

THE NARROW LANE

MEHER BABA

Compiled and edited by
William Le Page

MEHER BABA FOUNDATION
AUSTRALIA

SOURCE: This eBook is based on the 2nd Edition, June 1980.

© Copyright 1979

Meher Baba Foundation

21a Elliott Street

Balmain, N.S.W. Australia

PUBLISHED BY MEHER BABA FOUNDATION AUSTRALIA

PRINTED BY SUNLAND PRINTERS PTY. LTD.

NAMBOUR, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

eBooks at the Avatar Meher Baba Trust Web Site

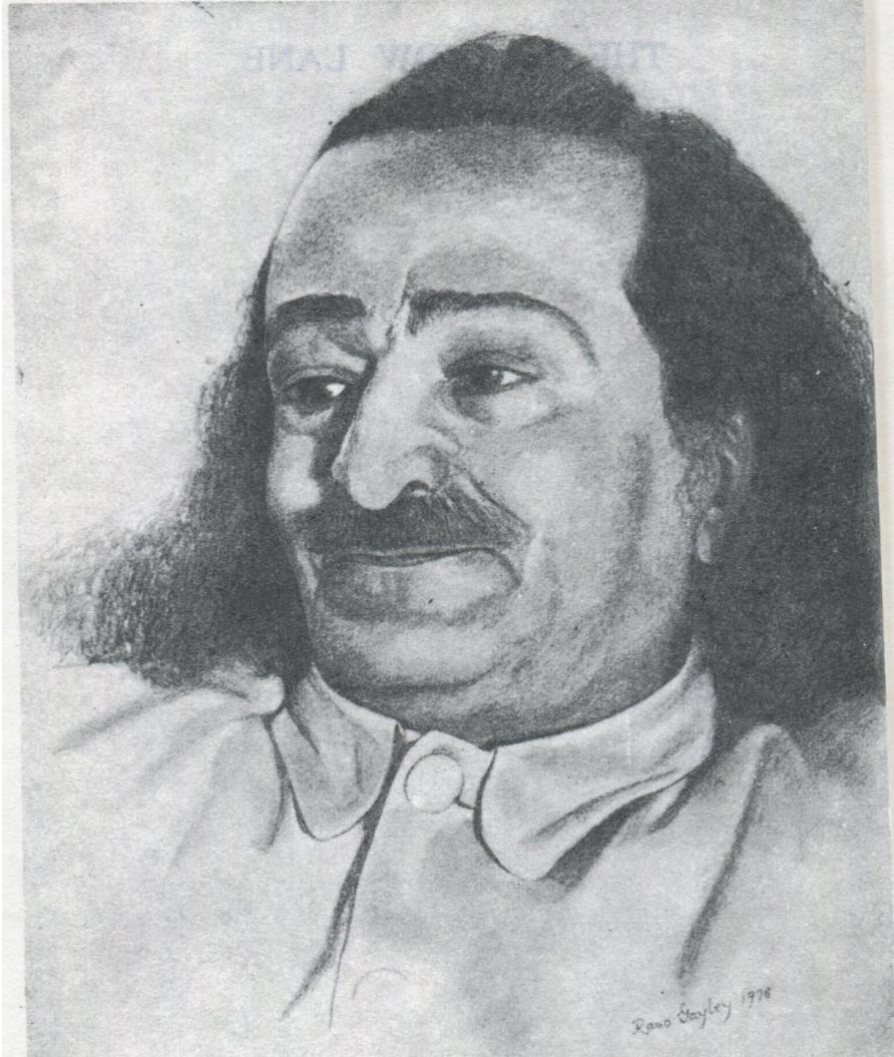
The Avatar Meher Baba Trust's eBooks aspire to be textually exact though non-facsimile reproductions of published books, journals and articles. With the consent of the copyright holders, these online editions are being made available through the Avatar Meher Baba Trust's web site, for the research needs of Meher Baba's lovers and the general public around the world.

Again, the eBooks reproduce the text, though not the exact visual likeness, of the original publications. They have been created through a process of scanning the original pages, running these scans through optical character recognition (OCR) software, reflowing the new text, and proofreading it. Except in rare cases where we specify otherwise, the texts that you will find here correspond, page for page, with those of the original publications: in other words, page citations reliably correspond to those of the source books. But in other respects—such as lineation and font—the page designs differ. Our purpose is to provide digital texts that are more readily downloadable and searchable than photo facsimile images of the originals would have been. Moreover, they are often much more readable, especially in the case of older books, whose discoloration and deteriorated condition often makes them partly illegible. Since all this work of scanning and reflowing and proofreading has been accomplished by a team of volunteers, it is always possible that errors have crept into these online editions. If you find any of these, please let us know, by emailing us at frank@ambppct.org.

The aim of the Trust's online library is to reproduce the original texts faithfully. In certain cases, however—and this applies especially to some of the older books that were never republished in updated versions—we have corrected certain small errors of a typographic order. When this has been done, all of these corrections are listed in the "Register of Editorial Alterations" that appears at the end of the digital book. If you want the original text in its exact original form, warts and all, you can reconstruct this with the aid of the "register."

The Trust's Online Library remains very much a work in progress. With your help and input, it will increase in scope and improve in elegance and accuracy as the years go by. In the meantime, we hope it will serve the needs of those seeking to deepen and broaden their own familiarity with Avatar Meher Baba's life and message and to disseminate this good news throughout the world.

THE NARROW LANE



© 1978 Rano Gayley

MEHER BABA

THE NARROW LANE

MEHER BABA

Compiled and edited by
William Le Page

MEHER BABA FOUNDATION
AUSTRALIA

2nd Edition, June 1980.

© Copyright 1979

Meher Baba Foundation

21a Elliott Street

Balmain, N.S.W. Australia

PUBLISHED BY MEHER BABA FOUNDATION AUSTRALIA

PRINTED BY SUNLAND PRINTERS PTY. LTD.

NAMBOUR, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

*The lane that leads to Me is narrow, and
only men and women of great daring enter it*

—Meher Baba

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	
THE PATH OF LOVE	1
— <i>Discourses Vol. I</i>	
THE SEARCH FOR GOD	4
— <i>Discourses Vol. II</i>	
THE DIVINE THEME	8
— <i>God Speaks</i>	
GOD AND THE INDIVIDUAL	14
— <i>Discourses Vol. I</i>	
GOD-REALIZATION	19
— <i>Discourses Vol. II</i>	
BEST OF ALL FORCES	22
— <i>Listen, Humanity</i>	
GOD AND MAYA	26
— <i>Discourses Vol. III</i>	
HOW TO LOVE GOD	28
— <i>Message given by Meher Baba</i>	
PERFECTION	30
— <i>Discourses Vol. I</i>	
LOVE	33
— <i>Discourses Vol. I</i>	
EVOLUTION AND INVOLUTION	43
— <i>Discourses Vol. II</i>	
THE SPIRITUAL ASPIRANT	46
— <i>Discourses Vol. III</i>	
TRUE DISCIPLESHIP	50
— <i>Discourses Vol. II</i>	

THE NATURE OF THE EGO	52
— <i>Discourses Vol. II</i>	
MENTAL IMPRESSIONS	57
— <i>Discourses Vol. I</i>	
MIND AND HEART	61
— <i>Discourses Vol. I</i>	
DESIRES	66
— <i>Discourses Vol. I</i>	
DESIRELESSNESS	68
— <i>Discourses Vol. I</i>	
SOLITUDE AND FASTING	70
— <i>Discourses Vol. I</i>	
PENANCE	72
— <i>Discourses Vol. I</i>	
MEDITATION	74
— <i>Discourses Vol. II</i>	
OCCULTISM	79
— <i>Discourses Vol. II</i>	
SUFFERING	84
— <i>Discourses Vol. III</i>	
SELFISHNESS	86
— <i>Discourses Vol. I</i>	
HAPPINESS	91
— <i>Discourses Vol. III</i>	
FAITH	95
— <i>Discourses Vol. III</i>	
GROWTH	97
— <i>Life At Its Best</i>	
WORK	99
— <i>Life At Its Best</i>	

SELFLESS SERVICE	101
— <i>Discourses Vol. I</i>	
GREATNESS AND HUMILITY	104
— <i>Message given by Meher Baba</i>	
THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT	107
— <i>Discourses Vol. I</i>	
THE INFINITY OF THE TRUTH	111
— <i>Discourses Vol. I</i>	
FALSE VALUES	114
— <i>Discourses Vol. III</i>	
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DEATH	116
— <i>Discourses Vol. III</i>	
GOOD AND EVIL	119
— <i>Discourses Vol. I</i>	
OPPOSITES	124
— <i>Discourses Vol. I</i>	
VIOLENCE AND NON-VIOLENCE	126
— <i>Discourses Vol. I</i>	
ACTION AND INACTION	129
— <i>Discourses Vol. I</i>	
RELIGION	131
— <i>Life At Its Best</i>	
WORLD PEACE	132
— <i>Life At Its Best</i>	
FREEDOM	133
— <i>Listen, Humanity</i>	
ORIGINS AND EFFECTS OF WAR	135
— <i>Listen, Humanity</i>	
THE AVATAR	139
A SHORT BIBLIOGRAPHY	149
CENTRES FOR INFORMATION	152

Acknowledgements

This book is based upon the concept of *Gems from the Teachings of Meher Baba*, published by Meher Baba Universal Spiritual Centre, Kings Road, Ahmednagar, India, 1947, and has been considerably extended from that publication.

The material used is comprised entirely of selections from *Discourses* by Meher Baba, edited by Ivy O. Duce and Don E. Stevens; *Life At Its Best*; short messages of Meher Baba; *Listen, Humanity, Part II*; discourses of Meher Baba; and *God Speaks* by Meher Baba, The Divine Theme.

Acknowledgement is given with thanks to the copyright holders of this material, Adi K. Irani, Kings Road, Ahmednagar, India, and Sufism Reoriented Inc., 1300 Boulevard Way, Walnut Creek, California, U.S.A.

My deepest thanks are also given to Kathy Milne, Linda McGahey, Kaye Lindsay, Wendy Borthwick for their help in various aspects of the book, and particularly to Judith Garbett who contributed so much at all stages of its preparation.

William Le Page

Meher House,
Beacon Hill, N.S.W.

The Path of Love

Love comprehends in itself the different advantages belonging to other paths leading to emancipation, and is in itself the most distinguished and effective path. It is at once characterised by self-sacrifice and happiness. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that it is accompanied by an exclusive and whole-hearted offering to the Beloved without admitting the claims of any other object. Thus there is no room for the diversion of psychic energy, and concentration is complete. In love the physical, vital and mental energies of men are all gathered up and made available for the cause of the Beloved, with the result that this love becomes a dynamic power. The tension of true love is so great that any foreign feeling which might intervene is at once thrown out. So, the expulsive and purifying efficacy of love is unparalleled.

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

the amoeba to the most evolved form of human beings. When love is self-illuminated, its value is intensified by its conscious sacrifice.

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

When love is deep and intense it is called bhakti or devotion. In its initial stages devotion is expressed through symbol-worship, supplication before the deities and reverence and allegiance to the revealed scriptures, or the pursuit of the Highest through abstract thinking. In its more advanced stages devotion expresses itself as interest in human welfare and. the service of humanity, love and reverence for saints and. allegiance and obedience to the spiritual

Master. These stages have their relative values and relative results. Love for a living Master is a unique stage of devotion, for it eventually gets transformed into para-bhakti or divine love.

Para-bhakti is not merely intensified bhakti. It begins where bhakti ends. At the stage of para-bhakti, devotion is not only single-minded but is accompanied by extreme restlessness of the heart and a ceaseless longing to unite with the Beloved. 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 appearance or criticism, while the divine impulses of attraction to the Beloved become more frequent than ever. This highest phase of love is most fruitful because it has as its object 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.

The Search for God

A true aspirant is not content with knowledge of spiritual realities based on hearsay, nor is he satisfied with pure inferential knowledge. For him the spiritual realities are not the object of idle thinking, and the acceptance or rejection of these realities is fraught with momentous implications for his inner life. Hence he naturally insists upon direct knowledge about them.

Although the aspirant cannot be content with secondhand knowledge or mere guesses, he does not close his mind to the possibility that there could be spiritual realities which had not come within his experience. In other words, he is conscious of the limitations of his own individual experience and refrains from making it the measure of all possibilities. He has an open mind towards all things which are beyond the scope of his experience. While he does not accept them on hearsay, he also does not rush to deny them.

God either exists or does not exist. If He exists, search for Him is amply justified. And if He does not exist, there is nothing to lose by seeking Him. But man does not usually turn to a real search for God as a matter of voluntary and joyous enterprise. He has to be driven to this search by disillusionment

with those worldly things which allure him and from which he cannot deflect his mind.

Ordinary man is completely engrossed in his activities in the gross world. He tries as best he can to have pleasures of the senses and to avoid different kinds of suffering. But in spite of his unceasing search for pleasure he cannot altogether avoid suffering, and even when he succeeds in having pleasures of the senses he is often satiated by them. While he thus goes through the daily round of varied experiences, there often arises some occasion when he begins to ask himself, 'What is the end of all this?'

Usually such an occasion arises from the frustration of some deep craving. If a deep craving happens to meet an impasse so that there is not the slightest chance of its ever being fulfilled, the psyche receives such a shock that it can no longer accept the type of life which may have been accepted hitherto without question.

Under such circumstances a person may be driven to utter desperation, and if the tremendous power which is generated by the psychic disturbance remains uncontrolled and undirected, it may even lead to serious mental derangement or attempts to commit suicide. Such a catastrophe overcomes those in whom desperateness is allied with thoughtlessness, for they allow impulse to have free and full sway. The unharnessed power of desperateness can only work destruction, .

The desperateness of a thoughtful person under similar circumstances is altogether different in results because the energy which it releases is intelligently

harnessed and directed towards a purpose. In the moment of such divine desperateness a man makes the important decision to discover and realize the aim of life. There thus comes into existence a true search for lasting values. Henceforth the burning query which refuses to be silenced is 'What does it all lead to?'

When the psychic energy of a man is thus centred upon discovering the goal of life, he uses the power of desperateness creatively. He can no longer be content with the fleeting things of this life and he is thoroughly sceptical about the ordinary values which he had so far accepted without doubt. His only desire is to find the Truth at any cost and he does not rest satisfied with anything short of the Truth.

If he does not posit some hidden reality which he has not hitherto known, then there is nothing at all worth living for. For him there are only two alternatives: either there is a hidden spiritual reality which prophets have described as God, or everything is meaningless. The second alternative is utterly unacceptable to the whole of man's personality, so he must try the first alternative. Thus man turns to God when he is at bay in worldly affairs.

Now since there is no direct access to this hidden reality which he posits, he inspects his usual experiences for possible avenues leading to a significant beyond. Thus he goes back to his usual experiences with the purpose of gathering some light

on the path. This involves looking at everything from a new angle of vision and entails a reinterpretation of each experience. All this careful reevaluation of experience results in his gaining an insight which could not come to him before he begins his new search.

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

With a clear and tranquil vision of the real nature and worth of life he realizes that God whom he has been so desperately seeking is no stranger nor hidden and foreign entity. He is Reality itself and not a hypothesis. So, though he begins by seeking something utterly new, he really arrives at a new understanding of an ancient thing.

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

The Divine Theme

A soul becomes perfect after passing through evolution, reincarnation and the process of realization. To gain full consciousness, it gets increasing sanskaras (mind impressions) in the process of evolution, till in the human form, it gets full consciousness as well as all the gross sanskaras.

In the process of reincarnation, this soul retains its full consciousness and exchanges (that is, alternatingly experiences) the diverse sanskaras in itself; and in the process of realization, this soul retains its full consciousness, but its sanskaras become fainter and fainter till they all disappear and only consciousness remains. While becoming faint, gross sanskaras become subtle sanskaras, subtle sanskaras become mental sanskaras; and finally they all disappear.

Up to the human form, the winding process of sanskaras becomes stronger and stronger in the process of evolution. In the human form, in the process of reincarnation, the winding retains its full strength; but in the process of realization, the sanskaras gradually unwind themselves, till in the God-state, they are completely unwound.

God, the Over-Soul, alone is real. Nothing exists but God. The different souls are in the Over-Soul and one with it. The processes of evolution, reincarnation and realization are all necessary in order

to enable the soul to gain self-consciousness. In the process of winding, sanskaras become instrumental for the evolution of consciousness though they also give sanskaric bindings; and in the process of unwinding, sanskaric attachments are annihilated, though the consciousness which has been gained is fully retained.

In the process of the winding of sanskaras, the soul goes through seven stages of *descent*; and in the process of unwinding, the soul goes through seven stages of *ascent*. But the phenomena of descent as well as ascent are both illusory. The soul is everywhere and indivisibly infinite; and it does not move or descend or ascend.

The souls of all men and women, of all nationalities, castes and creeds, are really one; and their experiences of good and evil, of fighting and helping, of waging wars and living in peace are all a part of illusion and delusion, because all these experiences are gained through bodies and minds, which in themselves are nothing.

