

DISCOURSES
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By

Meher Baba

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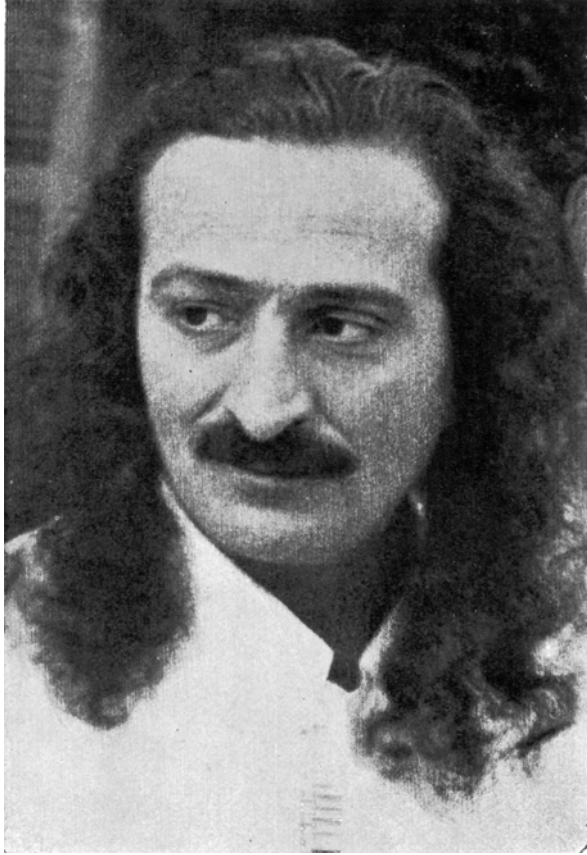
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MEHER BABA

DISCOURSES

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MEHER BABA

Vol. II

Rs. 2

We have great pleasure in presenting to the readers Meher Baba's twelve Spiritual Discourses in one volume. These Discourses have been taken from the issues of the MEHER BABA JOURNAL (Nov. 1939 to Oct. 1940).

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Problem of Sex

SEX is decidedly one of the most important problems with which the human mind is confronted as long as it does not step outside the domain of duality. It is one of the things

The arising of the problem of sex

which are so to say 'given' in the make-up of human nature and has to be dealt with. Like every other thing in human life sex also comes to be considered through the opposites which are the necessary creations of the limited mind. Just as the mind tries to fit life into a scheme of the alternatives of joy or pain, good or bad, solitude or company, attraction or repulsion, in relation to sex, it has a tendency to think of indulgence and repression as alternatives from which there is no escape. It seems as if man must accept the one alternative or the other. And yet he cannot whole-heartedly accept either alternative because when he tries repression he is dissatisfied with his lot and longingly thinks of indulgence, and when he tries indulgence he becomes conscious of his bondage to the senses and seeks freedom by going back to mechanical repression. The mind remains dissatisfied in *both* the alternatives and there thus arises one of the most vital and complicated problems of human life.

In order to solve the problem of sex the mind must first understand how both of these alternatives are equally the creation of imagination working under the deluding influ-

The opposites of indulgence and mechanical repression are equally disappointing

ence of craving. Craving is implicitly present in the repression of sex as well as its gratification; both presuppose the vitiation of consciousness by the operation of lust or the desire for sensations. The mind is therefore inevitably restless in either alternative. Just as when there are clouds in the sky, there is gloom and lack of sunshine, whether it rains or not, so when the human mind is shrouded by craving, there is diminution of being and lack of true happiness, whether this craving is gratified or not. The mind which is restless with desire creates an illusory idea of happiness in the gratification of desire, and then knowing that the soul remains dissatisfied even after gratification of desire, it seeks freedom through repression. Thus *in search of happiness and freedom the mind gets caught up in the opposite of indulgence and repression which it finds equally disappointing*. And since it does not try to go *beyond* these opposites, its movement is always from one opposite to the other and consequently from one disappointment to another disappointment.

Craving thus falsifies the operation of imagination and presents the mind with the option between the two alternatives of indulgence and repression which prove to be

The false promises of the opposites

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

This is like moving within a cage. The gateway to the spiritual Path of internal and spontaneous renunciation of craving remains closed for those who have not the good fortune to be awakened by a Master. But true awakening is the entering into the path of wisdom which in the course of time surely leads to the Freedom and Abiding Happiness of Life Eternal. Internal and spontaneous renunciation of craving is different from mechanical repression as it is from indulgence. *Mind turns to mechanical repression of craving because of disappointment; but it turns to internal and spontaneous renunciation of craving because of disillusionment or awakening.*

The need for indulgence or mechanical repression arises only when the nature of craving is not clearly grasped. When the aspirant becomes fully awake to the inevitable bondage and suffering entailed by craving, it voluntarily begins to disburden itself of craving through intelligent understanding. *The question of indulgence or repression arises only when there is craving; the need for both vanishes along with the complete disappearance of craving.* When the mind is free from craving, the mind can no more be moved by the false promises of indulgence or mechanical repression.

However, it should be borne in the mind that *the life of freedom is nearer to the life of restraint than to the life of indulgence* (though in quality it is essentially different from both). Hence for the aspirant a life of strict celibacy is preferable to the married life, if restraint comes to him easily without any undue sense of self-repression. But such restraint is for most persons difficult and sometimes impossible and for them the married

life is decidedly much more helpful than a life of celibacy. For ordinary persons married life is undoubtedly advisable unless they have a special aptitude for celibacy.

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

For the celibate as well as for the married person the path of inner life is the same. When the aspirant is drawn by the Truth he longs for nothing else; and as the Truth increasingly comes within his ken, he gradually *disburdens* himself of craving. Whether in celibacy or in marriage he is no longer swayed by the deceptive promises of indulgence or mechanical repression and he practises internal and spontaneous renunciation of craving until he is freed from the deceptive opposites. The path of perfection is open to the aspirant whether in celibacy or in marriage; and *whether he begins from celibacy or from marriage will depend upon the sanskaras and the karmic ties of the aspirant.* He cheerfully accepts the conditions which his past life has determined for him and utilises them towards his spiritual advancement in the light of the ideal which he has come to perceive.

The aspirant however must choose one of the two courses which are open to him; he must either take to the life of celibacy or to the married life; and he must at all costs avoid a cheap compromise between the two. *Promiscuity in sex-gratification is bound to land the aspirant in the most pitiful and dangerous chaos of ungovernable lust;* and as such diffused and undirected lust veils the higher values, it perpetuates entanglement and creates insuperable difficulties in the spiritual path of internal and spontaneous renunciation of craving. Sex in marriage is entirely different from sex outside marriage. In marriage, the *sanskaras* of lust are much lighter and are capable of being removed more easily. When sex-companionship is accompanied by a sense of responsibility, love and spiritual idealism, conditions for the sublimation of sex are much more favourable than when it is cheap and promiscuous.

In promiscuity the temptation to explore the possibilities of mere sex contact is almost formidable; and it is only by the maximum restriction of the scope of mere sex that the aspirant can arrive at any real understanding of the higher values which are attainable through the gradual transformation of sex into love. But if the mind once tries to understand sex through the increasing of its scope, there is no end to the delusions of which it must be a prey, because there is no end to the enlarging of its scope. In promiscuity, the suggestions of lust are necessarily the first to present themselves to the mind, and it is *doomed to react to people with the limitation of this initial perversion* and thus close the door to deeper experiences.

Truth cannot be understood by skipping over the surface of life and multiplying superficial contacts; but it requires the preparedness of mind to centre its capacities

upon selected experiences and to free itself from its limiting features. This process of discrimination between the higher and the lower and the transcendence of the lower in favour of the higher is made possible through *whole-hearted concentration and a real and earnest interest in life*; but such whole-hearted concentration and real interest is necessarily precluded when the mind becomes a slave to the habit of running at a tangent and wanders to many other possible objects for similar experience. In married life, the range of experience in the company of the partner is so wide that the suggestions of lust are not necessarily the first to present themselves to the mind, and there is a real opportunity for the aspirant *to recognise and annul the limiting factors in experience*. By the gradual elimination of lust and the progression through a series of increasingly richer experiences of love and sacrifice, he can finally arrive at infinity.

The Sanctification of Married Life

MOST persons enter into married life as a matter of course; but marriage will turn into a help or a hindrance according to the manner in which it is handled. There is no

Married life should be a spiritual enterprise

doubt that some of the immense spiritual possibilities are accessible through a married life, but all this depends upon having the right attitude. From the spiritual point of view, married life will be a success only if it is thoroughly determined by the vision of Truth. It cannot offer much if it is based upon nothing more than the limited motives of mere sex, or if it is inspired by considerations which usually obtain in the partnership of 'business'. It has to be taken as *a real spiritual enterprise which is intended to discover what life can be at its best*. When the two partners together launch upon the spiritual adventure of exploring the higher possibilities of the spirit, they cannot at the outset limit their experiment by any nice calculations concerning the nature and the amount of *individual gain*.

Married life almost always makes upon both the partners many demands of mutual adjustment and understanding and creates many problems which were originally beyond their expectation; and

Married life is essentially different from promiscuous sex-partnership

though this might in a sense be true of life in general it is particularly true of married life. In married life, two souls get linked with each other in many ways with the result that they are called upon to *tackle the whole complex problem of personality rather than any simple problem created by some isolated desire*. This is exactly the point in respect of which married life is utterly different from promiscuous

sex-partnership. Promiscuous sex-partnership attempts to separate the problem of sex from *other* needs of the developing personality and seeks to solve it in isolation from them ; and though this kind of solution might seem to be easy, it turns out to be very superficial and has further the disadvantage of *side-tracking* the aspirant from attempting the real solution.

The relative values of the various sides of the limited personality can be best appreciated when they get intertwined and appear in varied setting and perspective. It is difficult to discriminate between them if they appear fitfully in disconnected series. In married life there is ample room for varied experience, with the result that the different tendencies which are latent in the mind begin to get organised around the crystallised scheme of married life. And this organisation of varied purposes *not only provides an unlimited field for discrimination between the higher and lower values but also creates between them a necessary tension which requires and calls forth effective and intelligent sublimation.*

In one sense, married life may be looked upon as the intensification of most human problems; and as such it becomes *the rallying ground for the forces of bondage as well as for the forces of freedom*, the factors of ignorance as well as the factors of light. As the married life of ordinary persons is determined by mixed motives and considerations, it inevitably invites an uncompromising opposition between the higher and the lower self of man; and such opposition is necessary for the wearing out of the lower part and the dawning of the true divine self. Married life develops so many points of contact between the two souls that sever-

The tension between the varied purposes of married life calls forth sublimation

The conditions of marriage invite and precipitate the changes in inner life

ance of all connection means the unsettlement and derangement of practically the whole tenor of life; and since this difficulty of getting away from each other invites and precipitates inner readjustment, it is really a disguised opportunity for the souls to establish a real and a lasting understanding which can cope with the most complex and delicate situations.

The spiritual value of married life is directly relative to the nature of the preponderating factors which determine its daily happenings. If it is based upon shallow considera-

Married life must be in tune with the Divine Plan

tions, it can deteriorate into a partnership in selfishness as against the rest of the world; but if it is inspired by lofty idealism, it can be raised to a fellowship which not only requires and calls forth increasingly greater sacrifices for each other but actually *becomes a medium through which the two souls can offer their united love and service to the whole family of humanity.* When married life is thus brought into direct line with the Divine Plan for the evolution of the individual, it becomes a pure blessing to the children which are the fruit of that marriage, for they get the advantage of imbibing spiritual atmosphere from the very beginning of their earthly career.

Though the children are thus the beneficiaries from the married life of the parents, *the married life of the parents is in its turn enriched by the presence of the children.*

Married life is sanctified and enriched by children

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

In view of the claims which children have on married lives the present Birth Control movement deserves careful attention and critical examination. The question must not

The Birth Control movement tries to secure its aim through wrong means

be considered from the point of view of any one special or limited interest but from the point of view of the *ultimate* well-being of the individual and society. The right opinion in this respect, as in all respects, must above everything be based upon spiritual considerations. The attitude which most persons have towards the Birth Control movement is oscillating and confused because it contains a queer admixture of good and bad elements. *While the Birth Control movement is right in its aim of securing the regulation of population, it is disastrously unfortunate in the choice of its means.* There can be no doubt that the regulation of children is often desirable for personal and social reasons. Uncontrolled breeding intensifies the struggle for existence and may bring about a social order where ruthless competition becomes inevitable. Apart from creating for parents a responsibility which they cannot adequately discharge, it becomes an indirect and contributory cause of crimes, war and poverty. But though the humane and rational considerations demand and justify all serious attempts to regulate the birth of children, the use of physical means for securing this purpose remains fundamentally indefensible and unjustifiable.

