, complete darkness. The ray of light which leads the individual onward is the sense of true values, which guides with varying degrees of clarity according to the thickness of the veil of *sanskaras*. The process of the replacing lower by higher values is the process of sublimation, which consists in diverting the psychic energy locked up in *sanskaras* towards creative and spiritual ends. When the psychic energy is thus diverted those *sanskaras* get dispersed.

The method of sublimation has the special advantage of having an unfailing interest for the aspirant at all stages. The method of negation without substitution, though necessary, is likely to be boring, and may seem to lead to vacuity. But the method of sublimation is at every stage of absorbing interest, bringing an ever-increasing sense of fulfilment. Psychic energy can be sublimated into spiritual channels through (1) meditation, (2) selfless service of humanity, and (3) devotion.

Meditation is deep and constant concentration upon an ideal object and its nature and forms will be dealt with in the next discourse.

Selfless service

While meditation on the personal and impersonal aspects of God requires withdrawal of consciousness into the sanctuary of one's own heart, concentration on the universal aspect of God is best achieved through the selfless service of humanity. When the mind is absorbed in the service of humanity, it is oblivious of its body and mind and their functions as in meditation, and therefore new *sanskaras* are not formed. Further the old *sanskaras* which bind the mind are shattered and dispersed. Since the mind is now centring its attention not upon its own good but upon the good of

others, the nucleus of the ego is deprived of its energy. Selfless service is, therefore, one of the best methods of sublimating the energy locked up in the binding *sanskaras*.

Selfless service is accomplished when there is no thought of reward or result as an earlier discourse has made clear. You are willing to sacrifice everything for the well-being of others. Their comfort is your convenience, their health your delight, and their happiness your joy. You find your life in losing it in theirs. You live in their hearts, and your heart becomes their shelter. Thus through living for others your own life finds its expansion. The person who leads a life of selfless service is, however, never self-conscious in serving. He does not make those he serves feel that they are under any obligation to him.

The purifying efficacy of love

Love comprehends the different advantages belonging to the other paths leading to emancipation, and is the most effective Path. It is characterized by self-sacrifice and happiness. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that in whole-hearted offering to the Beloved there is no diversion of psychic energy, and concentration is complete. In love the physical, vital and mental energies are made available for the cause of the Beloved and become dynamic power. The tension of true love is so great that any feeling which might intervene is at once eliminated. Thus, there is no parallel to the explosive and purifying efficacy of love.

There is nothing artificial about it for love subsists from the beginning of evolution. At the organic stage it is expressed in the form of cohesion or attraction. It is the natural affinity that keeps things together and draws them to each other. The gravitational pull exercised by the heavenly bodies upon each other is an expression of love. At the organic stage love becomes self-illuminated and self-appreciative, even from the amoeba to the most evolved human beings. When love is self-illuminated, its value is in conscious sacrifice.

The sacrifice of love is complete and ungrudging. The more it gives the more it wants to give, and the less it is conscious of having given. Ever increasing and never failing it seeks to please the Beloved. It welcomes suffering to satisfy a single wish of the Beloved or to relieve the Beloved of the slightest neglect. It would

gladly die for the Beloved. The lover breaks through his limitations and loses himself in the being of the Beloved.

Such deep and intense love is called *Bhakti* or devotion. In its initial stages devotion is expressed through worship, through ritual before the deities, and reverence to the revealed scriptures, or through the pursuit of the Highest in abstract thinking. In its more advanced stages, devotion expresses itself in the form of interest in human welfare and the service of humanity, love and reverence for saints and allegiance and obedience to the Spiritual Master. These stages have their relative values and relative results. Love for a living Master is a unique stage in devotion, for it gets transformed into *Para-bhakti* or divine love.

Para-bhakti

Para-bhakti is not merely intensified *Bhakti*. It begins where *Bhakti* ends. At the stage of *Para-bhakti*, devotion is not only single-minded, but is accompanied by extreme restlessness of the heart and a ceaseless longing to unite with the Beloved. This is followed by lack of interest in one's own body and its care, isolation from one's own surroundings and utter disregard for appearances or criticism, while the divine impulses of attraction to the Beloved become more frequent. This highest phase of love is most fruitful, because it has as its object a person who is love incarnate, and who can, as the Supreme Beloved, respond to the lover most completely. The purity, sweetness and efficacy of the love which the lover receives from the Master contributes to the insuperable spiritual value of this highest phase of love.

XIII

MEDITATION

1. THE NATURE OF MEDITATION AND ITS CONDITIONS

Meditation may be described as the path that the individual makes for himself while trying to get beyond the limitations of the mind. The man who finds himself drawn into deep meditation is grappling with spiritual problems.

Meditation has been misunderstood as a process of forcing the mind upon a selected idea or object. Most people naturally have an aversion to meditation because they experience difficulty in attempts to coerce the mind in a particular direction, or to pin it down to one particular thing. Any purely mechanical use of the mind is bound to be spiritually unsuccessful.

The first principle for aspirants to remember is that the mind can be controlled and directed in meditation only according to the laws inherent in the make-up of the mind itself, and not by means of the application of force.

Many persons who do not technically "meditate" are often found to be deeply and intensely engrossed in systematic and clear thinking about some practical problem or theoretical subject; this mental process is very similar to meditation, inasmuch as the mind is concentrated upon the one subject to the exclusion of all others. Meditation is spontaneous in such mental processes, because the mind is dwelling upon an object in which it is interested and increasingly understands. The object of meditation has always to be carefully selected, and must be spiritually important; it should be some divine person or object, or some spiritually significant theme or truth. To attain success in meditation, the mind must not only be interested in the divine subjects but must understand and appreciate them. Some intelligent meditation is a natural process of the mind, and since it avoids the rigidity and regularity of mechanical meditation, it is easy and successful.

Meditation and concentration

Meditation should be distinguished from concentration. It is the first stage of a process which develops into concentration. In concentration, the mind seeks to unite with its object by the process of fixing itself upon it, whereas meditation consists in thinking about a particular object to the exclusion of other things. In concentration, there is practically no movement of the mind; in meditation the mind moves from one relevant idea to another. In concentration, the mind dwells upon an idea without amplifying it or connecting it with other ideas. In meditation, the mind assimilates the object by dwelling upon its attributes or implications. In concentration as in meditation there is the intermingling of love and longing for the divine object.

Persons who have not the capacity of intense concentration have to begin with meditation, whereas those who have the capacity for concentration find meditation unnecessary. The latter may immediately concentrate on the form of a God-man or some such formula as "I am neither the material body, nor the subtle body, nor the mental body; I am *Atman*".

Silence and seclusion

Meditation is essentially an individual matter in the sense that it is not for society but for one's own spiritual advancement. Isolation of the individual from social surroundings is almost always necessary in meditation. The ancient *yogis* took to the mountains and caves in search of seclusion. Undisturbed silence is necessary. However, there is no need to go to mountains and caves in search of these conditions, for even in towns the quiet, silence and seclusion necessary for meditation can be found.

Darkness

Darkness or the closing of eyes is not necessary for meditation. If the aspirant mentally faces the object of meditation, he may have successful meditation, even with open eyes. But generally he will find that to get away from physical sights and sounds is helpful. To secure complete silence involves careful selection of the spot for meditation, but one has only to close one's eyes to protect the mind from the disturbance of sights. Sometimes, when there is

light, closing the eyes is not sufficient to ward off visual stimulation; it is then advisable to meditate in darkness. Darkness normally promotes progress in meditation.

Posture, place and hour

As to posture, there are no fixed rules. Any posture that is comfortable and hygienically unobjectionable may be adopted, so long as it does not induce sleep and contributes to the alertness of mind. The posture should not involve physical tension or strain, because it then invites the attention of the mind. The body should, therefore, be relaxed, but the usual position taken in sleep should be avoided because it may induce sleep. When the body has assumed a convenient and suitable posture it is helpful to think of the head as the centre of the body when it becomes easier to withdraw one's attention from the body and to fix it on the object of meditation.

It is desirable that the aspirant should maintain the same posture for each meditation. The associations that the posture has with meditation endow it with a capacity to induce meditation. When the body has assumed the chosen posture, it is under the subconscious suggestion that it must serve the purpose of meditation. Choosing the same spot and a fixed hour are also useful because of association. Hence the aspirant should adopt the same place, posture and hour. The choice of place involves consideration of its occult associations. Special importance is attached to meditating in holy places where the Masters have lived or meditated.

The posture, place and hour of meditation have an importance that varies according to the individual. The Master, therefore, may give different instructions to disciples. However, where meditation has become habitual through practice, adherence to a fixed place, posture or time can be dispensed with, and the aspirant can meditate under any conditions. Even when walking he may be absorbed in meditation.

A joyous act

Meditation should not be resorted to as if it were a form of medicine. One has to be serious, but this does not mean that the

aspirant must look grave or melancholy; humour and cheerfulness not only do not interfere with the progress of meditation but contribute to it. Meditation should not be turned into a distasteful or tiresome thing; the aspirant should freely allow himself the joy attendant upon successful meditation without getting addicted to it. All thoughts of depression, fear or worry should be eliminated.

Collective meditation

Though meditation is essentially an individual matter, collective meditation has advantages. When aspirants who are in harmony with each other meditate together, their thoughts have a tendency to augment and strengthen each other; this is particularly noticeable when the disciples of the same Master are collectively engaged in meditation upon their Master. But if the collective meditation is to yield its full advantages, each aspirant must be concerned with the course of his own meditation and not with what others are doing. Though in the company of others, he has to be oblivious of the world, including his body and to be exclusively cognisant of the object agreed upon before the beginning of the meditation. Intelligently conducted, collective meditation can prove to be of immense help to beginners, although advanced aspirants invariably meditate by themselves.

Disturbing thoughts

In ordinary thinking, the flow of trains of thought is common, but when the mind sets itself to meditation, there is usually a tendency towards irrelevant thoughts. This is a habit of the mind, and the aspirant should not be disturbed by the appearance of contrary thoughts, which had hitherto not made their appearance. Meditation includes bringing the subconscious contents of the mind to the forefront of consciousness. The aspirant must be prepared for disturbing thoughts and should exercise patience with the confidence that these disturbances will be overcome.

The last but not least important condition of attaining success in meditation is to adopt the right technique in respect of disturbing thoughts. It is useless to waste psychic energy by direct effort to repress them. Such an attempt leads to further attention to the disturbing thoughts, which feed upon the attention given to

them and get strengthened. It is better to ignore them and return to the object of meditation without attaching undue importance to disturbing factors. By recognizing the irrelevance of disturbing thoughts it becomes possible to let them die through neglect, keeping the mind upon the object of meditation.