Before the world of forms and duality came into existence, there was nothing but God, that is, an indivisible and boundless ocean of Power, Knowledge and Bliss. But this ocean was unconscious of itself. Picture to yourself this ocean as absolutely still and calm, unconscious of its Power, Knowledge and Bliss and unconscious that it is the ocean. The billions of drops which are in the ocean do not have any consciousness; they do not know that they are drops nor that they are in the ocean nor that they are a part of the ocean. This represents the original state of Reality.

This original state of Reality comes to be disturbed by an urge to know itself. This urge was

always latent in the ocean; and when it begins to express itself, it endows the drops with individuality. When this urge makes the still water move, there immediately spring up numerous bubbles or forms around the drops; and it is these bubbles which give individuality to the drops. The bubbles do not and cannot actually divide the indivisible ocean; they cannot separate the drop from the ocean; they merely give to these drops a feeling of separateness or limited individuality.

Now let us study the life of one drop-soul through its different stages. Owing to the arising of the bubble, the drop-soul which was completely unconscious is invested with individuality (or a feeling of separateness) as well as with very slight consciousness. This consciousness, which has sprung up in the drop-soul, is not of itself nor of the ocean; but it is of the bubble or the form, which in itself is nothing. This imperfect bubble at this stage is represented by the *form* of a stone. After some time, this bubble or form bursts and there springs up in its place another bubble or form. Now, when a bubble bursts, two things happen: (1) there is an increase in consciousness and (2) there is a twist or consolidation of impressions or sanskaras accumulated during the life of the previous bubble. The consciousness of the drop-soul has now slightly increased; but the drop-soul is still conscious only of this new bubble or form and not of itself nor of the ocean. This new bubble is represented by the form of the metal. This new bubble or form also bursts in due course of time; and simultaneously there is a further increase in consciousness and a fresh twist or consolidation of sanskaras, which gives rise to the emergence of another type of bubble or form.

This process continues right through the course of evolution, which covers the stages of stones, metals, vegetables, worms, fishes, birds and animals. Every time that the previous bubble or form bursts, it gains more consciousness and adds one twist to the already accumulated sanskaras, until it reaches the human bubble or form, in which the ever-increasing consciousness becomes full and complete. The process of the winding up of sanskaras consists of these regular twists; and it is these twists which keep the consciousness, gained by the drop-soul, directed and fixed towards the bubble or the form instead of towards its real Self, even when consciousness is fully developed in the human form.

On gaining the human form, the second process begins; this process is that of reincarnation. At this point, the process of the winding up of sanskaras comes to an end. The drop-soul takes numerous human forms one by one; and these forms are exactly eighty-four lakhs in number. These human forms are sometimes those of man and sometimes those of woman; and they change nationalities, appearance, colour and creed. The drop-soul through human incarnations experiences itself sometimes as a beggar and sometimes as a king, and thus gathers experiences of the opposites of happiness or misery according to its good or bad sanskaras. In reincarnation (that is, in its successive and several human forms) the drop-soul retains its full consciousness but continues to have alternating experiences of opposite sanskaras, till the process of realization begins. And during this process of realization the sanskaras get unwound. In reincarnations, there is a spending up of sanskaras; but this spending up is quite different from the unwinding of the sanskaras, which takes place during

the process of realization. The spending up of sanskaras itself creates new sanskaras, which bind the soul; but the unwinding of sanskaras does not itself create fresh sanskaras; and it is intended to undo the very strong grip of sanskaras, in which the drop-soul is caught.

Up to the human form, the winding up of sanskaras becomes stronger and stronger during the process of evolution. In the human forms of reincarnation, the winding continues to operate as a limiting factor; but with every change of the human bubble or form, the tight twists, gained during the process of winding, get loosened through eighty-four lakhs of shakings, before they are ready to unwind in the process of realization.

Now begins the third process of realization, which is a process of ascent. Here, the drop-soul undergoes the gradual unwinding of the sanskaras. During this process of unwinding, the sanskaras become fainter and fainter; and at the same time, the consciousness of the drop-soul gets directed more and more towards itself; and thus, the drop-soul passes through the subtle and mental planes till all the sanskaras disappear completely, enabling it to become conscious of itself as the ocean.

In the infinite ocean of the Over-Soul, you are the drop or the soul. You are the soul in the ordinary state; and you use your consciousness in seeing and experiencing the bubble or the form. Through the gross layer of the bubble; you experience that part of the huge gross bubble which is the earth. You are eternally lodged and indivisibly one with the Over-Soul; but you do not experience it. In the advanced stage, up through the third plane, you use your consciousness in seeing and experiencing the

huge subtle bubble called the subtle world, through the subtle bubble or form called the subtle body; but you do not see and experience the Over-Soul which you are in, since your consciousness is not now directed towards the Over-Soul. In the advanced stage from the fourth through the sixth plane, you use your consciousness in seeing and experiencing the huge mental bubble, which is called the mental world, through the mental bubble or form which is called the mental body, but even now you do not experience the Over-Soul. But in the God-realized state, you continually use your consciousness for seeing and experiencing the Over-Soul: and then all the forms are known as being nothing but bubbles.

So, now, picture yourself as the soul-drop, lodged in the Over-Soul, behind five layers after the gross body. You, the soul-drop, are now looking at the gross body and through it at the gross world. When you look at the second layer and through it, the first layer will appear to you as nothing but a layer only, and thus, looking behind each layer, you will find all these layers as only your shadow covers; and finally, when you (that is the soul-drop) look at and get merged in the Over-Soul; you realize that only you were real and all that you were seeing and experiencing till now was your own shadow and nothing else.

God and the Individual

God is infinite. He is beyond the opposites of good and bad, right and wrong, virtue and vice, birth and death, pleasures and suffering. Such dual aspects do not belong to God. If we take God as one separate entity, He becomes one term in relational existence. Just as good is the counterpart of bad, God becomes the counterpart of not-God, and the Infinite comes to be looked upon as the opposite of the finite. When we talk of the Infinite and the finite, we are referring to them as two, and the Infinite has already become the second part of the duality. But the Infinite belongs to the non-dual order of being. If the Infinite is looked upon as the counterpart of the finite, it is strictly speaking no longer Infinite but a species of the finite, for it stands outside the finite as its opposite and is thus limited. Since the Infinite cannot be the second part of the finite, the apparent existence of the finite is false. The Infinite alone exists. God cannot be brought down to the domain of duality. There is only one being in reality and it is the Universal Soul. The existence of the finite or the limited is only apparent or imaginary.

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

body which is sitting, you do not know your true nature. If you were to look within and experience your own soul in its true nature you would realize that you are infinite and beyond all creation. But you identify yourself with the body. This false identification is due to ignorance which makes itself effective through the medium of the mind. Ordinary man thinks that he is the physical body. A spiritually advanced man thinks that he is the subtle body. The saint thinks that he is the mind. But in none of them is the soul having direct self-knowledge. It is not a case of pure thinking unmixed with illusion. The soul as soul is infinite — aloof from mind or body — but owing to ignorance, the soul comes under the sway of the mind and becomes a 'thinker,' sometimes identifying itself with the body and sometimes with the mind. From the limited point of view of a person who has not gone beyond the domain of maya, there are numberless individuals. It seems that there are as many individuals as there are minds and bodies. In fact, there is only one Universal Soul, but the individual thinks that he is different from other individuals. One and the same soul is ultimately behind the minds of seemingly different individuals, and through them it has the multifarious experiences of duality. The One in the many comes to experience itself as one of the many. This is due to imagination or false thinking.

Thinking becomes false owing to the interference of sanskaras accumulated during the process of the evolution of consciousness. The function of consciousness is perverted by the operation of sanskaras which manifest themselves as desires. Through many lives, consciousness is continually being burdened by the after-effects of experience. The perception

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

The progressive evolution of consciousness beginning with the stone stage culminates in man. The history of evolution is the history of a gradual development of consciousness. The fruit of evolution is full consciousness, which is characteristic of man. But even this full consciousness is like a mirror covered by dust. Owing to the operation of sanskaras, it does not yield clear and true knowledge of the nature of the soul. Though fully developed, it yields not truth but imaginative construction, since its free functioning is hindered by the weight of the sanskaras. Moreover, it cannot extend beyond the cage created by its desires, and therefore is limited in its scope.

The boundary in which consciousness can move is prescribed by the sanskaras, and the functioning of consciousness is also determined by the desires. As desires aim at self-satisfaction, the whole consciousness becomes self-centred and individualized. The individualization of consciousness may in a sense be said to be the effect of the vortex of desires. The soul gets enmeshed in the desires and cannot step out of the circumscribed individuality constituted by these desires. It imagines these barriers and becomes self-hypnotised. It looks upon itself as being limited

and separate from other individuals. It gets entangled in individualistic existence and imagines a world of manifold separateness composed of many individuals with their respective minds and bodies.

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

The history of the limited individuality is a history of the development of a triple entanglement with mind, energy and matter (body). Duality prevails in all these domains and the soul gets entangled therein

although it is in essence beyond duality. Duality implies the existence of opposites limiting and balancing each other through mutual tension. Good and bad, virtue and vice are examples of such opposites. The ignorant soul enmeshed in duality is in the clutches of both good and bad. The duality of good and bad arises due to ignorance, but once entangled with it, the soul comes under its sway. During the evolution of the triple entanglement with matter (body), energy and mind, the ignorant soul is continually in the grip of wanting. It wants the good and bad of the gross world; it wants the good and bad of the subtle world; and it wants the good and bad of the mental world; and owing to the distinction of good and bad, wanting itself becomes good and bad. Wanting thus comes to be inevitably limited by the perpetual tension of the opposites. This gives rise to unending oscillation from one state to another, without arriving at the unlimited state which can only be discovered in the unchanging eternal aspect of life. The Infinite is to be sought beyond the domain of duality. This becomes possible only when consciousness can emerge from the limited individuality by breaking through the barriers of sanskaras.

God-Realization

The problem of God-realization is the problem of emancipating consciousness from the limitations of the mind. When the individual mind is dissolved, the whole universe which is relative to the mind vanishes into nothingness, and consciousness is no longer tied to anything. Consciousness is now unlimited and unclouded by anything and serves the purpose of illumining the state of the Infinite Reality. While immersed in the bliss of realization the soul is completely oblivious of sights or sounds or objects in the universe. In this respect it is like sound sleep, but there are many important points of difference which distinguish God-realization from sound sleep. During sleep the illusion of the universe vanishes, since all consciousness is in abeyance, but there is no conscious experience of God, since this requires the complete dissolution of the ego and the turning of full consciousness towards the Ultimate Reality. Occasionally, when the continuity of deep sleep is interrupted by brief intervals, the soul may have the experience of retaining consciousness without being conscious of anything in particular. There is consciousness; but this consciousness is not of the universe. It is consciousness of nothing. Such experiences anticipate God-realization in which consciousness is completely freed from the illusion of the universe and manifests the infinite knowledge which was hitherto hidden by the ego.

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

The whole process of attaining God-realization is just a game in which the beginning and the end are identical. The attainment of realization is nevertheless a distinct gain for the soul. There are two types of advantages: one consists in getting what one did not previously possess, the other in realizing fully what one really is. God-realization is of the second type. However, this creates an infinite difference between the soul which has God-realization and the soul which does not have God-realization. Though the God-realized soul does not possess anything new, its explicit knowledge of all that it really is, has been and will ever be, makes God-realization all-important. The soul which is not God-realized experiences itself as being finite and is constantly

troubled by the opposites of fleeting joys and sorrows; but the soul which has realization is lifted out of them and experiences the infinite knowledge and the unlimited bliss of being God-conscious.

Best of All Forces

There can be no greater folly than that the aspirant quarrel with another over the pros and cons of this way or that, instead of concentrating on his own onward march. One road may be steep, another full of potholes, a third torn by racing rivers. Similarly, one man may walk best, another may be a good runner, a third a fine swimmer. In each case the things that should really count are the destination and the progress that each individual makes. Why should one who runs like a hare come in the way of another who is more likely to succeed at the pace of a snail?

Spiritual progress is like climbing through hills, dales, thorny woods and along dangerous precipices to attain the mountain top. On this path there can be no halting or return. Everyone must get to the top, which is the direct realization of the supreme Godhead. All hesitation, sidetracking or resting in halfway houses, or arguing about the best route, only postpones the day of final fulfilment.

The aspirant cannot be too alert about the path. The slightest lingering in the false world of shadows is inevitably an invitation to suffering that could have been avoided if the eye had been steadily fixed on the supreme goal of life.

The best of all forces, which can overcome all difficulties on the way, is the love that knows how

to give without need to bargain for a return. There is nothing that love cannot achieve, and there is nothing that love cannot sacrifice. There is nothing beyond God and there is nothing without God, and yet God can always be captured by love: All other essential qualities will come to the aspirant if he follows faithfully the whisperings of the unerring voice of love that speaks from his own heart, shedding light on the path.

To lose hold of the mantle of this guide is to find only despair. The heart without love is entombed in unending darkness and suffering, but the heart that is restless with love is on its way to realization of the unfading light that shines on the unfathomable sweetness of life divine.

Pure love is matchless in majesty; it has no parallel in power, and there is no darkness it cannot dispel. It is the undying flame that has set all life aglow, yet it must be kindled and rekindled in the abysmal darkness of selfish thoughts, selfish words and selfish deeds. As it is fired anew it bursts out in magnificent light. to serve as a beacon for those who still grope in the darkness of selfishness, be that darkness deep blue or all black.

Human love, regardless of its limitations, should never be despised. It is bound eventually to break through all limitations to initiate the aspirant into eternal life in the truth. Then the lover may lose his separate, false self and become united with God, who is the one matchless and indivisible ocean of unsurpassable love.

God does not listen to the language of the tongue and its japs, mantras, devotional songs and so on.

He does not listen to the language of the mind and its routine meditations, concentrations and thoughts about God. He only listens to the language of the heart and its message of love, which needs no ceremony or show, only silent devotion for the Beloved.

This love can be expressed in various ways, all of which ultimately result in union with God. The practical way for the average man to express love is to speak lovingly, think lovingly and act lovingly towards all mankind, feeling God to be present in everyone.

Love is dynamic in action and contagious in effect. It is only the spiritually alive and enlightened who can feel the significance of the ancient adage, so cheaply bandied about by some preachers and philosophers, that 'love begets love.'

The way of love is not free from sacrifices. Just as heat and light go hand in hand, so do love and sacrifice. The true spirit of sacrifice springs spontaneously, like humility, and cannot be aware of itself nor reserve itself for particular objects and special occasions.

Love means suffering and pain for oneself, and happiness for others. To the giver, it is suffering without malice or hatred. To the receiver it is a blessing without obligation.

Just as it can never be too early or too late to learn to love for the sake of love, so there can be nothing too small or too big to be sacrificed or sacrificed for. The flow of life, the flow of light and the flow of love are as much in the drop as in the ocean. The smallest thing is as big as the biggest

and the biggest thing is as small as the smallest. It all depends upon the particular yardstick used.

The spirit of true love and real sacrifice is beyond all ledgers and needs no measure. A constant longing to love and be loving, and a non-calculating will to sacrifice in every walk of life — high and low, big and small, between home and office, streets and cities, countries and continents — are the best measures man can take to fulfil his true role and purpose in life.

God and Maya

How does the false world of finite things come into existence? Why does it exist? It is created by maya or the principle of ignorance. Maya is not illusion, it is the creator of illusion. Maya is not false, it is that which gives false impressions. Maya is not unreal; it is that which makes the real appear unreal and the unreal appear real. Maya is not duality, it is that which causes duality.

For the purposes of intellectual explanation maya must be looked upon as being infinite. It creates the illusion of finiteness; it is not in itself finite. All the illusions which are created by maya are finite, and the entire universe of duality, which appears to exist due to maya, is also finite.

Among all possible intellectual explanations, the explanation that maya, like God, is both real and infinite is most acceptable to the intellect of man. Nevertheless maya cannot be ultimately true. Wherever there is duality there is finiteness on both sides. The one thing limits the other. There cannot be two real Infinities. If we have the duality of God and maya and if both are regarded as coordinate existents, then the infinite reality of God is considered as the second part of a duality. Therefore the intellectual explanation that maya is real

does not have the stamp of final knowledge, though it is the most plausible explanation.

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

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

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

How to Love God

If, instead of seeing faults in others, we look within ourselves, we are loving God.

If, instead of robbing others to help ourselves, we rob ourselves to help others, we are loving God.

If we suffer in the sufferings of others and feel happy in the happiness of others, we are loving God.

If, instead of worrying over our own misfortune, we think of ourselves as more fortunate than many, many others, we are loving God.

If we endure our lot with patience and contentment, accepting it as His will, we are loving God.

If we understand that the greatest act of devotion towards God is not to harm any of His beings, we are loving God.

To love God as He ought to be loved we must live for God and die for God, knowing that the goal of all life is to love God and find Him as our own Self.

Therefore let us become the soldiers of God. Let us struggle for the Truth. Let us live not for ourselves, but for others. Let us speak truly. think truly and act truly. Let us be honest, as God is infinite honesty. Let us return love for hatred and win others over to God. Let the world know that above everything the most dear to our hearts is God — the Supreme Reality.

Besides keeping God before ourselves in our daily lives and loving Him by loving our fellow men, we can love God by surrendering to the Sadguru or Perfect Master who is God's personal manifestation, or to the God-Man, who is God descended directly into form. To surrender to any of these is to surrender to God Himself.