The purely physical means which are generally advocated by the supporters of the Birth Control movement are most objectionable from the spiritual point of view. Al-

The use of physical means takes away the ordinary incentive to mental control

though the physical means of Birth Control are advocated on humanitarian grounds, they are almost always used by the generality of the people for serving their own selfish ends and for avoiding the responsibility of bearing and bringing up

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

The easy use of the physical means obscures the spiritual side of the question and is far from being contributory to the awakening of man to his real dignity and

Mental control is indispensable for rising from passion to peace

freedom as a spiritual being. Thoughtless and uncontrolled indulgence must inevitably lead to reaction and spiritual bondage.

For spiritual aspirants in particular and also for all human beings (because they are all potentially spiritual aspirants) it is extremely inadvisable to rely upon physical means for the regulation of children. *For the regulation of children they must rely upon nothing but mental control.* Mental control secures the humanitarian purposes which inspire the Birth Control movement and keeps clear of the spiritual disasters entailed by the use of physical means; and it is not only useful for regulating the number of children but is also indispensable for restoring to man his divine dignity and spiritual well-being. *Only through the wise exercise of mental control is it possible for man to rise from passion to peace, from bondage to freedom and from animality to purity.* In the minds of thoughtful persons the much ignored spiritual side of this question must assume the importance which it deserves.

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

Joint responsibility of parenthood

fact it does not mean any real unfairness to woman. It is true that

woman has to undertake the troubles and the responsibility of bearing and rearing children, but she has also the compensa-

ting joy of feeding and fondling them. Thus motherhood is much greater than the joy of fatherhood. Further the man also must face and shoulder the economic and educational responsibility towards the children. In a properly adjusted marriage there need not be any injustice in the distribution of parental responsibility which should be shared by man as well as woman. If the father as well as the mother are truly conscious of their mutual responsibility, *inconsiderateness will give place to active and co-operative endeavour to attain full mental control*; and in the event of there being any failure in mental control they would cheerfully and willingly discharge the joint responsibility of parenthood.

If a person is not prepared to undertake the responsibility of children, there is only one course which is left for him. He must remain a celibate and practise strict mental control; for, though such mental control is extremely difficult to attain, it is not impossible. From the purely spiritual point of view strict celibacy is best; but, since it is so difficult, few can practise it. And for those who cannot practise it, the next best course is to marry rather than fall a prey to promiscuity. Within married life one can learn to control animal passion. But it is bound to be a gradual process, and *in cases of failure in practising control, parents must allow nature to take its own course rather than interfere with it through artificial means*. They must cheerfully welcome the consequences and be prepared to shoulder the responsibility for the upbringing of children.

From the spiritual point of view, Birth Control must essentially be effected through mental control and nothing else. And physical means are under no circumstances advisable *even when a person seeks to use them merely as a provisional and a second aid without intending to ignore the ideal of developing mental control*. While using the physical means he can never arrive at

In married life children should be welcome

Mental power is undermined by reliance on physical means

real mental control, though he might want it in right earnest; on the contrary he becomes addicted to the use of physical means and even begins to justify them. To explain it still more clearly, what happens in the use of physical means is that while one thinks that he is using them merely as a preliminary step before mental control is fully developed, he actually gets addicted to their use and becomes a slave to that habit. And though he may for some time remain under the delusion that he is trying to develop mental control (side by side with the use of physical means), he is actually losing it gradually. In short, *mental power is necessarily undermined by reliance on the physical means*. Thus the use of physical means is detrimental to the development of self-control and is positively disastrous for spiritual advancement; it is therefore under no condition advisable even for the best of motives.

In the beginning of married life the partners are drawn to each other by lust as well as love. But they can with conscious and deliberate co-operation gradually lessen the element of lust and increase the element of love. **Spiritual advancement through married life** Through this process of sublimation lust ultimately gives place to deep love. By the mutual sharing of joys and sorrows the partners march on from one spiritual triumph to another spiritual triumph, from deep love to ever deeper love, till *the possessive and jealous love of the initial period is entirely replaced by a self-giving and expansive love*. In fact, through the intelligent handling of marriage a person may traverse so much of the spiritual Path that it needs only a touch by the Master to raise him into the sanctuary of eternal life.

The Search for God

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

A true aspirant is not content with such knowledge of spiritual realities as might be based on hearsay; nor is he satisfied with pure inferential knowledge. For him, the spiritual realities are not the object of idle thinking and the acceptance or the rejection of these realities are both fraught with momentous implications for his inner life. So, he naturally insists upon direct knowledge about them. This might be illustrated from the life of a great sage. One day he was discussing spiritual topics with his friend who was quite advanced upon the Path. While they were thus engaged upon this discussion, their attention was diverted to a dead body which was being carried by their side. "This is the end of the body but not of the

A True Aspirant Seeks Direct Knowledge of Spiritual Realities

spiritual realities are not the object of idle thinking and the acceptance or the rejection of these realities are both fraught with

soul," his friend remarked. "Have you seen the soul?" asked the sage. "No" was the answer of his friend. And the sage remained sceptical about the soul, for he insisted upon *personal* knowledge.

But though the aspirant cannot be content with second-hand knowledge or mere guesses, he does not close his mind against the possibility of there being such spiritual realities as might not have come within his experience. In other words, *he is conscious of the limitations of his own individual experience and he refrains from making it the measure of all possibilities*. He has an open mind for all things which are beyond the scope of his experience. If he does not accept them on hearsay he does not also rush to active disbelief in them. It is true that the limitation of experience often tends to restrict the scope of the working of imagination, and a person comes to believe that there are no realities other than such as may have come within the ken of his past experience; but usually as a result of some incidents or happenings in his own life, he may come out of his dogmatic enclosure and become really open-minded.

This stage of transition may also be illustrated from a story from the life of the same sage who happened to be a Prince. Once, some days after the incident of discussion (mentioned above), as he was riding on horse-back, he came upon an ordinary pedestrian coming towards him from the opposite direction. Since the way of the horse was thus blocked by the presence of the pedestrian, the sage arrogantly ordered him to clear the way for him. The pedestrian refused to clear the way for him and so the sage got down from his horse and they entered upon the following conversation: "Who are you?" asked the pedestrian. "I am the Prince," answered the sage. "But I do not *know* you to be the Prince," said the pedestrian and continued, "I shall admit you as

being a Prince only when I know you to be a Prince and not otherwise." This encounter awakened the sage to the fact that God *may* exist even though he did not know Him from personal experience, just in the same way as he was actually a Prince although the pedestrian did not know it from his own personal experience. And now that his mind was open for considering the possible existence of God, he set himself to the task of deciding that question in right earnest.

God either exists or does not exist: *if He exists, search for Him is amply justified; and even if He does not exist, there is nothing to lose by seeking Him.* But man

Ordinary Man is Indifferent to the Existence of God does not usually turn to a real search for God as a matter of voluntary and joyous enterprise; he has got to be driven to this search by a disillusionment about those worldly things which allure him and from which he cannot take away his mind. Ordinary man is completely engrossed in his activities concerning the gross world; and he lives through its manifold experiences of joys and sorrows without even suspecting the existence of a deeper Reality. He tries as best as he can to have pleasures of the senses and also to avoid different kinds of suffering.

"Eat, drink and be merry" is his philosophy; but in spite of his unceasing search for pleasure, he cannot altogether avoid suffering, and even when he succeeds in

Occasions which Provoke Thought having pleasures of the senses he is often satiated by them. While he thus goes through the daily round of varied experiences, there often arises some occasion when he begins to ask himself, "*What is the end of all this?*" Such occasion may arise out of some untoward happening for which a person is not mentally prepared; it may be the baffling of some confident expectations; or it may be some important change in his situation demanding radical readjustment and the giving up of established ways of thought

and conduct. Usually such occasion arises out of the frustration of some deep craving of which he was possessed. If a deep craving happens to come upon an *impasse* so that there is not the slightest chance of its being ever fulfilled, the psyche receives such a shock that it can no longer accept the type of life which might have been hitherto accepted without question.

Under such circumstances a person may be driven to utter desperateness; and if the tremendous power which is generated by the psychic disturbance remains uncontrolled and undirected, it may even lead to serious

Unharnessed Desperation is Destructive; but Divine Desperateness is Creative

derangement of mind or attempts to commit suicide. Such catastrophe overcomes those in whom desperateness is allied with thoughtlessness, for they allow impulse to have free and full sway. The unharnessed power of desperateness can only work destruction. But the desperateness of a thoughtful person under similar circumstances is altogether different in results because the energy which it releases is intelligently harnessed and directed towards a purpose. In the moment of such *divine desperateness* man takes the important decision of discovering and realising the aim of life. There thus comes into existence the true search for lasting values. Henceforth the burning query which refuses to be silenced is, "*What does it all lead to?*"

When the psychic energy of man is thus centred upon the finding out of the goal of life, he is using the power of desperateness creatively. He can no longer be

Divine Desperateness Is the Beginning of Spiritual Awakening

content with the fleeting things of this life and he is thoroughly sceptical about the ordinary values which he had so far accepted without doubt. His only desire is to find out the Truth at any cost and he does not rest satisfied with anything short of the Truth. *Divine desperateness is the beginning of spiritual awakening because it gives rise to the aspiration for God-realisation.* In the moment of divine desperateness, when everything seems to give way,

man decides to take all risks for realising any possible significance, which might so to say lie *behind* the veil.

All the usual solaces have now failed him; but at the same time his inner voice refuses to reconcile itself completely with the position that life is devoid of all meaning. *If he does not posit some hidden reality which he has not hitherto known, there is nothing at all which is worth living for.* For him the only two alternatives are either there is a hidden spiritual reality which prophets have described as God, or everything is meaningless. The second alternative is utterly unacceptable to the whole of man's personality therefore he must perforce try the first alternative. Thus man turns to God when he is at bay in worldly affairs.

Now, since there is no *direct* access to this hidden reality which he posits, he looks upon his usual experiences as possible avenues leading to a *significant beyond*; and thus he goes back to his usual experiences with the purpose of gathering some light on the Path. This involves looking at everything from a new angle of vision and entails a reinterpretation of each experience. He now not only *has* experience but tries to *fathom its spiritual significance*: he is not merely concerned with what it *is* but with what it *means* in the march towards this hidden goal of existence. And all this careful revaluation of experience results in his gaining an insight which can not come to him before he begins his new search.

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

**New Insight means
Experimenting with
Perceived Values**

The more he carries on this intelligent and purposive experimentation with his own life the deeper becomes his comprehension of the true meaning of life, until finally he discovers that as he was undergoing a complete transformation of his psychic being he was arriving at the true perception of the real significance of life *as it is*. With the clear and tranquil vision of the real nature and worth of Life he realises that *God Whom he has been so desperately seeking is no stranger or a hidden and foreign entity. He is the Reality itself and not a hypothesis*; he is the Reality as seen with undimmed vision— that very Reality of which he is a part and in which he has had his entire being and with which he is in fact identical. *So, though he begins by seeking something utterly new he really arrives at a new understanding of the Ancient thing.* The spiritual journey does not consist in arriving at a new destination in the sense of having what a person did not have or, in the sense of his being, what he was not; but it consists in the dissipation of his ignorance concerning himself and life and the gradual growth of that understanding which begins with spiritual awakening. *The finding of God is coming to one's own self.*

Love

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

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

In the animal world this love becomes more explicit in the form of *conscious impulses* which are directed towards the different objects in the surroundings. *This love is instinctive* and it takes the form of gratifying different desires through the appropriation of suitable objects. When the tiger seeks to devour the deer, he is in a very real sense in love with the deer. Sex-attraction is another

Love in the Animal Kingdom

form of love at this level. All the expressions of love at this stage have one thing in common, *viz., they all seek to satisfy some bodily impulse or desire* through the object of love.

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

Thus, in relation to reason, human love can enter into three types of combination. In the first type, the sphere of thought and the sphere of love are kept as separate as possible, *i.e., the sphere of love is practically inaccessible to the operation of reason; and love is allowed little or no access to the objects of thought*. Complete separation between these two aspects of the spirit is of course never possible; but when there is an alternate functioning of love and reason (with both oscillating in their predominance) we have *a love which is unillumined by reason or a reason which is unenlivened by love*. In the second type, love and reason are both simultaneously operative, but they *do not work in harmony with each other*. But though this conflict creates confusion, it is a necessary phase in the evolution of the higher state where there is a real synthesis of love and reason. In the third type of love this synthesis between love and reason is an accomplished fact with

the result that *both love as well as reason are so completely transformed that they precipitate the emergence of a new level of consciousness* which (in comparison with the normal human consciousness) is best described as *super-consciousness*.

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

Human love finds itself encircled by a number of obstructive factors like infatuation, lust, greed, anger and jealousy. In one sense, even these obstructive factors are either *forms* of lower love or the inevitable *side-results* of these lower forms of love. Infatuation, lust and greed might be looked upon as perverted and lower forms of love. In infatuation a person gets *enamoured* of a sensual object; in lust he develops a *craving* for sensations in relation to it; and in greed he desires to *possess* it. Of these three forms of lower love, greed has the tendency to be extended from the original object to the *means* of obtaining that object. Thus persons become greedy for money or power or fame which can become instruments for possessing the different objects of craving. Anger and jealousy come into existence when these lower forms of love are thwarted or threatened to be thwarted.