2. THE CHIEF TYPES OF MEDITATION

Meditation is of different types, which can conveniently be distinguished. They can be classified according to the function they perform in respect of spiritual advancement, or on the basis of the part of the personality predominantly brought into play during the process, or on the basis of items of experiences involved.

Associative meditation and dissociative meditation

In the first type of meditation the purpose of associating consciousness with the eternal Truth is served and of dissociating consciousness from the false things of the phenomenal world. There is thus associative meditation, which predominantly involves the synthetic activity of the mind (*Anwaya*), and dissociative meditation, which predominantly involves the analytic activity of the mind (*Vyatereka*). Associative meditation may be illustrated by the formula "I am Infinite", and dissociative meditation by the formula "I am not my desires".

Through associative meditation, the aspirant unites with the spiritual ideal as mentally constructed by him; and through dissociative meditation, he separates himself from the conditions that come to him as anti-spiritual. Associative meditation is a process of the assimilation of the essentials of spiritual life; dissociative meditation is the process of the elimination of those factors that inhibit the life of the spirit.

Associative meditation is concerned with objects selected from the land of light; and dissociative meditation is concerned with objects that belong to the land of shadows. The world of illusions is the world of shadows, which has a charm of its own, and if a person is to succeed in getting out of the world of illusions and to arrive at the Truth, he must develop resistance to the enticement of the world of illusions by repeated attention to its worthlessness and develop discontent with the world of shadows. Therefore,

dissociative meditation is a preliminary to associative meditation.

Associative and dissociative meditation are both necessary, but the former is by far the more fruitful. When a person is surrounded by shadows, he will not be helped by being upset about them. If he is cross with the shadows, he will increase his worries. Instead of fretting about the shadows, he should set himself to the task of getting into the full blaze of the sun, when the shadows will disappear. Aimless discontent with existing limitations is to be replaced by effort directed towards the ideal. As long as the face is turned toward the sun and as long as he walks into the light, the shadows will not be a serious handicap to a person's emancipation.

Associative meditation is to the spirit what the assimilation of food is to the body. As the body maintains itself by the assimilation of the right food, so the mind secures health by the assimilation of spiritual truths by meditating upon them. But it is necessary to strike a balance between different forms of associative meditation even though they are all in their own way good, just as it is necessary to attend to the balancing of the physical diet. Disproportionate development of mental life hampers advancement because of the internal friction attendant upon it. Combinations of the different forms of meditation facilitate rapid progress because they promote a harmonized and balanced mind. The right combinations are those which promote an advancing equilibrium by emphasizing these aspects of the truth that are relevant for removing the special obstacles with which the aspirant is at the moment faced.

The analogy of diet can be extended to the second type of meditation, which consists in avoiding the things that are anti-spiritual. As faulty diet can upset physical health, so can faulty meditation throw the mind into disorder. Instinctive meditation on the objects of craving creates fetters for the mind. Therefore, it is as important to avoid the wrong type of meditation as to avoid the wrong type of food. And further, as good health requires elimination of waste products, so spiritual health requires detachment from undesirable thoughts and emotions.

Three types of meditation

So far, explanations have been concerned with two forms of

meditation; by considering the nature of the functions they perform in spiritual advancement it is equally illuminating to consider the nature of the part of the personality predominantly brought into play during the process of meditation. Through the application of this second principle, we have three further types of meditation.

In the first, the intellect is predominant and it may be called "discriminative meditation". In the second, the heart is predominant, and it may be called the "meditation of the heart". In the third, the active nature of man is predominant, and it may be called "the meditation of action". Discriminative meditation is represented by the intellectual assertion of a formula such as "I am not my body but the Infinite"; the meditation of the heart is represented by a steady flow of love from the aspirant to the Divine Beloved; and the meditation of action is represented by an unreserved dedication of one's life to the selfless service of the Master or humanity. Of these three types of meditation, meditation of the heart is the highest and most important; but the others have also their value and cannot be neglected without serious detriment to the spiritual progress of the aspirant.

In fact, the different types of meditation must not be looked upon as excluding each other. They should proceed in combination. Sometimes, one type of meditation leads to another, and progress in one is often held up until there is corresponding progress in the others. All types of meditation are valuable for securing the spiritual advancement of the aspirant and supplement each other.

But one type of meditation may also seriously interfere with the progress of another if it is resorted to at an inopportune moment. The different types of meditation are all concerned with aspects of life that are equally true. But according to the psychic state of the individual, the assimilation of one truth of life may be more necessary than the assimilation of another. Therefore, the Masters never prescribe the same form of meditation to all; they give specific instructions according to the individual needs of the aspirant.

The need for instructions from the Master

The type of meditation necessary in a particular situation can often not be correctly ascertained by the aspirant for himself. He

can get so addicted to one type of meditation that he finds it difficult to escape from the groove that has been cut into his mind. He fails to see the importance of any other meditation and is not drawn to it. The aspirant may, of course, himself come to feel his own deficiency, but like many medicines, the meditations indicated in a specific situation may come to the aspirant as distasteful, so that he is disinclined to take them. The help and advice of the Master are indispensable. Specific instructions from the Master supply necessary correctives for neglected aspects of personality.

Although the aspirant may start with an initial aversion to a type of meditation, he gets interested in it when he comes to see its real value and appreciates its purpose only when he has tried it. It is not possible to discover the value of any type of meditation by theoretical speculation. Like many other things of spiritual importance, meditation yields its significance after the person has experienced it, not when he tries to understand it by examination.

Determination necessary for success

To have success in any mode of meditation the aspirant must enter upon it with the determination to explore its possibilities. He must not start with reservations, but should be prepared to encourage unexpected states of consciousness, and be willing to go where he is led, but without expectations. The essence of meditation is one-pointedness and the exclusion of other considerations, even when they happen to be enticing.

If the aspirant adopts any type of meditation on his own initiative and without the benefit of the guidance of the Master, he may get so far that he loses his perspective and is unable to recover himself. It may be impossible for him to change to some other mode of meditation even when necessary. This is avoided if the aspirant has accepted the orders of a Master. When he is under guidance the Master asks the aspirant to halt at the right time, and helps him to get out of the grooves cut by previous meditation.

3. GENERAL CLASSIFICATION OF THE FORMS OF MEDITATION

The process of meditation aims at understanding and transcending the range of experience. When meditation is interpreted in this manner, it is seen to be something not peculiar to a few

aspirants, but a process in which every living creature is in some way engaged. But the term meditation is restricted to those forms devoted to understanding experience intensively and systematically. Meditation as the natural application of the mind brings no consciousness of ultimate purposes. But spiritual meditation is deliberate; and the ultimate objective is consciousness itself. The forms of spiritual meditation are continuous with the meditation found throughout the world of consciousness, and the spiritual forms of meditation come into existence when other more general forms of "meditation" have brought the person to a crisis.

General and specialized meditation

The spiritually important forms of meditation are of two kinds: (1) General meditation, which consists in the assimilation of the Divine Truths and (2) Specialized meditation, in which the mind selects some definite experience and is exclusively concerned with it. General meditation is a carrying further of the ordinary thought-processes systematically and intensively. It is different from the pre-spiritual meditations of the worldly only in so far as (i) the thought-processes come to be directed towards realities that have spiritual importance, and (ii) the mind makes intelligent use of expositions of the Divine Truths without renouncing its critical powers.

The specialized forms of meditation require more than an intellectual approach to the Truth. In them the mind has an opportunity for intellectual understanding of the object of meditation, but help is required to cultivate mental discipline, to develop capacities hitherto inactive, and to unfold latent possibilities of personality.

The problem of the specialized forms of meditation is not theoretical but practical. Specialized forms of meditation are helpful for overcoming specific obstacles in the way of enlightenment and realization; they aim at controlling the mind and going beyond it. Specialized forms of meditation are equivalent to the attempts of a man to break through the walls of a prison rather than the speculative formation of "opinions" about the strength of the prison-walls.

In spiritual life even a sincere mistake taken seriously, may have more value than half-hearted allegiance to theoretical truth. The

practical purpose in the specialized forms of meditation may be at the cost of theoretical truth. Thus, while concentrating on a particular formula, no other formulae must be allowed access to the mind, although other formulae may have the same or even greater spiritual importance. If an aspirant has been meditating upon one Master, he must exclude other Masters. In the same way, intensive thinking about the nature of the soul cannot be carried on while trying to make the mind blank, although intensive thinking may be as helpful towards the achievement of the goal as the process of making the mind blank.

The task of bringing together the different facets of the Truth, and building up a complete view of life, is attempted in general meditation, in which thought is free, comprehensive and receptive to all aspects of the truth. Such general meditation has its own value. General meditation is helpful before adopting specialized forms of meditation, as well as after trying them. But it cannot take the place of the specialized forms of meditation, which have a different function.

As the different specialized forms of bodily exercise need to be correlated in the light of knowledge of the health of the body, so the specialized forms of meditation have to be correlated with the complete ideal of life, which the aspirant constructs through the process of general meditation, which observes no law but that of finding the truth in all its aspects. Just as specialized forms of meditation cannot be replaced by general meditation, general meditation cannot be replaced by specialized forms of meditation.

The different specialized forms of meditation can be conveniently classified on the basis of the experience that the mind seeks to understand. Human experience is characterized by the dual aspect of subject and object; some forms of meditation are concerned with the objects of experience, some with the subject. Some forms of meditation are concerned with the mental operations involved in the interaction of subject and object. Thus we get three kinds of meditation.

All the forms of meditation, which the aspirant may adopt, culminate in the goal of all meditation, which is to become established in the *Sahaj Samadhi* or spontaneous meditation of the spiritually perfected soul. The *Sahaj Samadhi* has two forms: (i) *Nirvana* or absorption and (ii) *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* or divinity in expression.

Table of General Classification

The classification of the types of meditation given in the accompanying table serves the purpose of summarizing what is said here. The different forms of general meditation will be dealt with in Part 4: the different forms of specialized meditation, along with their sub-divisions, will be explained in Parts 5 and 6. *Sahaj Samadhi* and its forms will be explained in Parts 7 and 8.

