

DISCOURSES
Volume I
Fourth Edition (1947)

By

Meher Baba

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"I have not come to teach but to awaken"



MEHER BABA

DISCOURSES

BY

MEHER BABA

1938-39

Vol. I

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VOL. I

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 experience 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. This freedom from limitation assumes three forms.

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

Some God-realized souls retain the body for a time, but their consciousness is merged completely in the unmanifest aspect of God, and they are, therefore, not conscious either of their bodies or of creation. They experience constantly the infinite bliss, power and knowledge of God, but they cannot consciously use them in creation or help others to attain to liberation. Nevertheless, their presence on earth is like a focal point for the concentration and radiation of the infinite power,

knowledge and bliss of God; and those who approach them, serve them, and worship them are spiritually benefitted by contact with them. These souls are called *Majzubs*, and this particular type of liberation is called *videh-mukti* or liberation with the body.

A few God-realized souls keep the body, yet are conscious of themselves as God in both His unmanifest and His manifest aspects. They know themselves both as the unchangeable divine essence and as the infinitely varied manifestation. They experience themselves as God apart from creation, as God the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer of the whole of creation, and as God who has accepted and transcended the limitations of creation. They experience constantly the absolute peace, the infinite knowledge, power and bliss of God. They enjoy to the full the divine sport of creation. They know themselves as God in everything, and are, therefore, able to help everything spiritually, and to make other souls realize God, either as *Muktas*, *Majzubs* or *Sadgurus* as they themselves are called.

There are fifty-six *Sadgurus* or Perfect Masters 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. 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—an *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.

He 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.

Those who are closest to him are known as his circle. Every *Sadguru* has an intimate circle of twelve disciples, who, in point of realization, are made equal to the *Sadguru* himself, though they differ from him in function and authority. In *Avataric* periods, the *Avatar* has a circle of one hundred and twenty disciples, all of whom experience realization, and work for the liberation of others.

Their work is not only for contemporary humanity, but for posterity as well. The unfoldment of life and consciousness for the whole *Avataric* cycle, which has been mapped out in the creative world before the *Avatar* took form, is endorsed and fixed in the formative and material worlds during the *Avatar's* life on earth.

The *Avatar* awakens contemporary humanity to a realization of its 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.

The breaking of my silence—the signal for my public manifestation—is not far off. I bring the greatest treasure which it is possible for man to receive—a treasure which includes all other treasures, which will endure for ever, which increases when shared with others. Be ready to receive it!



Selfishness

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

Analysis of Selfishness the long course of the evolution of consciousness. These impressions express themselves as desires, and

the range of the operation of consciousness is strictly limited by these desires. The *sanskaras* or impressions form an enclosure around the possible field of consciousness. The circle of *sanskaras* constitutes that limited area in which alone the individual consciousness can be focussed. Some of the desires have mere latency of action, but others can actually translate themselves into action. The capacity of a desire to find expression in conduct depends upon the intensity and the amount of the *sanskaras* connected with it. To use a geometrical metaphor, we might say that when a desire passes into action, it traverses a distance which is equal to the radius of a circle describing the boundary of the *sanskaras* connected with it. When a desire gathers sufficient strength, it projects itself into action for getting fulfilled.

The range of selfishness is equal to the range of desires. Owing to the hindrance of multifarious desires, it becomes

Wanting ends in Dissatisfaction 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, *i. e.*, 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.

The chief forms in which the frustrated ego finds expression are lust, greed and anger. Lust is very much like greed in many respects. But it differs in the manner of its fulfilment which is directly related to the gross sphere. Lust finds its expression through the medium of the physical body and is concerned with the flesh. It is a form of entanglement with the *gross* sphere. Greed is a state of **Lust, Greed and Anger** restlessness of the heart, and it consists mainly of craving for power and possessions. Possessions and power are sought for the fulfilment of desires. Man is only partially satisfied in his attempt to have the fulfilment of his desires. And this partial satisfaction fans and increases the flame of craving instead of extinguishing it. So greed always finds an endless field of conquest, and leaves the man endlessly dissatisfied. The chief expressions of greed are related to the emotional part of man. It is a form of entanglement with the *subtle* sphere. Anger is the fume of an irritated mind. It is caused by the thwarting of desires. It feeds the limited ego, and is used for domination and aggression. It aims at removing the obstacles existing in the fulfilment of desires. The frenzy of anger nourishes egoism and conceit, and it is the greatest benefactor of the limited ego. Mind is the seat of anger, and its expressions are mostly through the activities of the mind. Anger is a form of *mental* entanglement. Lust, greed and anger respectively have body, heart and mind as their vehicles of expression.

Man experiences disappointment through lust, greed and anger; and the frustrated ego, in its turn, seeks further grati-

fication through lust, greed and anger. Consciousness is thus caught up in a *vicious circle of endless disappointment*. Disappointment comes into existence when

The Vicious Circle either lust or greed or anger are thwarted in their 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 de-

The Road to Happiness sires. 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 just for 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 also is 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, 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 to the road to abiding happiness.

Wants should be carefully distinguished from needs. Pride and anger, greed and lust are all different from want. You might think, "I need all that I want." But this is a mis-

Renunciation of Wants take. If you are thirsty in a desert, what you need is good water, not lemonade.

As long as man has 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 priests prepare men for false death by painting gloomy pictures of hell and heaven. But their death is illusory, since life is one unbroken continuity. The real death consists of the cessation of desires, and it comes by gradual stages.

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

Love and Service 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 in entertaining good desires, selfishness is embracing 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.

The desires which enter into the constitution of the personal ego are either good or bad. Bad desires are ordinarily referred to as forms of selfishness, and good desires are referred to as forms of selflessness. But there is no hard and fast line dividing selfishness from selflessness. Both move in the domain of duality and, from the ultimate point of view which transcends the opposites of good and bad, the distinction between selfishness and selflessness is chiefly one of range. Selfishness and selflessness are two phases of the life of the personal ego, and these two phases are continuous with each other. Selfishness arises when all the desires are centred round the narrow individuality. Selflessness arises when this crude organisation of desires suffers disintegration, and there is a general dispersing of desires with the result that they cover a much wider sphere. Selfishness is the narrowing down of interests to a limited field; selflessness is the extension of interests over a wide field. To put it paradoxically, selfishness is a restricted form of selflessness; and selflessness is the drawing out of selfishness into a wide sphere of activity.

Selfishness must be transmuted into selflessness before the domain of duality is completely transcended. Persistent and continuous performance of good deeds wears out selfishness. Selfishness extended and expressed in the form of good deeds becomes the instrument of its own destruction. *The good is the main link between selfishness thriving and dying.* Selfishness which, in the beginning is the father of evil tendencies, becomes, through good deeds, the hero of its own defeat. And when the evil tendencies are completely replaced

by good tendencies, selfishness is transformed into selflessness, *i.e.*, individual selfishness loses itself into universal interest. And 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 of the soul to annihilate its own ignorance.

From the good the soul passes on to God. Selflessness is merged into *Universal Selfhood*, which is beyond good and bad, virtue and vice and all the other dual aspects of *Maya*. **Universal Selfhood** The height of selflessness is beginning of the feeling of oneness with all. In the state of liberation there is neither selfishness nor selflessness in the ordinary sense; but both of these are taken up and merged into the feeling of *selfness for all*. Realization of the unity of all life is accompanied by peace and unfathomable bliss. It does not, in any way, lead either to spiritual stagnation or to the obliteration of relative values. *Selfness for all brings about undisturbed harmony without loss of discrimination and unshakeable peace without indifference to the surroundings*. And this selfness for all is not an outcome of merely subjective synthesis. It is a result of an actual attainment of union with the Ultimate Reality which includes all.

Open your heart by weeding out all desires and by harbouring only one longing—the longing for union with the Ultimate Reality. The Ultimate Reality is not to be sought in the changing things of external environment, but in one's own being. **Union with the Ultimate Reality** Every time your soul intends entering your human heart, it finds the doors locked and the inside too full of desires. Do not keep the doors of your hearts closed. Everywhere there is the source of abiding bliss, and yet all are miserable

because of desires born of ignorance. The goal of lasting happiness shines forth fully only when the limited ego, with all its desires, finds its complete and final extinction.

Renunciation of desires does not mean asceticism or a merely negative attitude to life. Any such negation of life would make man inhuman. Divinity is not devoid of humanity. Spirituality must make man more human. It is a positive attitude of releasing all that is good and 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. But 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.



Twelve Ways of Realizing Me

1. LONGING

If you experience that same longing and thirst for Union with Me as one who has been lying for days in the hot sun of the Sahara experiences for the longing for water, then you will realize Me.

2. PEACE OF MIND

If you have the peace of a frozen lake, then too you will realize Me.

3. HUMILITY

If you have the humility of the earth which can be moulded into any shape, then you will know me.

4. DESPERATION

If you experience the desperation that causes a man to commit suicide and you feel that you cannot live without seeing Me, then you will see Me.

5. FAITH

If you have the complete faith that Kalyan had for his Master, in believing it was night although it was day (because his Master said so), then you will know Me.

6. FIDELITY

If you have the fidelity that the breath has in giving you company, even without your constantly feeling it, till the end of your life (that both in happiness and in suffering gives you company and never turns against you), then you will know Me.

7. CONTROL THROUGH LOVE

When your love for Me drives away your lust for the things of the senses, then you realize Me.

8. SELFLESS SERVICE

If you have the quality of selfless service unaffected by results, similar to that of the sun which serves the world by shining on all creation—on the grass in the field, on the birds in the air, on the beasts in the forest—on all mankind with its sinner and its saint, its rich and its poor, unconscious of their attitude towards it, then you will win Me.

9. RENUNCIATION

If you renounce for Me everything physical, mental and spiritual, then you have Me.

10. OBEDIENCE

If your obedience is as spontaneous, complete and natural as the light is to the eye or the smell to the nose, then you come to Me.