These lower forms of love are obstructive to the release of pure love. The stream of love can never become clear

and settled until it is disentangled from these limiting and perverting forms of lower love. *The Lower is the Enemy of the Higher* *lower is the enemy of the higher.* If consciousness gets caught in the rhythm of the lower it cannot emancipate itself from its self-created ruts and finds it difficult to get out of them and advance further. Thus the lower form of love continues to interfere with the development of the higher form of love and has to be given up in order to allow the untrammelled appearance of the higher form of love.

The emergence of the higher love from the shell of the lower love is helped by the constant exercise of *discrimination*. Therefore love has to be carefully distinguished from the obstructive factors of infatuation, lust, greed and anger. In **Love and infatuation** infatuation, the person is a *passive victim* of the spell of conceived attraction of the object; but in love there is an *active appreciation* of the intrinsic worth of the object of love.

Love is also different from lust. In lust, there is a reliance upon the *object of sense* and consequent spiritual *subordination* of the soul in relation to it; but love puts the **Love and Lust** soul into direct and *co-ordinate* relation with the *Reality* which is behind the form. Therefore, lust is experienced as being *heavy* and love is experienced as being *light*. In lust, there is a *narrowing down* of life and in love there is an *expansion* in being. *To have loved one soul is like adding its life to your own*, your life is, as it were, multiplied and you virtually live in two centres. If you love the whole world, you vicariously live in the whole world. But in lust there is the ebbing down of life and the general sense of hopeless dependence upon a form which is regarded as *another*. Thus, in lust there is the *accentuation of separateness and suffering*: but in love —

there is the *feeling of unity and joy*. Lust is dissipation; love is recreation. Lust is a craving of the senses; love is the expression of the spirit. Lust *seeks* fulfilment but love *experiences* fulfilment. In lust, there is *excitement*; but in love there is *tranquillity*.

Love is equally different from greed. Greed is possessiveness in all its gross and subtle forms. It seeks to appropriate gross things and persons as well as the abstract and intangible things like fame and power. In love, the annexation of the other person to your individual life is out of question, and there is a free and creative outpouring that enlivens and replenishes the psychic being of the beloved independently of any expectations for the self. And we have the paradox, that *greed which seeks for the self the appropriation of another object does in fact lead to the opposite result of bringing the self under the tutelage of the object; and love which aims at giving away the self to the object does in fact lead to a spiritual incorporation of the beloved in the very being of the lover. In greed the self tries to possess the object, but is itself spiritually possessed by the object: and in love the self offers itself to the beloved without any reservations, but in that very act it finds that it has included the beloved in its own being.*

Infatuation, lust and greed together constitute a spiritual malady which is often rendered more virulent by the aggravating symptoms of anger and jealousy: and pure love, in sharp contradistinction with them, is the bloom of spiritual perfection. Human love is so much tethered by these limiting conditions that the spontaneous appearance of pure love from within becomes impossible. So, when such pure love arises in the aspirant, it is always a *gift. Pure love arises in the heart of the aspirant in response to the descent of the Grace from the Master.* When pure

love is first received as a gift of the Master, it comes to be lodged in the consciousness of the aspirant like the seed in a favourable soil, and in the course of time the seed develops into a plant and then into the full-grown tree.

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

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

Pure love which is awakened through the Grace of the Master is more valuable than any other method which may

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

Divine Love is qualitatively different from human love. Human love is for the *many in the One* and Divine Love is for the *One in the many.* Human love leads to innumerable complications and tangles; but Divine Love leads to integration and freedom. *In Divine Love, the personal and the impersonal aspects are equally balanced; but in human love the two aspects are in alternating ascendancy.* When, in human love, the personal note is predominant, it leads to a man's being utterly blind to the intrinsic worth of other forms; and when, as in the sense of duty, love is predominantly impersonal, it often makes him cold, rigid and mechanical. The sense of duty comes to the man as external *constraint* of behaviour; but in Divine Love there is *unrestrained freedom and unbounded spontaneity.* Human love in its personal and impersonal aspects is limited; but Divine Love with its fusion of the personal and the impersonal aspects is *infinite* in being and expression.

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

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

Love is the reflection of God's Unity in the world of duality. It constitutes the entire significance of creation. If love is excluded from life all the souls in the world assume complete externality to each other and the only possible relations and contacts in such a loveless world are superficial and mechanical. It is because of love that the contacts and

relations between individual souls become significant; and it is love which gives meaning and value to all the happenings in the world of duality. But, *while love gives meaning to the world of duality, it is at the same time, a standing challenge to duality.* As love gathers strength, it generates *creative restlessness* and becomes the main driving power of that *spiritual dynamic* which ultimately succeeds in *restoring to consciousness the original Unity of Being.*

The Stages of the Path

ALL persons have to pass through the state of bondage but this period of bondage is not to be looked upon as a meaningless episode in the evolution of life. One has to ex-

Bondage adds to the Value of Freedom perience being caged if he is to appreciate freedom. If in the entire span of its life, the fish has not come out of water even once, it has no chance of appreciating the value of water. From its birth till its death it has lived only in water; and it is not in a position to understand what water really means for its being. But if it is taken out of water even for a moment it longs for water and becomes by that experience qualified for appreciating the importance of water. In the same way, if life had been throughout free and had known no bondage it would have missed the real significance of freedom. *The experience of spiritual bondage and the intense desire to be free from it are both a preparation for the full enjoyment of the freedom which is to come.*

As the fish which is taken out of water longs for going back to water, the aspirant who has perceived the goal longs for being united with God. In fact, the longing to

The Path begins with a Conscious longing for a Deeper Reality go back to the source is present in *each* being from the very time that it gets separated from the source by the veil of ignorance: but it is unconscious till the aspirant enters the Path. One can in a sense become accustomed to ignorance just as a person in a train might get accustomed to the darkness of the tunnel through which the train has been passing for some time; but there is even then a definite discomfort and a vague and undefinable sense of restlessness owing to the feeling that *something* is missing. This something is from the very beginning apprehended as that which has tremendous signi-

ficance for him. In the stages of dense ignorance, this something is often inadvertently identified with the variegated things of this mundane world; but when the experience of this world is sufficiently mature, the repeated disillusionment in relation to them puts the man on the right track for the thing which is missing. From that moment he seeks a *Reality which is deeper than the changing forms* and this moment might aptly be described as the first initiation of the aspirant. From the moment of initiation into the Path, the longing to unite with the source from which he has been separated becomes *articulate* and *intense*. Just as the entrained person in the tunnel longs for light all the more intensely after he seeks a streak of light coming from the other end, the person who has got a glimpse of the goal longs to hasten towards it with all the speed which he can command.

On the spiritual Path there are six stations, the seventh station being the terminus or the goal. Each intermediate station is in its own way a kind of an *imaginative anticipation of the goal*. The veil which separates man from God consists of false imagination: and this veil of false imagination has, as it were, many folds. Before entering the Path the man is shrouded in this veil of manifold imagination with the result that he cannot even entertain the thought of his being other than a separate and enclosed finite individual. The ego-consciousness has crystallised out of the working of the manifold false imagination, and the conscious longing for union with God is the first shaking of the entire structure of the ego which has come to be built through the period of the false working of imagination. *The traversing of the spiritual Path consists in the undoing of the results of the false working of imagination, or the dropping of the several folds of the veil which has created the sense of unassailable separateness and unredeemable isolation*. So far, the man had firmly clung to separate

**The Wearing out of the
Manifold Veil of Ignorance**

existence and secured it behind the formidable walls of thick ignorance: but from now on he enters, as it were, into some kind of *communication with the larger Reality*. The more he communes with Reality the thinner becomes the veil of ignorance and with the gradual wearing out of separateness and egoism there comes to him a greater sense of merging in the larger Reality.

The building up of the sense of aloofness is a result of flights of imagination; and therefore breaking through the self-created sense of aloofness and being united with the Reality is secured through reversing the false working of imagination. The act of getting rid of imagination altogether may be compared with the act of awakening from deep *sleep*: and the different stages in the process of getting rid of false imagination might be compared with the *dreams* which often serve as a bridge between deep sleep and full wakefulness. The process of getting rid of the manifold working of false imagination is gradual and has seven stages. The shedding of one fold of the veil of imagination is decidedly an approximation towards the Truth and the Light; but it does not amount to becoming one with Reality as it merely means renouncing the more false imagination in favour of the less false imagination. There are different degrees of the falseness of imagination according to the degrees of the sense of aloofness constituted by ego-consciousness. *Each stage in the process of getting rid of false imagination is a definite wearing out of the Ego*. But all the intermediate stages on the Path until the final realisation of the goal consist of *leaving one flight of imagination and having another flight of imagination*: they do not amount to the *cessation* of imagination.

These flights of imagination do not bring about any real change in the true being of the Self as it is. *What changes is*

not the Self but its idea of what it is. Suppose in a day-dream or an imaginative phantasy you imagine yourself to be in China while your body is actually in India. When the train of this imaginative phantasy comes to an end you realise that your body is actually not in China but in India. From the subjective point of view, this is like returning from China to India. In the same way, the gradual non-identification with the body and the progressive identification with the Universal Soul is comparable with the actual traversing of the *Path*, though in fact the different intermediate stages on the Path are all equally creations of the play of imagination.

The six stages of ascending are thus all within the domain of imagination: but at each stage, *the breaking through the growth of the sense of aloofness and the sense of merging in the larger reality are both so considerable and definite that the person often has a pseudo-sense of realisation.* Just as a person who wants to climb the mountain comes upon a deep valley and is so fascinated by the sight of the valley that he forgets the real goal and believes for the time being that he has arrived at the goal, the aspirant also mistakes the intermediate stages for the goal itself. But a person who is really in earnest about the climbing of the mountain realises after some time that the valley is really meant to be crossed: and the aspirant also in like manner sooner or later realises that the intermediate stage is meant to be transcended. *The pseudo-sense of realisation which comes at the intermediate stages is like a man's dreaming that he has become awake from sleep without actually being awake.* After becoming awake he realises that his first feeling of awakening was really a dream.

Each definite stage of advancement represents a state of consciousness: and the advancement from one state of consciousness to another proceeds side by side with the crossing of the inner planes.

Planes and States

Thus there are six intermediate planes and states of consciousness which have to be experienced before getting established in the seventh plane which is the end of the journey and where there is a final realisation of the God-state. The plane is comparable with a railway *station* where the train halts for some time; and the state of consciousness is comparable to the *movements* of the passenger after getting down at the station.

After entering a new plane of consciousness a person usually takes some time before he can freely function on that plane. As there is a radical change in the

**The Nature of Samadhi
—Istighraq**

total conditions of mental life the person experiences a sort of paralysis of mental activity, which is known as *Samadhi*. When the pilgrim enters a new plane he merges into that plane before he can experience the state which is characteristic of that plane. Just as a pilgrim who is tired by the strain of the journey sometimes goes to sleep, consciousness which has made the effort of ascending to a new plane goes through a period of *lowered mental activity comparable to sleep*. But at the same time the Samadhi is fundamentally different from sleep, because *in sleep a person is totally unconscious whereas in Samadhi he is conscious of bliss or light or power, although he is unconscious of his body or the surroundings*. After a period of comparative stillness, the mind begins to *function* on the new plane and experiences a state of consciousness which is utterly different from the state which it has left behind.

When the aspirant enters a new plane he gets merged into it and along with the lowering down of mental activity he experiences a

substantial diminution in the ego-life. This curtailment of the ego-life is different from the final annihilation of the Ego, which takes place at the seventh plane. But like the final annihilation of the seventh plane the different stages of the curtailment of the Ego at the intermediate six planes deserve special mention owing to their relative importance. In the Sufi spiritual tradition, the final annihilation of the Ego is described as *Fana-Fillah*: and the earlier *samadhis* of the six planes of duality have also been recognised as kinds of *Fana*, since they also involve a *partial* annihilation of the Ego.

Through all these Fanas of ascending order, there is the continuity of progression towards the final 'Fana-Fillah': and each of them has some special characteristic. When the pilgrim arrives at the first plane he experiences his first merging of *Fana* which consists in the *minor annihilation of the Ego*. The pilgrim is temporarily lost to his limited individuality and experiences bliss. Many pilgrims who thus get merged in the second plane think that they have realised God and get stuck in the first plane. But if the pilgrim keeps himself free from self-delusion or comes to realise that his attainment is really a transitional phase in his journey, he advances further on the spiritual Path and arrives at the second plane. The merging into the second plane is called "*Fana-e-Batili*" or *the annihilation of the False*. The pilgrim is now absorbed in bliss and infinite light. Some think that they have attained the goal and get stranded in the second plane; but others who keep themselves free from self-delusion march onwards and enter into the third plane. The merging into the third plane is called "*Fana-e-Zaheri*" or *the annihilation of the apparent*. Here the pilgrim loses for days all consciousness of the body or the world and experiences infinite power. But since he has no consciousness of the world he has *no*

occasion for the expression of his power. This is Videha Samadhi or the state of divine coma. Consciousness is now completely withdrawn from the entire world.