A TABLE OF GENERAL CLASSIFICATION OF THE TYPES OF MEDITATION

FORMS OF THE MEDITATION OF THE ASPIRANT	i	General Meditation or The assimilation of the Divine Truth	1.	Philosophical thinking
			2.	Hearing a discourse from the Masters
			3.	Reading the written expositions of the Masters
	ii	Specialized Meditation which selects some definite items of experience	1.	Meditation concerned with the objects of experience
			2.	Meditation concerned with the subject of experience
			3.	Meditation concerned with mental operations
SAHAJ SAMADHI OR THE MEDITATION OF THOSE WHO ARE SPIRITUALLY PERFECT			1.	Nirvana or Absorption
			2.	Nirvikalp Samadhi or Divinity in expression

4. ASSIMILATION OF THE DIVINE TRUTHS

(A) Modes of general meditation

The beginnings of spiritual life are marked by general meditation, which does not exclusively concern itself with specific items of experience, but in its comprehensive scope seeks understanding and assimilation of the Divine Truths concerning life and the universe. When the aspirant is interested in the problems of the nature of life and the universe he may be said to have launched himself upon such meditation. Philosophy is the outcome of the endeavour to grasp the ultimate nature of life. But the purely

intellectual grasp of the Divine Truths remains incomplete and indecisive owing to the limitations of the experience available to it. The philosophical meditation of free and unaided thought does not lead to conclusive results; it often leads to conflicting systems or views. All the same, philosophical meditation is not without value because besides leading him in the realms of knowledge, it provides the aspirant with intellectual discipline, which enables him to receive the Divine Truths when he arrives at them through those who know.

The study of Revealed Truths

The most fruitful method of general meditation consists in studying the Revealed Truths concerning life and the universe. The discourses of living Masters or the writings of the Masters of the past are a suitable object for this method of general meditation because the assimilation of the Divine Truths, so revealed, enables the aspirant to bring his life into line with God's purpose.

The Divine Truths are most easily grasped when directly passed on to the aspirant by a living Master. Such personal communications have in them an efficacy that does not belong to the information received by the aspirant through other sources. The word becomes alive because of the life of the Master. Hence many scriptures emphasize the need for hearing the Divine Truths directly through the spoken word of the Master (*Gurmukh*). The mode of general meditation, which depends upon hearing the expositions of the Divine Truths, is undoubtedly one of the best forms of meditation, when the aspirant has the opportunity to contact a living Master and to listen to him.

It is, however, not always possible for the aspirant to contact a living Master; and meditation through reading becomes necessary. For most aspirants, meditation through reading has hardly any substitute, and starts with written expositions. The meditation, which takes its start from reading about the Revealed Truths, has the advantage of being easily accessible to most aspirants.

(B) Reading as a meditation

Meditation through reading has its handicaps because most of the written expositions of the Divine Truths are meant for intellectual study rather than for assimilation through meditation.

The difficulties that aspirants experience in connection with this form of meditation, are (i) that the method is not adapted to the subject-matter of meditation; or (ii) to some flaw in the method which makes it mechanical; or (iii) to the vagueness of the subject-matter.

All these causes which vitiate meditation and make it unsuccessful are avoided in the specific meditation now to be explained. The usual difficulties in meditation through reading, are removed in this meditation, by (i) securing that the process of meditation as well as the subject-matter are adapted to each other and to the conditions of intelligent meditation, (ii) by explaining the different phases of the meditation that takes its start from reading, and (iii) by providing an exposition of the Divine Truths which are a suitable subject-matter for meditation through reading.

Three stages of meditation through reading

This form of meditation has three stages:

(1) In the first stage, the aspirant has to read the exposition daily and simultaneously think about it.

(2) In the second stage, reading becomes unnecessary, but the subject matter of the exposition is mentally revived and constantly thought over.

(3) In the third stage it is unnecessary for the mind to revive the words and discursive thinking about the subject matter comes to an end. At this stage, the mind is no longer occupied with any trains of thought but will have a clear, spontaneous and intuitive perception of the sublime Truth.

Subject-matter

Since meditation consists of intense thinking about a particular subject, it follows that the best help for such meditation is a clear exposition of the subject. The following exposition of the Divine Truths comprises the story of creation, and an account of the Path and the Goal of self-realization.

This special form of meditation is not difficult because reading of the subject-matter and thinking about it are simultaneous. Further, in making the exposition of the subject-matter clear and concise, the likelihood of irrelevant thoughts is eliminated. It is

extremely hard to avoid the disturbance of irrelevant thoughts in ordinary meditation, but they become improbable if the subject-matter consists of an exposition of the super-sensible Truth. Aspirants who meditate upon the subject-matter of the following exposition of the Divine Truths will find it to become inspiring and will be taking an important step towards the realization of the goal of life.

(C) The Divine Truths

Atman is identical with *Paramatman* or the Eternal Self, which is One, Infinite and Eternal. The self is beyond the material, subtle and mental worlds, but experiences itself as limited owing to identification with the *Sharira* or the material body; *Prana* or the subtle body (which is the vehicle of desires and vital forces); or *Manas* or the mental body (which is the seat of the mind). The self in its transcendental state, is one, formless, eternal and infinite, yet identifies itself with the phenomenal world of forms, which are many, finite and destructible. This is *Maya* or the cosmic illusion.

States of the phenomenal world

The phenomenal world of finite objects is illusory. It has three states: (1) the material; (2) the subtle; and (3) the mental. Although these three states of the world are false, they represent different degrees of falseness. Thus, the material world is farthest from Truth; the subtle world is nearer Truth; and the mental world is nearest to Truth. But all three states of the world owe their existence to the cosmic illusion, which the self has to transcend before it realizes the Truth.

The purpose of creation is that the self should enjoy the Eternal Self consciously. Although the self eternally exists in and with the Eternal Being in inviolable unity, it cannot be conscious of unity independently of the creation, which is within the limitation of time. It must, therefore, evolve consciousness before it can realize its true nature as identical with the Eternal Being. The evolution of consciousness requires the duality of the subject and the object—the centre of consciousness and the environment (i.e. the world of forms).

Cosmic illusion

How does the self get caught in illusion? How did the Formless, Infinite and Eternal come to experience itself as form, and as finite and destructible? How did the *Purush* or the Supreme Spirit come to think of itself as *Prakrati* or the world of nature? In other words what is the cause of the cosmic illusion in which the soul finds itself?

To realize the Eternal Being, One, Indivisible, Real and Infinite, the self became conscious, not of God but of the Universe, not of the Eternal Being but of its shadow, not of the One but of many, not of the Infinite but of the finite, not of the Eternal but of the transitory. Thus, instead of realizing the Eternal Being, the self became involved in the cosmic illusion, and, though infinite, came to experience itself as finite.

The organic evolution

To become conscious of the phenomenal world, the self must assume some form as its medium for experiencing the world, and the degree of consciousness is determined by the nature of the form. The self first becomes conscious of the material world by assuming a material body. The consciousness of the material world which it has in the beginning is of the most rudimentary kind, and correspondingly the self assumes the most undeveloped form (e.g., that of stone) with which evolution begins. The driving force of evolution is the momentum that consciousness received owing to the conservation of the impressions (*sanskaras*) left by desires or conations. Thus the *sanskaras* cultivated in a particular form have to be worked out and fulfilled through the medium of a higher form and a correspondingly more developed consciousness of the material world; and the self has to assume higher and higher forms such as metal, vegetable, worm, fish, bird and animal until it assumes a human form, in which it develops full consciousness in all the aspects of knowing, feeling and willing of the material world.

The *sanskaras* are not only responsible for the evolution of the form and the kind of consciousness connected with it, they are also responsible for the riveting of consciousness to the phenomenal world. They make emancipation of consciousness (i.e. the withdrawal of consciousness from the phenomenal world to the self

itself) impossible at the sub-human stage and difficult at the human level. Since consciousness clings to the previous *sanskaras*, and experience of the phenomenal world is conditioned by an adequate form as a medium, the self at every stage of evolution comes to identify itself with the form, e.g., stone, metal, vegetable, animal, etc. Thus the self, which is Infinite and formless, comes to experience itself as finite, and thinks of itself as stone, metal, vegetable, worm, fish, bird or animal, according to the degree of the development of consciousness; and finally, while experiencing the material world through the human form, the self thinks itself to be a human being.

Re-incarnation and the Law of Karma

The self develops full consciousness in the human form, and there is no need for any further evolution of the material form or body. The evolution of forms, therefore, comes to an end with the attainment of the human form; and to experience the *sanskaras* cultivated in the human form, the self has to re-incarnate again and again in the human form. The innumerable human forms, through which the self has to pass, are determined by the Law of *Karma*, or the nature of its previous *sanskaras*. During these lives, the self, which is eternal, identifies itself with the gross or material body, which is destructible.

The subtle and mental bodies

While developing full consciousness of the material world in the human form, the self simultaneously develops the subtle and mental bodies, but as long as its consciousness is confined to the material world it cannot use these bodies consciously. It becomes conscious of them and the corresponding worlds only when its full consciousness turns inwards, i.e. towards itself. When the self is conscious of the subtle world through the subtle body it identifies itself with the subtle body, and when it is conscious of the mental world through the mental body it identifies itself with the mental body.

The Path

The homeward journey of the self consists in freeing itself from

the illusion of identity with its bodies—material, subtle and mental. When the attention of the self turns towards self-knowledge and self-realization there is a gradual loosening of the *sanskaras*, which keep consciousness turned towards the phenomenal world. The disappearance of the *sanskaras* proceeds side by side with the piercing through the veil of the cosmic illusion, and the self begins to transcend the different states of the phenomenal world and to know itself to be different from its bodies. The Path begins when the self finds itself and turns its consciousness towards the Eternal Self.

At the first stage, the self becomes unconscious of its material body and of the material world and experiences the subtle world through the medium of its subtle body with which it identifies itself. In the second stage, the self is unconscious of its material and subtle bodies and also of the material and subtle worlds and experiences the mental world through the medium of its mental body with which it now identifies itself. At this stage, the self is face to face with God or the Eternal Self, which it realizes as Infinite. But though it recognizes Infinity or the Eternal Self, which it objectifies, it looks upon itself as being finite because of its identification with the mind or mental body.

Thus, we have the paradox that the self, which is infinite, sees its infinite state, but continues to regard itself as finite, because it looks upon itself as the mind. It looks upon the object of the mind as the Eternal Self and not only entertains the longing to be one with the Eternal Self but endeavours to fulfil that longing.

The Goal

In the third stage, the full consciousness of the self is drawn still further inwards (i.e., towards itself) and ceases to identify itself with the mental body. Thus, in the third and the last stage (which is the Goal) the self knows itself to be formless and beyond all the bodies and worlds, and realizes its unity with the Eternal Self. In this realization it enjoys infinite Bliss, Peace, Power and Knowledge.