The final way to realize God is to love Him and to lose oneself in Him through intense longing for union with Him.

To love God whole-heartedly is to lose oneself eventually in the Beloved and enter the eternal life of God. Like a tree, such love has branches — branches of whole-hearted devotion, perfect selfless service, self-denial, self-sacrifice, self-renunciation, self-annihilation and truth.

When one truly loves God, that love is based on the desire to give up one's whole being to the Beloved. When one loves a Perfect Master, one longs to serve him, to surrender to his will, to obey him whole-heartedly. Thus pure, real love longs to give and does not ask for anything in return.

Trust God completely and He will solve all difficulties. Faithfully leave everything to Him and He will see to everything. Love God sincerely and He will reveal Himself. And as you love, your heart must love so that even your mind is not aware of it. As you love God whole-heartedly and honestly, sacrificing everything at the altar of this supreme love, you will realize the Beloved within you.

Perfection

In order to have a comprehensive idea of what is implied in perfection, it is necessary to classify it into two categories. There is spiritual perfection, which consists in the inner realization of a transcendent state of consciousness beyond duality. There is also perfection as expressed and seen in the domain of duality. All related existence which is a part of the manifold world of manifestation admits of degrees; and when we are concerned with perfection as seen in this manifested world, we find that, like other things subject to duality, it also admits of degrees. Bad and good, weakness and strength, vice and virtue are all opposites within duality. In fact, all these aspects are expressions of the one Reality in different degrees.

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

and relative existence. Perfection in the domain of duality is only relative perfection. It is only when we compare it with imperfection that it appears to us as perfection.

Perfection is the full development of all the aspects of personality, so perfection must be all-sided. Perfection in one respect is no perfection. It is only a lopsided growth of a faculty or capacity, resulting in inflexibility or the incapacity to adjust oneself to the ever-changing and multitudinous vicissitudes of life. Such a person cannot maintain a moving equilibrium of mind while keeping pace with the swift changes of life. If he is in an environment which, by its nature, gives scope for the faculty which he has developed, he is temporarily happy and enjoys a sense of being in harmony with the world. But if he finds himself in a hostile environment where his faculty is a misfit, he has a sense of failure and his poise is disturbed. Therefore perfection implies perfection in every respect.

If you try to grasp the nature of perfection by means of a set standard (implying an opposite), you are bound to limit it and thus fail to understand its real significance. Perfection includes the opposites and transcends them, therefore the perfect man is not bound by any rule or limited ideal. He is beyond good and bad, but his law for those who are good gives good reward, and for those who are bad it responds in their own coin. Krishna proved to Arjuna, who was his devotee, that his apparent bringing about of the physical and mental annihila-

tion of the vicious Kauravas was for their spiritual salvation. Perfection might manifest itself through killing or saving according to the spiritual demands of the situation. The heart of the Perfect One is at once soft like butter and hard like steel. Perfection is not limited in its expression to any one of the opposites, and does not exclude the possibility of finding expression through the opposite. It can express itself through either of the opposites according to the logic implied in the situation. That is why it transcends the opposites and is capable of giving a rational response to all the possible situations in life. It ensures perfect adaptability without surrendering the standpoint of the Truth, and secures an unshakeable peace and sense of harmony in the midst of diverse situations which must be baffling to those who have not had all-sided development.

Perfection does not belong to God as God, nor does it belong to man as man. We get perfection when man becomes God or when God becomes man. The finite being who is conscious of his being finite is obviously short of perfection; but when he is conscious of being one with the Infinite, he is perfect. That is what happens when man gives up the illusion of being finite and attains Godhood by realizing his divinity.

Love

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

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

In the animal world love becomes more explicit in the form of conscious impulses which are directed towards different objects in the surroundings. This love is instinctive and it takes the form of gratifying different desires through the appropriation of suitable objects. When the tiger seeks to devour the deer he is in a very real sense in love with the deer. Sex-attraction is another form of love at this level. All the expressions of love at this stage have one thing in common, namely, they all seek to satisfy some bodily impulse or desire through the object of love.

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

Thus human love can enter into three types of combination with reason. In the first type, the sphere of thought and the sphere of love are kept as separate as possible, that is, the sphere of love is practically inaccessible to the operation of reason, and love is allowed little or no access to the objects

of thought. Complete separation between these two aspects of the spirit is of course never possible, but when there is an alternate functioning of love and reason (oscillating in their predominance) we have a love which is unilluminated by reason or a reason which is unenlivened by love. In the second type, love and reason are both simultaneously operative but they do not work in harmony with each other. Though this conflict creates confusion, it is a necessary phase in the evolution of the higher state where there is a real synthesis of love and reason. In the third type of love this synthesis between love and reason is an accomplished fact with the result that both love as well as reason are so completely transformed that they precipitate the emergence of a new level of consciousness which, compared to the normal human consciousness, is best described as super-consciousness.

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

Human love is encircled by a number of obstructive factors such as infatuation, lust, greed, anger and jealousy. In one sense, even these obstructive factors

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

These lower forms of love obstruct the release of pure love. The stream of love can never become clear and steady until it is disentangled from these limiting and perverting forms of lower love. The lower is the enemy of the higher. If consciousness is caught in the rhythm of the lower it cannot emancipate itself from its self-created ruts, finding it difficult to get out of them and advance further. Thus the lower form of love continues to interfere with the development of the higher form, and has to be given up in order to allow for the untrammelled appearance of the higher form of love.

The emergence of higher love from the shell of lower love is helped by the constant exercise of discrimination. Therefore, love has to be carefully distinguished from the obstructive factors of infatuation, lust, greed and anger. In infatuation, the

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

Love is also different from lust. In lust there is reliance upon the object of sense and consequent spiritual subordination of the soul to it, but love puts the soul into direct and co-ordinate relation with the reality which is behind the form. Therefore lust is experienced as being heavy and love is experienced as being light. In lust there is a narrowing down of life and in love there is an expansion in being. To have loved one soul is like adding its life to your own. Your life is, as it were, multiplied and you virtually live in two centres. If you love the whole world you vicariously live in the whole world, but in lust there is an ebbing down of life and a general sense of hopeless dependence upon a form which is regarded as another. Thus, in lust there is the accentuation of separateness and suffering, but in love there is the feeling of unity and joy. Lust is dissipation, love is recreation. Lust is a craving of the senses, love is the expression of the spirit. Lust seeks fulfilment but love experiences fulfilment. In lust there is excitement, but in love there is tranquility.

Love is equally different from greed. Greed is possessiveness in all its gross and subtle forms. It seeks to appropriate gross things and persons as well as such abstract and intangible things as fame and power. In love, the annexation of the other person to your individual life is out of the question, and

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

Infatuation, lust and greed constitute a spiritual malady which is often rendered more virulent by the aggravating symptoms of anger and jealousy. Pure love, in sharp contradistinction, is the bloom of spiritual perfection. Human love is so tethered by these limiting conditions that the spontaneous appearance of pure love from within becomes impossible. So, when such pure love arises in the aspirant it is always a gift. Pure love arises in the heart of the aspirant in response to the descent of grace from the Master. When pure love is first received as a gift of the Master it becomes lodged in the consciousness of the aspirant like a seed in favourable soil, and in the course of time the seed develops into a plant and then into a full-grown tree.

The descent of the grace of the Master is conditioned, however, by the preliminary spiritual prepara-

tion of the aspirant. This preliminary spiritual preparation for grace is never complete until the aspirant has built into his psychic make-up some divine attributes. When a person avoids back-biting and thinks more of the good points in others than of their bad points, and when he can practise supreme tolerance, and desires the good of others even at the cost of his own self, he is ready to receive the grace of the Master. One of the greatest obstacles hindering this spiritual preparation of the aspirant is worry. When, with supreme effort, this obstacle of worry is overcome, a way is paved for the cultivation of the divine attributes which constitute the spiritual preparation of the disciple. As soon as the disciple is ready the grace of the Master descends, for the Master, who is the ocean of divine love, is always on the look-out for the soul in whom his grace will fructify.

The kind of love which is awakened by the grace of the Master is a rare privilege. The mother who is willing to sacrifice all and to die for her child, and the martyr who is prepared to give up his very life for his country are indeed supremely noble, but they have not necessarily tasted this pure love which is born through the grace of the Master. Even the great yogis with long beards who, sitting in caves and mountains, are completely absorbed in deep samadhi, do not necessarily have this precious love.

Pure love awakened through the grace of the Master is more valuable than any other stimulus which may be utilised by the aspirant. Such love

not only combines in itself the merits of all the disciplines but excels them all in its efficacy to lead the aspirant to his goal. When this love is born the aspirant has only one desire, and that is to be united with the Divine Beloved. Such withdrawal of consciousness from all other desires leads to infinite purity; therefore nothing purifies the aspirant more completely than this love. The aspirant is always willing to offer everything for the Divine Beloved, and no sacrifice is too difficult for him. All his thoughts are turned away from the self and come to be exclusively centred on the Divine Beloved. Through the intensity of this ever-growing love he eventually breaks through the shackles of the self and becomes united with the Beloved. This is the consummation of love. When love has thus found its fruition it has become divine.

Divine love is qualitatively different from human love. Human love is for the many in the One and divine love is for the One in the many. Human love leads to innumerable complications and tangles, but divine love leads to integration and freedom. In divine love the personal and the impersonal aspects are equally balanced, but in human love the two aspects are in alternating ascendancy. When the personal note is predominant in human love it leads to utter blindness to the intrinsic worth of other forms. When, as in sense of duty, love is predominantly impersonal, it often makes one cold, rigid and mechanical. Sense of duty comes to the individual as an external constraint on behaviour, but in divine love there is unrestrained freedom and unbounded spontaneity. Human love in its personal and

impersonal aspects is limited, but. divine love with its fusion of the personal and the impersonal aspects is infinite in being and expression.

Even the highest type of human love is subject to the limitation of individual nature which persists till the seventh plane. Divine love arises after the disappearance of the individual mind and is free from the trammels of individual nature. In human love the duality of the lover and the beloved persists, but in divine love the lover and the Beloved become one. At this stage the aspirant has stepped out of the domain of duality and become one with God, for divine love is God. When the lover and the Beloved are one, that is the end and the beginning.

It is for love that the whole universe sprang into existence and it is for the sake of love that it is kept going. God descends into the realm of illusion because the apparent duality of the Beloved and the lover is eventually contributory to His conscious enjoyment of His own divinity. The development of love is conditioned and sustained by the tension of duality. God has to suffer apparent differentiation into a multiplicity of souls in order to carry on the game of love. They are His own forms, and in relation to them He at once assumes the role of the Divine Lover and the Divine Beloved. As the Beloved, He is the real and the ultimate object of their appreciation. As the Divine Lover, He is their real and ultimate saviour drawing them back to

Himself. Thus though the whole world of duality is only an illusion, that illusion has come into being for a significant purpose.

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

Evolution and Involution

The soul has developed full consciousness in the human form, and therefore there is no need for any further evolution of the gross form (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 soul has to reincarnate again and again in human forms.

While developing full consciousness of the gross world in the human form, the soul simultaneously develops the subtle and mental bodies; but as long as its consciousness is confined to the gross world alone, it cannot use these bodies consciously in wakefulness. It becomes conscious of these bodies and the corresponding worlds only when its full consciousness turns inwards, that is, towards itself. When the soul 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, just as it identifies itself with the gross body when it is conscious of the gross world through the gross body.

The homeward journey of the soul consists in freeing itself from the illusion of being identical with its bodies — gross, subtle and mental. When

the attention of the soul turns towards self-knowledge and self-realization, there is a gradual loosening and disappearance of the sanskaras which keep consciousness turned towards the phenomenal world. Disappearance of the sanskaras proceeds side by side with piercing through the veil of cosmic illusion, and the soul not only begins to transcend the different states of the phenomenal world, but also to know itself as different from its bodies. The path begins when the soul tries to find itself and turns its full consciousness towards Truth (God).

At the first stage the soul becomes totally unconscious of its gross body and of the gross world, and experiences the subtle world through the medium of its subtle body, with which it identifies itself. In the second stage the soul is totally unconscious of its gross and subtle bodies, and also of the gross 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 soul may be said to be face to face with God or the Over-Soul, which it recognizes as Infinite. But though it recognizes the Infinity of the Over-Soul, 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 soul, which in reality is infinite, sees its infinite state but still continues to regard itself as finite, because while seeing its infinite state, it looks upon itself as the mind. It imagines itself to be the mind and looks upon the object of the mind as the Over-Soul. Further, it not only longs to be one. with the

objectified Over-Soul but also tries hard to fulfil that longing.

In the third stage the full consciousness of the soul is drawn still further inwards (that is, towards itself) and it ceases to identify itself even with the mental body. Thus in the third and last stage (which is the goal), the soul ceases to identify itself with any of the three bodies which it had to develop for evolving full consciousness. Now it not only knows itself to be formless and beyond all the bodies and worlds, but also realizes with full consciousness its own unity with the Over-Soul, which is One, Indivisible, Real and Infinite. In this realization of the Truth it enjoys infinite bliss, peace, power and knowledge, which are characteristics of the Over-Soul.

The Spiritual Aspirant

When a person gives up uncritically accepted dogmas and creeds in favour of views and doctrines to which he has devoted thought, there is a certain amount of advance insofar as his mind has now begun to think and critically examine its beliefs. Very often, however, the newly held beliefs are seen to lack the fervour and enthusiasm which characterized allegiance to dogmas and creeds. If these newly held beliefs lack motive power, they belong only to the superficial aspect of life and they hang loosely upon the person like an overcoat. The mind has been emancipated from the domination of uncultured 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 so as to enlist its co-operative functioning.

In other words, the ideas which have been accepted after critical examination must again be released into active life if they are to yield their full benefit. In the process of practical life they often undergo a healthy transformation and become more soundly interwoven with the very fabric of life.

Spiritual effort demands not only physical endurance and courage, but also unshrinking forbearance and unassailable moral courage. The world is caught up in maya and is addicted to false values. Therefore the ways of the world run counter to the standards which the aspirant has set for himself. If he runs away from the world, that does not help him. He will again have to come back to the world to develop that quality which would enable him to face and accept the world as it is. Very often his path lies through the world which he has to serve in spite of not liking its ways. If the aspirant is to love and serve the world which does not understand him or even is intolerant towards him, he must develop infinite forbearance.

The task of forbearance would be easy if the aspirant could become reconciled to the ways of the world and accept them without challenge. Having seen the higher, however, it becomes his imperative duty to stand by it, even if the whole world opposes him. Loyalty to the higher truth of his own perception demands unshakeable moral courage and readiness to face the criticism, scorn and even hatred of those who have not yet begun to open out to the Truth.

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

Among the many things which the aspirant needs to cultivate there are few which are as important as cheerfulness, enthusiasm and equipoise, and these

are rendered impossible unless he succeeds in cutting out worry from his life.

The difficulties in the path can be overcome only if the aspirant has one-pointedness. One-pointedness implies dispassion concerning all the allurements of the phenomenal world. The mind must turn away from all temptations and complete control be established over the senses. Hence control and dispassion are both necessary to attain one-pointedness in the search for true understanding.

The supreme condition for sure and steady progress on the path is the benefit of guidance from the Master. The Master gives just that guidance and help which is necessary according to the immediate needs of the aspirant. All the Master expects is that the aspirant will try his best for spiritual advancement.

The aspirant always has to be in readiness to serve the cause of humanity. He need not apply himself to any type of work irrespective of his capacity. He has to select that portion of work which he is qualified to do by virtue of his individual aptitude and abilities. But whatever service he can render by virtue of his capacity, he renders even when the circumstances are most trying.

If the aspirant is completely detached from all works and their results he becomes free from the vitiating opposites of the great things and small things.

The aspirant can best assimilate the lessons of true service if he has the good fortune to be in contact with a Master. The Master teaches not through preaching but through example. When the Master is seen in his capacity of rendering service to humanity, the aspirant is quick to catch that spirit because of his love for the Master.

When the Master serves others he does so not because he is attached to the work, but in order to help, and also to set to his disciples an example in selfless service. While serving others, he sees himself in them and experiences having served himself. In his unwaning blissful feeling of oneness the Master knows himself to be at once the Lord of all and the servant of all. He therefore exemplifies the ideal of service in which there is no enslavement, either of him who receives service or of him who renders it. The aspirant can speedily realize the ideal of true service if he has before him the example of the Master; but the spiritual preparation of the aspirant can never be termed complete unless he has learned the art of rendering service which gives not boredom but joy, which brings not enslavement but freedom, which does not set claims and counter-claims but springs from the spontaneity of free give and take, which is free from the burden of personal want, and which is sustained by the sense of ever-renewed fulfilment.

True Discipleship

The fundamental requisite for the candidate who would be a true disciple is an unquestioning love for the Master. All the other streams of love ultimately join this great river of love for the Master and disappear in it.

The Master is the Divine Beloved, and when the disciple meets his Master, all that he has to do is to love him; for if the disciple loves the Master out of the fullness of his heart, his final union with him is assured. He need not worry about the quality of his love. He should love in spite of his weaknesses and not tarry till he can purify his own heart. The Master is the very 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 for the Master, he opens himself to the reception of the divine love which the Master pours upon him. All his weaknesses are consumed in this fire of divine love of which he thus becomes the recipient. If the disciple is to be free from all weaknesses and attain incorruptible and infinite purity, he has to dedicate his life to the Master without any reservations or provisions. He must offer his weaknesses as well as his vices, his merits as well as his sins. There should be no 'ifs' and 'buts' about his offering. His self-surrender must be so complete as to allow no room in his mind for even a shadow of any secret self desire.