11. SURRENDERANCE

If your surrenderance to Me is as whole-hearted as that of one, who, suffering from insomnia, surrenders to sudden sleep without fear of being lost, then you have Me.

12. LOVE

If you have that love for Me which St. Francis had for Jesus, then not only will you realize Me but you will please Me.



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. And 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 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

**The Apparent
Existence of the
Finite**

yourself with the body, and 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 all of them the soul is not 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. And from the limited point of view of such 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. And 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. And 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*. And this falsification of thought is present not only in cases where consciousness

is partly developed, but also in men where it is fully developed.

The progressive evolution of consciousness beginning with the stone stage culminates in man. History of evolution is the history of a gradual development of consciousness; and the fruit of evolution is full consciousness 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 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, prescribed by the *sanskaras* and its functioning, is also determined by the desires. But as desires aim at self-satisfaction, the whole consciousness becomes self-centred and individualised. *The individualisation 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 with 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 Supreme Being descends in 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 individualised ego is all imagination. It is a misapprehension of the soul. Out of the imagination of the universal soul are born many individuals. This is *maya* or ignorance.

Side by side with the birth of the separate and limited individuality, there also comes into existence the objective universe. As the limited individuality has separate existence not in fact but only in imagination, the objective universe also has no independent and separate reality. It is the One Universal itself appearing in the second role of manifestation through the attributes. When the soul descends in the domain of *maya*, it takes upon itself the limitations of manifold existence. This self-limitation of the soul might be looked upon as its self-sacrifice on the altar of consciousness. Although it eternally remains the same Infinite Absolute, it suffers a kind of *timeless* contraction through its apparent descent in the world of time and variety and evolution. What, however,

really evolves is not the soul itself but only the consciousness, which, owing to its limitations, gives rise to the limited individuality.

The history of the limited individuality is a history of the development of triple entanglement with mind, energy and matter (body). Duality prevails in all these domains, and the soul gets entangled in this duality, 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 the soul gets entangled with it, it comes under its sway. During the evolution of the triple entanglement with matter (body), energy and mind, the ignorant soul is continually on the grip of wanting. It wants good and bad of the *gross* world; it wants good and bad of the *subtle* world; and it wants 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 and eternal aspect of life. The Infinite is to be sought for beyond the domain of duality. And this becomes possible only when consciousness can step out of the limited individuality by breaking through the barriers of *sanskaras*.

We have seen that the possible field of consciousness is limited by the *sanskaras*. This limitation creates a division of

the human psyche into two parts. One part falls within the range of consciousness and the other part falls beyond it.

The Chasm between Consciousness and Unconsciousness This unconscious part taken in its full extent is identical with the power which is also behind matter. And it is referred to as God by the orthodox religions. The Ultimate Reality which symbolically represented through such concepts can be known in its truth only by *bringing the unconscious into consciousness*. An extension of consciousness consists in being conscious of that which was formerly unconscious. The progressive conquest of the unconscious by the conscious culminates in *consummate* consciousness which is unlimited in scope and unhindered in function. Between this highest state of consciousness and the limited, though full consciousness of average humanity, there are about forty-nine degrees of illumined consciousness. They mark the important stages of growing illumination.

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

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

A Perfect Master is consciously united with the Infinite Reality. In his case, the chasm between consciousness and unconsciousness is bridged, not by the extension of the unconscious over the conscious, as in the man who enjoys deep sleep, but by the extension of consciousness over unconsciousness. The waxing and waning of consciousness is applicable only to the limited individual. In the case of the Perfect Master, the conquest of the unconscious by the conscious is final and permanent and, therefore, his state of self-knowledge is continuous and unbroken, and remains the same at all times without any diminution. From this you can see that the Perfect Master never sleeps in the ordinary sense of the word. When he rests his body, he experiences no gap in his consciousness.

In the state of perfection, full consciousness becomes consummate by the disappearance of all obstacles to illumination. The conquest of the unconscious by the conscious is complete, and the person continuously dwells in the full blaze of illumination or as one with illumination. He becomes **The State of Perfection**

illumination itself. As long as a person remains under the sway of duality and looks upon the manifoldness of experience as being true and final, he has not traversed the domain of ignorance. In the state of final understanding, a person realizes that the Infinite, which is one without a second, is the only reality. The Infinite pervades and includes all existence leaving nothing as its rival. A person who has such realization has attained the highest state of consciousness. In this state, the full consciousness which is the fruit of evolution is retained, but the limitations of *sanskaras* and desires are completely transcended. The limited individuality, which is the creation of ignorance, is transformed into the Divine individuality which is unlimited. The illimitable consciousness of the Universal Soul becomes individualised in this focus without giving rise to any form of illusion. The person is free from all self-centred desires, and he becomes the medium of the spontaneous flow of the Supreme and Universal Will which expresses Divinity. *Individuality becomes limitless by the disappearance of ignorance.* As it is unimpaired by the separateness of *maya* and unentangled in its duality, it enjoys the state of liberation in which there is objectless awareness, pure being and unclouded joy. Such a person has no longer any illusions which perplex and bewilder man. In one sense he is dead. The personal ego, which is the source of the sense of separateness, has been for ever annihilated. But in another sense, he is alive for evermore with unconquerable love and eternal bliss. He has infinite power and wisdom, and the whole universe is to him a field for his spiritual work of perfecting mankind.



The Beginning and the End of Creation

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

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

Between the beginning and the end of this changing world, there are many cycles, but there is, in and through these

cycles, a continuity of cosmic evolution. The real termination of the evolutionary process is called *Mahapralaya* or the final annihilation of the world, when the world becomes what it was in the beginning, namely *nothing*. The *Mahapralaya* of the world may be compared with the sleep of a man. Just as the varied world of experience completely disappears in the case of the man who is in deep sleep, the entire objective cosmos which is the creation of *Maya* vanishes into nothingness at the time of *Mahapralaya*. It is as if the universe had never existed at all.

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

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

The one Reality includes in itself *all* existence. It is everything, but it has nothing as its shadow. The idea of all-inclusive existence implies that it leaves nothing outside its being. When you analyse the idea of Being, you arrive by implication at the idea of that which does not exist. This idea of non-existence or 'Nothing' helps you to define clearly

**Reality and
Nothing**

our notion of Being. *The complementary aspect of Being is thus Non-Being or Nothing.* But 'Nothing' cannot be looked upon as having its own separate and independent existence. It is nothing in itself. Nor can it, in itself, be a cause of anything. The manifold and evolving universe cannot be the outcome of 'Nothing' taken by itself. And you have seen that it cannot also be the outcome of the one Reality. How then does the manifold and evolving universe arise?

The manifold evolving universe arises owing to the mixing up of the one Reality and 'Nothing'. It springs out of 'Nothing' when this 'Nothing' is taken against the back-ground of the one Reality. But this should not be taken to mean that the universe is partly the outcome of the one Reality, or that it has an element of Reality. It is an outcome of 'Nothing' and is nothing. It only *seems* to have existence. And its apparent existence is due to the one Reality which is, as it were, behind 'Nothing'. *When 'Nothing' gets added to the one Reality, you get the manifold and evolving universe.*

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

The whole evolutionary process is within the domain of imagination. When in imagination the one ocean of Reality gets apparently disturbed, there arises the manifold world of separate centres of consciousness. This involves the basic division of life into the *self* and *not-self* or the 'I' and its environment. And owing to the falseness and the incompleteness of this limited self (which is only an imagined part of a really indivisible totality), consciousness

The Imagined Division between the Self and its Environment leads to an Evolving Duality cannot remain content with eternal identification with it. Thus consciousness is trapped in ceaseless restlessness forcing it to attempt identification with the not-self. That portion of the not-self, or the environment with which consciousness succeeds in identifying itself, gets affiliated to the self in the form of 'mine'; and that portion of the not-self, with which it does not succeed in identifying itself, becomes irreducible environment which inevitably creates a limit and an opposition to the self.

Thus consciousness arrives not at the *termination* of its limiting duality but at its *transformation*. As long as consciousness is subject to the working of vitiating imagination, it cannot successfully put an end to this duality, and all the varied attempts which it makes for the assimilation of the not-self (or the environment) result merely in the replacement of the initial duality by other innumerable novel forms of the *same* duality. The acceptance and the rejection of certain portions of the environment respectively express themselves as 'wanting' and 'not-wanting', thus giving rise to the opposites of pleasure and pain, good and bad, etc. But neither acceptance nor rejection can lead to freedom from duality, and consciousness, therefore, finds itself engaged in *ceaseless and alternate oscillation from one opposite to the other*. The

entire process of the evolution of the individual is characterised by this oscillation between the opposites.

The evolution of the limited individual is completely determined by the *Sanskaras* accumulated by him through ages, and though it is all part of imagination, the determinism is thorough and automatic. Every action and experience, howsoever ephemeral, leaves behind it an impression in the mental body. This impression is an *objective* modification of the mental body; and as the mental body remains the same through several lives, the impressions accumulated by the individual are also capable of persisting through several lives. When the *Sanskaras*, thus accumulated, begin to express themselves (instead of merely lying latent in the mental body), they are experienced as desires, *i.e.*, they are apprehended as being *subjective*. The subjective and the objective are the two aspects of the *Sanskaras*; the former is the passive state of latency, and the latter is the active state of manifestation.

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

But though this spending up of *Sanskaras* is going on continually, it does not end in freedom from the *Sanskaras*,

because new *Sanskaras* are being inevitably created *not only through fresh actions, but even through the very process of spending up*. So the heap of *Sanskaras* goes on increasing, and the individual finds himself helpless in the problem of throwing off the burden.