If the pilgrim advances still further he arrives at the fourth plane. The merging into the fourth plane is called "*Fana-e-Malakuti*" or *the annihilation leading towards Free-*

The Dangers of the Fourth Plane

dom. The pilgrim experiences a peculiar state of consciousness at the fourth plane since he now not only feels infinite power but has also plenty of occasions for the expression of that power. He can know everything. He can, for example, know what anyone situated in any part of the globe is thinking or doing. Further, he has not only occasions for the use of his powers but has a definite inclination to express them. If he falls a prey to this temptation he goes on expressing powers and gets caught up in the alluring possibilities of the fourth plane. The fourth plane is for this reason one of the most difficult and dangerous planes to cross. The pilgrim is never spiritually safe and has always the possibility of a reversion until he has successfully crossed the fourth plane and arrived at the fifth plane.

The merging into the fifth plane is called "*Fana-e-Jabaruti*" or *the annihilation of all desires. Here the incessant activity of the lower intellect comes to a stand-*

The Fanas of the Fifth and the Sixth Plane

still. He does not 'think' in the ordinary way: and yet he is indirectly a source of many thoughts inspired in others. He sees, but not with the physical eyes. Mind speaks with mind and there is neither worry nor doubt. He is now spiritually safe and beyond the possibility of a downfall: and yet many a pilgrim on this exalted plane finds it difficult to resist the delusion that they have attained Godhood. In his self-delusion he thinks and says, "I am God" and believes himself to have arrived at the end of the spiri-

tual Path. But if he moves on he perceives his mistake and advances to the sixth plane. The merging into the sixth plane is called " *Fana-e-Mahabubi* " or *the annihilation of the self in the Beloved*. Now the pilgrim sees God directly and clearly as an ordinary person sees the different things of this world: and this continued perception and enjoyment of God does not suffer a break even for an instant. Yet he does not become one with God, the Infinite.

If the pilgrim ascends to the seventh plane he experiences the *last merging* which is called "*Fana-Fillah*" or *the final annihilation of the self in God*. Through this

The Fana-Fillah or the Nirvikalpa Samadhi is a State of Conscious God-hood

merging the pilgrim loses his separate existence and becomes permanently united with God. He is now *one with God* and experiences himself as being none other than God himself. This seventh plane *Fana-Fillah* is the terminus of the spiritual Path, the goal of all search and endeavour. It is the *Sahaj Samadhi* or the *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* which is characteristic of *conscious God-hood*. It is the only real awakening. The pilgrim has now reached the other shore of the vast ocean of imagination, and realises that *this last Truth is the only Truth* and that all the other stages on the Path are entirely illusory. He has arrived at the final destination.

Arriving at Self-Knowledge

WHEN the time is ripe the advancement of a person towards self-knowledge comes about as naturally as the physical body of the child grows into the full-fledged form.

Progress Towards Self-Knowledge is Mostly Gradual and Imperceptible

The growth of the physical body *is* worked out by the operation of natural laws, whereas the progress of the aspirant towards self-knowledge is worked out by the operation of the spiritual laws pertaining to the transformation and emancipation of consciousness. The physical body of the child grows very gradually and almost imperceptibly; and the same is true of the spiritual progress of the person who has once entered the Path. The child does not know how its physical body grows: the aspirant also is, in the same way, often oblivious of the law according to which he makes headway towards the destination of his spiritual progress. The aspirant is generally conscious only of the manner in which he has been responding to the diverse situations in life: but he is rarely conscious of the manner in which he makes progress towards self-knowledge. But *without consciously knowing it the aspirant is gradually arriving at self-knowledge by traversing the Inner Path through his joys and sorrows, his happiness and suffering, his successes and failures, his efforts and rest, and, through his moments of clear perception and harmonised will as well as through the moments of confusion and conflict.* These are the manifestations of the diverse *sanskaras* which he has brought from the past; and the aspirant forges his way towards self-knowledge through the tangles of these *sanskaras* like the traveller threading his way through a wild and thick forest.

Human consciousness might be compared to the *flashlight* which reveals the existence and the nature of things.

The *province* illuminated by this flashlight is defined by the *medium* through which it works, just as a person who is confined to a boat can wander anywhere on the surface of water but can have no access to the remote places on the land or in the air: and the actual *working* of the flashlight is determined by the accumulated *sanskaras*, just as the course of the rivulets flowing from a mountain is given by the channels created by the natural contours of the mountain.

In the case of an average man, the sphere of life and the stage of action are restricted to the gross world because in him the flashlight of consciousness falls on the physical body and works through it. **The Average Man is only conscious of the Gross World** Being restricted to the medium of the gross body he can be conscious of anything within the gross world but is unable to establish conscious contact with subtle. The gross sphere thus constitutes the arena of the average man; and all his activities and thoughts have a tendency to be directed towards the gross objects which are accessible to him. But all the time he remains unconscious of the subtle and the mental spheres of existence since the flashlight of his consciousness cannot be focussed through the medium of the subtle or the mental body.

At this stage, *the soul is conscious of the gross world, but is completely ignorant about its own true nature. It identifies itself with the gross body on which the flashlight of consciousness falls and which naturally becomes the only base of all the activities which are within its range. It does not directly know itself through itself but by means of the physical body: and since all the knowledge which it can gather through the physical body points out to the physical body itself as the centre of*

the activities, it knows itself as being the physical body which in fact is only its instrument. The soul therefore imagines itself to be man or woman, young or old and takes upon itself the changes and the limitations of the body.

After several rounds of lives in the setting given by the gross world, the impressions connected with the gross world become weak through *long duration of the experience of opposites* like great happiness and intense suffering. The weakening of the impressions is the beginning of the spiritual awakening which consists in the gradual *withdrawal* of the flashlight of consciousness from the allurements of the gross world. When this happens the gross impressions become subtle, facilitating and inducing *its transference of the base of conscious functioning from the gross body to the subtle body*. Now the flashlight of consciousness falls on the subtle body and works through it as its medium; but it is no longer working through the gross body. Therefore the whole gross world goes out of the consciousness of the soul and it becomes conscious only of the subtle world. The subtle sphere of existence now constitutes the context of its life and *the soul now considers itself to be the subtle body* which becomes and is seen to be the centre of all its activities. But even when the soul has thus become subtle-conscious it remains ignorant about its own true nature since it cannot know itself directly through itself but only by means of the subtle body. However, the change of the stage of action from the gross to the subtle sphere of existence is of considerable significance in so far as in the subtle sphere, *the conventional standards of the gross world are replaced by new standards which, are nearer the Truth and a new mode of life is rendered possible by the dawning of new powers and a freer release of spiritual energy*. Life in the subtle world is only a passing phase in the spiritual journey and is far from being the goal;

but out of millions of gross-conscious souls only one is capable of becoming subtle-conscious.

The impressions connected with the subtle world in their turn get worn out through some forms of *penance* or *yoga* and thus facilitate and bring about a further inward withdrawal of consciousness, whereby the flashlight of consciousness comes to be thrown on the *mental body* and begins to function through it. The severance of conscious connection with the subtle and the gross body means that the gross and the subtle spheres of existence come to be completely excluded from the scope of consciousness. The soul is now conscious of the mental world which affords *deeper possibilities of spiritual understanding and clearer perception of the Ultimate Truth*. In this new setting of the mental sphere, the soul enjoys continuous inspiration, deep insight and unflinching intuition; and it is in *direct contact with the spiritual Reality*. But though it is in direct contact with God it does not see itself as God, since it cannot know itself directly through itself but only through the medium of the individual mind. It knows itself by means of the individual mind and *considers itself to be the individual mind* since it sees the individual mind as being the base and the centre of all its activities. Though the soul is now much closer to God than in the gross or subtle spheres, it is still enclosed in the world of shadow; and it continues to feel separate from God owing to the veil created by the impressions connected with the mental sphere. The flashlight of consciousness is functioning through the limitation of the individual mind and does not therefore yield the knowledge of the soul *as it is in itself*. But though the soul has not yet realised itself as being God, its life in the mental sphere of existence constitutes a tremendous advance upon the stage of the subtle sphere; and out of millions of subtle-conscious souls only one can establish conscious contact with the mental sphere of existence.

It is possible for an aspirant to rise up to the mental sphere of existence through its own unaided efforts. But *dropping the mental body amounts to the surrenderance of individual existence: and this last and all important step cannot be taken except through the help of a Perfect Master who is himself God-realised.* Out of millions of souls who are conscious of the mental sphere only one can withdraw the flashlight of its consciousness from the individual mind. Such withdrawal implies the complete vanishing of the last traces of the impressions connected with the mental life of the soul. When the flashlight of consciousness is no longer centred upon any of the three bodies, it serves the purpose of reflecting the *true* nature of the soul.

The soul now has direct knowledge of itself without being dependent upon any medium, and sees itself not as some finite body but as infinite God, and knows itself to be the only Reality. This major crisis in the life of the soul is conditioned by the complete *severance of connection three all the three bodies*; and since consciousness of the different spheres of existence is directly dependent upon corresponding bodies, the soul is now entirely *oblivious of the whole universe*. The flashlight of consciousness is no longer focussed upon anything foreign or external but is turned upon the soul itself and the soul is now truly self-conscious and has arrived at self-knowledge.

The process of arriving at self-knowledge throughout the three spheres of existence is attended by *the acquisition of false self-knowledge consisting in identification with the gross or the subtle or the mental body* according to the stage of the process. This is due to the initial purpose of the creation which is to make to the soul self-conscious. The soul cannot have true self-knowledge except at the end of the spiritual progress and all the intermediate forms of false self-knowledge

are, as it were, *temporary substitutes for true self-knowledge*. They are *necessary mistakes* in the attempt to arrive at true self-knowledge. Since the flashlight of consciousness is throughout the journey turned towards the objects of the environment and not upon the soul itself, the soul has a tendency to get so much engrossed in these objects that it is almost completely oblivious of its own existence and nature. *This danger of utter and unrelieved self-forgetfulness is counterbalanced by the self-affirmation of the soul by means of the body which happens to be used as the focal basis of the flashlight of consciousness*. Thus the soul knows itself as its own body and knows other souls as their bodies, thereby *sustaining a world of duality where there is sex, competition, aggression, jealousy, mutual fear, and exclusive ambition*. Self-knowledge of the soul by means of a *sign* is a source of untold confusion, complication and entanglement.

This form of ignorance may be illustrated by means of the famous *Pumpkin* story referred to by the poet Jami in one of his couplets. Once upon a time, there was an absent-minded man who had no equal in forgetting things. He had an intelligent and trusted friend who wanted to help him in at least remembering himself. This friend tied a pumpkin around his neck and said, " Now listen, old man, one day you might completely lose yourself and not be able to remember yourself. Therefore, as a *sign* I tie this pumpkin around your neck, so that every morning when you wake up you will see the pumpkin and know that you are there." Everyday, the absent-minded man saw the pumpkin after waking up in the morning and said to himself, "*I am not lost*". After some time, when the absent-minded man had got thoroughly used to self-identification through the pumpkin, the friend asked a stranger to remain with the absent-minded man, take away the pumpkin from his neck during his sleep and tie it around his own neck. The stranger did this, and when the absent-minded man woke up in the

The Story of the Pumpkin

morning, he did not see the pumpkin around his neck. So he said to himself, "*I am lost*". He saw the pumpkin on the other man's neck and said to him, "*You are me. But then who am I ?*"

This *Pumpkin* story offers an analogy to the different forms of *false* self-knowledge connected with identification with the body. To know oneself as the body is like knowing oneself by means of the pumpkin. **The Analogy made Explicit** The disturbance caused by non-identification with the gross or the subtle, or the mental body is comparable to the confusion of the absent-minded man when he could no longer see the pumpkin around his neck. The beginnings of the dissolution of the sense of duality are equivalent to the absent-minded man's identifying himself with the stranger who wore his pumpkin. Further, if the absent-minded man in the story were to learn to know himself through himself independently of any external sign, his self-knowledge might be comparable to the true self-knowledge of the soul which after non-identification with the three bodies knows itself as being none other than the infinite God. *Arriving at such self-knowledge is the very goal of creation.*

God-Realization

TO arrive at true self-knowledge is to arrive at God-realization. God-realization is a unique state of consciousness. It is different from all the other states of consciousness because all the other states of consciousness are experienced through the medium of the individual mind; whereas the state of God-consciousness is in no way dependent upon the individual mind or any other medium. *A medium is necessary for knowing something other than one's own self: for knowing one's own self no medium is necessary.* In fact, the association of consciousness with the mind is definitely a hindrance rather than a help for the attainment of realization. The individual mind is the seat of the ego or the consciousness of being isolated. It creates the limited individuality, which at once feeds and is fed by the illusion of duality time and change. So, in order to know the self as it is, consciousness has to be completely freed from the limitation of the individual mind. In other words, the individual mind has to disappear but consciousness has to be retained.