Undivided loyalty to the Master does not introduce any narrowness in the sphere of the disciple's life. 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 therefore to participate in his cause, which is to serve all life. While sharing in the work of the Master, the disciple may be required to be in touch with the world; but, though moving in the world in accordance with the work which is in store for him, he is in inward contact with the Master as Infinite Being. Therefore, by sharing in the work of the Master the disciple comes closer to him and becomes an integral part of his consciousness. Serving the Master is the quickest means of realizing him.

The Nature of the Ego

Human consciousness would have been nothing more than a repository for the accumulated imprints of varied experiences, if it had not also contained the principle of ego-centred integration, which expresses itself in the attempt to organize and understand experience. The process of understanding experience implies capacity to hold different bits of experiences together as parts of a unity, and the capacity to evaluate them by being brought into mutual relation.

The ego emerges as an explicit and unfailing accompaniment to all the happenings of mental life in order to fulfil a certain need.

It would be a mistake therefore to imagine that the arising of the ego is without any purpose. Though it arises only to vanish in the end, it does temporarily fulfil a need which could not have been ignored in the long journey of the soul. The ego is not meant to be a permanent handicap, since it can be transcended and outgrown through spiritual endeavour; but the phase of ego-formation must nevertheless be looked upon as a necessary evil, which has to come into existence for the time being.

The mind rarely functions harmoniously because it is mostly guided and governed by forces in the sub-conscious, and few persons take the trouble to attain mastery over these hidden forces which direct

the course of 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 all the cases of conflict which are presented to the mind.

If the mind is to be freed from conflict it must always make the right choice and must unfailingly prefer the truly important to the unimportant. The choice has to be both intelligent and firm in all cases of conflict — important as well as unimportant. It has to be intelligent, because only through the pursuit of true and permanent values is it possible to attain a poise which is not detrimental to the dynamic and creative flow of mental life. An unintelligent choice, if it is stern, may temporarily overcome conflict, but it is bound in the long run to curtail the scope of life or to hamper the fulfilment of the whole personality. Moreover, the conflict will surely reappear in some other form if it has not been intelligently solved. An intelligent solution, on the other hand, requires an insight into true values, which have to be disentangled from false values. The problem of the conflict of desires thus turns out to be the problem of conflicting values, and the solution of mental conflict therefore requires a deep search for the real meaning of life. It is only through wisdom that the mind can be freed from conflict.

The process of bringing conflict to the surface of consciousness should not degenerate however into a process of imagining conflict where there is none. The sure sign of a real hidden conflict is the sense that the whole of one's heart is not in the thought or

action which happens to be dominant at the moment. There is a vague feeling of a narrowing down or a radical restriction of life. On such occasion an attempt should be made to analyse the mental state through deep introspection, for such analysis brings to light the hidden conflicts concerning the matter.

When the conflicts are thus brought to light it is possible to resolve them through intelligent and firm choice. The most important requirement for the satisfactory resolution of conflict is motive power or inspiration, which can only come from a burning longing for some comprehensive ideal.

The establishment of the true ideal is a beginning of right valuation. Right valuation in turn is the undoing of the constructions of the ego, which thrives on false valuation. Any action which expresses the true values of life contributes towards the disintegration of the ego, which is a product of ages of ignorant action. Life cannot be permanently imprisoned within the cage of the ego. It must at some time strive towards the Truth. In the ripeness of evolution comes the momentous discovery that life cannot be understood and lived fully as long as it is made to move round the pivot of the ego. Man is then driven by the logic of his own experience to find the true centre of experience and reorganize his life in the Truth. This entails the wearing out of the ego and its replacement by Truth-consciousness.

The ego affirms its separateness through craving, hate, anger, fear or jealousy. When a person craves for the company of others he is keenly conscious of being separate from them and thus feels his own separate existence intensely. The feeling of separa-

tion from others is most acute where there is great and unrelieved craving. In hate and anger also the other person is, so to speak, thrown out of one's own being and regarded not only as a foreigner but as definitely hostile to the thriving of the ego. Fear also is a subtle form of affirming separateness and exists where the consciousness of duality is unabated. Fear acts as a thick curtain between the 'I' and the 'you' and it not only nourishes deep distrust of the other, but inevitably brings about a shrinking and withdrawal of consciousness so as to exclude the being of another from the context of one's own life. Therefore, not only other souls but God should be loved, and not feared. To fear God or His manifestations is to strengthen duality; to love them is to weaken it.

The digging out of the buried roots of the ego from the deeper layers of the subconscious and bringing them to the light of consciousness is one 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 clear and simple, for the explicit ego has a tendency to live through any one of the opposites of experience. If it is ousted from one opposite by the intensive operation of intelligent consciousness, it has a tendency to move to the other extreme and live through it. Through repeated alternation between the opposites of experience the ego eludes the attack of intelligent consciousness and seeks to perpetuate itself.

The ousting of the ego from consciousness is necessarily an intricate process, and cannot be achieved by exercising a constantly uniform approach. Since the nature of the ego is very complicated, an equally complicated treatment is needed to get rid of it. Since the ego has almost infinite possibilities for making its existence secure and creating self-delusion, the aspirant finds it impossible to cope with the endless upcropping of fresh forms of the ego. He can hope to deal successfully with the deceptive tricks of the ego only through the help and grace of a Perfect Master.

In most cases it is only when the aspirant is driven to realize the futility of all his efforts that he approaches the Master. By himself he can make no headway towards the goal which he dimly sights and seeks. The stubborn persistence of the ego exasperates him, and in this clear perception of helplessness he surrenders to the Master as his last and only resort. The self-surrender amounts to an open admission that the aspirant now has given up all hope of tackling the problems of the ego by himself and that he relies solely upon the Master. It is like saying, 'I am unable to end the wretched existence of this ego. I therefore look to you to intervene and slay it.' This step, however, turns out to be more fruitful than all other measures which might have been tried for the slimming down and subsequent annihilation of the ego. 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 of all creation.

Mental Impressions

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, when considered objectively, are seen to be 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 such impressions in the course of its experience. The problem of understanding the significance of human experience however, turns round the problem of understanding the formation and function of sanskaras (impressions).

The sanskaras which the soul gathers during the period of organic evolution are natural sanskaras. These sanskaras come into existence as the soul successively takes up and abandons the various subhuman forms, thus gradually passing from the apparently inanimate state of the stone or metal to the human state, where there is full development of consciousness. All the sanskaras which cluster round the soul before it attains the human form are the product of natural evolution and are referred to as natural sanskaras. The sanskaras which get attached to the soul during the human stage are

cultivated under the moral freedom of consciousness with its accompanying responsibility of choice between good and bad, virtue and vice. They are referred to as non-natural sanskaras. The non-natural sanskaras are not as difficult to eradicate as the natural sanskaras which have an ancient heritage and are therefore more firmly rooted.

The Over-Soul cannot attain self-knowledge through the ordinary consciousness of humanity because it is enveloped in a multitude of sanskaras or impressions, The acquisition of sanskaras is unceasingly going on during the process of evolution as well as during the later period of human activities. This acquisition of sanskaras may be likened to the winding up of a piece of string around a stick, the string representing the sanskaras and the stick representing the mind of the individual soul. The winding up starts from the beginning of creation and persists through all the evolutionary stages of the human form, and the wound string represents all the positive sanskaras — natural as well as non-natural.

The power and effect of impressions can hardly be overestimated. An impression is solidified might, and its inertness makes it immobile and durable. It can become so engraved upon the mind of man that despite his sincere desire and effort to eradicate it, it takes its own time and has a way of working itself into action directly or indirectly. The mind contains many heterogeneous sanskaras and, while seeking expression in consciousness, they often clash with each other. The clash of sanskaras is experienced

in consciousness as a mental conflict. Experience is bound to be chaotic and enigmatic, full of oscillations, confusion and complex tangles until consciousness is freed from all sanskaras, good and bad. Experience can become truly harmonious and integral only when consciousness is emancipated from the impressions.

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

1. *The cessation of new sanskaras.*

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

2. *The wearing out of old sanskaras.*

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

3. *The unwinding of past sanskaras.*

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

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

If the psychic energy which is locked up in sanskaras is sublimated and diverted into other channels,

they are dispersed and heaved and tend to disappear.

5. *The wiping out of sanskaras.*

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

Mind and Heart

The different avenues which lead to spiritual understanding can be understood best through an initial distinction between spirit and matter. Matter is understood through the mind or the intellect working upon data given through the different senses, but spirit can be understood only through the spirit itself. The best approach for the understanding of spirit is through the heart and not through the mind.

When mind is turned towards spiritual problems it tackles them along lines to which it is accustomed and, in so doing, uses concepts which it has invented for the intellectual understanding of material things. However, this approach to understanding spiritual problems is doomed to fail, because all concepts which the intellect evolves for knowledge of material things are inadequate for understanding the spirit. It is like trying to see through the ears or hear through the eyes.

As contrasted with the method of the mind, which has its foundation in sensations and which proceeds through inference and proofs to conclusions, there is the more direct method of the heart which intuitively grasps the values that are progressively realized in the life of man as he goes through the

diverse experiences of the world, and as his attention is centred on arriving at spiritual understanding.

In the life of most persons the mind and the heart are at loggerheads and the conflict between the two creates confusion. The heart, which in its own way feels the unity of life, wants to fulfil itself through a life of love, sacrifice and service. It is keen about giving instead of taking. It derives its driving power from the inmost psychic urge, expressing itself through the immediate intuitions of the inner life. It does not care for the proofs or intellectual corroborations which the mind seeks while dealing with material objects.

In its objective handling of the material world mind is saturated with experiences of multiplicity and separateness, and therefore it feeds the egocentric tendencies which divide man from man and make him selfish and possessive. But the heart, feeling in its inner experiences the glow of love, has glimpses of the unity of the spirit, and therefore seeks expression through self-giving tendencies which unite man with man and make him selfless and generous. Therefore there is necessarily a conflict between the 'inner voice' and the deliverances of the intellect which are based upon the apparent and superficial aspects of life.

When the mind encroaches upon the province of the heart, it does so by requiring assurance or conviction as a condition that must be fulfilled before there is a release of love. But love is nothing if it is not spontaneous. It cannot be a conclusion of reasoning. It is not a fruit of the spirit of bargain. If you want to be certain about the object of love

before giving your love, it is only a form of calculating selfishness.

Conviction and corroboration become important when a person desires guarantees for securing certain definite and tangible results in the objective world. Even if we suppose that a person is intellectually convinced of the existence of God by means of miracles or some such objective data, this will not necessarily release his heart. The allegiance which he might perhaps give to God as a result of such cold revelation will be either through fear or through a sense of duty. Love in which there is no sense of restraint cannot be born of a conviction which is based upon things accessible to the mind. And where there is no love, there is no bliss or beauty of being. In fact, God's nature as the ocean of love cannot be grasped by the mind. God has to be known through love and not through intellectual search after miracles.

When a person has his eye on the results of actions instead of being concerned solely with their intrinsic worth, he is trying to tackle spiritual problems through the mind alone, and in doing so, is interfering with the proper functioning of the heart. You cannot love through the intellect. What you may get through the mind is a theory of love, but not love Itself.

. Love and happiness are the only important things in life, and they are both absent in the dry arid factual knowledge which is accessible to the intellect. Spirituality does not consist of intellectual knowledge of true values but in their realization. It is this knowledge of inner realization which is worthy of

being called spiritual understanding, and this is more dependent upon the heart than on the mind.

The mind is the treasure-house of learning but the heart is the treasure-house of spiritual wisdom. It is futile to try to glean knowledge of true values by exercise of the mind alone. Mind cannot tell you which things are worth having, it can only tell you how to achieve the ends accepted from non-intellectual sources. In most persons the mind accepts ends from the promptings of wants, but this means denial of the life of the spirit. Only when the mind accepts its ends and values from the deepest promptings of the heart does it contribute to the life of the spirit.

Thus mind has to work in co-operation with the heart; factual knowledge has to be subordinated to intuitive perceptions; and heart has to be allowed full freedom in determining the ends of life without any interference from the mind. The mind has a place in practical life, but its role begins after the heart has had its say.

Spiritual understanding is born of harmony between mind and heart. This harmony of mind and heart does not require the mixing up of their functions. It does not imply cross-functioning, but co-operative functioning. Their functions are neither identical nor co-ordinate. Mind and heart must of course be balanced, but this balance cannot be secured by pitching the mind against the heart or by pitching the heart against the mind. It can be attained not through mechanical tension, but

through intelligent adjustment.

Mind and heart may be said to be balanced when they serve their proper purpose and when they perform their respective functions without erring this way or that. It is only when they are so balanced that there can be true harmony between them. Such harmony of mind and heart is the most important condition of the integral undivided life of spiritual understanding.

Desires

The wearing out and the unwinding of sanskaras can also be effected by denying to desires their expression and fulfilment. People differ in their capacity and aptitude for rejecting desires. Those in whom desires arise with great impulsive velocity are unable to curb them at their source, but they can refrain from seeking their fulfilment 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 seeds of future desires. On the other hand, if a man translates his desires into action, he may spend up and exhaust some impressions, but he is creating fresh impressions during the very process of fulfilling the desires, and is thus sowing seeds for future desires which, in their turn, are bound to demand their own satisfaction. The process of spending up or exhausting impressions through expression and fulfilment 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 spontaneous cogitation about these desires. This cogitation results in the wearing out of the corresponding sanskaras. It should be noted, however, that such spontaneous cogitation does not bring about the desired results if it takes the form of mental in-

dulgence in the desires. When there is a deliberate and wanton attempt to welcome and harbour the desires in the mind, such cogitation will not only have no spiritual value but may itself 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 not be any effort to perpetuate the memory of these desires. When desires are denied their expression and fulfilment in action and are allowed to pass through the intensity of the fire of a cogitative consciousness which does not sanction them, the seeds of these desires are consumed.

Desirelessness

Rejection of desires is a preparation for desirelessness or the state of non-wanting which alone can bring about true freedom. Wanting is necessarily binding, whether it is fulfilled or not. When it is fulfilled, it leads to further wanting and thus perpetuates the bondage of the spirit. When it is unfulfilled it leads to disappointment and suffering which, through their sanskaras, fetter the freedom of the spirit in their own way. There is no end to wanting because the external and internal stimuli of the mind are constantly alluring it into a state of wanting or disliking something (which is another form of wanting). The external stimuli are the sensations of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. The internal stimuli are those that arise in the mind-stuff of man from the memories of the present life and the totality of sanskaras gathered by consciousness during the evolutionary period and during human lives. When the mind is trained to remain unmoved and balanced in the presence of all external and internal stimuli, it arrives at the state of non-wanting, and by not wanting anything (except the Absolute Reality which is beyond the opposites of stimuli) it is possible to unwind the sanskaras of wanting.

Wanting is a state of disturbed equilibrium of mind and non-wanting is a state of stable poise. The poise of non-wanting can only be maintained by an unceasing disentanglement from all stimuli, whether pleasant or painful, agreeable or disagreeable. In order to remain unmoved by the joys and sorrows of this world, the mind must be completely detached from the external and internal stimuli. Though the mind is constantly fortifying itself through its own constructive suggestions, there is always the chance of these outposts of defence being washed away by some sudden and unexpected wave arising in the ocean of natural and mental environment. When this happens you may, for the time, feel completely lost, but the attitude of non-attachment can keep you safe. This attitude consists in the application of the principle of 'Not-this, Not-this.' It implies constant effort to maintain watchful detachment in relation to the alluring opposites of limited experience. It is not possible to deny only the disagreeable stimuli and remain inwardly attached to the agreeable stimuli. If the mind is to remain unmoved by the onslaughts of the opposites, it cannot continue to be attached to the expressions of affection and be influenced by them. The equipoise consists in meeting both alternatives with complete detachment.

Solitude and Fasting

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

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

Food is a direct necessity of life and its continued denial is bound to be disastrous to health. Therefore external fasting should be periodical and only for a short time. It has to be continued till there is complete victory over the craving for food. By bringing into action all the vital and psychic forces to withstand the craving for food, it is possible to free the mind from attachment to food. External fasting has no spiritual value when it is undertaken with the motive of securing the formation of the body or for the sake of self-demonstration. It should not be used as an instrument for self-assertion. In

the same way, it should not be carried to the extreme - until the body is reduced to its limits. Self-mortification through prolonged fasting does not necessarily promote freedom from the craving for food. On the contrary, it is likely to invite a subsequent reaction towards a life of extravagant indulgence in food. If, however, external fasting is undertaken in moderation and for spiritual purposes, it facilitates the achievement of internal fasting. When external and internal fasting are whole-hearted and faithful, 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 and expressing the feeling of remorse which a man feels after realizing that he has done some wrongful act. Repentance consists in mentally reviving the wrongs with severe self-condemnation. It is facilitated by availing oneself of the different circumstances and situations which stir up penance, or remaining vulnerable during periods of emotional outbursts, or by deliberate efforts to recall the past incidents with a bleeding heart and acute 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. Suppose a person has done irreparable wrong to someone through uncontrolled greed, anger or lust. Some time or other he is bound to have the reaction of self-killing remorse and experience the pricks of conscience. If at this time he vividly realizes the evil for which he was responsible, the intensity of emotional awareness by which it is accompanied consumes the tendencies for which he stands self-condemned.