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

Balancing through the Opposites

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

Suppose a man has killed some one in this life. This deposited in his mental body the *Sanskaras* of killing. And if consciousness were to be solely and simply determined by this initial tendency created by these *Sanskaras*, he would go on killing others again and again *ad infinitum*, every time gathering further

momentum from subsequent acts of the same kind. And there would be no escape from this recurring determinism, had it not been for the fact that the logic of experience provides the necessary check to it. The person soon realizes the incompleteness of the experience of one opposite, and he unconsciously seeks to restore the lost balance by going over to the other opposite. Thus the person, who has had the experience of killing, will develop the psychological need and the 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 other complementary half of the total situation, namely, the role of being killed, remains for him an understood and foreign datum which, nevertheless, has introduced itself in his experience. There thus arises the *need to complete experience* by attracting on oneself the opposite of that through which one has personally gone, and consciousness has a tendency to fulfil this new and pressing need. In the above example of a person who has had the experience of killing, he will soon develop a tendency to get himself killed in order to cover the entire situation by personal experience.

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

Like the shuttle of the weaver's loom, the human mind moves within two extremes developing the warp and the woof

of the cloth of life. To use a geometrical metaphor, *the development of the psychic life is best represented not as a straight line but as a zig-zag course*. Take the function of the two banks of the river. If there are no banks, there would be dispersion of the waters of the rivers sideways, making it impossible for the river to reach its destination. In the same way, the life-force would have dissipated itself in endless and innumerable ways, had it not been confined between the two poles of the opposites. But these banks of the river of life are best looked upon not as two parallel lines, but as two converging lines which meet at the point of liberation. The amount of oscillation becomes less and less as the individual approaches the goal, and it completely subsides when he realizes it. It is like the movement of the doll which has its centre of gravity at the base, with the result that it has a gradual tendency to become steady in the sitting posture. If it is shaken, it continues to swing from one side to another for some time, but the movement covers an increasingly shorter span, and in the end the doll becomes stationary. In the case of cosmic evolution, such subsiding of alternation between the opposites, means *Mahapralaya*; and in the case of the spiritual evolution of the individual, it means *Liberation*.

The step from duality to non-duality is, however, merely a matter of difference in degree. As the two are qualitatively different, the difference between them is infinite. The former is a not-God state and the latter is the God-state. This infinite difference constitutes the abyss between the sixth plane of consciousness and the seventh plane of consciousness. All the lower six planes of consciousness are also separated from each other by a kind of a valley or distance. But though, the difference between them is great, it is not infinite, because

they are all equally subject to the by-polarity of limited experience, consisting in the alternation between the opposites. The difference between the first plane and the second, the second and the third, and so on up to the sixth plane, is great but not infinite. It follows that, strictly speaking, none of the six planes of duality can be said to be really nearer to the seventh plane than any others. The difference between any of the six planes and the seventh plane is infinite, just in the same way as the difference between the sixth and the seventh plane is infinite. The progress through the six planes is a progress in imagination. But the realization of the seventh plane is the *cessation* of imagination, and, therefore, the awakening of the individual into Truth-consciousness.

The illusory progress through the six planes cannot, however, be altogether avoided. Imagination has to be completely exhausted before a person can realize the Truth. When a disciple has a Master, **Progress through the Planes** he has to cross all the six planes. The Master may take his disciple through the planes, *either with open eyes or under veil*. If the disciple is taken under cover and is not conscious of the planes which he is crossing, desires persist till the sixth plane; but if he is taken with open eyes and is conscious of the planes which he is crossing, no desires are left after the fifth plane. If the Master comes for work, he often chooses to take his disciples under cover, for he is likely to be more actively useful for his work if he is blind-folded than if he is taken with open eyes.

The crossing of the planes is throughout characterised by the *unwinding* of the *Sanskaras*. This process of unwinding should be carefully distinguished from the spending up. In the process of spending up, the *Sanskaras* become dynamic and release themselves into action or experience. This does

not lead to final emancipation from *Sanskaras*, as the never-ceasing fresh accumulation of *Sanskaras* more than replaces the *Sanskaras* which are spent up, and the spending up itself is responsible for further *Sanskaras*. In the process of the unwinding of the *Sanskaras*, however, the *Sanskaras* get weakened and annihilated by the flame of the longing for the Infinite.

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

The longing for the Infinite gets accentuated and acute until it arrives at its climax, and then gradually begins to cool down. But while cooling down, consciousness does not altogether give up the longing for the Infinite, but it continues to stick to the aim of realizing the Infinite. This state of cooled but latent longing is preliminary to the realization of the Infinite. It has at this stage been the instrument of annihilating all other desires, and is itself ready to be quenched by the unfathomable stillness of the Infinite.

Before the longing for the Infinite is fulfilled through the realization of the Infinite, consciousness has to pass from the

sixth to the seventh plane. It has to pass from duality to non-duality. Instead of wandering in imagination, it has to arrive at the ending of imagination. The Master understands the one Reality as being the only Reality and the ' Nothing' as being merely its shadow. For him, time is swallowed up in eternity. As he has realized the timeless aspect of Reality, he is beyond time, and *holds within his being both the beginning and the end of time*. He remains unmoved by the temporal process consisting of the action and interaction of the many. Ordinary man neither knows the beginning nor the end of creation. He is, therefore, overpowered by the march of the events which seem to be beyond his control or comprehension. They loom large in his estimate because of lack of proper perspective. He is caught up in time. He looks upon everything in terms of possible fulfilment or non-fulfilment of his *Sanskaras*. He is, therefore, profoundly disturbed by the happenings of this world. The whole objective universe comes to him as an unwelcome limitation which has either to be overcome or tolerated.

The Master, on the other hand, is free from duality and the *Sanskaras* characteristic of duality. He is, therefore, free from all limitation. The storm and the stress of the universe do not affect his being. All the bustle of the world with its constructive and destructive processes can, for him, have no special importance, for he has entered into the *Sanctuary of Truth* which is *the abode of that eternal significance which is at best only partially and faintly reflected in the fleeting values of the phantasmagoria of creation*. He comprehends within his being all existence, and looks upon the entire play of manifestation as merely a game.



The Formation and the Function of Sanskaras

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

From the psycho-genetic point of view, human actions are seen to be based upon the operation of the impressions stored in the mind through previous experience. Every thought and emotion and every 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 experience. When occupied with the physical objects of this world, such as, body, nature and other things around, the mind is, so to say, externalised, and creates gross impressions; and when it is busy with its own subjective mental processes (which are the

Sanskaras are originated in Experience and become the Basis of Future Experience

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

The *sanskaras* are of two types—natural and non-natural—according to the manner in which they come into existence. The *sanskaras* which the soul gathers during the period of organic evolution are **Natural and Non-natural Sanskaras** natural *sanskaras*. These *sanskaras* come into existence and gather round the soul as it successively takes up and abandons the various sub-human 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* attaining the human form are the product of natural evolution and therefore best referred to as natural *sanskaras*. They should be carefully distinguished from the *sanskaras* which are cultivated by the soul *after* the attainment of the human form. 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, therefore, best referred to as non-natural *sanskaras*. For, though these post-human *sanskaras* are directly dependent upon the natural *sanskaras*, they are created under fundamentally different conditions of life, and are, in their origin, comparatively more recent than the natural *sanskaras*. This difference in the length of the periods through which they have gathered and in

the conditions under which they are formed is responsible for the difference in the degree of firmness with which the natural and non-natural *sanskaras* are respectively attached to the soul. The non-natural *sanskaras* are not as difficult to eradicate as the natural *sanskaras* which have an ancient heritage, and are, therefore, more firmly rooted. The obliteration of the natural *sanskaras* is practically impossible unless the neophyte is the recipient of the grace and the intervention of a Sadguru.

As explained above, the non-natural *sanskaras* are dependent upon the natural *sanskaras*, and the natural *sanskaras* are a result of evolution. The next im-

**The Manifested Life
arises owing to the
Will-to-be-conscious
in the Absolute**

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

But, though for the purposes of an intellectual explanation of the creation, the impetus in the Absolute has to be regarded as a will-to-be-

**The Lahar within the
Absolute may be
compared to a Wave
in the Ocean**

conscious; to describe it as a sort of inherent desire is to falsify its true nature. It is better described as a *lahar* or an impulse which is so inexplicable, spontaneous and sudden that *to call it this or that is to have its reality undone.* Since all intellectual categories turn out to be necessarily inadequate in grasping

the mystery of creation, the nearest approach to understanding its nature, is not through an intellectual concept, but through an analogy. Just as a wave going across the surface of a still ocean calls forth into being a wild stir of innumerable bubbles, the *lahar* creates myriads of individual souls out of the indivisible infinity of one Oversoul. But the all abounding Absolute remains the substratum of all the individual souls. The individual souls are the creations of a sudden and spontaneous impulse, and have, therefore, hardly any anticipation about their destined continuity of existence throughout the cyclic period until the final subsiding of the initial tremor. Within the undifferentiated being of the Absolute is born a mysterious point through which come forth the variegated manyness of creation; and the 'vasty' deep which, before a fraction of a second, was icy-still, is astir with the life of innumerable frothy selves who secure their separateness of a definite size and shape through self-limitation within the foamy surface of the ocean.

But all this is merely an analogy. It would be a mistake to imagine that some real change takes place in the Absolute when the *lahar* of the involved will-to-be-conscious makes itself effective by bringing into existence the world of manifestation. There can be no act of involution or evolution within the being of the Absolute; and nothing real can be born from the Absolute as any real change is necessarily a negation of the Absolute. The change implied in the creation of the manifested world is not an ontological change or a change in the being of the Absolute Reality; it is only an apparent change. In one sense, the act of manifestation must be regarded as a sort of an *Expansion* of the illimitable being of the Absolute, since through that act the Infinite which is without consciousness seeks to attain its own

consciousness. But, since this expansion of Reality is effected through its self-limitization into various forms of life, the act of manifestation might, with equal aptness, be called the process of timeless *contraction*. But, whether the act of manifestation is looked upon as a sort of expansion of reality or as its "timeless contraction", it is preceded by an initial urge or movement which might, in terms of thought, be regarded as *an inherent and involved desire to be conscious*. The manifoldness of creation and separateness of the individual souls exist only in imagination. The very existence of the creation or the world of manifestation is grounded in *bhas* or illusion, so that, in spite of the manifestation of numberless individual souls, the Oversoul remains the same without suffering any real expansion or contraction, increment or decrement. But, though the Oversoul undergoes no modification due to the *bhas* or illusion of individuation, there comes into existence its apparent differentiation into many individual souls.