At the end of the Path the self frees itself from all *sanskaras* and desires connected with the material, subtle and mental worlds, and from the illusion of being finite. At this stage the self transcends the phenomenal world and becomes self-conscious and

self-realized. For attaining this goal the self retains full consciousness and at the same time knows itself to be different from the *Sharira* (material body) *Prana* (subtle body, which is the vehicle of desires and vital forces) and *Manas* (mental body, which is seat of the mind).

The self emancipates itself from the illusion of being finite by (1) liberating itself from the bondage of the *sanskaras*, and (2) knowing itself to be different from the material, subtle and mental bodies. It thus annihilates the false ego (i.e., the illusion that "I am the material body", "I am the subtle body" or "I am the mental body"). While the self thus frees itself from the illusion it retains full consciousness which now results in self-knowledge and realization of the Truth. Escaping from the cosmic illusion and realizing its identity with the Infinite is the goal of the long journey.

5. SPECIAL MEDITATIONS WHICH ARE PERSONAL

It was said earlier that specialized meditation is of three kinds: (i) meditation concerned with the objects of experience; (ii) meditation concerned with the subject of experience and (iii) meditation concerned with mental operations. These three kinds of meditation are interconnected because the subject of experience, the objects of experience and the different mental operations, are interwoven. Thus, meditation concerned with the objects of experience may often have reference to the subject of experience and to the diverse mental operations involved in it; meditation concerned with the subject of experience may often involve reference to the diverse mental operations and the objects to which these mental operations are directed; and meditation concerned with the diverse mental operations may often involve reference both to the subject and the objects of experience. Yet each kind of meditation remains distinct because of the predominance of some factor.

These three kinds of meditation can each be further subdivided according to the nature of the content of the meditation and according to the manner in which it is conducted. Out of these forms of specialized meditation only those that are representative need mention. Thus, twelve forms of specialized meditation are referred to in the following Table of Enumerative Classification.

**A TABLE OF ENUMERATIVE CLASSIFICATION
IN
THE FORMS OF SPECIALIZED MEDITATION**

A Meditation concerned with the <i>objects</i> of experience	1. Meditation on the Divine Qualities of the Master	FORMS OF PERSONAL MEDITATION
	2. Concentration on the form of the Master	
	3. The Meditation of the Heart	
	4. The Meditation of Action	
B Meditation concerned with the <i>subject</i> of experience	5. Meditation regarding the numerous forms of manifested life	FORMS OF IMPERSONAL MEDITATION
	6. Meditation regarding one's own bodies	
	7. Meditation on the Formless and Infinite aspect of God	
C Meditation concerned with <i>mental</i> operations	8. Quest for the Agent of Action	
	9. Considering oneself as the witness	
C Meditation concerned with <i>mental</i> operations	10. Writing down thoughts	
	11. Watching mental operations	
	12. Making the mind blank	

It should be noted that of these twelve forms of specialized meditation, meditation is personal when concerned with a person and impersonal when concerned with (a) aspects of human personality or (b) something that falls outside the range of human personality. The forms of specialized meditation that are personal will be explained here, and those that are impersonal will be explained later.

Advantages of personal meditation

Personal meditation has some clear advantages compared with impersonal meditation. For beginners, personal meditation is easy and attended with joy; while impersonal meditation is difficult

unless there is a special aptitude for it. Moreover, forms of impersonal meditation are mostly disciplines for the mind, but forms of personal meditation also draw out the heart. In spiritual perfection, the mind and the heart are both to be developed and balanced; therefore, personal meditation, which helps the development and the balancing of the mind and the heart has special importance. Impersonal meditation is fruitful and effective when the aspirant has been prepared through forms of personal meditation.

Personal meditation is directed towards persons who are spiritually perfect. As a man who admires Napoleon and constantly thinks about him has a tendency to become like him, so an aspirant who admires some spiritually perfect person and constantly thinks about him tends to become spiritually perfect. A suitable object of personal meditation is to be found in a living Master or *Avatar* or in the Masters and *Avatars* of the past; but it is important to have as an object of personal meditation a person who is spiritually perfect. If the person selected for meditation is spiritually imperfect there is a possibility of his frailties entering into the mind of the aspirant who meditates upon him.

Personal meditation often begins by the admiration which the aspirant feels for some divine quality which he sees in the Master. By allowing the mind to dwell upon the divine qualities expressed in the life of the Master, the aspirant absorbs them into his own being. The Master is beyond all qualities, good and bad; he is not bound by them. But the qualities he exhibits, while interacting with life, are different aspects of divinity in action; and the expression of divinity becomes a medium of helping those who are responsive. Appreciation of the divinity perceived in the Master gives rise to forms of meditation in which the aspirant thinks of the Master as an embodiment of qualities such as Universal Love or Complete Detachment, Ego-lessness or Steadfastness, or Infinite Knowledge or Selfless Action. Sometimes the mind may dwell upon such qualities in their separateness or in combinations that reveal their inter-relatedness. This form of meditation is valuable when it is spontaneous; it then leads to a greater understanding of the Master and gradually moulds the aspirant into the likeness of the Master, thus contributing towards self-preparation for the realization of the Truth.

Dwelling upon the qualities of the Master often facilitates

concentration on the Form of the Master. In this meditation, the aspirant is aware of the spiritual perfection of the Master and fixes his mind upon the Form of the Master, without analyzing his spiritual perfection. Though specific spiritual qualities are not revived in the mind, all that the aspirant may have understood through the preparatory meditation concerned with the qualities of the Master will constitute the implicit background of one-pointed concentration and contribute towards its efficacy. This form of meditation involves identification of the Master with the spiritual ideal. This is responsible for removing such barriers as may exist between the aspirant and the Master and gives rise to unrestrained love for the Master leading to the meditation of the heart, which consists in constant thinking about the Master with uninterrupted flow of love. Such love annihilates the illusion of separateness, which divides the aspirant from the Master, and has in it spontaneity hardly paralleled by other forms of meditation. Meditation of the heart is in its final stages accompanied by unbounded joy and utter forgetfulness of the self.

Modes of the meditation of action

Love for the Master leads to increasing identification of the aspirant with the Master, so that the aspirant desires to live in and for the Master and not for himself; this leads to the meditation of action. The initial modes of the meditation of action usually take the following forms; (a) the aspirant mentally offers to the Master all that is in him, thus renouncing all that is good in him as well as all that is evil; this frees him from the good as well as the bad elements of the ego and helps him to find a lasting integration of being with the Master; (b) the aspirant volunteers for the service of the Master; doing work for the Master in the spirit of selfless service is as good as meditation; (c) the aspirant does not allow the ego to seize upon any of his actions—small or great, good or bad. He does not think "I do this"; on the contrary, he develops the thought that through him the Master is doing all that he does. For example, when he looks, he thinks "The Master is looking"; when he eats, he thinks "The Master is eating"; when he sleeps, he thinks "The Master is sleeping"; when he drives a car, he thinks "The Master is driving the car"; even when he may happen to do something wrong, he thinks "The Master is doing this". Thus he

relinquishes all identity with his actions, and everything is brought into reference to the Master. This necessarily involves the determination of each act in the light of the spiritual ideal as seen in the Master.

The four forms of personal meditation on the Master represent the four main ascending stages: (i) perceiving the spiritual ideal in the Master; (ii) concentrating upon the Master as an embodiment of the spiritual ideal; (iii) loving the master as a manifestation of the spiritual ideal; and (iv) expressing the spiritual ideal, perceived in the Master, in one's own life. Personal meditation on the Master in its different forms contributes towards the release of the creative life of spiritual fulfilment. Meditation on the Master is a meditation on the living ideal and not on the conception of perfection; it therefore generates the dynamic power that enables the aspirant to bridge the gulf between theory and practice and to unify the spiritual ideal with everyday actions in his own life. To live the life that is inspired and illumined by the spiritual ideal as embodied in the Master is the culmination of all the forms of personal meditation.

6. SPECIALIZED MEDITATIONS WHICH ARE IMPERSONAL

The attention has a tendency to be riveted on one's own bodies independently of the spirit which they manifest. This leads to illusions, entanglements and other complications; hence arises the need for a kind of meditation that enables the aspirant to cultivate a correct perspective upon the meaning of the bodies or forms, and a right attitude to them. This meditation consists of regarding all forms as equally the manifestations of the same all-pervading life and as nothing in themselves. It is contributory to disentanglement from the world of creation, and furthers the cultivation of universal love, which regards the whole of humanity and all living creatures as members of an indivisible whole.

Meditation regarding one's own bodies

But the meditation concerned with the numerous forms of manifested life remains incomplete unless supplemented by another meditation which is concerned with one's own bodies, material, subtle or mental. Consciousness of them causes an

attachment so deep that it identifies itself with them. Thoughts of detachment concerning one's own bodies helps the emancipation of consciousness and the dawn of self-knowledge, and such meditation is most fruitful. The material, the subtle and the mental bodies are then regarded as cloaks to be put on or off.

Meditation on the formless and infinite aspect of God

The meditation concerned with the form of manifested life and the meditation concerned with one's own bodies, are preparatory to the impersonal meditation in which (a) an effort is made to withdraw one's consciousness from the forms of manifested life as well as from one's own bodies-material, subtle or mental, and (b) to centre consciousness on the formless and infinite aspect of God. In impersonal meditation it is necessary in the initial phases to avail oneself of symbols of infinity. It is helpful to start with an image that suggests infinity rather than with the abstract idea of infinity. The mind may become steady on the image of sky, ocean or emptiness; but once a particular image is chosen, the aspirant should retain it throughout the period of meditation and not replace it by another. Of these symbols of infinity, emptiness is difficult to imagine but is the best symbol if it can successfully be brought before one's mind. The aspirant is not in this meditation to arrive at complete blankness of mind. Such blankness involves the cessation of mental activity and the exclusion of all thoughts, but the object of this meditation is to dwell upon the formless aspect of God.

The infinite within

It is important in this meditation that the symbol should not be externalized as if infinity were outside the aspirant; it should be thought of as within. The aspirant should give to himself the suggestion of identity with the infinite by mentally repeating "I am as infinite as the sky within", or "I am as infinite as the ocean within", or "I am as infinite as the emptiness within". It may be useful to use the bare formula, "I am the infinite within" and while mentally repeating this formula, to realize the significance of infinity through the image that has been chosen. It is not necessary to repeat the formula in words; it is enough to retain the thought.

The "I am infinite" meditation may lead to the merging of the aspirant into the formless and infinite aspect of God. Some aspirants merge so completely that they are disturbed by no outer sounds. Others become restless or easily disturbed; they should not worry about lack of success but persist whether they experience the sense of merging or not.