Self-condemnation sometimes expresses itself through different forms of self-mortification. Some aspirants even inflict wounds on their bodies when they are in a mood of penitence, but such drastic expression of remorse must be discouraged as a

general usage. Some Hindu aspirants try to cultivate humility by making it a rule to fall at the feet of everyone whom they meet. To a man of strong will and stable character, penance can bring the desired good effect through self-humiliation, which unwinds and eradicates the different sanskaras connected with good and bad actions. Others who might be feeble in their will-power also derive benefit from penance if they are under sympathetic and loving direction. When penance is carefully nourished and practised, it inevitably results in the psychic revocation of undesirable modes of thought and conduct and makes a man amenable to a life of purity and service.

It should, however, be carefully noted that there is always the danger in penance that the mind might dwell too long upon the wrongs done and thus develop the morbid habit of wailing and weeping over petty things. Such sentimental extravagance is often an indiscriminate waste of psychic energy and is in no way helpful for the wearing out or the unwinding of sanskaras. Penance should not be like everyday repentance which follows everyday weaknesses. It should not become a tedious and sterile habit of immoderate and gloomy pondering over one's own failings. Sincere penance does not consist in perpetuating grief for the wrongs, but in resolving to avoid in the future those deeds which call forth remorse. If it leads to lack of self-respect or self-confidence, it has not served its true purpose which is merely to render impossible the repetition of certain types of action.

Meditation

Meditation may be described as the path which the individual cuts for himself while trying to get beyond the limitations of the mind.

Meditation has often been misunderstood as a mechanical process of forcing the mind upon some idea or object. Most people naturally have an aversion to meditation because they experience great difficulty in attempting to coerce the mind in a particular direction, or to pin it down to one particular thing. Any purely mechanical handling of the mind is not only irksome but is bound ultimately to be unsuccessful.

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

Meditation should be distinguished from concentration. Meditation is the first stage of a process which gradually develops into concentration. In concentration the mind seeks to unite with its object by the process of fixing itself upon that object, whereas meditation consists in thorough thinking about a

particular object to the exclusion of every other thing. In concentration there is practically no movement of the mind, but in meditation the mind moves from one relevant idea to another. In concentration the mind merely dwells upon some form, or a pithy and terse formula, without amplifying it through a succession of ideas. In meditation the mind tries to understand and assimilate the object by dwelling upon diverse attributes of the form or various implications of the formula. In concentration as well as in meditation, there is a peaceful intermingling of love and longing for the divine object or principle on which the mind dwells, and both these psychic activities are very different from the merely mechanical processes which have rigid regularity and unrelieved monotony.

Persons with no capacity for intense concentration have to begin with meditation, whereas for those who have the capacity for concentration, meditation is unnecessary.

Meditation should not be resorted to with a heavy heart. One has to be serious about meditation, but not grave or melancholy. Humour and cheerfulness not only do not interfere with the progress of meditation but actually contribute to it. Meditation should not be turned into a distasteful and tiresome thing. The aspirant should freely allow himself the natural joy which is attendant upon successful meditation without getting addicted to it.

In ordinary thinking the uninterrupted flow of relevant trains of ideas is common, but when the

mind sets itself to systematic meditation, there is inevitably a reactionary tendency for irrelevant and contrary thoughts to emerge and create disturbances. This is the law of the mind and the aspirant should not be upset by the appearance in consciousness of many contrary and unwholesome thoughts which had hitherto never made their appearance. Meditation involves bringing the subconscious contents of the mind to the forefront of consciousness. The process of meditation invites many absurd and unwanted thoughts. The aspirant must expect and be prepared for all these disturbing thoughts and should exercise inexhaustible patience with unshakeable confidence that ultimately all these disturbances will be overcome.

It is useless to waste psychic energy by trying directly to combat and repress disturbing thoughts. By recognizing their irrelevance and worthlessness, and the relative value and importance of the object of meditation, it becomes possible to let the disturbing thoughts die through sheer neglect, thus making the mind permanently steady in the object of meditation.

Meditation is of different types which can be conveniently distinguished from each other on the basis of three distinct principles. They can be classified either on the basis of the function meditation performs in spiritual advancement, or the part of personality that is predominantly brought into play during the process of meditation, or the items of experience it tries to understand.

With reference to the first principle, meditation has to serve the purpose of associating consciousness with the eternal Truth, and of dissociating consciousness from the false and unimportant things of the phenomenal world. There thus arise two types of meditation. Associative meditation predominantly involves the synthetic activity of the mind, and dissociative meditation predominantly involves the analytic activity of the mind. Associative meditation may be illustrated by the formula 'I am Infinite,' and dissociative meditation may be illustrated by the formula, 'I am not my desires.'

Through associative meditation the aspirant tries to unite with the spiritual ideal as mentally constructed by him. Through dissociative meditation the aspirant tries to separate himself from the conditions which come to him as anti-spiritual. Associative meditation is a process of assimilation of the essentials of spiritual life; dissociative meditation is a process of elimination of those factors which prevent the life of the spirit.

Dissociative meditation is a preliminary to associative meditation. It comes first and has its own value, but it is meant merely to pave the way for associative meditation. If a person is surrounded by shadows, it does not help very much to be continuously upset about them. What really matters is not aimless discontent with existing limitations but directive effort towards the established ideal. As long as the person is turned towards the sun and he is trying to walk into the light, the shadows which encircle him cannot be a serious handicap to his emancipation.

Through the application of the second principle (the part of the personality which is predominantly brought into play during the process of meditation) we have three distinct types of meditation.

In the first type the intellect is predominantly brought into play; it might be called 'discriminative meditation.' In the second type the heart is predominantly brought into play; it might be called 'the meditation of the heart.' In the third type the active nature of man is predominantly brought into play; it might be called 'the meditation of action.'

Discriminative meditation is represented by intellectual assertion of a formula like 'I am not my body, but the Infinite.' The meditation of the heart is represented by a steady and unhampered flow of love from the aspirant to the Divine Beloved. 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, meditation of the heart is the highest and most important, but the other two types also have their own value and cannot be neglected without serious detriment to the spiritual progress of the aspirant.

Occultism

Spiritual emancipation of consciousness brings with it an unfoldment of many psychic capacities which are latent in the human soul. This unfoldment increases the scope and range of human consciousness. New elements often play an important part in helping or hindering the spiritual emancipation of consciousness. Therefore, the aspirant not only has to understand the value of such occult experiences as unusual and significant dreams, visions, glimpses of the subtle world and astral journeys, but also has to learn to distinguish such occult realities from hallucinations and delusions.

Most dreams are purely subjective and subconscious experiences of the subtle body and they have no special spiritual significance, except that they can be occasions for forging new sanskaras or spending up old ones and that occasionally they shed light upon the hidden complexes and unfaced problems of personality. Such dreams can never include something which is not in some way a part of the past experience of the person. They allow scope for novelty only in respect of new combinations of items which have already appeared in past experience.

The rare types of dreams are those about persons and things unknown in this life but known in some past life or lives. Still more rare are the dreams of

persons and things which have never appeared in this life or former lives but are going to appear in this life in the future. Ordinary dreams are thus utterly different from dreams which have occult significance.

Very often, when the aspirant is having psychic unfoldment he has occasional experience of the subtle world in the form of significant visions, lights, colours, sounds, smells or contacts. At first these experiences are fitful and the aspirant is likely to treat them as hallucinations. But even when he treats them as hallucinations, he finds it impossible to resist their directive influence because of their intrinsic potency. The spiritual journey, however, becomes more smooth if the aspirant learns to cultivate the right attitude towards occult experiences, which consists in taking them for what they are worth. This balanced attitude is just the thing which the aspirant in the initial stages finds it difficult to maintain.

The beginner is apt to exaggerate the importance of his glimpses into the inner worlds and develops an ungovernable craving for repetition of these experiences, or he tries to treat them as abnormal phenomena and underrates their significance. Of these two alternatives, the attitude of exaggerating the importance of occult experiences is the most common, because the novelty and rarity of occult experiences are the factors which contribute to charging them with overwhelming importance.

In the initial stages the appearance of occult realities is very fitful and the aspirant sometimes doubts their claims to validity, treating them with caution in order to rule out the possibility of his being deluded. But occult experiences often bear unmistakable credentials for their own claim to validity, and even when any such credentials are not evident they compel due respect and attention because of the unusual significance, bliss, peace and directive value with which they are surcharged. Mainly because of these characteristics, the aspirant is able to distinguish real occult experiences from hallucinations and delusions.

Hallucinations are erroneous perceptions and consist in actually seeing or hearing things which do not really exist. Though they are clearly different in this respect from merely imagining things, they remain objects of doubt in spite of their similarity to normal perceptions. Delusions are even more deceptive because they consist not only in actually seeing things which really do not exist, but also in having complete conviction of their existence. But ordinary hallucinations and delusions do not bring extraordinary bliss or peace to the person who experiences them. The bliss and peace which are attendant upon real occult experiences are a fairly reliable criterion by which to distinguish them as genuine. Hallucinations are like the nightmare of wakeful consciousness.

Even when occult experience can be clearly differentiated from illusion, it is deficient in power and efficacy and subject to poignant doubt. This

happens when the person who has had the experience discusses the matter with others who, because of their incapacity to understand such things, throw out contrary thoughts and shake his conviction. For this reason, in ancient times, the Master usually required a disciple to maintain strict secrecy about his occult experiences. Even a deep experience is likely to become weak through the contradiction and scepticism of others, unless the aspirant has learned to follow his own inner experience irrespective of what others might think or say.

The harnessing of occult forces is not to be regarded in any way as a substitute for the inner effort which the aspirant must make to advance further. When occult experiences are gifts from the Masters or spiritually advanced souls, they serve the purpose of unveiling much of the hitherto obscured intuition, removing some of the difficulties on the path and filling the aspirant with the great confidence and enthusiasm which are necessary to cope with the new requirements of each stage of the path. But the aspirant makes real progress by putting into practice the best intuitions of his heart, not by being the merely passive recipient of occult experiences.

Most persons consciously or unconsciously attach undue importance to occult phenomena and mistake them for spirituality. For them, miracles and spirit-phenomena are the real topics of absorbing interest, and this is presumed to indicate an interest in the true life of the spirit. There is a very clear and definite distinction, however, between occultism and

mysticism, spiritualism and spirituality; and any failure to grasp the full import of this difference can only lead to confusion.

All miracles belong to the phenomenal world, which is the world of shadows. As phenomena, they are subject to change, and nothing that changes can have lasting value. Realization of the eternal Truth is an initiation into the unchangeable Being, which is the Supreme Reality; and no acquaintance with the occult world or capacity to manipulate its forces can really amount to realization of the Truth.

Occult phenomena are as much within the domain of false imagination as are ordinary phenomena of the gross world. From the spiritual point of view the only important thing is to realize the divine life and help others to realize it by manifesting it in everyday happenings.

To penetrate into the essence of all being and significance and to release the fragrance of that inner attainment for the guidance and benefit of others, by expressing, in the world of forms, truth, love, purity and beauty — this is the sole game which has intrinsic and absolute worth. All other happenings, incidents and attainments in themselves can have no lasting importance.

Suffering

The simple life of freedom and happiness is one of the most difficult things to achieve. Man has complicated his life by the growth of artificial and imaginary desires, and returning to simplicity amounts to the renunciation of desires. Desires have become part and parcel of the limited self of man, with the result that he is reluctant to abandon them unless the lesson that desires are born of ignorance is impressed upon his mind through acute mental suffering. When a man is confronted with great suffering through his desires, he understands their true nature. When such suffering comes it should be welcomed. Suffering may come in order to eliminate further suffering. A thorn may be taken out by another thorn, and suffering by suffering. Suffering has to come when it is of use in purging the soul of its desires; it is then as necessary as medicine to a sick man.

However, ninety-nine per cent of human suffering is not necessary. Through obstinate ignorance people inflict suffering upon themselves and their fellow-men, and then, strangely enough, they ask, 'Why should we suffer?' Suffering is generally symbolized by scenes of war: devastated houses, broken and bleeding limbs, the agonies of torture and death; but war does not embody any special suffering, People really suffer all the time. They suffer because

they are not satisfied — they want more and more. War is more an outcome of the universal suffering of dissatisfaction than an embodiment of representative suffering. Through his greed, vanity and cruelty, man brings untold suffering upon himself and others.

Man is not content to create suffering only for himself, but he is relentlessly zealous in creating suffering for his fellow-men. Man seeks his own happiness even at the cost of the happiness of others, thus giving rise to cruelty and unending wars. As long as he thinks only of his own happiness he does not find it. In the pursuit of his own individual happiness the limited self of man becomes accentuated and burdensome. When man is merely selfish he can, in the false pursuit of separate and exclusive happiness, become utterly callous and cruel to others, but this recoils upon him by poisoning the very spring of his life. Loveless life is most unlovely; only a life of love is worth living.

Selfishness

Selfishness comes into existence owing to the tendency of the desires to find fulfilment in action and experience.

The range of selfishness is equal to the range of desires. Owing to the hindrance of multifarious desires, it becomes impossible for the soul to find free and full expression of its true being, and life becomes self-centred and narrow. The entire life of the personal ego is continually in the grip of wanting, that is, an attempt to seek fulfilment of desires through things that change and vanish. But there can be no real fulfilment through the transient things. The satisfaction derived from the fleeting things of life is not lasting and the wants of man remain unfulfilled. There is thus a general sense of dissatisfaction accompanied by all kinds of worries.

Disappointment comes into existence when either lust, greed or anger is thwarted in its expression. It is thus a general reaction of the gross, subtle and mental entanglement. It is a depression caused by the non-fulfilment of lust, greed and anger which, together, are co-extensive with selfishness. Selfishness, which is the common basis of these three ingredient vices, is thus the ultimate cause of disappointment and worries. It defeats itself. It seeks fulfilment

through desires but succeeds only in arriving at unending dissatisfaction.

Selfishness inevitably leads to dissatisfaction and disappointment, because desires are endless. The problem of happiness is, therefore, the problem of dropping out desires. Desires, however, cannot be effectively overcome through mechanical repression. They can be annihilated only through knowledge. If you dive deep in the realm of thoughts and think seriously for just a few minutes, you will realize the emptiness of desires. Think of what you have enjoyed all these years and what you have suffered. All that you have enjoyed through life is today nil. All that you have suffered through life is also nothing in the present. All was illusory. It is your right to be happy and yet you create your own unhappiness by wanting things. Wanting is the source of perpetual restlessness. If you do not get the thing you wanted, you are disappointed. And if you get it, you want more and more of it and become unhappy. Say, 'I do not want anything,' and be happy. The continuous realization of the futility of wants will eventually lead you to knowledge. This Self-knowledge will give you the freedom from wants which leads to the road to abiding happiness.

Wants should be carefully distinguished from needs. As long as man has a body there will be some needs, and it is necessary to meet these needs. But wants are an outcome of infatuated imagination. They must be scrupulously killed if there is to be any happiness. As the very being of selfishness consists of desires, renunciation of wants becomes a process of death. Dying in the ordinary sense means

parting with the physical body, but dying in the real sense means renunciation of low sense-desires.

The dawn of love facilitates the death of selfishness. Being is dying by loving. If you cannot love one another, how can you love even those who torture you? The limits of selfishness are created by ignorance. When a man realizes that he can have a more glorious satisfaction by widening the sphere of his interest and activities, he is heading towards the life of service. At this stage he entertains many good desires. He wants to make others happy by relieving distress and helping them. And though even in such good desires there is often an indirect and latent reference to the self, narrow selfishness has no grip over good deeds. Even good desires may, in a sense, be said to be a form of enlightened and extended selfishness, for, like bad desires, they too move within the domain of duality. But as man entertains good desires his selfishness embraces a larger conception which eventually brings about its own extinction. Instead of merely trying to be luminous, arrestive and possessive, man learns to be useful to others.

Bad desires are ordinarily referred to as forms of selfishness and good desires are referred to as forms of selflessness. But there is no hard and fast line dividing selfishness from selflessness. Selfishness and selflessness are two phases of the life of the personal ego, and these two phases are continuous with each other. Selfishness arises when all the desires are centred around the narrow individuality. Selfless-

ness arises when this crude organization of desires suffers disintegration and there is a general dispersing of desires with the result that they cover a much wider sphere. Selfishness is the narrowing down of interests to a limited field; selflessness is the extension of interests over a wide field.

Selfishness must be transmuted into selflessness before the domain of duality is completely transcended. Persistent and continuous performance of good deeds wears out selfishness. Selfishness extended and expressed in the form of good deeds becomes the instrument of its own destruction.

The good is the main link between selfishness thriving and dying. When the evil tendencies are completely replaced by good tendencies, selfishness is transformed into selflessness, that is, individual selfishness loses itself in universal interest. Though this selfless and good life is also bound by the opposites, goodness is a necessary step towards freedom from the opposites. Goodness is the means by which the soul annihilates its own ignorance.