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

**The Most Original
Bhas appears in the
Stone Phase**

derived from the Oversoul and not from the body of the stone. But consciousness is unable to enlarge its scope independently of the body of the stone, because the Oversoul first gets identified with consciousness and then through it to the stone form. And since all further development of consciousness is arrested by the body of the stone and its langour, evolution of the higher forms or vehicles of manifestation becomes indispensable. The development of consciousness has to proceed side by side with the evolution of the body by which it is conditioned. Therefore, the will-to-be-conscious which is inherent in the vastness of the Oversoul seeks by divine determination a *progressive evolution of the vehicles of expression*.

Thus the Oversoul forges for itself a new vehicle of expression in the mental form in which it becomes slightly more intensified. But it is even at this stage very rudimentary. And so it has to get transferred to still higher forms of vegetation and trees in whom there is an appreciable advance in the development of consciousness through the maintenance of the vital processes of growth, decay and reproduction. Emergence of a still more developed form of consciousness becomes possible when the Oversoul seeks manifestation through the instinctive life of insects, birds and animals who are fully aware of their bodies and their respective surroundings, and who develop a sense of self-protection and aim at establishing mastery over their environment. In the higher animals, intellect or reasoning also appears to a certain extent, but its working is strictly limited by the play of their instincts like the instinct of self-protection and the instinct for the care and preservation of the little ones. So, even in animals, consciousness has not had its full development, with the result

Progressive Evolution of Consciousness and Forms

that it is unable to serve the initial purpose of the Oversoul to have self-illumination.

The Oversoul finally takes the human form in which consciousness attains to its fullest development with complete awareness of the self and the environment. At this stage the capacity of reasoning has the widest range of activity and is unlimited in its scope. But, as the Oversoul, through its consciousness, gets identified with the gross body, consciousness does not serve the purpose of illuminating the nature of the Oversoul. However, since consciousness has had its fullest development in the human form, there is in it a latent potentiality for Self-realization, and the *will-to-be-conscious with which evolution started, becomes fructified in the Sadgurus or Man-Gods who are the fair flowers of humanity.*

The Oversoul cannot attain self-knowledge through the ordinary consciousness of humanity, because it is enveloped in a multitude of *sanskaras* or impressions. As consciousness passes from the apparently inanimate to the vegetative life of the trees, then onwards to the instinctive state of insects, birds and animals, and finally to the full consciousness of the human state, it is continually creating new *sanskaras* and getting enveloped in them. And these natural *sanskaras* get added to, even after attaining the human state, by the further creation of non-natural *sanskaras* through manifold experience and multitudinous activities. Thus *the acquisition of sanskaras is unceasingly going on during the process of evolution as well as during the period of later post-human activities.* This acquisition of the *sanskaras* may be likened to the winding up of a piece of string round a stick, the string

representing the *sanskaras* and the stick representing the mind of the individual soul. The winding up starts from the beginning of the creation and persists through all the evolutionary stages and human form, and the wound string represents all the positive *sanskaras*—natural as well as non-natural.

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

Some Examples of the Potency of Impressions The impressions created by beautiful objects have the potency of arousing in consciousness the innate capacity for appreciating and enjoying beauty. When one hears a good piece of music, or sees a beautiful landscape, the impressions caught from these objects gives him a feeling of exaltation. In the same way, when one contacts the personality of a thinker, he might get interested in new avenues of thought and be inspired with an enthusiasm which was utterly foreign to his consciousness before contacting the thinker. Not only the impressions of objects or persons, but also the impressions of ideas and superstitions, have great efficacy in determining the conditions of consciousness.

The power of the impressions of superstitions might be illustrated by means of a ghost story. Of the different realms of human thought, there is perhaps none as abounding in superstitions as the realm which is connected with ghosts who, according to popular ideology, are supposed to harass and torture their victim in curious ways. Once upon a time, during the Moghul rule in India, a highly educated

man, who was very sceptical about the stories of ghosts, made up his mind to verify them from personal experience. He had been warned against visiting a certain graveyard on the night of *amavasya* (the darkest night of the month), for it was reported to be the habitation of a very dreadful ghost who unfailingly made his appearance whenever an iron nail was hammered into the ground within the limits of the graveyard. With the hammer in one hand and the nail in the other, he walked straight in to the graveyard on the night of *amavasya* and chose a spot uncovered by grass in order to drive a nail in. The ground was dark, and equally dark was the cloak he wore hanging loosely. When he sat on the ground trying to hammer the nail, an end of his cloak got between the nail and the ground, and got tied to the nail. He finished hammering and felt that he was successful with the experiment without encountering upon the ghost. But, as he tried to rise in order to depart from the spot, he felt a strong pull towards the ground, and he was panic-stricken. Owing to the operation of previous impressions, he could not think of anything except the ghost who, he thought, had secured him at last. And the shock of the thought was so great that the poor man died of heart-failure. This story illustrates the tremendous power which sometimes resides in the impressions created by superstition.

The power and the 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 have it eradicated, it takes its own time and has a way of working itself into action directly or indirectly. The mind contains many heterogenous *sanskaras* and, while seeking expressions in

**Freedom from
Sanskaras is the
Condition of Har-
monious Experience**

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 *sanskaras* can be classified according to the essential differences in the nature of the spheres to which they refer. As referring to different spheres of existence, they are found to be of three kinds: (1) Gross *sanskaras* which enable the soul to experience the gross world through the gross medium and compel it to identify itself with the gross body. (2) Subtle *sanskaras* which enable the soul to experience the subtle world through the subtle medium and compel the soul to identify itself with the subtle body, (3) Mental *sanskaras* which enable the soul to experience the mental world through the mental medium and compel it to identify itself with the mental body. The differences between the states of the individual souls are entirely due to the differences existing in the kind of *sanskaras* with which their consciousness is loaded. Thus, the gross-conscious souls experience only the gross world; the subtle-conscious souls experience only the subtle world; and the mental-conscious souls experience only the mental world. The qualitative diversity in the experience of these three types of souls is due to the difference in the nature of their *sanskaras*.

The self-conscious souls are radically different from all the other souls, because they experience the Over-soul through the

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



The Removal of Sanskaras

Part I

THE CESSATION OF SANSKARAS: THEIR WEARING OUT AND UNWINDING

HUMAN beings do not have self-illumination, because their consciousness is shrouded in *sanskaras* or the accumulated imprints of past experience. In them, the will-
Sanskaras Prevent Self-illumination to-be-conscious with which evolution started has succeeded in creating consciousness. But it does not arrive at the knowledge of the Oversoul, because the individual soul is impelled to use consciousness for experiencing *sanskaras*, instead of utilising it for experiencing its own true nature as the Oversoul. The experiencing of *sanskaras* keeps it confined to the illusion of being a finite body trying to adjust itself in the world of things and persons.

The individual souls are like the drops in the ocean. Just as each drop in the ocean is fundamentally identical with the ocean, the soul which is individualised due to *bhas* or illusion is still the Oversoul, and does not really become separate from the Oversoul. And yet the envelope of *sanskaras*, in which consciousness is covered, prevents it from having self-illumination and keeps it within the domain of *maya* or duality. In order that the soul should consciously realize its identity with the Oversoul, it is necessary that consciousness should be

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

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

(1) *The cessation of new sanskaras.*

Five Ways of Securing Release from Sanskaras This consists in putting an end to the ever-renewing activity of creating fresh *sanskaras*. If the formation of *sanskaras* is compared to the winding of a string round a stick, this step amounts to the stopping of the further winding of the string.

(2) *The wearing out of old sanskaras.*

If *sanskaras* are withheld from expressing themselves in action and experience, they are gradually worn out. 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. To develop the analogy of the string, it is like the unwinding of the string.

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

If the psychic energy which is locked up in *sanskaras* is sublimated and diverted to other channels, they get dispersed and heaved and have a tendency to disappear.

(5) *The wiping out of sanskaras.*

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

It should be carefully noted that many of the concrete methods of undoing *sanskaras* are found to be effective in *more than one way*, and the five ways mentioned above are not meant to classify these methods into sharply distinguished types. They rather represent the different principles characterising the psychic processes which take place while *sanskaras* are being removed. For the sake of convenience, this article will deal only with those methods which pre-eminently illustrate the first three principles (viz., the cessation of fresh *sanskaras* and wearing out as well as the unwinding of past *sanskaras*.). The methods which predominantly illustrate the last two principles (viz., the dispersion and sublimation of *sanskaras* and the wiping out of *sanskaras*) will be explained in the next article.

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

Renunciation Fresh multiplication of *sanskaras* can be stopped through renunciation. Renunciation may be external or internal. External or physical renunciation consists in giving up everything to which the mind is attached, viz., home, parents, wife, children, friends, wealth, comforts and gross enjoyments. Internal or mental renunciation consists in giving up all cravings, particularly the craving for sensual

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

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

likely to be carried away by some wild wave of collective passion and get caught up in modes of thought which he is unable to renounce. But, *though it is difficult to resist and overcome the influence and surroundings, it is easier to escape from them.* Many persons would live a chaste and a straightforward life if they are not surrounded by luxuries and temptations. The renunciation of all superfluous things helps the wearing out of *sanskaras* and is, therefore, contributory to the life of freedom.

The two important forms of external renunciation which have special spiritual value are (1) solitude and (2) 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 has also 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; and 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 to 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; and when external and internal fasting are whole-hearted and faithful, they bring about the unwinding of the *sanskaras* connected with the craving for food.