Quest for the Agent of Action

The forms of meditation that have been so far explained are concerned with the impersonal objects of experience; but some impersonal forms of meditation are concerned with the subject of experience. One such form of meditation consists in repeating the question, "Who is it that does these things?" The aspirant finds himself thinking such thoughts as "I sleep", "I walk", "I eat", "I talk", "I see, hear, touch, taste and smell", "I think, feel and desire", etc. But the question is, Who is this "I"? The self does not experience any of these things. The self does not sleep, walk, eat or talk, see, hear, touch, taste or smell, think, feel or desire. The aspirant thinks that he sees, hears, thinks, feels or desires; it is really his mind that does these things. As self the aspirant does nothing. But it is not enough to think that he does nothing; he must know it. This he achieves by detachment.

Knowledge of the self may be aimed at through a form of meditation in which the aspirant realizes himself as a witness of his own physical and mental happenings. After one awakes from one's dream, one realizes oneself to have been not the agent of the actions in the dream but a witness. If the aspirant persistently practices considering himself as a witness of the physical and mental happenings that he experiences in wakefulness, he will develop detachment, which brings freedom from the sufferings connected with worldly events. This meditation is intended to lift the aspirant out of the bonds of time and to secure for him relief from the fret connected with expressions of limited energy. As a witness, the self remains aloof from all events in time, and the results of actions do not bind it. All this has to be experienced and not merely thought of.

Making the mind still

The forms of meditation concerned with experience, however,

are subject to the handicap that experience can never be the object of thought or meditation; these forms of meditation, therefore, can at best take the aspirant near to self-knowledge, which is made complete when the domain of the mind is transcended. Some impersonal forms of specialized meditation are, therefore, concerned with mental operations, and aim at making the mind still.

Writing down thoughts

To acquire control over one's thoughts is to become fully conscious of what they are. Thoughts have to be attended to before they are controlled. In introspection it is often not possible for the beginner to devote attention to the thoughts that pass through his mind. It is, therefore, helpful for the aspirant occasionally to write down his thoughts as they come and to inspect them at leisure. This process is different from writing what is planned beforehand. Thoughts arise without direction or restraint and are allowed to show themselves as they come, so that repressed elements from the subconscious gain access to the conscious mind.

Watching mental operations

In a more advanced stage an intensive awareness of mental processes can take place while thoughts appear in consciousness; writing then becomes unnecessary. The watching of mental operations should be accompanied by the critical evaluation of thoughts. Thoughts cannot be controlled except through appreciation of their value or lack of value. When the thoughts that assail the mind are critically evaluated, and the internal stirrings of *sanskaras* are faced, understood, and taken for what they are worth, the mind is freed from obsessions and compulsions in relation to them.

Making the mind blank

A way is thus prepared for the meditation that makes the mind blank. This is difficult to achieve. The mind is without ideas during sleep when consciousness is in abeyance. If during wakefulness the mind has the idea of becoming blank, it is thinking about that idea and is far from being blank. Making the mind blank becomes possible by an alternation between two incom-

patible forms of meditation so that the mind is caught between concentration and distraction.

Thus the aspirant can concentrate on the Master for five minutes, and then keep his mind steady for a further five minutes in the impersonal meditation of "I am Infinite". The disparity between the two forms of meditation can be realized as follows: in the meditation on the forms of the Master, the eyes may be kept open, and in the impersonal meditation the eyes may be closed. Though after the first five minutes there is to be a change to another type of meditation, there should be no thought about the change. There is no distraction unless there is concentration. When the change is effected, there should be no thought of the first meditation. The distraction has to be as complete as the previous concentration. When there is a quick alternation between concentration and distraction, mental operations are, as it were, cut through, and the disappearance of mental operations is contributory towards making the mind still, without allowing consciousness to fall into abeyance.

All thoughts that appear in the mind of the aspirant, are forms of perturbation, and have their origin in the momentum of stored *sanskaras*. The perturbed condition of the mind can disappear only when the aspirant can so control his mind that all thoughts are eliminated. Only in complete internal silence is truth found. When the surface of the lake is still, it reflects the stars; so when the mind is tranquil, it reflects the nature of the self.

7. SAHAJ SAMADHI

The different forms of meditation practiced before consciously entering the Path, as well as the different forms of general and special meditation, adopted after becoming an aspirant, are preparatory to the attainment of the highest state of *Sahaj Samadhi* or spontaneous meditation, in which the aspirant becomes permanently established when he realizes the ultimate goal of life. The *Sahaj Samadhi* of the *Siddha* or God-realized person is continuous with all prior forms of meditation and is a culmination of them. But it is different in kind and belongs to an entirely different order.

Pre-spiritual meditations

The spontaneity or effortlessness of *Sahaj Samadhi* must be

distinguished from the pseudo spontaneity present in the "meditations" of the man who has not entered the Path. The mind of the worldly man is engrossed in objects of sense, and he experiences no sense of effort in the "meditations" concerning these objects. His mind dwells upon them because of a natural interest in them, and not because of any deliberate effort on his part. The sense of effort arises, not in allowing the mind to dwell upon these objects, but in trying to dissuade it from them. So the pre-spiritual forms of "meditation" seem to have some similarity with the culminating *Sahaj-Samadhi* of the *Siddha*, in having a sense of spontaneity. But this resemblance between the initial phase of meditation and its final phase is superficial, since *Sahaj-Samadhi* and pre-spiritual "meditations" are separated by vital differences of great spiritual importance.

The sense of spontaneity, experienced in the pre-spiritual "meditations" concerned with worldly objects and pursuits, is due to the interests created by *sanskaras*. The pre-spiritual "meditations" are the working out of the momentum of accumulated *sanskaras* of the past. They are not only far from being the expression of true freedom, they are symptoms of spiritual bondage. At the pre-spiritual level, man is engulfed in ignorance concerning the goal of infinite freedom; and, though he is far from being happy and contented, he gets so deeply identified with *sanskaric* interests, that he experiences gratification in their furtherance. But the pleasure of his pursuits is conditional and transitory, and the spontaneity that he experiences in them is illusory, because through all his pursuits his mind is working under limitations.

Freedom and spontaneity in Sahaj Samadhi

The mind is capable of genuine freedom and spontaneity of action only when completely free from *sanskaric* ties, which is possible only when it is merged in the state of the *Sahaj Samadhi* of the *Siddha*. It is, therefore, important to note that though there may seem to be a resemblance between the *Sahaj Samadhi* of the *Siddha* and the pre-spiritual "meditations" of the worldly man, this resemblance hides the difference between illusory and true spontaneity, bondage and freedom, pleasure and abiding happiness. In the pre-spiritual meditations, the movement of the

mind is under unconscious compulsion, and in *Sahaj Samadhi*, mental activity is released under conscious initiative.

The different forms of meditation that characterize the life of the spiritual aspirant are midway between the pre-spiritual "meditations" of the worldly man and the *Sahaj Samadhi* of the *Siddha*, and constitute the link between them. When a man's acquiescence in *sanskaric* interests is profoundly disturbed by any set back, defeat or suffering, or is shaken by an imparted spark of spiritual understanding, he becomes conscious of his bondage and the falseness of his perceptions, and the different forms of meditation that are resorted to arise out of his struggle towards emancipation from the bondage of receptive desires. The forms of meditation that are spiritually important begin when a person has become an aspirant or *Sadhaka*.

The meditation of the aspirant in all its forms counteracts instinctive or other tendencies inherent in the mind. He adopts different forms of meditation as a means to an end, because he looks upon them as avenues to the Truth. They are intelligent and deliberate effort. The mind interested in the various aspects of the Truth, which the different forms of meditation are concerned with, finds these forms of meditation increasingly spontaneous. In none of the meditations of an aspirant is the element of spontaneity more pronounced than in those forms of personal meditation that require the expression of love. But full spontaneity and freedom remain unattained until the goal of meditation is achieved; until then there is a mixture of deliberateness and spontaneity. The reaching out towards spiritual freedom is throughout accompanied by a sense of effort, which persists until all false perceptions are overcome. Though effort may vary in its intensity, it never disappears until there is reached the tranquillity of final attainment.

Progress towards Sahaj Samadhi

In *Sahaj Samadhi* there is no effort because there are no obstacles to overcome or objectives to achieve; there is the infinite spontaneity of unfettered freedom and the unbroken peace and bliss of Truth-Realization. Progress towards *Sahaj Samadhi* consists of transition from unquestioned acquiescence in the momentum of *sanskaras* to a desperate struggle with *sanskaric* limitations, and ends in complete freedom, when consciousness is no longer

determined by the deposits of the past but is active in the perception of the eternal Truth.

The *Sahaj Samadhi* of the *Siddha* is different from the meditation of the aspirant, not only in respect of freedom and spontaneity of consciousness, but also in other respects. All the different forms of meditation in which the aspirant may be engaged aim at securing a merging of the mind in the infinite Truth. They only partially succeed and fall short of the annihilation of the individual mind. They represent varying degrees of approximation towards the spiritual goal, but not its realization. In *Sahaj Samadhi*, however, there is realization of the spiritual goal, for the limited mind is completely annihilated and has arrived at the total merging in the infinite Truth.

Exaltations in Meditation

The aspirant's meditation in its higher forms often brings a sense of expansion and freedom, as well as the joy and illumination of the higher planes; but neither the sense of expansion and freedom nor the joy and illumination are abiding, because when the aspirant comes down from his exalted state he is again what he was, viz., a person held up in the shackles of *sanskritic* limitations.

Just as a prisoner who looking out of the window of his prison at the expanse of the sky may get lost in the vision of space, so the aspirant who enters into a trance-meditation may temporarily forget limitations immersed in the light and bliss that it brings. But though the prisoner may have forgotten the prison, he has not escaped from it: neither has the aspirant absorbed in the trance-meditation lost the chains that hold him to the world of illusion. The prisoner becomes conscious of his bondage as soon as he turns his mind to his surroundings, and the aspirant becomes conscious of his failings as soon as he returns to normal consciousness. The ascending forms of trance-meditation may bring increasing occult powers, but not the unending knowledge and bliss accessible in the *Sahaj Samadhi* to the *Siddha* who has attained emancipation by breaking through the chains of *Maya*. There is still another difference between the trance-meditations of the aspirant and the *Sahaj Samadhi* of the *Siddha*. The trance-meditation is usually sustained by some phenomenal object capable of exercising attraction. The lights, colours, tastes, smells and sounds of the subtle sphere have their part to play in helping the mind to withdraw from worldly

things. Thus the trance-meditation of the aspirant is not self-sustained being dependent upon the objects to which the mind directs itself.