Throughout the past life-history of the soul, its consciousness has grown with the individual mind and all the workings of consciousness have proceeded against its background. *Consciousness has therefore come to be firmly embedded in the individual mind:* and it is inextricable from this setting with which it has been woven. The result is that if the mind is in abeyance consciousness also disappears. The intertwining of the individual mind and consciousness is amply illustrated by the tendency to become unconscious when there is any effort to stop mental activity through meditation.

The everyday phenomenon of going to sleep is not in its nature essentially different from the lull experienced during

meditation; but it is slightly different in its *origin*. Since the individual mind is continuously confronted by the world of duality it is involved in ceaseless conflict; and *when it is wearied by its unrelieved struggle it wants to lose its identity as a separate entity and go back to the Infinite*. It then recedes from the world of its own creation and experiences a lull; and this lull is also invariably accompanied by the cessation of consciousness.

The quiescence of mental activity in sleep entails the complete submerging of consciousness; but this cessation of mental life and conscious functioning is only temporary because *the impressions which are stored in the mind goad it to renewed activity*. After some time, the psychic stimuli of impressions are responsible for stirring the mind and reviving the conscious functioning which is carried through its medium. So, the period of sleep is followed by the period of wakefulness and the period of wakefulness is followed by the period of sleep according to the law of alternating activity and rest; but as long as the latent impressions in the mind are not completely undone there is no final annihilation of the individual mind or the emancipation of consciousness. In sleep the mind temporarily forgets its identity; but it does not finally lose its individual existence. And when the person is back to wakefulness from sleep he finds himself subject to his old limitations. There is the resurrection of consciousness; but it is still mind-ridden.

The limited mind is the soil in which the ego is securely rooted; and this ego perpetuates ignorance through the many illusions in which it is caught. The ego prevents the manifestation of the infinite knowledge which is already latent in the soul; and it is the most formidable obstacle in the attainment of God. A Persian poem truly says, " It is extremely difficult to pierce through the

The Obstacle of the Ego

veil of ignorance; for there is a rock on fire". Just as the flame of fire cannot rise very high if a rock is placed upon it, a desire to know one's own true nature cannot lead to the Truth as long as there is the burden of the ego on consciousness. *Success in finding oneself is rendered impossible by the continuation of the ego which persists throughout the journey of the soul.* In old age, the aching tooth continues to give untold trouble for months together because it does not get easily uprooted though it might have been moving within its socket for a considerable period of time: in the same way, the ego which might become feeble through love or penance is yet difficult to eradicate and persists till the very end. Though it becomes more and more loose as the soul advances on the Path, it remains till the last stage of the seventh plane.

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

The problem of God-realization is the problem of emancipating consciousness from the limitations of the mind. When the individual mind is dissolved, the whole universe which is relative to the mind vanishes into nothingness and consciousness is no longer tied to anything. Consciousness now unlimited and unclouded by is anything and serves the purpose of illumining the state of the Infinite Reality. While immersed in the bliss of realization the soul is

Parallel between Sleep and God-Realization

completely oblivious of sights or sounds or any other objects in the universe: and in this respect it is *like sound sleep*. But there are many important points of difference which distinguish God-realization from sound sleep. During sleep, the illusion of the universe vanishes since all consciousness is in abeyance; but there is no conscious experience of God since this requires the complete dissolution of the ego and the turning of full consciousness towards the Ultimate Reality. Occasionally when the continuity of deep sleep is interrupted by brief intervals, the soul may have the experience of retaining consciousness without being conscious of anything in particular. There is consciousness; but this consciousness is not of the universe. It is consciousness of *nothing*. Such experiences anticipate God-realization in which consciousness is completely freed from the illusion of the universe and manifests the infinite knowledge which was so far hidden by the ego.

In sleep, the individual mind continues to exist though it has forgotten everything including itself; and the latent impressions in the mind create a veil between the submerged consciousness and the Infinite Reality. Thus, *during sleep, consciousness is submerged in the shell of the individual mind; but it has not yet been able to emerge out of that shell*. So, though the soul has forgotten its separateness from God and has actually attained unity with him, it is unconscious of this unity. *In God-realization, however, the mind does not merely forget itself but has (with all its impressions) actually lost its identity*; and the consciousness which was hitherto associated with the individual mind is now freed from all its trammels and brought into direct contact and unity with the Ultimate Reality. Since there is now no veil between consciousness and the Ultimate Reality, it is fused with the Absolute and eternally abides in it as an inseparable aspect promoting an unending state of Infinite Knowledge and Unlimited Bliss.

The manifestation of infinite knowledge and unlimited bliss in consciousness is, however, strictly confined to the soul who has attained God-realization. The infinite

God-Realization is Personal

Reality in the God-realized soul has the explicit knowledge of its own Infinity; but such explicit knowledge does not belong to the same reality in the unrealized soul, who is still subject to the illusion of the universe. If God-realization had not thus been a personal attainment of the soul, the entire universe would come to an end as soon as any one soul gets God-realization. However, this does not happen, because *God-realization is a personal state of consciousness belonging to the soul who has transcended the domain of the mind*. Other souls continue to remain in bondage and though they too are one day bound to have God-realization they can only have it by freeing their consciousness from the burden of the ego and the limitations of the individual mind. Thus the attainment of God-realization has a direct significance only for the soul who has emerged out of the time-process.

After the attainment of God-realization, *the soul discovers that it has always been the Infinite Reality which it now knows itself to be* and that its looking upon itself as

What was Latent in the Infinite becomes Manifest

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

The whole process of attaining God-realization is just a *game in which the beginning and the end are identical*. The attainment of realization is nevertheless a distinct gain for the soul. There are two types of advantages. One type of advantage consists in *getting what he did not previously possess*. The other type of advantage consists in *realizing fully what we really are*. The value of God-realization is of the second type only. However, this creates an infinite difference in the soul which has God-realization and the soul which does not have God-realization. Though the soul which has God-realization does not have anything new which it did not in a sense already possess, its explicit knowledge of all that he really is, has been and will ever be, makes God-realization all-important. The soul which is not God-realized experiences itself as being finite and is constantly troubled by the opposites of the fleeting joys and sorrows; but the soul who has realization is lifted out of them and experiences *the Infinite Knowledge and the unlimited Bliss of being God-conscious*.

In God-realization, the soul drops its separate consciousness and transcends duality in the abiding knowledge of its identity with the Infinite Reality; *the shackles of limited individuality are broken: the world of shadows is at an end: the curtain of illusion is for ever drawn: the feverishness and the agonising distress of the pursuits of limited consciousness are replaced by the tranquility and bliss of Truth-consciousness: and the restlessness and fury of temporal existence are swallowed up in the peace and stillness of Eternity*.

True Discipleship

WHEN the aspirant gets voluntarily affiliated to some Master, he is said to have become a disciple. But if this affiliation is merely formal, it does not constitute true disci-

Discipleship is a Vital Relation pleship. The relationship between the disciple and the Master is *utterly different from the legal relations which create rights and liabilities through verbal transactions or formal agreements*. Discipleship is one of the fundamental features which characterise the life of the advanced aspirant, and it does not come into existence through any artificial procedure. It *arises out of the basic laws of spiritual life*. It is therefore of much greater significance than the mundane relations which arise within the context of ordinary social life as a result of incidental associations or temporary contracts. Many of these mundane relations do not enter into the spiritual fabric of the life of the aspirant but remain superficially attached to his being. Thus it is not of any great consequence whether you purchase a thing from one shop-keeper or another as long as you pay the price for the same: and it is immaterial whether you travel by one ship or another so long as you secure your getting at the destination. Even such transactions are no doubt inwardly determined by *sanskaric* ties and *karmic* laws, and they are therefore not entirely devoid of spiritual significance. But these relations are in their very nature provisional and superficial: and they are in no way comparable to the vital bond of discipleship which *gives the very substance and direction to the life of the aspirant*.

The relation between the Master and the disciple is an inevitable outcome of the intrinsic conditions of the life of the aspirant. It is primarily a relation between the lover and his

Divine Beloved: and it is from the spiritual point of view the most important relationship into which a person can enter.

The Love Implied in Discipleship is Unique The love which constitutes the core of discipleship stands by itself among the different types of love which obtain in ordinary social relations. Mundane love is an interplay between two centres of God-unconscious: but *the love implied in discipleship is the love of God-unconscious for God-conscious*. Every one is God; but some are unconscious of their divinity, some are partly conscious of their divinity and a few are fully God-conscious. Those who are unconscious of their divinity can have no idea of the God-state; they are only conscious of the body-state. In order that they should inherit the God-state they have to love, worship and be guided by the Master who is constantly dwelling in the God-state.

The love which the aspirant has for the Master is really the response evoked by the greater love which the Master has for the aspirant; and it is to be placed *above all other loves*. Love for the Master naturally becomes a central power in the life of the aspirant because he knows the Master to be an embodiment and representation of the Infinite God. All his thoughts and aspirations, therefore, come to be woven around the personality of the Master. The Master, thus, comes to have an unquestionable supremacy among the claims recognised by the aspirant: and *it is through the supremacy of claim that the Master becomes the focal point for the radiation of the spiritual forces* which dispel all darkness, pluck out the sins of the heart and initiate the aspirant into the life of freedom and Truth-consciousness.

The most fundamental requisite for the candidate who would be a true disciple is an unquestioning love for the

Master. *All the other streams of love ultimately join this great river of love for the Master and disappear in it.* Majnu loved Laila. He loved her so intensely that every moment of his life he was filled with thoughts about her. He could not eat, drink or sleep without thinking of her: and all that he wanted was the happiness of Laila. He would gladly have seen her married to some other person if he knew that it would be in her interest; and he would even have died for her husband if he had thought she would thereby be happy. The utter self-denial and sincerity of his love ultimately led him to the Master. Every second of his life he thought not of himself but of the beloved, and this lifted his love from the physical or intellectual level and made it spiritual. The spiritualisation of his love led him to the Divine Beloved.

The Master is the Divine Beloved and when the disciple meets his Master, all that he has to do is to love him; for if the disciple loves the Master out of the fulness of his heart, his final union with him is assured. He need not worry about the quality of his love. He should love in spite of his weaknesses and not tarry till he can purify his own heart. The Master is the very source of purity and *to set one's heart on the Master is beginning of self-purification.* When the disciple has whole-hearted devotion for the Master, he is opening himself for the reception of the Divine Love which the Master pours on him: and all his weaknesses are consumed in this fire of Divine Love of which he thus becomes the recipient. But if the disciple is to be free from all weaknesses and attain incorruptible and infinite purity, he has to *dedicate his life to the Master without any reservations or provisions.* He must offer his weaknesses as well as his strength, his virtues as well as his vices, his merits as well as his sins. There should be no 'if' and 'but' about his offering. His

self-surrender must be so complete as to allow no room in his mind for even a shadow of any secret desire for the self.

Complete self-surrender and unquestioning love become possible when the disciple comes to have an unswerving faith in the Master. *Faith in the Master is an indispensable part of true discipleship.*

The Value of Faith

Once God is realized there is no question of faith at all, just as there is no question of faith when a man knows himself to be a man. But till this state of realisation is attained, the faith which the disciple places in the Master is his most reliable guiding light and is comparable to the steering wheel of the ship. *It is not correct to describe faith as being blind for it is more like sight than like unrelieved ignorance;* but it has to be short of direct experience until the aspirant realises God for himself. It is not for nothing that all the religions are otherwise referred to as 'faiths'. One of the essentials of the life of the aspirant is that he should have faith. Faith may express itself through diverse forms; but from the psychological point of view it is one and the same thing and does not admit of being labelled. The only differences in faith are differences of degree. Faith may be strong and vital or weak and lukewarm. A weak and lukewarm faith does not carry a man further than adherence to rituals and ceremonies; but a *strong and vital faith is bound to take the aspirant beyond the external forms of religion* and help him to eschew the crust and get at the kernel of true spiritual life. *Faith reaches its natural climax and goal when it comes to be rested in one's own Master.*

The faith of the disciple must always be securely grounded on his experience of the divinity of the Master. He must not be like a straw carried anywhere by the slightest breeze; he should be like a rock which remains

The Story of Kalyan

unmoved in the severest of storms. The story of Kalyan brings out the meaning of a really sound faith in the Master. Kalyan was a disciple of Swami Ramdas who was a Perfect Master at the time of

Shivaji. The Master loves all disciples alike; but some might be particularly dear to him, just as a man loves all the parts of his body, but the eyes are more dear to him than his fingers. Swami Ramdas had many disciples; but the most favourite among them was Kalyan. Other disciples did not quite understand why Kalyan should be more dear to the Master than all the others. Once Swami Ramdas made a test of the devotion of his disciples. He asked all his disciples to come to him and pretended to be so sick as to be on the point of death. He had placed a mango on the joint of his knee and bound it up by means of a bandage so that it looked like a huge swelling. Swami Ramdas pointed out to this swelling and told the disciples that it was a malignant tumour and that there was no chance of his living unless some one offered to suck out the poison from the joint of his knee. At the same time he made it clear to all the disciples that whoever would suck out the poison from the swelling would die instantaneously. Then he asked whether any disciple was prepared to suck out the poison from the swelling at the cost of life. At this invitation, all the other disciples hesitated while Kalyan arose immediately and began to suck from the swelling. To his own surprise, Kalyan found that what he sucked out was the sweet mango juice and not poison; and he further had from Swami Ramdas much merited praise for having unswerving faith and self-denying love. To be willing to die for the happiness of the Beloved is true love. Such implicit faith, unflinching love and undivided loyalty as that of Kalyan can come to the disciple only through the Grace of the Master.