The unwinding of many other *sanskaras* can be brought about through penance. This consists in augmenting and expressing the feeling of remorse which a man feels after realizing that he has done some wrong 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 the penance, or by 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 some one 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 saints even inflict wounds on their body when they are in a mood of penitence. But such drastic expression of remorse must be discouraged as a general usage. Some Hindu aspirants try to cultivate humility by making it a rule to fall at the feet of every one 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 in penance the danger that the mind might dwell too long upon the wrongs done, and thus develop the morbid habit of wail and weep 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 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.

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 **Withholding Desires from Fulfilment** 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 of these desires; and this cogitation results in the wearing out of the corresponding *sanskaras*. It should, however, be noted that such spontaneous cogitation does not bring about the desired result if it takes the form of mental indulgence in the 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 cogitative consciousness which does not sanction them, the seeds of these desires get consumed.* The rejection of desires and the inhibition of physical response in time effect an automatic and natural negation of the past *sanskaras*.

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; and when it is unfulfilled, it leads to disappointment and suffering which, through their *sanskaras*, fetter the freedom of the spirit in their own way. There is no end to wanting, because the external and internal stimuli of the mind are constantly alluring it into a state of wanting or disliking (which is another form of wanting) something. The external stimuli are the sensations of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch; and 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 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 dis-entanglement 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 ' *Neti* ', ' *Neti* ', ' 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 opponents, it cannot continue to be attached to the expression of affection and be influenced by them. The equipoise consists in meeting both the alternatives with complete detachment.

The 'yes,' 'yes,' meaning of the positive sanskaras can only be annulled through the negative assertion of 'no', 'no'. This negative element is necessarily present in all the aspects of asceticism, as expressed through renunciation, solitude, fasting, penance, withholding desires from fulfilment and non-wanting. The happy blending of all these methods and attitudes (which have been individually explained in this article) creates a healthy form of asceticism in which there is no toil or exertion. But to ensure all this, the

The Limit of the Negative Element in the Different Forms of Asceticism

negative element in them must come naturally without giving rise to any perversions or further limitations.

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

The process of being freed from some attachments is often accompanied by the process of forming some other new attachments. The grossest form of attachment is that which is directed towards the world of objects. But when the mind is being detached from the world of objects, it has a tendency to arrive at some finer attachments of a subjective kind. After the mind has succeeded in cultivating a certain degree of detachment, it might easily develop that subtle form of egoism which expresses itself through aloofness and superior air. *Detachment should not be allowed to form any nucleus for the ego to fasten itself on; and at the same time, it should not be an expression of one's inability to cope with the storm and stress of worldly life.* The things, that condition pure and infinite being, should be given up from the attitude of the immense strength which is born of purity and enlightenment, and not from a sense of helplessness in the face of strife and struggle. Further, true detachment does not consist in clinging to the mere formula of 'Neti', 'Neti' which sometimes becomes an obsession of the mind without any deep-felt longing for enlightenment. Such interest in mere formula of negation often exists side by side

with an inward dwelling on the temptations. Detachment can be integral and whole-hearted only when it becomes a part and parcel of one's nature.

The negative assertion of 'no', 'no' is the only way of unwinding the positive *sanskaras* gathered through evolution and human lives. But though this does destroy the positive *sanskaras* it results in the formation of the *negative sanskaras* which, in their own way, condition the mind and create a new problem. The assertion of 'no', 'no' has to be sufficiently powerful to effect the eradication of all the physical, subtle and mental *sanskaras*; but after it has served its purpose, it has to be ultimately abandoned. *The finality of spiritual experience does not consist of a bare negation.* To bring it under a negative formula is to limit it by means of an intellectual concept. The negative formula has to be used by the mind to decondition itself, but it must be renounced before the ultimate goal of life can be attained. Thought has to be made use of in order to overcome the limitations set up by its own movement; but, when this is done, it has to be itself given up. This amounts to the process of *going beyond the mind*; and it becomes possible through non-identification with the mind or its desires. To look upon the body, as well as all thoughts and lower impulses objectively, is to get established in blissful detachment and to negate all the *sanskaras*. This means freeing the soul from its self-imposed illusions like 'I am the body', 'I am the mind' or 'I am desire' and gaining ground towards the enlightened state of '*I am God*', '*Anal Haque*', or '*Aham Brahmasmi*'.



The Removal of Sanskaras

Part II

THE DISPERSION AND EXHAUSTION OF SANSKARAS

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

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

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

If, however, control is purely mechanical and aimless, it defeats its own purpose which is to make possible the free and unconditioned functioning of the mind.

**True Control is
Creative Self-adjust-
ment in the Light of
Perceived Values**

The control which has true spiritual value does not consist in the mechanical repression of thoughts and desires, but is the natural restraint exercised by the perception of positive values discovered during the process of experience. True control is, therefore, not merely negative. When some positive values come within the ken of consciousness, their claims for being expressed in life generate psychic response and energy which ultimately remove all the mental tendencies standing in the way of a free and full expression of those values. *Thus, the tendencies for lust, greed and anger are removed through the appreciative recognition of the value of a life of purity, generosity and kindness.*

The mind, which gets accustomed to certain habits of thought and response does find it easy to adjust itself to these new claims of its own perceptions owing to the inertia caused by the impressions of previous modes of thought and conduct, and this process of *readjustment in the light of true values* takes the form of what we call controlling the mind. But this control is not a mechanical or forcible twisting of the mind. It is an effort of the mind to overcome its own

inertia. *It is fundamentally creative and not negative in its purpose*, for it is an attempt of the mind to arrive at self-adjustment in order to release the expression of the true values of life.

Creative control becomes possible, because the source of light is within everyone; and though self-illumination is prevented by the veil of *sanskaras*, it is not all darkness even within the boundaries of ordinary human consciousness. The ray of light, which leads it onward, consists of the sense for true values and guides man with varying degrees of clarity according to the thickness of the veil of *sanskaras*. *The process of the negation of sanskaras is at the same time the process of understanding the true values*. Spiritual progress is thus characterised by the dual aspect of renouncing the false values of the *sanskaras* in favour of the true values of understanding. The process of replacing the lower values by the higher values is the process of sublimation which consists in diverting the psychic energy locked up in the old *sanskaras* towards creative and spiritual ends. *When the psychic energy which is locked up in the sanskaras is thus diverted, they get dispersed and exhausted*.

The method of sublimation is the most natural and effective method of breaking through the grooves of old *sanskaras* and has the special advantage of having an unflagging interest for the aspirant at all stages. The method of mere negation without any substitution is sometimes likely to be boring, and might seem to lead to vacuity. But the method of

The Dispersion and Exhaustion of Old Sanskaras Through Sublimation

The Process of Sublimation is Sustained by Unflagging Interest

sublimation consists of *replacing lower values by higher ones*, and is, therefore, at every stage, full of absorbing interest, and bring an ever-increasing sense of fulfilment. Psychic energy can be sublimated into spiritual channels through (1) Meditation, (2) Selfless service of humanity and (3) Devotion.

Meditation takes the form of deep and constant concentration on the ideal object. In such concentration on the ideal object, the soul is conscious only of the object of meditation, and it completely forgets its mind, as well as the body, so that no new *sanskaras* are formed and the old ones are dispersed and exhausted through the psychic activity of dwelling on the object of concentration. Finally, when there is complete disappearance of *sanskaras*, *the soul as individualised is dissolved in the intensity of concentration and merged in the ideal object.*

There are many forms of meditation according to the aptitude of different persons. The imaginative genius of persons who have to labour hard is often dried up due to overwork. For such persons, the form of meditation which is most suitable consists in disconnecting oneself from the thoughts, and then looking upon these thoughts and the body *objectively*. After the aspirant is successful in regarding his thoughts and his body with complete objectivity, he tries to *identify himself with the cosmic Being* through constructive suggestions like "I am the Infinite", "I am in everything", "I am in all ". Those

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

The more successful and deeper forms of meditation are preceded by deliberate and constructive thinking about God—the Beloved. Meditation on God is spiritually most fruitful. God can become the object of meditation either in his *impersonal* aspect of God or in his *personal* aspect. Meditation on the impersonal aspect of God is suitable only for those who have a special aptitude for it. It consists in focussing all thoughts on the abstract and unmanifest existence of God. On the other hand, meditation on the personal aspect of God consists in centring all thoughts upon the form and the attributes of God. After intensive meditation, the mind might want to settle down, not on the object of meditation but, on the steadiness of the expansive peace experienced during meditation. Such moments are the natural result of the fatigue of the faculty of imagination, and they should be effortlessly encouraged.

Meditation should be spontaneous and not forced. In the moments of the surging up of the divine

impulses, imagination should be let loose and allowed to soar high. The flight of imagination should be controlled only by the set purpose of becoming one with the infinite. It should not be allowed to be influenced by the currents of the diverse feelings of lust, greed or anger. Success in concentration comes only gradually, and the novice is likely to be disheartened, because he does not get satisfactory results in the beginning. The disappointment which he experiences is itself often a serious obstruction to begin the meditation of the day and persist in it. Other obstacles like idleness and ill health might also be found to be difficult to overcome; but they can be got over by having fixed and regular hours for meditation and steady practice. Early morning or at sunset, the quiet condition of nature is particularly helpful for meditation; but meditation might be undertaken also at any other suitable time.

Solitude is one of the essential conditions of attaining success in meditation. In the world of thought, there is a constant intermingling of thought-forms and thought-colours. Some mighty ideas have a tendency to strengthen the mind by facilitating integration, whereas some frivolous thoughts are dissipating. The mind is either attracted or repelled by these diverse thoughts in the mental environment. It is advisable to avoid altogether the influence of these variegated thoughts in order to *get established in one's own ideal of thought*. And for this purpose, solitude has an immense possibility. Solitude means economy of psychic energy and increased power of concentration. Having nothing extraneous to

attract or repel the mind, you are drawn inwards, and learn the art of opening yourself to the higher atmospheric currents which have the potency of giving you strength, bliss and peaceful expansiveness.