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

while performing the worldly activities or discharging the responsibilities arising from the specific place and position of the individual, the inner spirit should remain free from the burden of desires.

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

Happiness

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

. Everyone seeks to be happy, yet most persons are immersed in some kind of suffering. If at times they do get small instalments of happiness in their lives, it is neither unadulterated nor abiding.

Man does not seek suffering; but it comes to him as an inevitable outcome of the very manner in which he seeks happiness. He seeks happiness through the fulfilment of his desires but such fulfilment is never an assured thing, hence in the pursuit of desires

man is also unavoidably preparing for the suffering from their non-fulfilment.

Goaded by multifarious desires, man seeks the pleasures of the world with unabating hope. His zest for pleasures does not remain uniform, however, because even while he is reaching for the cup of pleasure, he often has to gulp down doses of suffering. His enthusiasm for pleasure is abated by suffering, which often follows in pleasure's wake. He is subject to sudden moods and impulses. Sometimes he is happy and elated, at other times he is very unhappy and downhearted. His moods change as his desires are fulfilled or frustrated. Satisfaction of some desires yields momentary happiness, but this happiness does not last, and it soon leads to the reaction of depression. His moods subject him to ups and downs and to constant change.

Complete detachment is one of the essential conditions of lasting and true happiness, for he who has complete detachment no longer creates for himself the suffering which is due to the unending thralldom produced by desires.

Desirelessness makes a man firm like a rock. He is neither moved by pleasure nor by sorrow; he is not upset by the onslaughts of opposites. The steadiness and equanimity which remain unaffected by any opposites is possible only through complete detachment, which is an essential condition of lasting and true happiness. He who has complete detachment is not at the mercy of the opposites of experience,

and being free from the thralldom of all desires, he no longer creates his own suffering.

The state of complete desirelessness is latent in everyone, and when, through complete detachment, one reaches the state of wanting nothing, one taps the unfailing inner source of eternal and unfading happiness which is not based upon the objects of the world, but is sustained by self-knowledge and self-realization.

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

When true love is awakened in man it leads him to the realization of God and opens up an unlimited field of lasting and unfading happiness. The happiness of God-realization is the goal of all creation. It is not possible for a person to have the slightest idea of that inexpressible happiness without actually having the experience of Godhood. The idea which the worldly man has of suffering or happiness is entirely limited. The real happiness which comes

through realizing God is worth all the physical and mental suffering in the universe. Then all suffering is as if it had never been.

Even those who are not God-realized can control their minds through yoga to such an extent that nothing makes them feel pain or suffering, even if they are buried or thrown into boiling oil. But though the advanced yogis can brave and annul any suffering, they do not experience the happiness of realizing God. When one becomes God, everything else is zero. The happiness of God-realization, therefore, does not suffer curtailment by anything. The happiness of God-realization is self-sustained, eternally fresh and unfading, boundless and indescribable. It is for this happiness that the world has sprung into existence.

Faith

One of the most important qualifications for the spiritual aspirant is faith. There are three kinds of faith: (i) faith in oneself, (ii) faith in the Master. and (iii) faith in life. Faith is so indispensable to life that unless it is present in some degree, life itself would be impossible. It is because of faith that co-operative and social life becomes possible. It is faith in each other that facilitates a free give and take of love, a free sharing of work and its results. When life is burdened with unjustified fear of one another it becomes cramped and restricted.

Unshakeable faith in oneself is as rare as implicit faith in some other person. Few have developed it to the degree which ensures effective and constructive control of oneself. In most persons faith in oneself is always being challenged and undone by the constant experience of one's own frailties and failings which often prove to be unyielding. even when one knows what is right. The self-confidence which is thus in perpetual danger of being shattered. can be securely established only when the man has before him the vision of the living example of perfection, and has faith in it.

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

Life, as man knows it in himself, or in most of his fellow-men, may be narrow, twisted and perverse, but life as he sees it in the Master is unlimited, pure and untainted. In the Master, man sees his own ideal realized; the Master is what his own deeper self would rather be. He- sees in the Master the reflection of the best in himself which is yet to be, but which he will surely one day attain. Faith in the Master therefore becomes the chief motive-power for realizing the divinity which is latent in man.

True faith is grounded in the deeper experiences of the spirit and the unerring deliverances of purified intuition. It is not to be regarded as the antithesis of critical reason but as the unfailing guide of critical reason. When critical reason is implemented by a deep and living faith, based on pure intuition, its functioning becomes creative, fruitful and significant instead of barren, ineffective and meaningless.

True faith is a form of sight and not of blindness. It need not be afraid of the free functioning of critical reason.

Growth

The youth of today is the ruling force of tomorrow. All things have a small beginning: the seedling grows into a tree, the stream into a river, and the child grows into a man to use or misuse the lessons he has absorbed in life as a youth. But even after he has grown into a man he often remains a child in the spiritual sense of the word. The world is the kindergarten and school necessary for the spiritual lessons man must learn through countless lives of experiencing the opposites such as pain and pleasure, joy and suffering, good and bad, wealth and poverty.

All growth is gradual, and it is only through slow and gradual stages that man truly begins to 'grow up' and discover his true Self, and to relinquish the childish playthings of hate, greed and anger through selfless service and love. In the spiritual school also there are many grades to be passed, for which few have the required courage and determination. Just as there are masters and instructors to guide you along the path of your studies, so there are Perfect Masters who can guide you along the path of the spirit to the glorious destination of Godhood. Few have the good fortune to meet and follow such a spiritual guide — when you do, you must earn his grace and be worthy of his love.

Do not balk at the discipline given by your parents and teachers. Discipline in small ways leads to the

greater necessary discipline of Self. Do not try to conquer others — conquer yourself and you will have conquered the world. The simplest way to do this is to love God. Begin to love God by loving your fellow beings. Begin to see God by seeing Him in all beings and things. Give without thought of return, serve without thought of reward. God is everywhere, in everything. Most of all He is right within yourself. You do not exist for the world — the world exists for you.

There is an amusing illustration of this in the story of the ant. An ant was trying to cross a stream on a leaf. Tossed by the wind, the leaf overturned in midstream and the ant cried, 'Help. help. the world is drowning.'

A frog close by said, 'What rubbish! The world is not drowning, you mean you are drowning.'

'Well,' said the ant, 'once I drown the world might as well not exist for me, so for me it means not only that I am drowning but that the world is drowning too!'

In the same way, all existence is within you. God is to be found within yourself. and once you find Him you have found the only treasure worth finding.

Work

Work undertaken with honest intent and love for God is Meher Baba's work, and those who do this are always his.

But the greatest work one can do for Meher Baba is to live the life of love, humility, sincerity and selfless service in which there is no trace of hypocrisy. Meher Baba's love is for all; and for each of his lovers to help others know this, his or her own life must be a radiating example of love so that it may become the instrument to spread Baba's love and the truth of Reality. Such a life and such a love are vital and carry the highest responsibility, for behind every thought, word and deed is the all-pervading force of Truth.

To cultivate discipline in one's self requires self-determination and honest effort if one desires to tread knowingly and consciously the path of love. This discipline may at first appear dry as dust, but with perseverance it will automatically blossom and be transmuted into the very life of the lover.

To help others through one's own example, one must get not only thoroughly drenched but drowned in love. As a prelude one should attempt to create a balance between the thoughts of the mind and the feelings of the heart. Mind, however, works much faster. Thoughts are like lightning — first there is the flash and later the sound of thunder. For an

equilibrium to be reached, the mind — which is the seat of desires — must be made to function more slowly in order to keep pace with the heart, and no amount of silence or fasting can accomplish this.

If the individual desires the enforcement of equilibrium in the true direction, a consistent acceleration of feelings should be made so that feelings supersede thoughts, that is, the heart supersedes the mind. To achieve this the only effective fuel is love — unadulterated love. Unless one learns to love in its true sense, one cannot cross the hurdle of the mind. And for one to understand love in its true sense, the only recourse is to dedicate one's self to the Lord of love, and to hold fast under all circumstances to the feet of the Perfect Master. Any deviation from self-dedication will lead one astray from the path of divine love.

It is good to fast and observe silence as a discipline in one's daily life. But this becomes utterly insignificant when one has determined to starve and silence the mind itself, by implicitly obeying in all things a Sadguru — a Perfect Master.

Meher Baba's love is with his lovers always, helping and guiding them. And they? They should keep their love for him alive and aglow, by making him their constant companion in all their thoughts, words and actions, while carrying on their responsibilities, commitments and all other apparently necessary things of this world, though these have no foundation of their own in the domain of Reality.

Selfless Service

It is very important that service, even when it is utterly selfless, be guided by spiritual understanding, for selfless service, when unintelligently handled, often creates chaos and complications. Many good persons are ceaselessly active for public cause through social institutions. But what does that activity lead to? For one problem which it solves, it often creates ten other problems owing to the unforeseen and uncontrollable side-results of such activity. Worldly men try to counteract evil through opposition, but in doing so they often unconsciously become authors of other evils.

. A man may be selfless, but his actions create chaos instead of harmony because he has not learned how to render real and effective service without creating complications. If action is to be a pure blessing for the universe it must be born of consummate understanding of life.

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

service lest they might unwittingly render a disservice. Even when a person renders selfless service unintelligently, he always derives spiritual benefit through it.

In fact, from the spiritual point of view, the real danger in service lies more in the possibility of your rendering it from a false motive than in making a mistake about the spiritual demands of the situation. If you render service in order to oblige a person and if you feel proud of doing it, you are not only doing spiritual harm to the recipient of your service but also to yourself. If, while serving, you take delight in it and develop pride in doing a good-thing, you are getting attached to your act and thereby binding yourself.

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

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

ing of individual or social life. This is the type of service rendered by aspirants, politicians, social reformers and other good persons. Though this type of service is of immense spiritual importance, it is in its very nature unending. In spite of what any individual might attain in these fields, there always remains much that is to be achieved. Therefore, as long as the idea of service is thus tied to the idea of results, it is inevitably fraught with a sense of incompleteness. There can be no realization of Infinity through the pursuit of a never-ending series of consequences. Those who aim at sure and definite results through a life of service have an eternal burden on their minds.

On the other hand, service which comes after realization of the Truth is a spontaneous expression of spiritual understanding of the true nature of the Self; and though it also brings about important results in the objective world, it is in no way complicated by any longing for them. As the sun shines because it is its nature to do so and not because it wants to achieve something through shining, the God-realized person also lives a life of self-offering because of the basic structure of the divine life which is at the heart of Reality, and not because he longs to achieve anything.

Greatness and Humility

Strength begets humility, whereas modesty bespeaks weakness. Only he who is truly great can *be* really humble.

When, in the firm knowledge of it, a man admits his true greatness it is in itself an expression of humility. He accepts his greatness as most natural and is expressing merely what he is, just as a man would not hesitate to admit to himself and others the fact of his being man.

For a truly great man, who knows himself to be truly great, to deny his greatness would be to belittle what he indubitably is. For whereas modesty is the basis of guise, true greatness is free from camouflage.

On the other hand, when a man expresses a greatness he knows or feels he does not possess, he is the greatest hypocrite.

Honest is the man who is not great, and knowing and feeling this, firmly and frankly states that he is not great.

There are more than a few who are not great, yet who assume a humility in the genuine belief of their own worth. Through words and actions they express repeatedly their humbleness, professing to be servants of humanity. True humility is not acquired

by merely donning a garb of humility. True humility spontaneously and continually emanates from the strength of the truly great. Voicing one's humbleness does not make one humble. For all that a parrot may utter 'I am a man,' it does not make it so.

Better the absence of greatness than the establishing of a false greatness by assumed humility. Not only do these efforts at humility on man's part not express strength; they are, on the contrary, expressions of modesty born of weakness, which springs from a lack of knowledge of the truth of Reality.

Beware of modesty. Modesty, under the cloak of humility, invariably leads one into the clutches of self-deception. Modesty breeds egoism and man eventually succumbs to pride through assumed humility.

The greatest greatness and the greatest humility go hand in hand naturally and without effort.

When the Greatest of all says, 'I am the Greatest,' it is but a spontaneous expression of an infallible Truth. The strength of his greatness lies not in raising the dead but in his great humiliation when he allows himself to be ridiculed, persecuted and crucified at the hands of those who are weak in flesh and spirit. Throughout the ages humanity has failed to fathom the true depth of the humility underlying the greatness of the Avatar, gauging his divinity by its acquired limited religious standards. Even real saints and sages, who have some knowledge of the Truth, have failed to understand the Avatar's greatness when faced with his real humility.

Age after age history repeats itself when men and women in their ignorance, limitations and pride sit

in judgement over the God-incarnated man who declares his Godhood, and condemn him for uttering the Truths they cannot understand. He is indifferent to abuse and persecution, for in his true compassion he understands, in his continual experience of Reality he knows, and in his infinite mercy he forgives.

The Life of the Spirit

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

Owing to the multifarious cravings of the mind, matter has a tendency to assume importance for itself. For the drunkard wine is everything; for the greedy man the hoarding of money is all-important; and for the flirt the chase of sensations is the supreme end of life. These are examples of how, through

diverse cravings of the mind, matter becomes unduly obtrusive and perverts the expressions of the spirit. The way to restore the dignity of the spirit is not to reject matter but to use it for the claims of the spirit. This is possible only when the spirit is free from all cravings and is fully conscious of its own true status. When this is achieved, man may have material goods but is not caught up in them. When necessary he may use them as means for the life of the spirit but he is not allured by them nor does he become restless for them. He realizes that in themselves they do not constitute the real significance of life. He dwells in the material and social environment without any hankering for them, and being unattached, is able to convert them into the field for spiritual life.

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

The life of the spirit is the expression of Infinity

and as such knows no artificial limits. True spirituality is not to be mistaken for an exclusive enthusiasm for some fad. It is not concerned with any 'ism.' When people seek spirituality apart from life, as if it had nothing to do with the material world, their search is futile. All creeds and cults have a tendency to emphasize some fragmentary aspect of life, but true spirituality is totalitarian in its outlook. The essence of spirituality does not consist in a specialized or narrow interest in some imagined part of life, but in a certain enlightened attitude to all the various situations which obtain in life. It covers and includes the whole of life.

Since the physical body and other material things can be used for the life of the spirit, true spirituality does not take any hostile attitude towards them, but seeks expression in and through them. Thus the perfect man does not look down upon things of beauty or works of art, attainments of science or achievements of politics. The things of beauty can be degraded by being made objects of craving or jealous and exclusive possessiveness; the works of art can often be used to augment and exploit egoism and other human frailties; the attainments of science can be used for mutual destruction, as in modern wars; and political enthusiasm, without spiritual insight, can perpetuate social and international chaos; but all these can also be rightly handled and spiritualized. The things of beauty can become the source of purity, happiness and inspiration; the works of art can ennoble and raise the consciousness of people; the attainments of science can redeem humanity from unnecessary suffering and handicaps;

and political action can be instrumental in establishing a real brotherhood of humanity. The life of the spirit does not consist in turning away from worldly spheres of existence, but in reclaiming them for the divine purpose which is to bring love, peace, happiness, beauty and spiritual perfection within the reach of everyone.

However, he who would live the life of the spirit must remain detached in the midst of worldly things without becoming cold or indifferent to them. Detachment should not be misunderstood as lack of appreciation. It is not only compatible with true evaluation of things, but is its very condition. Craving creates delusion and prevents right perception. It nourishes obsessions and sustains the feeling of dependence upon external objects. Detachment promotes right understanding and facilitates perception of the true worth of things without making consciousness dependent upon external things. To see things as they are is to grasp their real significance as parts of the manifestation of the One Life, and to see through the veil of their apparent multiplicity is to be free from the insistent obsession for anything in its imagined isolation and exclusiveness. The life of the spirit is to be found in comprehensiveness which is free from clinging, and appreciation which is free from entanglement. It is a life of positive freedom in which the spirit infuses itself into matter and shines through it without submitting to any curtailment of its own claims.

The Infinity of the Truth

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

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

The infinity of the Truth remains unaffected by any changes in the universe. All that happens in

the universe is phenomenal, and as such amounts to zero from the viewpoint of the Truth.

The illusion which most aspirants find difficult to shake is the belief that infinite Truth is an object which has to be attained in some distant future, and that all life is just a means for this attainment. If Truth were to be confined only to the future and not to the past or the present it would not be infinite. It would at once become limited as an event which has its origin in time. All that life is and has, is at once deprived of intrinsic significance if it comes to be regarded as merely instrumental to some far-off event. This is definitely a false point of view. Life is not meant to be rich in spiritual significance at some distant date, but it is so at every moment, if the mind is disburdened of illusions. Only through a clear and tranquil mind is the true nature of spiritual infinity grasped as something which is not yet to be, but which already has been, is and ever will be an eternal self-fulfilment. When every moment is rich with eternal significance there is neither the lingering clinging to the dead past, nor a longing expectation for the future, but an integral living in the eternal Now. Only through such living can the spiritual infinity of the Truth be realized in life.