Sahaj Samadhi is self-sustained

The *Sahaj Samadhi* of the *Siddha* is self-sustained and in no way dependent upon any object of the mind. It is a state of wakefulness which has the steadiness of true perception.

The different forms of general and specialized meditation resorted to by the aspirant are valuable within limits. They must not be looked upon as having the same value for all or as being equally necessary for all. They are among the ways that lead towards the divine destination. For the few who are in an advanced spiritual state the ordinary forms of meditation are unnecessary. Those who are in direct contact with a God-realized Master may find the special forms of meditation unnecessary. It is enough to be under the guidance of the Master and to have love for him. Those rare beings who have attained self-realization and are always in the state of *Sahaj Samadhi* not only do not need any form of meditation, but themselves become objects of meditation when they are able to give their help to others.

8. THE ASCENT TO SAHAJ SAMADHI

When the mind is tuned to the object of meditation it merges in the Truth and experiences *Sahaj Samadhi*, or state of spontaneous enjoyment of uninterrupted self-knowledge, in which the aspirant loses his limited individuality to discover that he is identical with God. The *Sahaj Samadhi* is a culmination of the earlier forms of personal and impersonal meditation, not their product.

All forms of meditation followed by the aspirant, as well as his other spiritual efforts, have but one aim, to realize his longing to be united with the Infinite. When this union is effected the *Sadhaka* (aspirant) becomes *Siddha* (one who has attained the Goal). The union with the Infinite, which the *Siddha* achieves is referred to by the Sufis as *Vasl*. It is this state of union with God which is described by Christ in the words: "I and my Father are One". Many have written about this highest state of consciousness, but it remains indescribable. It cannot be expressed in words, and therefore cannot be explained. But though it can never be

explained it can be experienced. This highest state of the *Siddha* is called the state of *Sahaj Samadhi*,

To dwell in *Sahaj Samadhi* is to experience the God-state, in which the self knows itself to be God, because it has shed all limiting factors. The God-state of the *Siddha* is in contrast to the body-state of the worldly man. The worldly man concerned with eating, drinking, sleeping and the satisfaction of other bodily desires, does not extend his consciousness beyond the body, and thinks in terms of the body. He lives and moves and has his being in time and space.

The life of energy

The first step towards the God-state of *Sahaj Samadhi* is taken when the body-state is transcended. The shedding of the body-state means entering the sphere of existence that is comprised of energy. The self is not subject to time and space. It is lifted to the domain of energy. Body or form is a solidification of energy; and to rise from the world of forms to the sphere of energy amounts to an advance towards a pure state of being. The energy-state is free from many of the limitations that obtain in the world of forms. Consciousness then vibrates in and through energy. In the energy-state, the eating and drinking of the body-state are paralleled by the absorption and assimilation of energy. The self at this level exercises control over energy. It is through the use of energy that it seeks fulfilment. But its actions are still within the domain of spiritual limitation. It can see, hear and smell things that are inaccessible to the body-state, and can perform many things (such as producing light in the dark, or living for thousands of years only on the drinking of energy), which appear to be miracles to those who are in the body-state. But the sphere of its existence is that of energy, and its life is completed by energy. The energy-state is the state of the spiritually advanced, but is far from being the state of perfection, which expresses itself through the *Sahaj Samadhi* of the *Siddha*.

The life of the mind

The second important step towards *Sahaj Samadhi* is taken, when the self transcends the domain of energy and enters the domain of the mind. All energy is an expression of the mind,

therefore the transition from the energy-state to the mind-state constitutes an advance towards the God-state of *Sahaj Samadhi*. In the mind-state, consciousness is directly linked with the mind. Here consciousness is in no way fettered by the body or energy. The saints who are in the mind-state have full control over the body and energy, they can read and influence the minds of others and even raise the dead. However, the mind-state is still within the domain of duality and illusion and has to be transcended before the attainment of union with the Infinite.

The entire advance from the very beginning consists in gradually curtailing and transcending the working of the individual mind. The mind functions in the body-state and the energy-state. In the body-state the mind thinks in terms of the body, in the energy-state in terms of energy, and in the mind-state in its own terms. However, even when the mind thinks in its own terms it does not attain knowledge and realization of the Infinite, because itself is the veil between its thought and the Truth. Though the mind may be unencumbered by the life of the body or the life of energy, it is still limited by separate consciousness. The mind has to be merged and dissolved in the Infinite before it is possible to experience the God-state of *Sahaj Samadhi*. Form is solidified energy, energy is an expression of the mind, the mind is the covered mirror of Eternity, and Eternity is the Truth, which has thrown off the mask of the mind.

To discard the limiting mind is no easy thing. The chief difficulty lies in the fact that the mind has to be annihilated through the mind itself. One indispensable condition is the most intense longing for unity with the Infinite Reality. But patience is equally necessary. One Master told his disciple that to attain the highest state he had to be bound to a wooden plank, with his hands and feet tied, thrown into a river, and then to strive to keep his garments dry. The disciple could not understand the meaning of this. He went from place to place until he came to another saint and asked the meaning of the injunction given by the Master. The saint explained that it meant that to attain God he had to long for union with him, as if he could not live another moment without it, and yet to have the inexhaustible patience that could wait for endless years. If there is lack of intense longing for unity with God, the mind lapses into its usual *sanskritic* working, and if there is lack of infinite patience, the very longing that the mind

entertains sustains the working of the limited mind. Only when there is a balance between infinite longing and infinite patience can the aspirant hope to pierce through the veil of the limited mind; and this combination of extremes comes only through the grace of the Master.

To dwell in *Sahaj Samadhi*, is to dwell in Truth-consciousness. This state cannot be grasped by anyone whose mind is active. *The God-state* is beyond the mind; for it dawns when the limited mind disappears in the final union with the Infinite. The self now knows itself through itself, not through the mind. The worldly man knows that he is a human being, not a dog; in the same way, in *Sahaj Samadhi* the self knows that it is God, not finite. The worldly man does not have to keep repeating to himself that he is not a dog, and in *Sahaj Samadhi*, the self does not need any inducing of God-Consciousness through repeated suggestions; it knows itself to be God through effortless intuition.

The life in Eternity

He who has *Sahaj Samadhi* is established in the knowledge of the self. This knowledge does not come and go. In the state of ignorance the aspirant looks upon himself as a man or woman, as the agent of limited actions and the experiencer of joys and pains; but in the state of knowledge he knows himself as the self, which is not limited by these things, and is untouched by them. Once he knows his own true nature, he does not get involved in ignorance. This state of God-consciousness is infinite, characterized by unlimited understanding, purity, love and happiness. To be initiated in *Sahaj Samadhi* is to arrive at the endlessness of life in Eternity.

Two forms of Sahaj Samadhi

Sahaj Samadhi has two forms: (1) Nirvana or absorption in divinity; and (2) *Nirvikalp* or divinity in expression. When consciousness is withdrawn entirely from all the bodies and the world of creation it leads to Nirvana or the beyond state; but when consciousness is made to function through the bodies without attachment or identification, it leads to *Nirvikalp Samadhi* or the *Sadguru-state*, in which though consciousness is attached to the bodies as instruments, it is detached from them inwardly by non-identification. The piercing of the mind amounts to the complete

withdrawal of consciousness from the universe and its absorption in God. This is the state where the universe becomes zero; it is *Nirvana*. Most of those who attain *Nirvana* do not come back again to the consciousness of the universe. The few who descend to the consciousness of the universe experience it as nothing but God, and remain constantly in the *Nirvikalp* state. *Nirvikalp* means a life where the mental activity of false imagination has come to an end, and where the oscillations of the limited mind are stilled in the realization of Eternal Truth.

The *Sahaj Samadhi* of the *Nirvikalp* state comes to those who descend from the seventh plane. It belongs to the *Sadgurus* and the *Avatars*. The poise and harmony of this state remain undisturbed even while giving energetic response to the changing circumstances of life. He who has this state sees God everywhere and in everything; he sees nothing but God. His God-state is therefore in no way lessened while dealing with the things of this world. In the battlefield, while flying in an aeroplane, or talking to people, or engaged in any other activities, he is still in the conscious enjoyment of the Truth.

The state of *Nirvana* and the *Nirvikalp* state are similar to the state of *Mukti* or *Moksha* in representing the merging of the individual soul in God and in yielding the eternal bliss and infinite knowledge of super-consciousness. But *Mukti* or *Moksha* is experienced after the soul has dropped its bodies; and the state of *Nirvana* as well as the *Nirvikalp* state can both be experienced before giving up the bodies. However, though the state of *Nirvana* and the *Nirvikalp* state are similar in this respect and though they are also the same in essence, there is a difference.

When the self leaves the ego-shell and enters into the infinite life of God, its limited individuality is replaced by unlimited individuality. The self is God-conscious and preserves its individuality. The important point is that individuality is not extinguished, it becomes spiritualized. However, though the unlimited individuality of the self is retained in union with the Infinite, it may remain eternally quiescent in the experience of self-contained divinity. None returns to world consciousness from this state of *Nirvana* or absorption. Sometimes, however, the self that has just entered the infinite life of God establishes its unlimited individuality through the release of dynamic divinity. This is the *Sahaj Samadhi* of the *Nirvikalp* state.

THE NATURE OF THE EGO AND ITS TERMINATION

1. THE EGO THE CENTRE OF CONFLICT

In the prehuman stage, consciousness has experiences that are not explicitly brought into relation with a central "I". For instance, a dog is angry, but does not feel "I am angry". But even a dog learns through experiences acting upon each other as a result of the mechanical tension of connected imprints or *sanskaras*; this, however, is different from the intelligent synthesis of experiences through the development of I-consciousness. The first step in submitting the working of isolated impressions to intelligent regulation consists in bringing them in relation with the centre of consciousness, which appears as the explicit limited ego. The consolidation of the ego-consciousness is defined from the beginning of human consciousness.

The origin of the ego

Human consciousness would be no more than a repository of the accumulated imprints of varied experiences did it not also contain the principle of ego-centred integration in the attempt to organize and understand experience. The process implies capacity to hold different experiences together as parts of a unity and the capacity to evaluate them by mutual relation. The integration of the opposites of experience is a condition of emancipating consciousness from the thralldom of compulsions and repulsions which tend to dominate consciousness irrespective of valuation; and the early attempts in securing such integration are through the formation of the ego as its centre.