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

Selfless Service When the soul is completely absorbed in the service of humanity, it is completely oblivious of its own body or mind or their functions as in meditation and, therefore, new *sanskaras* are not formed. Further, the old *sanskaras* which bind the mind are shattered and dispersed. Since the soul is now centring its attention and interest, not upon its own good, but upon the good of others, *the nucleus of the ego is deprived of its nourishing energy*, Selfless service is, therefore, one of the best methods of diverting and sublimating the energy locked up in the binding *sanskaras*.

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

Implications of Selfless Service When you are wholly occupied with the welfare of others, you can hardly think of yourself. You are not concerned with your comfort and convenience, or your health and happiness. On the contrary you are willing to sacrifice everything for their well-being. Their comfort is your convenience, their health is your delight, and their happiness is your joy. You find your life in losing it

in theirs. You live in their hearts, and your heart becomes their shelter. When there is true union of hearts, you completely identify yourself with the other person. Your act of help or word of comfort supply to others whatever might be lacking in them and, through their thoughts of gratitude and good-will, you actually receive more than what you give.

Thus, through living for others, your own life finds its amplification and expansion. The person who leads a life of selfless service is, therefore, hardly conscious of serving.

Freedom and Fulfillment Through Service He does not make those whom he serves feel that they are in any way under his obligation. On the contrary, he himself feels obliged for being given a chance of making them happy. Neither for show nor for name and fame does he serve them. Selfless service is completely achieved only when in serving others a man derives the happiness of himself being served. The ideal of selfless service frees him from the *sanskaras* of the craving for power and possession, or self-pity and jealousy, or the evil deeds actuated through selfishness.

Selfless service as well as meditation are both spontaneous when they are inspired by love. Love is, therefore, rightly regarded as being the most important

Love avenue leading to the realization of the Highest. In love, the soul is completely absorbed in the Beloved and is, therefore, detached from the actions of the body or mind. This, therefore, puts an end to the formation of new *sanskaras* and also results in the undoing of old *sanskaras* by giving to life an entirely new direction. *Nowhere does self-forgetfulness come so naturally and completely as in the*

intensity of love. It has, therefore, been given the foremost place among the methods which secure release of consciousness from the bondage of *sanskaras*.

Love comprehends in itself the different advantages belonging to the other paths leading to emancipation, and is in itself the most distinguished and effective Path. It is at once characterized by self-sacrifice and happiness. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that it is accompanied by an exclusive and whole-hearted offering to the Beloved without admitting the claims of any other object. So, 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 it 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 life is unparalleled.

There is nothing unnatural or artificial about love. It subsists from the very beginning of evolution. At the organic 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 feels for having given.*

Love is Expressed Through Conscious Sacrifice

Ever increasing and never failing is the stream of true love. 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 by a thousand ways. It falters not 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 a concern of its lifetime. The tabernacle of love bursts under unmanageable restlessness, and gives birth to the 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, application before the deities and

The Different Stages of Devotion

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 ***Para-Bhakti*** restlessness of the heart and a ceaseless longing 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 Removal of Sanskaras

Part III

THE WIPING OUT OF SANSKARAS

LOVE for the *Sadguru* or Perfect Master is particularly important, because it invites contact with the *Sadguru*. Through such contact, the aspirant receives from the *Sadguru* impressions which have the special potency of undoing other past impressions, and thus completely transforming the tenor of his life. The recipient of the impressions may entirely give up old habits of life and ways of thought. It changes and elevates the tone of the most depraved life. A person might have been leading a life of reckless dissipation without ever thinking of anything other than the fulfilment of mundane desires. He might be caught up in the thirst of possession and power, and may have no ideal other than that of acquiring and hoarding money and becoming merry. But even such a person who cannot, by any stretch of imagination, think of freedom from earthly fetters may find that the *sanskaras* which he catches from his contact with the *Sadguru* are potent enough to drop for ever a curtain on his old manner of thought and existence, and open for him entirely new vistas of a higher and freer life. The impressions received from the *Sadguru* might be equally beneficial to an intellectual and cultured person whose vision is nevertheless circumscribed,

whose imagination can at best appreciate the beauty of art and literature and whose altruism cannot transgress the limits of his neighbourhood or the boundaries of his country. Such a person would, on receiving the impressions from a *Sadguru*, be lifted to still higher modes of life.

The *Sadguru* can raise the aspirant from the ordinary intellectual level of consciousness to the level of consciousness where there is inspiration and intuition, and then onwards to the level of insight and illumination which culminates in his merging into the Infinite. This rising of the aspirant corresponds to his progress from the mundane sphere to the subtle sphere, from the subtle sphere to the mental sphere and finally from the mental sphere to the state of Freedom. The last step implies *complete wiping out of all sanskaras—natural or non-natural—positive or negative*. To take the analogy of the string which is wound round a stick, this process of the wiping out of *sanskaras* consists in the cutting of the string by means of a pair of scissors. The erasing of all *sanskaras* which is implied in the final release of consciousness from all illusion and bondage can never be achieved *except through the grace of a Sadguru*.

But such active intervention by the *Sadguru* presupposes unrestrained relationship between the aspirant and the *Sadguru*, and such unrestrained relationship can be established only when the aspirant succeeds in *complete self-surrender* to the *Sadguru*. Self-surrender implies obedience of all the orders of the Master. When all your desires and actions are guided by him and are the result of your obeying his

orders, he becomes directly responsible for them. Thus, when self-surrender is thorough, the responsibility for your release from *sanskaras* is devolved upon the Master and, under this new condition, the Master annihilates all your *sanskaras* in no time.

Obedience to the Master as implied in full self-surrender is of two kinds: (1) intellectual and (2) literal. Of these two types of obedience, *intellectual obedience* **Intellectual Obedience** comes first, and is a preliminary to *literal obedience* which is more fruitful. When you are intellectually convinced about the greatness and perfection of the Master, you have love and respect for him, but are unable to follow his orders literally. Reason being the basis of your conviction, you find it difficult to divorce it from your understanding of the Master and his orders. And, as the two are inextricably intertwined with each other, your reasoned faith holds you within the limits of *intelligible* obedience. This phase of the pupil is left undisturbed by the Master, and all the pills of obedience offered by him are intellectualised in order to suit his taste and calibre.

Through intellectual obedience of the Master, you can annihilate all your *sanskaras*, provided you are sincere in your logical interpretation of his orders and in their execution. But the result comes much quicker if your obedience is literal. **Literal Obedience** Literal obedience is the effect of the rock-like faith and deep love which the Master inspires in the pupil through his human appeal. The overflowing radiance of the halo of the Master and the effulgence of purity and compassion are mainly responsible for creating in the pupil

an unswerving faith which prepares him to follow the orders of the Master implicitly, irrespective of their satisfying his critical spirit. Such literal obedience is not even bound by the requirement that the real significance of the orders should be within the intellectual comprehension of the pupil, and it is the best type of obedience which you can aspire for. *Through such implicit and unquestioning obedience, all the crooked knots of your desires and sanskaras are set straight;* and it is through such obedience that a deep link is created between the Master and the pupil, with the result that there is an *unhindered and perennial flow of spiritual wisdom and power* into the pupil. At this stage, the pupil becomes the *spiritual son* of the Master; and, in due time, he is freed from all individualistic and *sanskaric* ties, and he himself becomes a Master.

The *Sadguru* or a Perfect Master has a position and power which is unique. There are many souls in the world who are more or less advanced on the spiritual Path, but there are few who have crossed all the six stages of the internal spheres of consciousness and become one with the Infinite Source of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. The *Sadguru* has not only experienced the different planes of consciousness, but he actually permeates the very being of all souls because of his having become one with the Infinite. He is the pivot of universal activity. In a sense, to him are due all your thoughts and actions, your joys and sorrows, your frets and fumes, your strength and weaknesses, your possessions and surrenderance and your love and longing. He not only pervades all existence, but is consciously conversant with the cosmic law of cause and effect and the complex working of the *sanskaras* of the individual souls. The causes of individual happiness or misery, vices or virtues are as much

known to him as the causes of cosmic changes and upheavals. Every being is an open book for the infinite searchlight of his omnipresent consciousness. He is, because of his union with the Infinite, endowed with unlimited power and can, in the twinkling of an eye, annihilate all the *sanskaras* of the soul and liberate it from all entanglements and bondage.



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 the spiritual perfection, which consists in the *inner realization of a transcendent state*

Two Types of Perfection *of consciousness which is beyond duality.* And there is 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 the other things which come under the domain of duality, it also admits of degrees. Bad and good, weakness and strength, vice and virtue are all opposites of duality. But, in fact, all these aspects are expressions of the one Reality in different degrees.

Thus, evil is not utterly evil but good 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 the other intervening *degrees*: and perfection is no exception to this. The whole range of humanity is included in the two extremes of perfection and imperfection: and *both perfection and imperfection are*

We can have only Relative Perfection in the Domain of Duality

essentially matters of comparison, contrast and relative existence. So, perfection in the domain of duality is only *relative* perfection. It is only when we compare it with imperfection that it comes to us as perfection.

When perfection is concerned with duality, it consists in the *excellence* of some attribute or capacity. And, in this context, perfection in one respect does not necessarily include perfection in other respects.