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

A thing need not be unusual or particularly striking in order to be spiritually significant. The unusual and the striking exist relative to the usual and the habitual, and they are not in themselves necessarily representative of absolute spiritual beauty. Thus it is not necessary for a man to give huge sums of money for a cause in order to be spiritually great. A poor man may be unable to do this and yet be none the less spiritual if he gives what he can. It is not the amount that endows the gift with spiritual meaning; it is the spirit in which it is given. In fact, a large donation may often be accompanied with pride or some selfish motive, and then it loses its spiritual value. Even a small gift, given with humility and utterly unselfish love, is endowed with a much greater spiritual value.

Spiritual life is not a matter of quantity but of inherent quality of living. Spiritual infinity includes in its scope all phases of life. It comprises acts which are great as well as acts which are small. Being greater than the greatest, spiritual infinity is also smaller than the smallest, and it can equally express itself through happenings irrespective of whether they are outwardly small or great.

False Values

Everyone wants to know and realize the Truth, but Truth cannot be known and realized as Truth unless ignorance is known and realized as being ignorance. Hence arises the importance of understanding maya or the principle of ignorance. People read and hear much about maya, but few understand what it really is. It is not enough to have a superficial understanding of maya; it is necessary that maya should be understood as it is, that is, in its reality. To understand maya or the principle of ignorance is to know half of the Truth of the universe. Ignorance in all its forms must disappear if the soul is to be established in the state of self-knowledge. Therefore it is imperatively necessary for man to know what is false, to know it to be false and to get rid of the false by knowing it to be false.

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

From the spiritual point of view the only thing which has importance is God. Very few persons are really interested in God for His own sake. If the worldly-minded turn to God at all, it is mostly for

their own selfish and mundane purposes. They seek the gratification of their own desires, hopes and even revenges through the intervention of the God of their imagination. They do not seek God as Truth. They long for all things except the only Truth, which they regard as unimportant. This again is the blinding of vision caused by the working of maya, people pursue their happiness through everything except God who is the only unfailing source of abiding joy.

The shackles which hold the soul in spiritual bondage consist chiefly of wrong values or falsehoods concerning valuation. Some falsehoods, of the nature of wrong beliefs, also play an important part in holding the soul in spiritual bondage. False beliefs implement false values, but they in turn gather strength from false values in which the soul has been hung up. All false beliefs are as much creations of maya as are false values, and are among the clutches which maya uses in order to hold the soul in ignorance.

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

The Significance of Death

The overwhelming importance of death is derived from man's attachment to particular forms, but death loses much of its sting and importance, even for the worldly man, if he takes a broader view of the course of life. In spite of their transitoriness, there is an unbroken continuity of life through these forms, old ones being discarded and new ones created for habitation and expression. The recurring incident of death is matched by the recurring incident of birth. Old generations are replaced by new ones; life is reborn in new forms, incessantly renewing and refreshing itself; the streams of life, with their ancient origin, are ever advancing onwards through the forms which come and go like the waves of the ocean.

So, even within the limits of the experience of the worldly, there is much that should mitigate morbid thoughts of death as being an irreparable loss. A sane attitude towards death is possible only if life is considered impersonally and without any attachment to particular forms; but this the worldly man finds difficult because of his entanglement with specific forms. For him, one form is not as good as another. The form with which he identifies himself is by far the most important. The general preservation and advancement of the stream of life has for him no special interest. What the worldly man craves

is a continuation of his own form and other particular forms with which he is entangled. His heart cannot reconcile itself to his intellect. With the vanishing of the forms which have been dear to him, he becomes a victim of unending sorrow, though life as a whole may have replaced elsewhere the lost forms with new ones.

The sorrow of death, on closer analysis, turns out to be rooted in selfishness. The person who loses his beloved may know intellectually that life as a whole has elsewhere compensated for the loss, but his only feeling is, 'What is that to me?' When a man looks at it from his own personal point of view death becomes a cause of unending sorrow. From the point of view of life in general, it is an episode of minor importance.

In normal cases death occurs when all the sanskaras seeking fructification are worked out. When the soul drops its physical body it is completely severed from all connections with the gross world, though the ego and the mind are retained with all the impressions accumulated in the earthly career. Unlike the exceptional cases of obsessing spirits, ordinary spirits try to reconcile themselves to severance from the gross world, and conform to the limitations of changed conditions and sink into a state of subjectivity in which a new process begins of mentally re-viewing the experiences of the earthly career by reviving the sanskaras connected with them. Thus death inaugurates a period of comparative rest consisting in a temporary withdrawal from the gross

sphere of action. It is the beginning of an interval between the last incarnation and the next.

In life after death the experiences of pain and pleasure become much more intense than they were in earthly life. These subjective states of intensified suffering and joy are called hell and heaven. Hell and heaven are states of mind; they should not be looked upon as being places; and though subjectively they mean a great deal to the individualized soul, they are both illusions within the greater illusion of the phenomenal world.

Different souls start with different degrees of intuitive wisdom as their initial capital for the experiments and adventures of their earthly career. This intuition may seem to have been the product of past experiences, thus adding to the equipment of the psyche, but it is more truly an unfoldment of what was already latent in the individualized soul. From his deeper point of view, the experiences of earthly life as well as the reflective and consolidatory processes to which they are subjected in life after death, are merely instrumental in gradually releasing to the surface the intuitive wisdom which is already latent in the soul from the very beginning of creation. As is true of the earthly career and its experiences, the states of hell and heaven in the life after death are also integral parts of and incidents in that journey of the individualized soul which is ultimately meant to reach the source of all things.

Good and Evil

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

Man's conception of what is acceptable or unacceptable goes on evolving and changing according to the nature of desires which happen to be dominant at any particular moment. But, as long as there is any kind of desire in his mind, he is impelled to appraise his experience in relation to that desire and divide it into two parts, the one contributing towards its fulfilment and therefore acceptable, and the other tending to prevent its fulfilment and therefore unacceptable. Instead of meeting life and all that it brings without expectation, entanglement or shirking, the mind creates a standard whereby it divides life into opposites, one of which is regarded as acceptable and the other as not acceptable.

Of the opposites created by the human mind the

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

Right from the beginning of human evolution, the problem of emancipation consists in cultivating and developing good sanskaras so that they may overlap and annul the accumulated sanskaras. The cultivation of good sanskaras is achieved by fostering experiences and actions which are opposite to those that predominate in animal life. The opposite of lust is love, the opposite of greed is generosity, and the opposite of anger is tolerance or patience. By trying to dwell in love, generosity and tolerance, man can erase the tendencies of lust, greed and anger.

The general process of freeing oneself from the limitation of sanskaras has, therefore, to be accompanied by the process of renouncing the bad for the good. But whether a person happens to be good or bad at any given time is dependent upon the inexorable operation of his sanskaras. From this point of view the sinner and the saint are both what they are according to the laws operative in the universe.

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

When there is an exact balancing and overlapping of good and bad sanskaras there is at once a termination of both types of sanskaras and the precipitation of consciousness from a state of bondage to a state of freedom. The credit and debit sides must be exactly equal to each other if the account is to be closed. But usually, either the debit side is greater or the credit side is greater and the account is kept running. It is important to note that the account is kept running not only by excess of the debit side but also by the excess of the credit side. It can be closed only when the two sides balance each other. In the field of sanskaras such balance is a rare happening because at any particular time either the good or bad sanskaras are predominant. Just as the account can be kept running by excess of either the debit or credit side, so the life of the limited self is prolonged and sustained through the excess of either bad or good sanskaras. The limited self can

linger through good sanskaras as well as bad sanskaras. What is required for its final extinction is an exact balancing and overlapping of the bad and good sanskaras.

Good sanskaras can be the medium for the lingering life of the limited self. When a person looks upon himself as being good and not bad, he is engaged in self-affirmation through identification with this conviction, which is a continuation of separative existence in a new form. In some cases this new house which the ego constructs for itself is more difficult to dismantle, because self-identification with the good is often more complete than self-identification with the bad. Identification with the bad is easier to deal with because as soon as the bad is perceived as being bad, its grip on consciousness becomes less firm. The loosening of the grip of the good presents a more difficult problem. since the good carries a semblance of self-justification through favourable contrast with the bad. However, in course of time the aspirant gets tired of his new prison-house, and after this perception he surrenders his separative existence by transcending the duality of good and bad.

The ego changes the house of identification with evil for the house of identification with good because the latter gives him a greater sense of expansion. Sooner or later the aspirant perceives the new abode to be no less of a limitation. Then he finds that the process of breaking through it is less difficult than the process of breaking through the former abode of identification with the evil. The difficulty concerning the abode of evil is not so much of per-

[123]

ceiving that it is a limitation but in actually dismantling it after arriving at such perception. The difficulty concerning the abode of the good is not so much in dismantling it as of perceiving that it is, in fact, a limitation.

Opposites

The sanskaras deposited by specific actions and experiences render the mind susceptible to similar actions and experiences; but after a certain point is reached, this tendency is checked and counteracted by a natural reaction consisting in a complete change-over to its direct opposite, making room for the operation of opposite sanskaras.

A person soon realizes the incompleteness of the experience of one opposite and he unconsciously seeks to restore the lost balance by going over to the other opposite. Thus the person who has had the experience of killing will develop the psychological need and susceptibility for getting killed. In killing another person he has appreciated only one portion of the total situation in which he is a party, namely, the part of killing. The complementary half of the total situation, namely, the role of being killed, remains for him a non-understood and foreign datum which nevertheless has introduced itself into his experience. There thus arises the need to complete experience by attracting to oneself the opposite of that through which one has personally gone, and consciousness has a tendency to fulfil this new and pressing need. A person who has killed will soon develop a tendency to get himself killed in order to cover the entire situation by personal experience.

Like the shuttle of the weaver's loom, the human mind moves within two extremes, developing the warp and the woof of the cloth of life. The development of the psychic life is best represented not as a straight line but as a zig-zag course. The amount of oscillation becomes less and less as the individual approaches the Goal, and it completely subsides when he realizes it.

Violence and Non-Violence

Man has a tendency to cling to catch-words and to allow his action to be determined by them almost mechanically, without bringing his action into direct relation with the living perception which these words embody. Words have their own place and use in life, but if action is to be intelligent, it is imperatively necessary that the meaning which these words are intended to convey should be carefully analysed and fixed. Among the words which need such exploration few are as important as 'violence' and 'non-violence.' They have a direct bearing upon the ideologies which shape not only particular actions but also the entire tenor of life.

Spiritual life is a matter of perception and not of mechanical conformity to rules, even when these rules are meant to stand for the highest values. It implies an understanding which goes beyond all words or formulations. All words and formulations have a tendency to limit the Truth. Therefore those who seek to bring out the spirit underlying these formulations often have to launch upon a searching analysis of the formulated principles, and supplement this analysis by constantly retaining touch with concrete examples taken from life. This is particularly true of those guiding principles formulated through the opposite concepts of violence and nonviolence.

The words 'violence' and 'non-violence' are, in ordinary references, applicable to such diverse situations in practical life that no exposition of the issues involved can be complete, unless it takes note of these diverse situations and uses them as a starting point. However, for the purpose of exposition, it is not necessary to exhaust numerically all the possible diversities which would be covered by these words. It is enough to consider some of the most representative situations.

1. Suppose a man who does not know how to swim, has fallen into a lake and is drowning, and that there is another person nearby who is good at swimming and wants to save him. A drowning man has a tendency to grasp desperately at the person who comes to his help and the hold is often so restricting that it may not only make it impossible to save the drowning man, but may even cause the drowning of the one who came to help. The one who wishes to save the drowning man must therefore strike him unconscious by hitting him on the head before he can help him. Striking the drowning man on the head under such circumstances cannot be looked upon either as violence or non-violence.

2. Suppose a man is suffering from some disease which can only be cured through an operation. Now in order to cure this suffering man as well as protect others from catching this infection, a surgeon may have to remove the infected part. This cutting of the body by a knife also cannot be looked upon either as violence or non-violence.

3. Suppose an aggressive nation invades a weaker nation for selfish purposes, and another nation, inspired solely by the noble desire of saving the

weak nation, resists this aggressive invasion by armed force. Fighting in defence of the weak nation cannot be looked upon as either violence or non-violence, but can be called non-violent violence.

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

5. Suppose a physically strong man is insulted and spat upon by an arrogant man who is nevertheless weak, and suppose that the strong man who has the power to crush the arrogant man not only desists from hurting the arrogant man, but calmly explains to him the gospel of love. This action implies non-violence, but it is the non-violence of the strong.

The detailed analysis and comparison of the diverse situations bring out the fact that questions concerning violence or non-violence, their justification or otherwise, and the ascertaining of their true value or lack of value, cannot be decided by any formal enunciation of a universal rule. They involve many delicate spiritual issues and implications.

A right understanding of the status of violence and non-violence in the scheme of spiritual values requires true perception of the purpose of existence. Action, therefore, should not be governed by means of any slogans (however high-sounding) based upon incomplete and insufficient ideas of mere violence or mere non-violence. It should be a spontaneous outcome of divine love, which is above duality, and of spiritual understanding, which is above rules.

Action and Inaction

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

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

Action which helps in attaining God is truly intelligent and spiritually fruitful because it brings

release from bondage. It is second only to that action which springs spontaneously from the state of God-realization itself. All other forms of action (howsoever good or bad and howsoever effective or ineffective from a worldly point of view) contribute towards bondage and are inferior to inaction. Inaction is less helpful than intelligent action, but it is better than unintelligent action, for it amounts to the non-doing of that which would have created a binding. The movement from unintelligent action to intelligent action (that is, from binding karma to unbinding karma) is often through inaction. This is characteristic of the stage where unintelligent action has stopped because of critical doubt, but intelligent action has not yet begun because no adequate momentum has arisen. This special type of inaction which plays its part in progress on the path should in no way be confused with ordinary inaction which springs from inertia or fear of life.

Religion

Though religion has come into existence to liberate man from all narrowness, it can itself become a cage when not understood properly. All the world religions proclaim the same eternal and universal Truth; yet human weakness has a tendency to carve out some limiting, narrow loyalty which closes its gates upon the shoreless and unbounded ocean of love or divinity. It is not the essentials of religions, but addiction merely to their outer forms, which has tended to divide man from man, thus thwarting the very purpose of the great founders of the world religions.

I invite man to break through all of his self-created prisons, and taste of the unlimited life which I bring. I ask him to love divinely, fearlessly and limitlessly and to rise above the limited self of the separative ego-mind. I come to impart to groping humanity the universal Truth which transcends sectarian divisions and dogmatic formulations.

Through ages of darkness and suffering, mankind awaits me and my Truth. I and the Truth which I bring are inseparable, one from the other. I am one with the Truth. May you all, too, break through the numberless cages and realize that you are one with the limitless Truth of divine life. The divine Beloved is always with you, in you and around you. Know that you are not separate from Him.

World Peace

Everywhere today man is rightfully occupied with the problem of world peace. If there is war, it means nothing short of racial suicide and total destruction. But world peace cannot be ensured through dogmas, however learned, or organisations, however efficient. It can be ensured only by a release of unarguing and unconquerable love which knows no fear or separateness.

Humanity is not going to be saved by any material power — nuclear or otherwise. It can be saved only through divine intervention. God has never failed humanity in its dark and critical periods. The greatest danger to man today is not from any natural catastrophe, but from himself.

It is not possible to realize human brotherhood merely by appealing to high ideals or to a sense of duty. Something more than that is essential to release human consciousness from the clutches of selfishness and greed.

Today the urgent need of mankind is not sects or organised religions, but LOVE. Divine love will conquer hate and fear. It will not depend upon other justifications, but will justify itself.

I have come to awaken in man this divine love. It will restore to him the unfathomable richness of his own eternal being and will solve all of his problems.

Freedom

National, economic, religious and cultural freedoms are the reflections of the duality of existence. They exist only in varying degrees, subject to constant discordant adjustment. Even when won through persistent effort, they cannot be permanently maintained because the external conditions upon which they have been constructed are themselves subject to deterioration.

Only spiritual freedom is absolute. and unlimited; when it is won through persistent effort, it is won forever. For, although spiritual freedom can and does express itself in the duality of existence, it is grounded in and sustained by the realization of the inviolable unity of all life.

One important condition of spiritual freedom is freedom from all wanting. It is wanting itself which chains life by attaching it to the conditions in environment which would fulfil that want. If there is no wanting, there is no dependence, and therefore no limitation.

The individual never achieves true freedom until he is no longer pushed or pulled by any inner compulsion. When he has worked through all the desires and worn them so threadbare that he can be, or not be — have, or have not — then he is free.

When the individualized soul breaks through the encasing steel armour of wanting, it emancipates itself from its illusory bondage to bodies, mind and ego. This is the spiritual freedom which brings with it the final realization of the unity of all life and puts an end to all doubts and worries.

It is only in spiritual freedom that one can have enduring happiness and unhampered self-knowledge. It is only in spiritual freedom that one finds the supreme certainty of truth-realization. It is only in spiritual freedom that there is a final end to sorrow and limitation. It is only in spiritual freedom that one can live for all, and yet remain detached in the midst of all activity.

Any other lesser type of freedom is like a house built on sand, and any lesser attainment is fraught with fear of decay. There is no gift greater than that of spiritual freedom, and no task more important than helping others to find spiritual freedom.

Origins and Effects of War

The basic causes of the social turmoil that often precipitates into war may be found in the individual, the social whole, the functioning of maya, and in the very intent of God's will. Inasmuch as these are essentially one in the final analysis, this means no more than that war is a part of the divine pattern. Insofar as war affects the individual, however, it must be understood at all the levels within illusion from which it is precipitated.