The ego emerges as an explicit accompaniment of all the happenings of mental life to fulfil a certain need. The part played

by the ego in human life may be compared with the function of the ballast in a ship. The ballast keeps the ship from too much oscillation; without it, the ship is likely to be too light and unsteady and in danger of being overturned. The psychic energy would be caught up in the mazes of dual experience and would be frittered away were there no provisional nucleus to bind together the active tendencies born of the relatively independent instincts inherited from animal-consciousness. The formation of the ego serves the purpose of giving a certain amount of stability to conscious processes, and secures a working equilibrium which makes for an organized life.

It would, therefore, be a mistake to imagine that, as the ego arises only to vanish, it fulfills no need in the long journey of the soul. Though the ego is not meant to be permanent since it can be transcended and outgrown through spiritual endeavour, the phase of ego-formation must nevertheless be looked upon as a necessary evil for the time being.

The ego thus fulfils a certain need in the progress of consciousness; but since it takes its shelter in the false idea of being the body, it is a source of illusion. It is of the essence of the ego that it should feel separate from the rest of life by contrasting itself with other forms of life. Thus, though inwardly trying to complete and integrate individual experience, the ego creates division between external and internal life in the attempt to feel and secure its own existence; and this division cannot but have its reverberations in the inner individual life over which it presides.

The ego a seat of conflicts

While striving to establish unity and integration in experience, the ego can never realize this objective; and though it establishes a certain kind of balance, this is only provisional. The incompleteness of its attainments is evident from the internal conflict which is never absent as long as experience exists only from the point of view of the ego. From moment to moment, the mind passes through a series of conflicts. The minds of great persons as well as the minds of common people are harassed by conflicting desires. Sometimes the conflict is so acute that the person concerned yields to psychic pressure, with the result that there is either a partial or total breakdown or a complete derangement of the

mind. There is no vital difference between the normal man and the so-called abnormal man. Both face the same problems; but the one more or less successfully solves his problems and the other does not.

The ego attempts to solve its inner conflicts through false valuations and wrong choice. It is characteristic of the ego that it takes what is unimportant as important and what is important as unimportant. Thus power, fame, wealth, ability and other attainments and accomplishments are taken delight in by the ego and are clung to by it. Spirituality the ego fights against. For example, if a person experiences bodily or mental discomfort while doing work of spiritual importance the ego desires to restore that comfort even at the cost of giving up the spiritual work. Bodily and mental comfort as well as other worldly attainments are necessary, but not important. Many things come to the ego as necessary which are not in themselves important, so that the ego represents a fundamental principle of ignorance.

The need for conscious control

It is rare to get the mind to function harmoniously, because it is mostly guided and governed by forces in the sub-conscious, and few take the trouble to attain mastery over these forces which direct the course of their mental life. The elimination of conflict is possible only through conscious control over the psychic forces in the sub-conscious, and this control can be permanently attained only through the repeated exercise of true valuation in the conflicts with which the mind happens to be presented.

If the mind is to be freed from conflict, it must make the right choices and prefer the truly important to the unimportant. The choice has to be intelligent and firm in all conflicts—important and unimportant. It has to be intelligent, because only through the pursuit of true and permanent values is it possible to attain a poise that is not detrimental to the dynamic and creative flow of mental life. An unintelligent choice may temporarily overcome conflict, but it is bound to curtail the scope of life or to hamper the fulfilment of the personality. Moreover, the conflict will reappear in some other form, if it has not been intelligently cleared up. An intelligent solution, on the other hand, requires an insight into values. The problem of conflicting values, and the solution of

mental conflict, therefore, require a search for the real meaning of life. It is only through wisdom that the mind can be freed from conflict.

Having once known the right choice it is necessary to maintain it, because competing tendencies continue to act as obstacles in making the choice effective; and, at times, there is even the danger of the decision being subverted through the intensification of competing psychic forces. To avoid defeat, it is necessary that the mind should stick to the right value, which it has seen. Thus, the solution of mental conflict requires not only the perception of right values, but unswerving fidelity.

The intelligent and firm choice, however, has to be repeatedly exercised in all matters—small and great; for the ordinary worries of life are not less important than the problems with which the mind is confronted in times of crises. The roots of mental conflict cannot completely disappear as long as there is only intermittent exercise of intelligent choice. The life of true values is spontaneous only when the mind has acquired the way of choosing the right values. Three-fourths of our life is made up of ordinary things; and though conflict concerning such things may not cause mental agony, it leaves a sense of uneasiness.

Hidden conflicts

In fact, the conflicts upon ordinary things are rarely brought to the surface of consciousness, so that they cast a shadow on life, from, as it were, behind a screen. Such conflicts have to be brought to the surface of consciousness and faced. This process should not degenerate into imagining conflicts where there are none. The sure indication of a hidden but real conflict is the sense that the whole of the heart is not in the thoughts or actions that happen to be dominant at the moment, and there is a vague feeling of a narrowing down or restriction of life. On such occasions, an attempt should be made to analyze the mental state through inward attention and such analysis will bring to light the hidden conflicts.

The most important requirement for the satisfactory resolution of conflicts is the motive power or inspiration that comes from a burning longing for the Truth. Mere analysis may aid choice, but the choice will remain a barren intellectual preference, unless it is

vitalized by zeal for the Truth that appeals to the depths of human personality. Psychology has done much to reveal the sources of conflict; but it has yet to discover the method of awakening inspiration or supplying the mind with that which makes life worth living.

To establish love for the Truth is the beginning of right valuation, and the beginning of the undoing of the constructions of the ego exhibits itself through false valuation. Any action that expresses the true values of life contributes towards the disintegration of the ego, which is a product of ages of ignorant action. Life cannot permanently be imprisoned within the ego; it must make efforts towards ultimate Truth. In the ripeness of evolution comes the discovery that life cannot be understood and lived fully so long as it moves upon the pivot of the ego: and man is, therefore, driven by the logic of his own experience to find the true centre of experience and to reorganize his life in the Truth. This brings about the wearing out of the ego and its replacement by truth-consciousness. The false nucleus of consolidated *sanskaras* disappears in the integration and fulfilment of life.

2. THE EGO AN AFFIRMATION OF SEPARATENESS

The ego as an affirmation of separateness takes many forms. It may take the form of self-conscious memory expressing itself in such recollections as, "I did this and I did that, I felt this and I felt that". It also takes the forms of ego-centred hopes expressed through plans, "I shall do this", "I shall do that", "I shall feel this", "I shall feel that", "I shall think that". Or the ego has a strong feeling of being some one in particular and asserts its separateness from others. While provisionally serving a useful purpose in the development of consciousness, the ego, as an affirmation of separateness, constitutes the chief hindrance to the spiritual emancipation and enlightenment of consciousness.

The ego affirms separateness through craving, hate, anger, fear or jealousy. When a person craves for the company of others, he is conscious of being separate from them and feels his own separate existence in an intensive manner. The feeling of separation from the other is most acute where there is unrelieved craving. In hate and anger also the other person is excluded from one's own being and regarded as hostile to the thriving of the ego. Fear is a subtle

form of affirming separateness and exists where the consciousness of quality is unabated. Fear acts as a curtain between the "I" and the "you" and not only nourishes distrust of the other but brings about a shrinking and withdrawal of consciousness so as to exclude the being of another from one's own life. To fear God and his manifestations is to strengthen duality; to love them is to weaken it.

The feeling of separateness finds most poignant expression in jealousy. There is a deep and imperative need in the human soul to love and identify itself with others; this is not fulfilled where there is craving or hate, anger or fear. In jealousy, in addition to the non-fulfilment of this deep need there is the conviction that another has successfully identified itself with the person whom one sought; there is therefore an irreconcilable protest against both for being in a relationship designed for oneself. All exclusive feelings such as craving, hate, anger, fear or jealousy bring about a narrowing of life and contribute to the limitation of consciousness; they are instrumental to the affirmation of separateness and feed the ego.

The reduction of the ego through love

Every thought, feeling or action that springs from the idea of exclusive or separate existence binds the soul, all experiences—small or great—and all aspirations—good or bad—create a load of impressions and nourish the sense of the "I". The only experience that makes for the reduction of the ego is the experience of love, and the only aspiration that makes for the elimination of separateness is the longing for becoming one with the Beloved. Craving, hatred, anger, fear and jealousy are exclusive attitudes that create a gulf between oneself and others; love alone helps towards the bridging over of this self-created gulf and breaks through the separative barrier of false imagination. The lover, too, longs; but he longs for union with the Beloved; and in seeking or experiencing union with the Beloved the sense of the "I" declines. In love, the "I" does not think of its own preservation. The ego is the affirmation of separateness from the other: and love is the affirmation of oneness with the other: the ego can be dissolved only through love.

Desires

The ego is implemented by desires of varied kinds. The failure in the fulfilment of desires is a failure of the ego, and success in the attainment is the success of the ego. Through fulfilled desires as well as through those that are unfulfilled the ego gets accentuated. The ego can also feed upon a lull in desires and asserts its separative tendency even through desireless feeling. But when there is cessation of all desires, there is cessation of the desire to assert separateness in any form, therefore freedom from all desires brings about the end of the ego.

The problem of erasing the ego from consciousness is complicated because the roots of the ego are in the sub-conscious mind in the form of latent tendencies. The limited ego of explicit consciousness is only a small fragment of the ego. The ego is like the iceberg floating in the sea, of which about one-eighth is visible. Only a small portion of the ego becomes manifest in consciousness as an explicit "I": the major portion remains submerged in the dark and inarticulate sanctuaries of the sub-conscious mind.

The explicit ego

The explicit ego which finds its manifestation in consciousness is by no means a harmonious whole but an arena for conflicts of opposing tendencies. It has a limited capacity for this, however, for two persons have to be at least on speaking terms if they are to enter into a quarrel, otherwise they have no common ground. In the same manner two tendencies entering into conscious conflict must have a common ground; otherwise they remain submerged in the sub-conscious mind, until modified through the tensions exerted by the activities of the conscious mind.

The implicit ego

Although the ego is essentially heterogeneous, the explicit ego of consciousness is less so than the implicit ego of the sub-conscious mind, and operates as a formidable whole as against the isolated sub-conscious tendencies that seek to emerge in consciousness. The organized ego of explicit consciousness thus becomes a repressive barrier, which indefinitely prevents the several constituents of the implicit ego from getting access to consciousness.

All problems of the ego can be tackled through intelligent and conscious action, and, therefore, a complete annihilation of the ego is possible only when all the constituents of the ego pass through intelligent consciousness.