Spiritual Perfection must be distinguished from Excellence For example a man who is perfect in science may not be perfect in singing, or a man who is perfect in

singing may not be perfect in science. There is a sense in which excellence can be exhibited even in crimes. When a murder is committed in such a manner that not a single clue is left for tracing the murderer, it is called a perfect crime. So, even in crimes or sins, there is a sort of perfection. But this type of perfection, which consists in the excellence of a quality or capacity, should be carefully distinguished from *spiritual* perfection, which is not in the domain of duality. The different types of excellence which are characteristic of duality are all within the scope of the intellect, for such excellence can be easily envisaged by the extension (in imagination) of something good which is found in the limited experience of everyday life. But the perfection which belongs to the spiritually realized souls is not in the domain of duality, and is as such entirely beyond the scope of the intellect. It has no parallel in the domain of duality. When a person becomes spiritually perfect, he knows that nothing exists except God, and that what seems to exist in the domain of duality and is capable of being grasped by the intellect is only illusion. *For the spiritually perfect man, God is the only reality.* Science, art, music, weakness, strength, good and evil are all to him nothing but dreams. His

perfection consists in the knowledge of one indivisible existence.

When a spiritually perfect soul wants to use all his knowledge and powers, it is always for the spiritual upliftment of other souls. His knowledge of others is not based upon their expressions. Thought comes first, and its expression in words follows later. But, as he directly knows the minds of all, he is not dependent upon the expression of thought. For him, words are unnecessary. If he wants to know something before it is manifested, he can do so; but he does so only when it is necessary for spiritual reasons. In the same way, if he wants to have excellence in any other matter, he can have it without any difficulty. All sorts of excellence are latent in spiritual perfection. Krishna was spiritually perfect. He was also perfect in everything. If he had wanted to, he could have shown himself as a perfect drunkard, a perfect sinner, a perfect rogue, or a perfect murderer; but that would have shocked the world. Though, possessed of perfection in every respect, it was not necessary for him to exhibit it in fulfilling his Mission. The spiritually perfect souls can exhibit supreme excellence in any mode of life which they may be required to adopt for the spiritual upliftment of other souls. But they do not do so merely to show themselves as perfect in that respect. Excellence of capacities is used by them only when there is a spiritual need for it, and not merely to satisfy the curiosity of others; and when they use such excellence of capacity, they do so with utter detachment. Just as a person who wears gloves may touch the dirt of the universe without getting soiled, a spiritually perfect soul can be engaged in universal activity without being bound by it.

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.

This means that, though perfection transcends the opposites, it also includes them. 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 apparently bringing about the physical and mental annihilation of Kauravas who were vicious, 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 in its expression limited to any *one* of the opposites, *i. e.*, it

cannot exclude the possibility of finding expression through the other opposite also. *It can express itself through either of the opposites according to the logic which is 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 unshakable peace and a sense of harmony in the midst of diverse situations, which must be baffling to those who have not had all-sided development.

Human activities are limited by the opposites, and perfection is beyond them. It should not, however, be imagined that perfection has no human touch about it. Human beings are unhappy, and they laugh to make themselves and others happy; but even a Perfect Man, who is eternally happy, is not without a sense of humour. Perfection, in other words, does not consist in being inhuman but super-human; *it is the full development of that rationality which is implicit in humanity.*

Perfection does not belong to God as God, nor does it belong to man as man: but 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 his being one with the Infinite, he is perfect. That is what happens when man gives up the illusion of being finite and attains Godhood by realizing his divinity. If, by the Infinite we mean that which is opposed to the finite, or that which is away from the finite, and necessarily other than the finite, that Infinite is already limited by

Perfection is the Supreme Development of the Human

Perfection belongs to Man becoming God or God becoming Man

its being unable to assert itself in and through the finite. In other words, perfection cannot belong to such an Infinite. The Infinite, therefore, has to discover its unlimited life in and through the finite, without getting limited by this process. God's perfection is revealed only when He manifests Himself as man. The conscious descent of God into the limited form of man is known as His *Avatar*, and this again is a case of perfection. Thus, *we have perfection, when the finite transcends its limits and realizes its infinity, or when the Infinite gives up its supposed aloofness and becomes man*: in both cases, the finite and the Infinite do not stand outside each other. When there is a happy and a conscious blending of the finite and the Infinite, we have perfection. Then we have the Infinite revealing itself through the finite without getting limited thereby; and we have the finite transcending its sense of limitation in the full knowledge of its really being the revelation of the Infinite.



The Life of the Spirit

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

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 expressed, not by avoiding or rejecting matter, but by using it as an adequate vehicle for the expressions of the spirit. So, 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

The *Karmayogin* faces the Problems of Life

Matter has to be used as Pliable Instrument for the Expression of the Spirit

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. So, for a 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 the 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;* and 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, or does not become restless for them, because 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, he 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

Positive Freedom of the Soul is expressed through Its Dominion over Matter

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 the fear of the world or lack of confidence in the spirit, it is far from being helpful towards the attainment of real freedom. *Real freedom is essentially positive, and it must express itself through the 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 of no artificial limits. True spirituality is not to be mistaken for an exclusive enthusiasm for some fad. It **Spirituality covers the Whole of Life** 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 specialised 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. All the material things of this world can be made subservient for the divine game; and when they are thus subordinated, they become auxiliary for the self-affirmation of the spirit.

The value of material things depends upon the part they play in the life of the spirit. In themselves, they are neither good nor bad; they become good or bad according to whether they help or hinder the manifestation of Divinity through matter. Take for example **The Body is not Necessarily a Hindrance for Spiritual Life** the place of the physical body in the life of the spirit. It is a

mistake to set up the antithesis between the "flesh" and the spirit. Such contrast almost inevitably ends in an unqualified condemnation of the body; but the body stands in the way of spiritual fulfilment only if it is pampered as having claims in its own right. But its proper function is rightly understood when it is looked upon as ancillary for spiritual purposes. The rider needs a horse if he is to fight the battle, though the horse can become an impediment if he refuses to be completely submissive to his will. In the same way, *the spirit needs to be clothed in matter if it is to come into the full possession of its own possibilities*, although the body can at times become a hindrance if it refuses to be compliant for the requirements of the spirit. If the body yields to the claims of the spirit, as it should, it is instrumental in bringing down the kingdom of heaven on earth. It becomes a vehicle for the release of Divine Life and, when it subserves this purpose, it might aptly be called the temple of God on earth.

Since the physical body and other material things can be availed of for the life of the spirit, true spirituality does not take any hostile attitude to them. In fact, it seeks expression in and through them. Thus, the perfect man does not look down upon the things of beauty or works of art, the attainments of science or the achievements of politics. The things of beauty can be degraded by being made the 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

**Science, Art and
Politics can subserve
Spiritual Ends**

chaos: but all these can also be rightly handled and spiritualised. 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. So, *the life of the spirit does not consist in turning away from the worldly spheres of existence, but it consists 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. But detachment promotes right understanding and facilitates the 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. So, *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 things and the happenings of this earthly existence are looked upon as foreign, only so long as they are not engulfed in the advancing tide of comprehensive spirituality. But when once they find their right life, each of them is seen to participate in the symphony of creation. Then, the expression of spirituality does not require a separate or exclusive field; it does not become degraded by being concerned with the ordinary physical, intellectual and emotional needs of people. The life of the spirit is *unified and integral existence which does not admit of exclusive or unrelated compartments.*

The life of the spirit is an unceasing manifestation of Divine Love and spiritual understanding, and both these aspects of Divinity are unrestricted in their universality and unchallengeable in their exclusiveness. Thus, Divine Love does not require any special type of context for making itself felt; it need not await some rare moments for its expression, nor is it on the lookout for sombre situations which savour of special sanctity. It discovers its field of expression in every incident and situation which might, by an unenlightened person, be passed over as too insignificant to deserve attention. Ordinary human love is released only under suitable conditions. It is a response to certain types of situations and is relative to them. But *Divine Love which springs from the source within is independent of stimuli.* It is, therefore, released even in circumstances which would be looked upon as unfavourable by those who have tasted only of human love. If there

is lack of happiness or beauty or goodness in those by whom the Master is surrounded, these very things become for him the opportunity to shower his Divine Love on them and to redeem them from the state of material or spiritual poverty. So, his everyday responses to his worldly environment become expressions of dynamic and creative divinity which spreads itself and spiritualises everything in which he puts his mind.

The spiritual understanding, which is the other complementary aspect of the life of the spirit, must be distinguished from the worldly wisdom which is the quintes-

**Spiritual Understand-
ing is not Born of
Blind Imitation**

sence of the conventions of the world. Spiritual wisdom does not consist in the unquestioning acceptance of the ways of the world.

The ways of the world are almost always a collective effect of the actions of materially inclined people. Worldly people consider something to be right and make it right for persons of similar inclination. Therefore, the blind following of convention does not necessarily secure wise action. The life of the spirit cannot be a life of uncritical imitation; it must have its basis in the true understanding of values.



Selfless Service

THE *karmayogin* avoids the chaotic activity of selfish desires as well as the apparent inaction of utter non-wanting; but he leads a life of service service in which there is *not the slightest alloy of personal motive* and which furthers the release of Divinity in all the phases of life.

The Karmayogin avoids Chaotic Activity as well as Inaction

It is very important that service, even when it is utterly selfless, must be guided by spiritual understanding: for, *selfless service, when unintelligently handled, often creates chaos and complications.*

Unintelligent Service 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 some other evils. Suppose, a group of ants has climbed on the body of a certain individual and one of them bites him. He might instinctively want to punish it by killing it. But if he were to strike it with his hands, he might, in doing so, kill many other ants which were in no way involved in biting. So, in trying to secure justice against one ant, he is inevitably drawn into an activity which means injustice to so many other ants. The man, who is

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

When service is rendered in a selfless spirit, it always benefits the *karmayogin* although he himself does not do it for the sake of any reward or result. There is no doubt that even when he renders selfless service unintelligently, he derives some spiritual benefit thereby; but in doing so, he cannot avoid causing much unnecessary suffering to others. However, when he renders selfless service with spiritual understanding, it not only confers spiritual benefit upon himself, but also promotes the material and the spiritual well-being of others involved in it. That is why selfless service must be based upon understanding, if it is to be an unmixed boon for *all* concerned.