Undivided loyalty to the Master does not introduce any narrowness in the sphere of the life of the disciple. To serve the Master is to serve your own self in every other self. The Master dwells in Universal Consciousness and wills universal spiritual well-being; to serve the Master is therefore, to participate in his cause which is to serve

The Master can be realized through Service

all life. While sharing the work of the Master, the disciple may be required to be in touch with the world; but though moving in the world in accordance with the work which is in store for him he is in inward contact with the Master as Infinite Being. Therefore, *by sharing the work of the Master the disciple comes closer to him and becomes an integral part of his consciousness.* Serving the Master is the quickest means of realising him.

The service which the disciple can offer to the Master is not only linked up with the universal cause of humanity but is one of the most potent means of bringing the disciple nearer to his spiritual goal. When the service offered by the disciple is spontaneous, whole-hearted, selfless and unconditional it brings him more spiritual benefit than can ever come by any other means. Service of the Master is a joy for the disciple even when it means an ordeal that tries his body or mind. Service which is offered under conditions of discomfort or inconvenience is the test of the devotion of the disciple. The more trying such service becomes the more welcome it is for the disciple: and as he voluntarily accepts physical and mental suffering in his devoted service to the Master, he experiences the bliss of spiritual fulfilment.

The sense of undivided and absolute loyalty to the Master is made possible by the right understanding of what the Master is and what he really stands for. If the disciple has an imperfect grasp of the true status and function of the Master he is likely to set up a *false antithesis* between his own Higher Self and the Master and as a consequence of this antithesis he might create in his mind an artificial and imaginary conflict between the claims of the Master and other claims which come to him as legitimate. But a disciple should from the very beginning realise that the Master only requires that the disciple should realise his own Higher Self. In fact, *the Master symbolises this Higher Self of*

the disciple and is none other than this very Higher Self which is the same one reality in all. So allegiance to the Master is only another form of his allegiance to his own Higher Self. This, however, does not mean that merely formal allegiance to the Higher Self is in any way an adequate substitute for the allegiance to the Master. *The disciple cannot have a clear perception of his own Higher Self until he is God-realised and often that which comes to him as his duty is really a prompting of some sanskaras interpolating themselves between the Higher Self and his field of consciousness.* The Master on the contrary is one with the Higher Self and can make no mistake about right valuation.

The disciple, therefore, must always test his own promptings by means of the standards or orders given by the Master and in the event of any conflict between the two he should thoroughly re-examine his own ideas to discover the points wherein they might be short of perfection. Almost always a little reflection is sufficient to complete his own thinking and to perceive the *basic harmony between the true dictates of his own Higher Self and the requirements of the Master.* If, however, on some rare occasion, the disciple is unable to reconcile the two, he may be sure that he has either not properly understood the dictates of his own Higher Self or that he has not properly grasped the import of his Master. In such cases the Master himself requires that the disciple should follow his own conscience at any cost. The Master may sometimes give instructions with a view to prepare his disciple for a higher mode of life; and it is under such circumstances that the disciple finds himself confronted by an apparent and temporary variance between his own inclinations and the instructions which he receives from the Master. But usually the Master does not give any instructions for which the disciple has not had inward anticipatory preparation.

The Master is supremely impersonal and all the time his only concern is to remove the veils between the conscious-

ness of the disciple and his Higher Self. So there can never be any real conflict between the allegiance of the disciple to his Master and his allegiance to his own Higher Self. Indeed, at the end of his search, *the disciple discovers that the Master is none other than his own Higher Self in another form.* The Master in his utter impersonality and unhampered divinity is so complete that he has nothing to desire for himself; and in relation to the disciple all that he requires is that the disciple should reconstitute himself in the light of the Highest Truth. To become a disciple is to begin to tread the Path leading towards the spiritual goal. This is the meaning of true discipleship.

The Ways of the Masters

THE Masters are absolutely impersonal and universal in their state of consciousness; but they can for their spiritual purpose limit the scope of their work and also allow their

The Masters are Ever Ready to Help manifested personality to become the centre of the aspirations of their disciples. *They use personal relationships as well-defined channels to pass on their help to those aspirants who get connected with them.* The Masters are always on the look out for those who need and deserve their help and the faintest gleams of spiritual yearnings are not overlooked by them. They foster and promote the advancement of all aspirants in multifarious ways; and their ways are always unfailingly effective, although they might not necessarily be completely intelligible to others.

The help of the Master consists in making the spiritual journey of the aspirant sure and safe as well as in shortening the time which he might otherwise take for arriving at the goal. The aspirant may go a

The Nature of their Help long way through independent search, but he is unable to cross the sixth plane without the help of a Master. But even on the intermediate planes the help of the Master is extremely valuable, because he *prevents the aspirant from getting stuck on the way and protects him from the pitfalls and the dangers with which the spiritual Path is beset.* Kabir has compared the three stages of the Path to the three phases of fire. Just as first there is only smoke and no fire, then there is fire enveloped in smoke, and lastly there is only fire without smoke, the beginnings of the Path are enveloped in thick ignorance, in the middle there is confused perception of the Goal, and finally there is the realisation of the Truth without the slightest alloy of illusion. Since the Path lies through illusions of

many kinds, the aspirant is never safe without the guidance of the Master who knows all the stages of the Path and can take him through them.

Before the opening of the inner eye, the mind conceives of the goal as the Infinite, and this conception is based upon some symbolic image of Infinity like the sky or ocean, which suggest the idea of vastness. But though such concept of the Infinite has the advantage of being clean-cut and well-defined, it has to be superseded by the direct perception of the Infinite. The aspirant sees the Self *directly* when his inner eye of the spirit is opened. But when this happens, the mind is dazed by what it sees and is no longer as clear as it is before the opening of this inner eye. Being dazed by the perception of the Self, the mind loses its capacity to think clearly and mistakes the seeing of the Self with its being actually realized. Hence comes the illusion of being at the end of the Path when one is really traversing it. In *Sufi* this particular part of the Path is known as *Mukameafasan* or the *Abode of Delusion*; and it is in such difficult phases of the Path that the Master can, through his skilful intervention, give a push to the aspirant, so that he keeps going on instead of getting caught up on the way.

In fact, there is the danger of the aspirant being detained on each one of the inner planes, because, each is, in its own way, very alluring and serves as a trap to the aspirant. But the Master either takes the aspirant past these planes or through them without unnecessary delay. *The aspirant has to walk his own way; but the contribution of the Master consists in confirming and consolidating the previously acquired intuitions and perceptions of the aspirant and in precipitating his consciousness into the next stage which, though unavoidable, is by its nature, incapable of being anticipated by him.*

The Master uses *Maya* to take the disciple out of *Maya*, and as he is himself beyond good and bad he may often require things which are unacceptable and even shocking to the ordinary 'good sense' of his disciples. The best thing for the disciple to do is to follow the instructions of the Master with implicit faith, without bringing them to the bar of his limited capacity of judgment. The following famous instances illustrate the point in discussion:

Unquestioning Faith of Disciples

There is the Koranic story of Abraham being called upon to sacrifice his beloved son Ismael in the way of the Lord. When Abraham, firm in his resolve and faith, was about to slaughter his son, the latter with Abraham's knife pointing at his throat, is miraculously saved by being replaced by a goat.

Shams-e-Tabriz ordered Maulana Rumi, his disciple, to fetch wine for him from a pub, which he unflinchingly complied with in order to please and win the grace of his Master. Maulana at the time commanded a large following of Muslim divines on account of his reputation as a great theologian of the Islamic world and wine is religiously prohibited (*Haram*) to the Muslims. Hence it was a crucial test for Maulana to carry a jar of wine on his shoulders through the streets, and he did it.

Ghousali Shah was asked by one of his Masters who lived in a hut by the side of the river Ganges, to get a vessel full of water from mid-stream only, for drinking purposes. It was about midnight and the river Ganges was in heavy floods because of the monsoon. The disciple hesitated at first, but finally gathered courage to attempt the impossible, believing in the omniscience of the Master. No sooner he stepped into the angry waters of the Ganges, he witnessed a wonderful transformation of the scene. Instead of the surging waves and the floods, the river had turned into a thin stream and the vessel to be filled almost touched the river bed. The

disciple nearly crossed the river to the opposite bank in search of the mid-stream. While thus occupied the Master appeared on the scene and asked him the reason of his delay. When explained that the mid-current could not be located, the Master allowed him to fill the vessel by handfulls and himself helped in the process. The Master left the disciple on some pretext asking him to follow immediately after filling the vessel. When Ghousali Shah returned to the hut with the vessel full of water, he was bewildered beyond words to discover from other disciples that the Master had never left the hut during his absence even for a minute but was talking to them all the while about him.

These instances show how the Master, on rare occasions, may use his occult powers to break down the ego of his disciples or help them further on the Path. But as

The Masters Usually Prefer Ordinary Ways to Occult Methods *a rule, the Masters are very sparing in the use of their divine powers; and they never use them unless such use is absolutely necessary for spiritual purposes. Ordinarily they secure their purposes through the normal ways of worldly men; but while doing so, they not only exhibit great understanding, keen sense of humour, unending patience and consummate tact, but they also take great troubles to help their disciples and adjust themselves in numberless ways to whatever might be entailed by the needs of the situation.*

Some of these points are effectively brought out by the story of the great mystic Bahlul. Bahlul wanted to con-

The Story of Bahlul tact certain notables of Persia for internal reasons of his own; and the only way of doing so was to go to the Prince's party which used to be attended by these notables. But unfortunately, Bahlul was bald-headed; and, in those days, no one who was without hair could be allowed to attend the party given by the Prince. The Prince

had lost all his hair; and to see others without hair, made him think of it and prevented him from enjoying the party. Since the Prince was very sensitive on this point, no bald person was allowed to come for the party; and so, when Bahlul, who was bald, went to the party in his shabby clothes, he was thrown out. The party, however, lasted for three days; and on the following day, Bahlul borrowed some fine clothes and a wig disguised himself and again went to the party.

During the party no one recognised Bahlul; and in his fine clothes, he made a great impression upon all the notables who had gathered for the party. He made himself liked so much that even the Prince offered him a warm welcome and invited him to sit near him. No sooner was Bahlul seated, he winked at the Prince. The Prince did not understand the meaning of his winking but vaguely felt that such a gesture from an illustrious man like him must mean something important; and thinking that it immediately required a suitable response, he also winked back. Those who were in the close vicinity of the Prince, saw this exchange of winking and felt impelled to imitate them. So they also winked at each other; and soon the winking spread throughout the crowd so that for five minutes the party saw nothing but winking. Then Bahlul cried, "Stop! O you wise men. Why do you wink?" And the notables replied, "We are winking because you great men were winking. We only imitate you." Then immediately Bahlul took off his wig and said, "We two are both bald. Imitate us!" The notables then went away and on the third day they all came with shaved heads, when Bahlul turned to the Prince and said, "We two are permanently bald; these men will have to shave their heads daily in order to remain bald." And thus through his tactful handling and sense of humour, he secured access to those whom he wanted to help.

The Master takes infinite pains to contact and win over the disciple for spiritual life. Since the progress of the disci-

ple is secured only if his love for the Master is not allowed to dwindle, he takes every care to remove all the obstacles which might be standing in the way of the whole-hearted devotion of the disciple. And, *if sometimes he is seen to humour the individual nature of the disciple it is only to keep them away from creating a serious impediment in his way.* Sometimes, he might even seem to feed the ego of the disciple; but all this is really a part of giving a long rope to the ignorance of the disciple and is only a preparation for the final extinguishing of his ego, just as the animals to be offered in sacrifice are carefully nurtured before their annihilation on the day of sacrifice. The Master is himself beyond good or bad and is not perturbed by the failings of the disciple; and he tolerates them with inviolable patience and infinite capacity to wait, knowing full well, that once the disciple gets established on the Path, these failings will take no time to be washed away.