The first is the level of the individual himself. It may readily be seen that most persons are immersed in their own egos and selfish viewpoints. Ignorant of the real purpose of life, many persons sink to the lowest level of culture. Bound by material interest and a limited viewpoint, they forget their divine destiny. They have truly lost their way, and so they lay savagely about themselves, for their hearts are torn by fear and hate.

The second level from which wars are bred is that of the social whole. Here, economic pressures are often cited as a major cause. Also, resistance to aggression seems a reasonable cause. It would be an illusion within illusion, however, to claim that wars arise merely to secure material adjustment. They are

more often the product of uncritical identification with narrow interests which, through association, finally come to be regarded as one's sole rights. To profess that humanity's problem is merely that of bread is to reduce humanity to the level of animality.

A solution to the individual and social factors. underlying war rests upon the spiritual enlightenment of the individual. This need not mean that wars are inevitable as long as the ego-self of the individual continues to ride rampant in the cultural and economic areas of life, for war is only the most explosive gross manifestation of the combined egocentricity of mankind. But conflict of one sort or another is inevitable until the ego-self is finally tamed and eliminated.

As man faces the truth and begins to appreciate that all humanity, all creation, is one, the problem of wars will commence to disappear. Wars must be so clearly seen by all to be both unnecessary and unreasonable that the immediate problem will not be to stop wars, but to wage them spiritually against the attitude of mind which generated them.

In the light of the truth of the unity of all, a cooperative and harmonious life becomes inevitable. Thus the chief task for those who set out to rebuild humanity after a great war is to do their utmost to dispel the spiritual ignorance that envelops humanity.

The third level is that of maya. When truly understood, all conflicts and wars are also seen to be a part of the divine game. They are thus a result of

the divine will, which finds expression in the world of manifestation, through the medium of mava - the cosmic power that causes the illusory world of duality to appear as real.

The purpose served by maya is twofold: (1) it can be instrumental in trapping the mind in the duality of illusion, and (2) it can also be instrumental in freeing the mind from the grip of spiritual ignorance and bondage. Maya should not be ignored; it must be handled with detachment and understanding. Wars are the work. of maya, and are either spiritually disastrous or beneficial depending on whether they are based on attachment to or detachment from the hold of maya.

The final level from which the causes of war spring is no level at all, for it is a part of the divine plan of God to give to a hungry and weary world a fresh dispensation of the eternal and only truth. During war, great forces of destruction are afoot which at times might seem to be dominant. But constructive forces for the redemption of humanity are also released through various channels. Though the working of these latter forces is largely silent, eventually they are bound to bring about the transformations that will render safe and steady the further spiritual progress of humanity.

Regardless of the political and economic factors described by the historian as he looks at war in retrospect, from the spiritual point of view this sanguine phenomenon is a cyclic divine ferment over which no earthly power has control.

Just as war is not an unmixed evil for the individual, so it may have certain forward-propelling effects on humanity as a whole. The destructiveness of war tends to bring humanity to a spiritual crisis born of the physical nightmare. Inevitably suffering and misery pose the question of what it all leads to, how it will all end. Gradually people become sick of wanting and sick of fighting. Greed and hatred finally reach such an intensity that everyone becomes weary of them. Then mankind begins to suspect that the only way out is through selflessness. The only alternative to war and its suffering is seen to be to stop hating and to love, to stop wanting and to give, to stop dominating and to serve.

The 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; in advanced human beings, it is conscious. The object of the quest is called by many names — happiness, peace, freedom, truth, love, perfection, Self-realization, God-realization, union with God. Essentially, it is a search for all of these, but in a special way. Everyone has moments of happiness, glimpses of truth, fleeting experiences of union with God; what they want is to make them permanent. They want to establish an abiding reality in the midst of constant change.

It is a natural desire, based fundamentally on a memory, dim or clear as the individual's evolution may be low or high, of his essential unity with God; for every living thing is a partial manifestation of God, conditioned only by its lack of knowledge of its own true nature. The whole of evolution, in fact, is an evolution from unconscious divinity to conscious divinity, in which God Himself, essentially 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 the Creator 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 his limited knowledge, limited power, limited capacity for enjoying bliss, is an epic of alternating rest and struggle, joy and sorrow, love and hate, until, in the perfected man, God balances the pairs of 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 must and does take place only in the midst of life, for it is only in the midst of life that limitation can be experienced and transcended, and that subsequent freedom from limitation can be enjoyed.

There are fifty-six God-realized souls in the world at all times. They are always one in consciousness. They are always different in function. For the most part they live and work apart from and unknown to the general public, but five, who act in a sense as a directing body, always work in public and attain to public prominence and importance. These are known as Sadgurus or Perfect Masters. In Avataric periods, the Avatar, as a supreme Sadguru, takes his place as the head of this body and of the spiritual hierarchy as a whole.

Avataric periods are like 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 made available for all humanity. Life as a whole is stepped up to a higher level of consciousness, is 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.

This new influx of the creative impulse takes, through the medium of a divine personality, an incarnation of God in a special sense — the Avatar. This Avatar was the first individual soul to emerge from the evolutionary process as a Sadguru, and he 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, 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 always one in which humanity suffers from the pangs of the approaching birth. Man seems more than ever enslaved by desire, more than ever driven by greed, held by fear, swept by anger. The strong dominate the weak; the rich oppress the poor; large masses of people are exploited

for the benefit of the few who are in power. The individual, who finds no peace or rest, seeks to forget himself in excitement. Immorality increases, crime flourishes, religion is ridiculed. Corruption spreads throughout the social order. Class and national hatreds are aroused and fostered. Wars break out. Humanity grows desperate. There seems to be no possibility of stemming the tide of destruction.

At this moment the Avatar appears. Being the total manifestation of God in human form, he is like a gauge against which man can measure what he is and what he may become. He tries the standard of human values by interpreting them in terms of divinely human life.

The Avatar is interested in everything but not concerned about anything. The slightest mishap may command his sympathy; the greatest tragedy will not upset him. He is beyond the alternations of pain and pleasure, desire and satisfaction, rest and struggle, life and death. To him they are equally illusions which he has transcended, but by which others are bound, and from which he has come to free them. He uses every circumstance as a means to lead others towards Realization.

He knows that men do not cease to exist when they die, and therefore is not concerned over 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 only concerned about concern.

In those who contact him he awakens a love that consumes all selfish desires in the flame of the one desire to serve him. Those who consecrate their lives

to him gradually become identified with him in consciousness. Little by little, their humanity is absorbed into his divinity and they become free.

The Avatar awakens contemporary humanity to a realization of its true spiritual nature, gives liberation to those who are ready, and quickens the life of the spirit in his time. For posterity is left the stimulating power of his divinely human example, the nobility of a life supremely lived, of a love unmingled with desire, of a power unused except for others, of a peace untroubled by ambition, of a knowledge undimmed by illusion. He has demonstrated the possibility of a divine life for all humanity, of a heavenly life on earth. Those who have the necessary courage and integrity can 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 always precedes Avataric manifestations. Even unawakened men and women are becoming aware of it now. From their darkness they are reaching out for light; in their sorrow they are longing for comfort; from the midst of the strife into which they have found themselves plunged, they are praying for peace and deliverance.

For the moment they must be patient. The wave of destruction must rise still higher, must spread still further. But when from the depths of his heart man desires something more lasting than wealth, something more real than material power, the wave will recede. Then peace will come, joy will come, light will come.

At the time of the manifestation of an Avatar the force of the general spiritual push is so tremendous that it creates quite a new awakening of consciousness. This, combined with the teachings and activities of the Avatar on the physical plane during the life in which he manifests himself, is given outward form by his followers who call it a new religion.

As the force of the spiritual push gradually weakens with the lapse of time, spirituality also recedes until it almost sinks into insignificance. Religion, or rather the outward form of it, becomes a dry crust, ready to crumble at any moment, and world conditions reach a climax.

It is at this critical juncture that the Avatar appears and manifests on the physical plane to give once again the spiritual push to the world. The force of this spiritual push is again adopted as a new, outward, religious form, according to the existing circumstances.

This is why religions have apparently different forms, owing to different times and circumstances in which they were established, though in essence they are the one and the same ideal of life taught over and over again by the one and the same divinity who appeared on earth at different times and under different circumstances.

When the Avatar takes an incarnation in the . human form, he brings upon himself a veil; and this veil has to be removed by some Master or Masters.

The veil with which the Avatar descends in the human form is placed upon him by the five Perfect Masters who bring him down from his formless

being. In the Avataric periods the five Perfect Masters always put this veil upon the infinite consciousness of the Avatar, because if he were to be brought without such a veil into the world of forms, the existing balance between reality and illusion would be profoundly disturbed. However, when the five Masters think that the moment is ripe, they remove this veil which they have placed on the Avataric consciousness. From that moment the Avatar consciously starts his role as the Avatar.

The incarnation of the Avatar does not take place unless it is precipitated by the five Perfect Masters of the cycle. In all of his incarnations except the first, even the Avatar needs a Master in order to come into his own eternal and infinite consciousness.

What I am, what I was and what I will be as the Ancient One is always due to the five Perfect Masters of the Age. During the Avataric periods the five Perfect Masters make God incarnate as man.

Sai Baba, Upasni Maharaj, Babajan, Tajuddin Baba and Narayan Maharaj are the five Perfect Masters of this Age for me.

Of these five, Upasni Maharaj and Babajan directly played the main roles. Babajan in less than a millionth of a second made me realize that I am God (my Ancient State), and in the period of seven years Upasni Maharaj gave me the knowledge that I am the Avatar, the Ancient One (established me in that State).

Sai Baba made me assert this time what I am.

Babajan made me feel what I am.

Upasni Maharaj made me know what I am.

Babajan gave me Divine Bliss.
Sai Baba gave me Divine Power.
Upasni Maharaj gave me Divine Knowledge.
I am Infinite Power, Knowledge and Bliss.
I am the Ancient One, come to redeem the modern world.

God is absolutely independent, and the universe is entirely dependent upon God. Yet when the Perfect Masters effect the descent of God on earth as the Avatar, they make Reality and illusion interdependent, each upon the other. And thus it is that his infinite mercy and unbounded love are eternally drawn upon by those who are immersed in illusion.

Between God and the universe, infinite mercy and unbounded love act as a prominent link which is eternally made use of by men who become God (Sadgurus, Perfect Masters or Qutubs), and by God who becomes man (Avatar, Christ or Rasool), and so the universe becomes the eternal playmate of God. Through this prominent link the Avatar not only established life in his divine play, but also established law in illusion. And this law being established by the God-Man or Avatar is the law of the law-less Infinite and it is eternally Real and at the same time illusory. It is this law that governs the universe; all its 'ups and downs,' construction and devastation are guided by this law.

At the cyclic period, God's independent Absoluteness is made to work upon this law by the God-Man as God's Will, and this means that anything and everything that the Avatar wills is ordained by God.

When I say I am the Avatar, there are a few who feel happy, some who feel shocked, and many who hearing me claim this would take me for a hypocrite, a fraud, a supreme egoist or just mad. If I were to say that every one of you is an Avatar, a few would be tickled, and many would consider it a blasphemy or a joke. The fact that God being One, Indivisible and equally in us all, we can be nought else but one, is too much for the duality-conscious mind to accept. Yet each of us is what the other is. I know I am the Avatar in every sense of the word, and that each one of you is an Avatar in one sense or the other.

It is an unalterable and universally recognized fact since time immemorial that God knows everything, God does everything, and that nothing happens but by the Will of God. Therefore it is God who makes me say I am the Avatar, and that each one of you is an Avatar. Again, it is He who is tickled through some, and through others is shocked. It is God who acts and God who reacts. It is He who scoffs and He who responds. He is the Creator. the Producer, the Actor and the Audience in His own divine play.

Infinite God, age after age, throughout all cycles, wills through His infinite mercy to effect His presence amidst mankind by stooping down to human level in the human form, but His physical presence amidst mankind not being apprehended, He is looked upon as an ordinary man of the world. When He asserts, however, His Divinity on earth by proclaiming Himself the Avatar of the Age, He is worshipped by some who accept Him as God, and

glorified by a few who know Him as God on earth. But it invariably falls to the lot of the rest of humanity to condemn Him while He is physically in their midst.

Thus it is that God as man, proclaiming Himself as the Avatar, suffers Himself to be persecuted and tortured, to be humiliated and condemned by humanity for whose sake His Infinite Love has made Him stoop so low, in order that humanity by its very act of condemning God's manifestation in the form of Avatar should, however indirectly, assert the existence of God in His Infinite Eternal State.

The Avatar is always One and the Same, because God is always One and the Same, the Eternal, Indivisible, Infinite One, who manifests Himself in the form of man as the Avatar, as the Messiah, as the Prophet, as the Ancient One - the Highest of the High. This eternally One and the Same Avatar repeats His manifestation from time to time, in different cycles, adopting different human forms and different names, in different places, to reveal Truth in different garbs and different languages, in order to raise humanity from the pit of ignorance and help free it from the bondage of delusions.

Of the most recognised and much worshipped manifestations of God as Avatar, that of Zoroaster is the earliest, having been before Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed. Thousands of years ago, He gave to the world the essence of Truth in the form of three fundamental precepts — good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. These precepts were and are constantly unfolded to humanity in one form or another, directly or indirectly in every cycle, by the Avatar of the Age, as He leads humanity imperceptibly towards the Truth.

A Short Bibliography

Listed here are some of the principal books by and about Meher Baba. Information regarding these and other books and material may be obtained from the addresses given on p. 152.

GOD SPEAKS, *The Theme of Creation and Its Purpose*, by Meher Baba. Dodd, Mead and Co., New York, revised and enlarged edition, 1973.

DISCOURSES by Meher Baba, in three volumes, paperback. Sufism Reoriented Inc., 1967, San Francisco and frequently reprinted.

LISTEN, HUMANITY by Meher Baba, narrated and edited by D. E. Stevens, Harper & Row, Harper Colophon Books, New York, 1971.

Part I is Don Stevens' account of a gathering of Meher Baba's followers in India in November 1955.

In Part II are discourses on life and the spiritual path. There is also an autobiographical note by Meher Baba.

THE EVERYTHING AND THE NOTHING, additional discourses by Meher Baba. Meher House Publications, Beacon Hill, Australia, 1963, and frequently reprinted.

THE WAYFARERS by William Donkin, Meher Publications, India, 1948, republished 1969. An account of Meher Baba's work with the 'masts' or God-intoxicated.

STAY WITH GOD, A Statement in Illusion on Reality, by Francis Brabazon. Garuda Books, Queensland, Australia, 1959. Of this poetic work Meher Baba said, 'it contains food for the brain and a feast for the heart.' Reprinted.

HOW A MASTER WORKS by Ivy O. Duce. Sufism Reoriented Inc., U.S.A., 1975. Many accounts of different phases of Meher Baba's life are given in the course of Mrs. Duce's autobiography, and much previously unpublished material is used, particularly in the 250-page Supplement.

MUCH SILENCE by Tom and Dorothy Hopkins. Victor Gollancz, London, 1974. A biography of Meher Baba.

TALES FROM THE NEW LIFE WITH MEHER BABA. Narrated by Eruch, Mehera, Mani and Meheru, The Beguine Library, California, U.S.A., 1976.

THE MASTERY OF CONSCIOUSNESS as given by Meher Baba. Compiled and edited by Allan Cohen. Harper Colophon Books; New York, 1977.

NOT WE BUT ONE edited by William Le Page. Meher Baba Foundation, Sydney, Australia, 1977. Statements by Meher Baba and disciples on Life, Living and Love.

THE SILENT WORD, Being Some Chapters of the Life and Time of Meher Baba, by Francis Brabazon. Meher Baba Foundation, Sydney, Australia, 1978.

IT SO HAPPENED . . . Stories from Days with Meher Baba. Compiled and edited by William Le Page. Meher Baba Foundation, Sydney, Australia, 1978.

GLIMPSES OF THE GOD-MAN, MEHER BABA (Vol. I) by Bal Natu, Sufism Reoriented Inc., U.S.A., 1977.

GLIMPSES OF THE GOD-MAN, MEHER BABA (Vol. II) by Bal Natu, Meher Baba Foundation, Sydney, Australia, 1978.

PRAISE IN COMPLAINT by Steve Klein, Meher Baba Foundation, Sydney, Australia, 1978.

Centres for Information

Information on Meher Baba can be obtained from the following:

AVATAR MEHER BABA TRUST
King's Road Post Bag 31
AHMEDNAGAR M.S. 414 001 INDIA

MEHER BABA ASSOCIATION
228 Hammersmith Grove
LONDON W6 7HG ENGLAND

MEHER SPIRITUAL CENTER
10200 Highway 17 North
MYRTLE BEACH SC 29572 USA

MEHER BABA FOUNDATION AUSTRALIA
Avatar's Abode
Meher Road PO Box 22
WOOMBYE Q'LAND 4559 AUSTRALIA

Register of Editorial Alterations

Page 58, para 3, line 7, heterogenous changed to heterogeneous

Page 81, para 1, line 5, unmistakable changed to unmistakable

Page 116, para 1, line 3, maan changed to man