That which is looked upon as service by ordinary persons might, under special circumstances, be considered as disservice by the Master; for, he has an unerring knowledge of the situation and a deeper grasp of its spiritual demands. Thus, though it is normally an undeniable piece of service to give food to those who are needy, there may be some qualifying

circumstances which, in a particular situation, require that the person who comes for food should not be given food for his own good. The tendency, to beg for food as charity, creates undesirable *sanskaras* and, in feeding a person who comes to you with this tendency, you may help him to increase the burden of such *sanskaras*. So, though you may appear to do him good by offering food, you may in reality be successful only in binding him further. And, though it may not have been your motive to crush him under your obligations, you may in actuality be doing nothing else when you are charitable, not through understanding but through habit.

What applies to the above instance of giving food also applies to the dispensation of many other things—tangible and intangible; and *though, from the narrower point of view, a thing may definitely seem to be nothing but service for the recipient, it may, from the higher point of view, be a definite piece of disservice to him*. Just as what is nourishing to a healthy man may be poison to a patient, what is generally good for people may be an evil for some particular person. So, intelligent charity requires profound understanding of the spiritual needs of the situation.

But all this should only make people more careful and discriminating in their service. It need not discourage them in the spirit of selfless service. It is true that only a **Even Unintelligent Service does confer Spiritual Benefit** 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, withhold their spontaneous urge for selfless service lest, in obeying it, they might unwittingly be actually

rendering disservice. It had been already made clear that *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 the possibility of your making a mistake about spiritual demands of the situation. *If you render service in order to oblige a person and if you feel proud for 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 the pride that you are doing a good thing, you are getting attached to your act and thereby binding yourself. Just as a man may get bound by an iron chain or by a golden chain, so also a person can get spiritually bound by his attachment to evil deeds or by his attachment to good deeds. Hence, the way to remain free from *karma* is to remain completely detached in service. The consciousness, "I am obliging some one," is the first to occur during the process of serving; but it can be annulled by the contrary thought, "I am myself being 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. So, service which is based upon comprehensive understanding is not only selfless and adjusted to the spiritual demands of the recipient, but is rendered with complete detachment; and it is such service which takes the aspirant to the goal most rapidly.

The value of service is dependent upon the kind of the good which is secured through it. Ministering to the

bodily needs of others is service; cultivation of the intellect of others is service; feeding the hearts of people is service; satisfying the aesthetic requirements of society is service. But all these forms of service are not of the same value, though they might all be accompanied by the spirit of selflessness. The kind of well-being which is sought through service will depend upon the vision of the person, and *he, who has the dearest perception of final good, will be in a position to render the most important and valuable type of service.* Those who have not found the Supreme Truth are incapable of this highest type of service. Their service cannot have for the creation the same value as the service of a person who has arrived at finality in spiritual understanding. In a sense, true service begins after Realization.

But the spirit of service which is invariably present in aspirants and good persons can be harnessed and creatively utilized for spiritual purposes, if it is allied with the work of a Master. The Master serves the whole universe out of the finality of his infinite consciousness, and those who serve the Master and obey him also have their share in his universal work. Their service has the advantage of his wisdom and insight. Willing participation in the work of the Master not only raises the value of service, but creates best opportunities for spiritual enlightenment. In importance, *service originating in the instructions of the Master is second only to the service rendered by the Master himself.*

For most persons, the idea of service is inextricably bound with the securing of certain definite results in the

objective world. Thus, for them, service consists in the removal of human suffering or illiteracy or other difficulties and handicaps which thwart the flourishing of individual or social life. This is the type of service rendered by aspirants, politicians, social reformers and other good persons. Now, 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 the life of service, have an eternal burden on their minds.

On the other hand, *the service which comes after the realization of the Truth is a spontaneous expression of the spiritual understanding of the true nature of the Self:*

Service after Realization is Essentially Different from Service before Realization

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 his nature to do so and not because he wants to achieve something through it, 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. His life is not a reaching out towards something with the hope of some kind of attainment. *He does not seek enrichment through attainments, but is already established in the fullness of the realization of the Infinite.* The overflow of his being is a blessing to the life in other forms and actually brings about their upliftment

from the material as well as spiritual point of view. But, since his own happiness is grounded in the realization of the Divinity within him, it does not suffer any diminution to the imperfection or suffering of life in other forms, and his consciousness is not tinged by the ache of something unrealized. There is a vast gulf between service before the realization of the Truth and service after realizing It. The life of the Master is a life of Service: it is a perpetual offering to other forms of his own Self. But this service, which is characteristic of the life of a God-realized person, is essentially different from the kind of service which is found in the lives of those who have not realized the Truth.



The Avenues to Understanding

THE different avenues which lead to spiritual understanding can be best understood by means of an initial distinction between spirit and matter. In order to understand mat-

The Spirit cannot be understood through the Mind

ter, we have material means, and in order to understand the spirit, we have spiritual means. Matter is understood through the mind or the intellect working upon the data given through the different sensations. But *the spirit can be understood only through the spirit itself*. Now, this highest form of understanding, in which the spirit enjoys self-knowledge without using any instrument or medium, is very rare and most difficult to attain; but the next best approach for the understanding of the spirit is through the heart and not through the mind.

The mind is accustomed to work upon material things, and its driving power for this intellectual understanding of material objects is derived from lusts and

The Conceptions and the Attitude of the Mind in Relation to Matter are Inadequate for the Spirit

cravings. So, when it is turned towards spiritual problems, it tackles them along the lines to which it is accustomed and, in doing so, it uses conceptions which it has invented for the intellectual understanding of material things. However, this approach to the understanding of spiritual problems is doomed to fail, because *all the conceptions which the intellect evolves for the knowledge of material things are inadequate for the understanding of the spirit*. It is like trying to see through the

ears or hear through the eyes. If the mind tries to understand the spirit independently of the heart, it is bound to use analogues from the material world; and this inevitably leads to the spirit being looked upon as an *object* of the mind which it is not.

As contrasted with the method of the mind, which has its foundation in sensations and which proceeds further through inference and proofs to conclusions, there is the more direct method of the heart which intuitively grasps the values which are progressively realised in the life of man as he goes through the diverse experiences of the world and as his attention is centered on arriving at spiritual understanding. In the life of most persons, the mind and the heart are at loggerheads and the conflict between the two creates confusion. 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, and does not care for the proofs or intellectual corroborations which the mind seeks while dealing with material objects. The mind, in its objective handling of the material world, is saturated with the experiences of multiplicity and separateness and it, therefore, feeds the ego-centric tendencies which divide man from man and make him selfish and possessive. But the heart, which in its inner experiences feels the glow of love, gets the glimpses of the unity of the spirit; and it, therefore, seeks expression through the self-giving tendencies which unite man with man and make him selfless and generous. There is, therefore, necessarily a conflict between the "inner voice" and the deliverances

of the intellect which are based upon the apparent and the 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 precedent, which 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.* Many persons, for example, want to be convinced about my Divinity in order to be able to love me. That is to say, they want me to give them objective proofs of my spiritual status by performing miracles. But conviction of this type often is a hindrance, rather than a help, for the release of the highest form of love which is utterly regardless about what it might receive from the object of love.

When the mind is seeking conviction or corroboration (through objective proofs and miracles as an aid to spiritual understanding), it is encroaching upon the sphere which properly belongs to the heart. Convictions and corroborations become important when a person desires guarantee for securing certain definite and tangible results in the objective world. Even if we suppose that a person is intellectually convinced about 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 the sense of duty. *But 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 the intellectual search after miracles. That is the reason why, for those who are closest and dearest to me, I do not perform miracles. I would rather have no following than use miracles for convincing others of my Divinity. It is true that while loving me, people often do have spiritual experiences which were hitherto unknown to them; and these experiences help them in the further opening of their hearts. But they are not meant to feed the mental craving for intellectual conviction; and they should not be regarded as the goal.

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

Glimpses of the Spirit can be had only through the Heart

Mind wants to have all kinds of things and, therefore, seeks objective proofs, convictions and assurances. But this demand of the mind is a fetter for the spontaneous outflow of love which at once depends upon and furthers true spirituality. You cannot love through the intellect. What you may get through the mind is a *theory* of love and not love itself. The knowledge, which certain types of *yogis* have through their minds, is merely intellectual and dry. It cannot give them spiritual bliss which characterises the life of love, *Love and happiness are the only important things in life; and they are both absent in the dry*

and factual knowledge which is accessible to the intellect. Spirituality does not consist in the 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 far more dependent on the heart than on the mind. Knowledge of the intellect alone is on the same footing as mere information; and, being superficial, it moves on the surface of life. It gives the shadow and not the substance of reality. The hidden depths of the ocean of life can be gauged only by the plumber of the heart.

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

However, between the two extremes of a life harassed by wants and a life which is completely free from wants,

it is possible to strike upon a mode of practical life in which there is harmony between the mind and the heart. When there is such harmony, the mind does not dictate the ends of life, but only helps to realize those ends which are given by the heart. It does not lay down any conditions to be fulfilled before any deliverance of the heart is adopted for being translated in practical life. In other words, *it surrenders its role of a judge*, which it is accustomed to play in its intellectual queries concerning the nature of the universe and accepts unquestioningly the dictates of the heart.

The mind is the treasure-house of learning; but the heart is the treasure-house of spiritual wisdom. The so-called conflict between religion and science arises only when there is no appreciation of the relative importance of these two types of knowledge. It is futile to try to glean knowledge of the true values by the 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 the denial of the life of the spirit. It is only when the mind accepts its ends and values from the deepest promptings of the heart, that it contributes to the life of the spirit. *So, 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 the harmony between the mind and the heart. This harmony of the mind and the 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. The mind and the 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.* The mind and the heart might be said to be balanced when they serve their proper purpose and when they perform their respective functions without erring this way or that way; and it is only when they are so balanced that there can be true harmony between them. Such harmony of the mind and the heart is the most important condition of the integral undivided life of spiritual understanding.