But, once the Master is satisfied that the disciple is firmly established in the Path, he is keen about cleansing the mind of the disciple of all the blemishes: and he often achieves this task of his *even at the risk of appearing ruthless,* just as once a patient is entrusted to a surgeon, he is active at his healing knife with complete disregard for the protests of the patient. But all such measures are really in the interest of the disciple and the disciple cannot fail to see this ultimately; therefore he is never weaned away from his Master and comes closer to him by the process of cleansing which might have come to him as irksome or painful.

The usual method of the Master, however, is as sweet and agreeable for the disciple as it is effective. The Master is very pleased when the disciple shows any real progress in the spiritual line. *By conferring well-merited praise on the disciple he is confirming in*

him the spiritual qualities which he is in the process of realising and he is also arousing in him such confidence as will enable him to cope with any situation. The glow of noble emotion, a gesture of self-denial, a heroic sacrifice, or an incident revealing extraordinary patience or love or faith, any one of these is sufficient to make the Master happy and evoke from him transparent approbation; and the usual method of the Master to encourage the good qualities in the disciple is plain and unconcealed appreciation of the attainments of the disciple. The disciple soon comes to value the approval of the Master and takes delight in his approval more than in any other thing. He is ready to resist the greatest of temptations and go through the most trying ordeals, which would have otherwise seemed to him as impossible, if only he knows that this will make the Master happy.

Since the Master is, for the aspirant, a symbol of the Supreme Self in all, the problem of true adjustment with the Master comes to him as being the same as the problem of realizing his own inner divinity and arriving at true adjustment with all other forms of the Supreme Self. Through his allegiance to the Master, the aspirant gives effect to his conscious appreciation of the fundamental unity of all these problems: and *from the point of view of psychological strategy, he is in a position to tackle them not as separate problems but as aspects of one problem, so that he can arrive at true integration which is different from a temporary compromise, between conflicting claims.* In order to be able to help the disciple to achieve this difficult task, the Master has to *become the nucleus of all the spiritual idealism of the aspirant*, because intensive concentration of psychic energy is necessary if the aspirant is to break through the many barriers which lie between him and his goal.

The supremacy of claim, which the Master has, cannot be challenged or limited even by the spontaneous reverence

which the disciple is bound to feel for Masters other than the one who has accepted him. All Perfect Masters are *one* in their consciousness and it is absurd to imagine any grades between them; but though, from this point of view, one Master is not greater than another, the disciple must, for his own purposes, place the claim of his own Master over and above the claims of other Masters, until he transcends the domain of duality and realises the unity of all life. *Psychic energy would be dissipated unless there arises a supremely imperative claim among the many conflicting claims of life:* and exclusive concentration upon one Master is, therefore, usually indispensable for the gathering up of the dispersed psychic energy of the disciple. In very rare cases, owing to special circumstances, the Masters themselves might decide to share the spiritual work in relation to a particular disciple: and there are, therefore, exceptional cases of disciples who have had to affiliate themselves to two or more Masters. But this is an *exception* rather than a rule; and *where there are more Masters than one, they arrange the distribution of their work so carefully that they do not set up any conflict of claims.*

The Nature of the Ego and its Termination

Part I

THE EGO AS THE CENTRE OF CONFLICT

IN the pre-human stage, consciousness *has* experiences, but these experiences are not explicitly brought into relation with a central 'I'. The dog is angry; but he does not continue to feel 'I am angry'. Even in his case, we find that he learns through some experiences and thus evinces the action of one experience on another; but this action is a result of a semi-mechanical tension of connected imprints or *sanskaras*; it is different from the intelligent synthesis of experiences, which is possible through the development of I-consciousness. *The first step in submitting the working of isolated impressions to intelligent regulation consists in bringing them all in relation with the centre of consciousness which appears as the explicit limited Ego.* The consolidation of the ego-consciousness is most clear and defined from the beginning of human consciousness.

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

The Process of Ego-Formation

opposites of experience is a condition of emancipating consciousness from the thralldom of diverse compulsions and repulsions which tend to-dominate consciousness irrespective of valuation : and the early attempts in securing such integration are made through the formation of the Ego as its base and centre.

The Ego emerges as an explicit and unfailing accompaniment of all the happenings of mental life in order to fulfil a certain need. The part played by the Ego in hu-

The Ego Arises to Fulfil a Need

man life may be compared with the function of *the ballast in the ship*. The ballast in the ship keeps it away from too much oscillation; and without it, the ship is likely to be too light and unsteady and is in danger of being overturned by the lawless breezes moving to and fro. The psychic energy would be endlessly caught up in the multitudinous mazes of dual experience and would be all flittered away and dissipated if there is no *provisional nucleus* to take stock of all acquired experience and bind together the active tendencies born of the relatively independent and loose instincts inherited from animal-consciousness. *The formation of the Ego serves the purpose of giving a certain amount of stability to conscious processes and also secures a working equilibrium which makes for a planned and organised life.*

It would, therefore, be a mistake to imagine that the arising of the Ego is without any purpose. Though it arises only to vanish in the end, it does temporarily fulfil a need

Necessary Evil which could not have been ignored in the long-drawn journey of the soul. The Ego is not meant to be a permanent handicap, since it can be transcended and outgrown through spiritual endeavour; but the phase of Ego-formation must nevertheless be looked upon as a *necessary evil*, which has to come into existence for the time being.

The Ego thus marks and fulfils a certain necessity in the further progress of consciousness. But since *the Ego takes its shelter in the false idea of being the body*, it is a source of much illusion which vitiates experience. *It is of the essence of the Ego that it should feel separate from the rest of life by contrasting itself against the other forms of life.* Thus, though inwardly trying to complete and integrate individual experience, the Ego artificially creates a *division between the external and internal life*, in the very attempt to feel and secure its own existence; and this division, in the totality of life, cannot but have its reverberations in the inner individual life over which it presides as a guiding genius.

While always striving to establish unity and integration in experience, the Ego can never realise this objective; and though it establishes a certain kind of balance, this balance is only provisional and temporary. *The incompleteness of its attainments is patent from the internal conflict which is never absent as long as experience is being faced from the point of view of the Ego.* From moment to moment, the mind of man is passing through a series of conflicts. The minds of great and distinguished persons as well as the minds of common people are seen to be harassed by conflicting desires and tendencies. Sometimes the conflict with which the mind is faced is so acute, that the person concerned yields to the psychic pressure, with the result that there is either a partial or total breakdown or a complete derangement of mind. There is really no vital difference between the normal man and the so-called abnormal man. *Both have to face the same problems; but the one can more or less successfully solve his problems and the other cannot solve them.*

The Ego attempts to solve its inner conflicts through false valuation and wrong choice, *It is characteristic of the Ego that it*

takes all that is unimportant as important and all that is important as unimportant. Thus power, fame, wealth, ability and other worldly attainments and accomplishments are really unimportant; but the Ego takes delight in these possessions and clings to them as 'mine'. On the other hand, true spirituality is all-important for the Soul; but the Ego looks upon it as unimportant. For example, if a person experiences some bodily or mental discomfort while doing a work of spiritual importance, the Ego steps in to secure the unimportant bodily or mental comfort even at the cost of giving up the really important spiritual work. Bodily and mental comfort as well as other worldly attainments and accomplishments are often necessary; but they are not therefore important. *There is a world of difference between necessity and importance.* Many things come to the Ego as being necessary; but they are not in themselves important: and spirituality which comes to the Ego as being unnecessary is really important for the Soul. The Ego thus represents a deep and fundamental principle of ignorance which is exhibited in *always choosing the unimportant in preference to the important.*

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

If the mind is to be freed from conflict, it must always make the right choice and must unfailingly prefer the truly

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

Having once known what the right choice is, the next thing to do is to stick to that choice firmly, because although the competing tendencies in the mind may be ruled out in choosing one particular course in preference to other alternatives, they still continue to act as obstacles in making the choice fully effective and operative; and at times, there is even the danger of the decision being subverted through the intensification of those competing psychic forces. To avoid this possibility of defeat, it is necessary that the mind should tenaciously stick to the right value, which it has seen. Thus, *the solution of mental conflict requires not only the perception of right values, but also an unswerving fidelity to them.*

The intelligent and firm choice, however, has to be repeatedly exercised in *all* matters—small or great; for, *the ordinary "worries" of life are not any way less important than the serious*

"problems " with which the mind is confronted in the times of crises. The roots of mental conflict cannot completely disappear as long as there is only intermittent exercise of intelligent and firm choice. The life of true values can be spontaneous only when the mind has got into the unbroken habit of choosing the right value. Besides, three-fourths of our life is made of ordinary things; and though the conflict concerning ordinary things may not cause mental agony, it still leaves in the mind the sense of uneasiness that something is wrong. In fact, the conflicts which turn upon ordinary things are rarely brought to the surface of consciousness; and they cast a shadow on the general feeling about life, as it were, from behind the screen. Such conflicts have to be brought to the surface of consciousness and frankly faced before they can be adequately solved.

The process of bringing the conflict to the surface of consciousness should, however, not degenerate into the process of imagining conflicts where there are none. *The sure indication of a real hidden conflict is the sense that the whole of our heart is not in the thoughts or actions which happen to be dominant at the moment;* and there is a vague feeling of a narrowing down or a radical restriction of life. On such occasions, an attempt should be made to analyse the mental state through deep introspection; for such analysis brings to light the hidden conflicts concerning the matter.

When the conflicts are thus brought to light, it is possible to resolve them through intelligent and firm choice. But the most important requirement for the satisfactory resolution of conflicts is the motive power or inspiration which can only come from a burning longing for some comprehensive Ideal. Mere analysis may aid choice; but *the choice will remain a barren and ineffective intellect-*

The Ideal as Motive-Power

ual preference, unless it is vitalised by the zeal for some Ideal appealing to the deepest and most significant strata of human personality. Modern psychology has done much to reveal the sources of conflict; but it has yet to discover the methods of awakening inspiration or supplying the mind with something which makes life worth living. This indeed is the creative task before the saviours of humanity.

The establishing of the true Ideal is a beginning of right valuation; the beginning of right valuation is, in its turn, the undoing of the constructions of the Ego which exhibits itself through false valuation, **Disintegration of Ego-centre through right valuation** *Any action which expresses the true values of life contributes towards the disintegration of the Ego, which is a product of ages of ignorant action.* Life cannot be permanently imprisoned within the cage of the Ego; it must, at some time, make efforts towards the Truth. In the ripeness of evolution comes the momentous discovery that *life cannot be understood and lived fully as long as it is made to move round the pivot of the Ego:* and man is, therefore, driven by the logic of his own experience *to find the true centre of experience and reorganise his life in the Truth.* This entails the wearing out of the Ego and its replacement by the Truth-consciousness. The disintegration of the Ego is a condition of realising the Truth. *The false nucleus of the consolidated sanskaras must disappear if there is to be a true integration and fulfilment of life.*

The Nature of the Ego and its Termination

PART II

THE EGO AS AN AFFIRMATION OF SEPARATENESS

THE Ego is an affirmation of separateness. It takes many forms. It may take the form of continued self-conscious memory expressing itself in recollections like, 'I did this and

The Ego is an Affirmation of Separateness

I did that; I felt this and I felt that; I thought this and I thought that.' It also takes the forms of ego-centred hopes (about the future) expressing themselves through plans like, 'I shall do this and I shall do that; I shall feel this and I shall feel that; I shall think this and I shall think that.' Or again in the present, the Ego makes itself felt in a strong feeling of being *someone in particular* and asserts its distinctness and separateness from all the other centres of consciousness. While provisionally serving a useful purpose in the development and progress of consciousness, *the Ego, as an affirmation of separateness, constitutes the chief hindrance to the spiritual emancipation and enlightenment of consciousness.*

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

The Ego Feeds upon Exclusive Feelings

own separate existence in an intensive manner. The feeling of separation from the other is most acute where there is great and unrelieved craving. In hate and anger also the other person is, so to say, thrown out of one's own being and regarded not only as a foreigner but as definitely hostile to the thriving of the Ego. Fear also is a subtle form of

affirming separateness and exists where the consciousness of duality is unabated. Fear acts as a thick curtain between the 'I' and the 'you' and it not only nourishes deep distrust of the other but inevitably brings about a *shrinking and withdrawal of consciousness so as to exclude the being of another from the context of one's own life*. Therefore, not only other souls but God should be loved and not feared. To fear God or his manifestations is to strengthen duality; to love them is to weaken it.