The action of the intelligent consciousness is important, but not in itself sufficient. Even the components of the implicit ego of the sub-conscious mind have to be brought to the surface of consciousness to become parts of the explicit ego and to be submitted to the action of intelligent consciousness. If this is to be achieved, there has to be weakening of the explicit ego in such a manner that it allows the emergence in consciousness of those desires and tendencies that could not hitherto find admittance in the arena of consciousness. This release of inhibited tendencies brings about additional confusion and conflict in the explicit ego; therefore, the process of the disappearance of the ego is often accompanied by intensified conflicts in the arena of the conscious mind rather than by any easing of conflicts. However, at the end of the uncompromising struggle lies the poise and harmony that come after the dissolution of the structure of the ego.

The removal of the roots of the ego from the deeper layers of the sub-conscious and the bringing them to the light of consciousness is an important part of the process of wiping out the ego; the other important part consists in the intelligent handling of desires after they gain entrance to the arena of consciousness. The process of dealing with the components of explicit consciousness is by no means simple; for the explicit ego has a tendency to live through any one of the opposites of experience, and, if ousted from one opposite by the intensive operation of intelligent consciousness, it may move to the other opposite and live through it. Through alternations between the opposites of experience the ego eludes the attack of intelligent consciousness and seeks to perpetuate itself.

The tricks of the ego

The ego is also epiphytic and expresses itself in numberless ways. It lives upon any type of ignorance. Pride is a specific element in egoism. A person can be proud of unimportant and silly things. Persons may develop their nails to an abnormal length and preserve them, even at the cost of much inconvenience to themselves, for no other reason than as a medium of assertion

of separateness from others. The ego may magnify its attainments in a grotesque manner. Direct assertion of the ego through self-display is very common; but, if such direct assertion be hindered by good manners, the ego may seek the same result through such evil as slander. To show another in a bad light is to glorify oneself.

The ego is activated by the principle of self-perpetuation and has a tendency to live and grow through any means not closed to it. If the ego is curtailed in one direction, it seeks compensating expansion in another, and, if overpowered by spiritual actions, it may even fasten upon this very force brought into action for the ousting of the ego. If a person attempts to cultivate humility to relieve himself of the monstrous weight of the ego and succeeds in doing so, the ego can with surprising alacrity get transferred to this attribute of humility itself. It feeds itself through attachment to such assertions as "I am spiritual", as, in primary stages, it achieves the same end by "I am not interested in spirituality". Thus arises the ego that feels separateness through the attainment of things considered highly desirable and unworldly. But this type of spiritual ego is as binding as the crude ego.

In fact, in the more advanced stages of the Path, the ego does not seek its strengthening through open methods, and uses the means that are available for securing the elimination of the ego. These tactics are like guerilla warfare and are the most difficult to counteract. The elimination of the ego from consciousness is necessarily an intricate process. The nature of the ego itself is very complicated and needs divine grace to overcome it. Since the ego has almost endless possibilities of securing its existence and creating self-delusions, the aspirant finds it impossible to cope with its ever fresh forms, and can hope to be successful with the tricks of the ego only through the grace of a Master.

The Master's help

It is when the aspirant is driven to realize the futility of his own efforts that he approaches the Master. He can by himself make little headway towards the goal that he seeks. The persistence of the ego leads him to self-exasperation; and it is in this perception of helplessness that he surrenders to the Master. The self-surrender amounts to an admission that the aspirant has given up hope of tackling the problems of the ego by himself and that he

relies upon the Master. When through the grace of the Master, the ignorance which constitutes the ego is dispelled, there is the dawn of Truth which is the goal.

3. THE FORMS OF THE EGO AND THEIR DISSOLUTION

The ego subsists upon possessions such as power, fame, wealth, ability, and accomplishments. It creates and recognizes what is distinctively "mine". However, in spite of all the things it claims as "mine", it feels empty and incomplete and seeks to fortify itself through further acquisitions. It brings its varied possessions into comparison with those of others and uses its possessions for self-display at the cost of others. Yet the ego is dissatisfied despite its possessions, and seeks to derive satisfaction by a more intense sense of possession. Thus the ego as an affirmation of separateness lives through the idea of "mine".

The ego wants to feel separate and unique, and seeks self-expression either in the role of one better than others or as inferior to them. Either role may serve. As long as there is the ego, there is the background of duality, and the mental operations of comparison and contrast with others cannot be ended. Therefore, even where a person feels a sense of equality with another, this feeling is not securely established, and marks a point of transition between the two attitudes of the ego, rather than a permanent freedom from the distinction between "I" and "thou". This pseudo equality, may be made articulate in the formula "I am not in any way inferior or superior to the other", which will be seen to be a negative assertion of the ego. The balance between the "I" and the "thou" is disturbed by a superiority or inferiority complex; and the idea of equality arises to restore this balance. The negative assertion of the ego in the form of equality is, however, utterly different from the sense of unity, and the conditions of co-operative life are fulfilled only where the idea of equality is replaced by the realization of unity.

Two complexes

The feelings of superiority and inferiority are reactions to each other and the induced feelings of equality is a reaction to both. In these three modes, the ego succeeds in asserting its separateness.

Both feelings and complexes of superiority and inferiority are compelled to seek separate and alternate expression through suitable objects, as when a person dominates over his inferiors and submits to his superiors. The ego is constantly confronted with the spectacle of its intrinsic emptiness, and, therefore, clings to the delusion of its worthwhileness by demonstrating the greatness of its possessions. This is not confined to mere comparison but often exhibits itself in clashes with others. Thus, aggressiveness is a natural outcome of the need to compensate for the poverty of the ego-life.

On the other hand, submissiveness is rooted in fear or selfishness, and is not whole-hearted or spontaneous, because there is jealousy of or hatred for the superior person. Outward submission is the effect of the inferiority feeling and enhances the ego in one of its worst forms. The ego attributes its sense of emptiness to inferior possessions rather than to seeking fulfilment through possessions; and the awareness of its inferiority becomes a further stimulus to efforts to add to its possessions, through such means as are available. Thus, while perpetuating the inward poverty of the soul, the inferiority feeling becomes, like the superiority feeling, the expression of and the accumulation of that type of ignorance which constitutes the ego.

Surrender to the Master

When a person comes into contact with the Master and recognizes him as being in the state of egoless perfection, his self-surrender is distinguished from the inferiority feeling because accompanied by the awareness that the Master has basic unity with the disciple. Such self-surrender is not an expression of loss of confidence, but of confidence in the final overcoming of obstacles through the help of the Master. The appreciation of the divinity of the Master is the manner in which the Higher Self of the disciple expresses its sense of dignity.

To bring about a rapid dissolution of the feelings of superiority and inferiority, the Master may stir both feelings in alternation. If the disciple is losing heart and giving up the search, he may arouse deep self-confidence; if he is egoistic he may create situations in which the disciple has to accept his own incapacity or futility. Thus the Master wields his influence over the disciple

to expedite the stages through which the ego passes before its disappearance.

The superiority feeling and the inferiority feeling have to be brought into relation with each other, and may require a psychic situation in which they will be allowed to have their play without requiring the repression of the one to secure the expression of the other. When the soul enters into a vital relation with the Master, the feelings concerned with the senses of inferiority and superiority are both brought into play and counteract each other. With the dissolution of these opposites there comes the breaking down of the separative barriers of the ego in all forms; with the breaking down of the barriers, there arises divine love; and with the arising of divine love, the feeling of "I", as distinguished from "thou", dissolves in the sense of unity.

So that a car should move towards its destination a driver is necessary, but the driver may cultivate strong attachments for the things he encounters on the way, and may not only halt at intervening places but get lost in the sideways in pursuit of things that appeal to him. He may keep the car moving without coming nearer the goal; he may even get further away from it. Something like this happens when the ego assumes the control and direction of consciousness.

If consciousness is to be emancipated from its limitations and rendered adequate for serving the purpose for which it came into existence, it must draw its directive momentum not from the ego but from some other principle. In other words, the driver who is ignorant of the ultimate destination must be exchanged for another driver, free from the influence of the things he encounters on the way, one who keeps his attention on the goal of non-duality. The shifting of the centre of interest from unimportant to important values is comparable to the transfer of power from the ignorant driver to the driver who knows the destination.

Integration around a false idea

Had the ego been nothing but a medium for the integration of human experience, it would have been possible for man to get established in the Truth merely by carrying it actively further; but while playing a part in the progress of consciousness, the ego represents an active principle of ignorance which prevents

spiritual development. The ego attempts the integration of experience around the false idea of separateness. And having taken an illusion as a foundation for the construction of its edifice only succeeds in building one illusion upon another.

As long as human experience is within the limitation of duality, its integration is the condition of a rational and significant life. But the ego as a nucleus of integration has to be renounced because of its alliance with ignorance. There arises an imperative need to have a new centre for integration, free from the basic ignorance of a separateness, which allows scope for the incorporation of the values inaccessible to the ego-centre. Such a new centre is provided by the Master who represents the absolute Truth. The shifting of interest from unimportant to important values is facilitated by allegiance and self-surrender to the Master who becomes the new nucleus for integration.

Union with the Master the realization of the Truth

The Master is an affirmation of the unity of all life; allegiance to the Master, therefore, brings about a gradual dissociation from the ego-nucleus which affirms separateness. After this crisis in the life of man, all mental activity has a new reference in the light of its relation to the Master as the manifestation of the infinite Truth. The person henceforth experiences his acts as no longer initiated from the limited "I", but inspired by the Truth. He is no longer interested in the well-being of the limited self, but only in the Master as representing universal and individual life. He offers all his experiences and desires to the Master, reserving neither the good nor the evil for the limited "I", thus stripping the ego of its contents. This bankruptcy of the ego does not interfere with the process of integration, which is created around the new centre established by the Master. When the ego-nucleus is bankrupt and devoid of any power or being, the Master as Truth is firmly established in consciousness as the guiding and animating principle. This is at once the attainment of union with the Master and the realization of the Infinite Truth.

As the ego gradually adjusts itself to the spiritual requirements of life through the cultivation of humility, selflessness and love or whole-hearted surrender and offering to the Master, it suffers drastic curtailment in being, and it not only offers increasingly

reduced resistance to spiritual enfoldment, but undergoes a radical transformation that causes the ego, as an affirmation of separateness, completely to disappear. The intermediate steps of the reduction of the ego and the softening of its nature are comparable to the trimming and the pruning of the branches of a tree, whereas the final step of the annihilation of the ego amounts to the uprooting of the tree. When the ego disappears entirely, there arises the knowledge of the True Self. Thus, the long journey of the soul consists in developing from animal consciousness the explicit self-consciousness of the limited "I", then in transcending the "I", and, through the medium of the Master, to be initiated into the consciousness of the Supreme and Real Self, as an everlasting and Infinite "I am" in which there is no separateness, which includes all existence.