The feeling of separateness finds most poignant expression in jealousy. There is a deep and an imperative need in the human soul to love and identify itself with other souls; this is not fulfilled in all instances where there is craving or hate, anger or fear. In jealousy, in addition to the non-fulfilment of this deep and imperative need for self-identification with the other, there is a belief that some other soul has successfully identified itself with the person with whom one might have sought it: there is therefore a standing and irreconcilable protest against *both* for being in a relationship which one would feign have really reserved for oneself. *All exclusive feelings like craving, hate, anger, fear or jealousy bring about a narrowing down of life and contribute to the limitation and restriction of consciousness: they become directly instrumental to the affirmation of separateness and feed the Ego.*

Every thought, feeling or action which springs from the idea of exclusive or separate existence binds; all experiences—small or great—and all aspirations—good or bad—create a load of impressions and nourish the sense of the 'I'. The **The Slimming down of the Ego through Love** *only experience which makes for the slimming down of the Ego is the experience of love and the only aspiration which makes for the alleviation of separateness is the longing for becoming one, with the Beloved.* Craving, hatred, anger, fear and jealousy are all exclusive attitudes which create a gulf

between oneself and the rest of life; *love alone is an inclusive attitude which helps towards the bridging over of this artificial and self-created gulf and which tends to break through the separative barrier of false imagination.* The lover too longs; but he longs for union with the Beloved; and in seeking or experiencing union with the Beloved the sense of the 'I' becomes feeble. In love, the 'I' does not think of self-preservation, just as the moth is not at all afraid of getting burnt in the fire. *The Ego is the affirmation of being separate from the other: and love is the affirmation of being one with the other: so, the Ego can be dissolved only through real love.*

The Ego is implemented by desires of varied types. The failure in the fulfilment of desires is a failure of the Ego; and success in the attainment of desired objects is a suc-

The Ego is made of Desires

cess of the Ego. *Through the fulfilled desires as well as through the unfulfilled ones the Ego gets accentuated.* The Ego can even feed upon the comparative lull in the surging desires and asserts its separative tendency through feeling that it is desireless. But, *when there is a real cessation of all desires, there is a cessation of all desire to assert separativeness in any form; therefore, a real freedom from all desires brings about the end of the existence of the Ego.* The bundle of the Ego is made of the faggots of multi-coloured desires; and the breaking of these faggots amounts to the destruction of the Ego.

The problem of erasing the Ego from consciousness is however very complicated, because the roots of the Ego are all in the sub-conscious mind in the form of latent tendencies: and these latent tendencies are not always ac-

The Roots of the Ego are in the Sub-conscious Mind

cessible to the explicit consciousness. The limited Ego of explicit consciousness is only a small fragment of the real being of the Ego. The Ego is like the iceberg floating in the sea. About one-eighth of the ice-berg remains above the surface of the water and is

visible to the onlooker: and about seven-eighth portion of the iceberg remains submerged below the level of the water and remains invisible to the onlooker. In the same way, *only a small portion of the real Ego becomes manifest in consciousness in the form of an explicit 'I': and the major portion of the real Ego remains submerged in the dark and inarticulate sanctuaries of the sub-conscious mind.*

The explicit Ego which finds its manifestation in consciousness is by no means a harmonious whole; it can and does become an arena for multitudinous conflicts of opposing tendencies. But it has a limited capacity for allowing simultaneous emergence of conflicting tendencies. Two persons have to be at least on speaking terms if they are to enter into articulate wrangling; but if they are not even on speaking terms with each other, they cannot bring themselves to quarrel on a common ground. In the same manner, two tendencies which can enter into conscious conflict must have some common ground; if they are too disparate from each other and have nothing in common, they cannot find admittance in the arena of consciousness, *even as conflicting tendencies*, but have to remain submerged in the sub-conscious mind, until they both get modified through the tension exerted by the diverse activities connected with the conscious mind.

Although the entire being of the Ego is essentially heterogeneous in its constitution, *the explicit Ego of consciousness is less heterogeneous than the implicit Ego of the sub-conscious mind and. it operates as a formidable whole as against the isolated sub-conscious tendencies which seek to emerge in consciousness.* The organised

The Explicit Ego and the Implicit Ego

Ego of explicit consciousness thus becomes a repressive barrier which indefinitely and prevents several constituents of the implicit Ego from getting an access to consciousness. All the problems of the Ego can be tackled only through intelligent and conscious

action and therefore, *a complete annihilation of the Ego is possible only when all the constituents of the Ego pass through the fire of intelligent consciousness.*

The action of intelligent consciousness on the components of the explicit Ego is important; but it is in itself not sufficient. Even the components of the implicit Ego of the subconscious mind have to be somehow brought to the surface of consciousness, become parts of the explicit Ego and then submitted to the action of intelligent consciousness. If this is to be achieved, there has to be the weakening of the explicit Ego in such manner that it allows the emergence in consciousness of those desires and tendencies which could not hitherto find admittance in the arena of consciousness. This release of inhibited tendencies naturally brings about additional confusion and conflict in the being of the explicit Ego; therefore, the process of disappearance of the Ego is often accompanied by intensified conflicts in the arena of the conscious mind rather than by any comfortable easing of the conflicts. However, *at the end of the uncompromising and acute struggle lies the state of true poise and unassailable harmony which comes after the melting away of the entire iceberg of the Ego.*

The digging out of the buried roots of the Ego from the deeper layers of the subconscious and bringing them to the light of consciousness is one important part of the process of wiping out the Ego: the other important part consists in the intelligent handling of desires after they gain entrance in the arena of consciousness. The process of dealing with the components of explicit consciousness is by no means plain and simple; for, the explicit Ego has a tendency to live through *any* one of the opposites of experience; and if it is ousted from one

opposite by the intensive operation of intelligent consciousness, it has a tendency to move to the other opposite and live through it. *Through repeated alternation between the opposites of experience the Ego eludes the attack of intelligent consciousness and seeks to perpetuate itself.*

The Ego is hydra-headed and expresses itself in numberless ways. It lives upon *any* type of ignorance. Pride is the specific feeling through which egoism becomes patent. A person can be proud of most unimportant and silly things. Instances are known where persons who develop their nails to an abnormal length and preserve them, even at the cost of much inconvenience to themselves, for no other reason except that they become the medium of their assertion of separateness from others. The Ego must magnify its attainments in a grotesque manner, if it is to live in them. Direct assertion of the Ego through self-display in society is very common; but, if such direct assertion is prohibited by the rules of decency, the Ego has a tendency to seek the same result through the *slander of others*. To show others as in many ways evil is to glorify oneself by *suggesting* a comparison, which the Ego would feign develop, but from which it abstains for other reasons.

The Ego is activated by the principle of *self-perpetuation* and has a tendency to live and grow through each and any means, which is not closed to it. *If the Ego is submitted to curtailment in one direction, it seeks compensating expansion in another direction: and, if it is over-powered by a flood of spiritual notions and actions, it even tends to fasten upon this very force which is originally brought into play for the ousting of the Ego.* If a person attempts to cultivate humility in order to relieve himself of the monstrous weight of the Ego and succeeds in doing so, the Ego can with surprising alacrity

get transferred to this attribute of humility itself. It feels itself through attachment to repeated assertions like 'I am spiritual,' just as, in more primary stages, it achieves the same task by assertions like 'I am not interested in spirituality.' Thus arises what we might call a *spiritual Ego* or the Ego which feels its separateness through the attainment of things which are considered to be good and highly spiritual. But from the truly spiritual point of view, this type of spiritual Ego is as binding as the primary and crude Ego which makes no such pretensions.

In fact, in the more advanced stages of the Path, the Ego does not seek self-maintenance through *open* methods and takes shelter in those very things which are pursued for securing the slimming down of the Ego. These tactics of the Ego are very much like *guerilla warfare* and are the most difficult to counteract. The ousting of the Ego from consciousness is necessarily an intricate process, and it can by no means consist in carrying on of a uniform activity all along. The nature of the Ego itself turns out to be very complicated and it needs equally complicated treatment to get rid of the Ego. Since the Ego has almost infinite possibilities of securing its existence and creating self-delusions, the aspirant finds it impossible to cope with the unending cropping up of ever fresh forms of the Ego; and *he can hope to have a successful deal with the deceptive tricks of the Ego only through the help and grace of the Perfect Master.*

In most cases, it is only when the aspirant is driven to realise the futility of all his efforts that he approaches the Master. He can by himself make no headway towards the goal which he dimly sights and seeks. **The Master is the Last Resort** The stubborn persistence of the Ego leads him to exasperation; and *it is in this clear perception of helplessness that he surrenders to the Master as his last and only resort.* The self-sur-

render amounts to an open admission that the aspirant now has given up all hopes of tackling the problems of the Ego by himself and that he solely relies upon the Master for the same. It is like saying, 'I am unable to end the wretched existence of this Ego; I therefore look to you to intervene and slay it'. This step, however, turns out to be more fruitful than all the other measures which it might have tried for the slimming down and the subsequent annihilation of the Ego. When through the grace of the Master, the ignorance which constitutes the Ego is dispelled, there is the dawn of truth which is the goal of all creation.

The Nature of the Ego and its Termination

PART III

THE FORMS OF THE EGO AND THEIR DISSOLUTION

THE Ego subsists upon mundane possessions like power, fame, wealth, ability, attainments and accomplishments. It creates and recognises the 'thine' in order to feel what is distinctively 'mine'. However, in spite of all the worldly things which it claims as 'mine', it is, all the time, feeling empty and incomplete; and to make up for this deep restlessness in its own being, it seeks to fortify itself through further acquisitions. It brings all the array of its varied possessions into relief by comparison with others who might be inferiors in any one of the items stamped as 'mine' and it often uses its possessions for wanton and uncalled for self-display even at the cost of others. The Ego is dissatisfied *in spite* of its mundane possessions. But instead of cultivating detachment for its vain possessions, it seeks to derive satisfaction by feeling more intensely such possessions as it has; and in order to feel them more intensely it seeks to review them in contradistinction with the possessions of others. *The Ego as an affirmation of separateness lives through the idea of 'mine'.*

The Ego wants to feel separate and unique and it seeks self-expression either in the role of some one who is decidedly better than others or in the role of some one who is decidedly inferior to them. As long as there is Ego, there is an implicit background of duality, and as long as there is the background of duality, the mental operations of comparison and contrast with the other cannot be effectively stilled for ever. Therefore,

even in the rare cases where a person seems to feel a sense of equality with another, this feeling is not securely established and marks a point of transition between the two attitudes of the Ego, rather than a permanent freedom from the distinction between the 'I' and the 'You'.

This pseudo-sense of equality, where it exists, might be made articulate in the formula 'I am not in any way inferior or superior to the other,' which will at once be seen to be a *negative assertion of the Ego*. The balance between the 'I' and the 'you' is being constantly disturbed by the predominance of superiority complex or by the predominance of the inferiority complex: and the idea of equality arises to restore this lost balance. *The negative assertion of the Ego in the form of equality is, however, utterly different from the sense of unity, which is characteristic of the life of spiritual freedom; and although the sense of equality is made the basis of many social and political ideals, the real conditions of rich co-operative life are fulfilled only where the bare idea of equality is replaced by the realization of the unity of all life.*

The feeling of superiority and the feeling of inferiority are so to say reactions to each other, and the artificially induced feeling of equality might be looked upon as a reaction to both; and in all these three modes, the Ego succeeds in asserting its separateness from others. *The superiority complex and the inferiority complex remain, for the, most part, disconnected with, each other and they both seek separate and alternate expression through suitable objects, as when a person dominates over those whom he regards as his inferiors and submits to those whom he looks upon as his superiors. But such alternative expression through contrast of behaviour only accentuates these opposite complexes instead of leading to their dissolution. The superiority complex is stirred when a person meets one who is, in some way, remarkably inferior to him in*

respect of mundane possessions. *In spite of its many possessions, the Ego is constantly confronted with the spectacle of its intrinsic emptiness; and it, therefore, clings to the comforting delusion of its worthwhileness by demonstrating to itself and to others that its possessions are greater than those of others.* This contrast is not confined to theoretical comparison, but it often exhibits itself in an actual clash with others in such points as offer themselves. Thus, aggressiveness is a natural outcome of the need to compensate for the poverty of the Ego-life.

The inferiority complex is stirred when a person meets one who is, in some way, remarkably superior to him in respect of mundane possessions. But his submission to the other is either rooted in fear or in selfishness; and it can never be whole-hearted or spontaneous, because there is a lurking jealousy and even hatred for the other for being in possession of something which he would rather have for himself. All forced and outward submission is purely the effect of the inferiority complex, and it can only enhance the Ego in one of its worst forms. *The Ego attributes its sense of emptiness to the apparently inferior possessions which it can claim as 'mine', rather than to the radical viciousness of seeking fulfilment through possessions;* and the awareness of its inferiority in possessions becomes only a further stimulus for making desperate efforts to add to its possessions, through such means as are available to it. Thus, while perpetuating the inward poverty of the soul, *the inferiority complex becomes, like the superiority complex an agent for selfishness and social chaos and the accumulation, of that type of ignorance which constitutes the Ego.*

When a person comes into contact with the Master and recognises him as having the state of egoless perfection, he

voluntarily surrenders himself to him, because he perceives the Ego to be a source of perpetual ignorance, restlessness and conflict and also recognises his own inability to terminate it. But this self-surrender should be carefully distinguished from the inferiority complex, because it is accompanied by the awareness that the Master is *his* ideal and as such has a basic unity with the disciple. Such self-surrender is, in no way, an expression of loss of confidence; it is, on the contrary, an expression of confidence in the final overcoming of all obstacles through the help of the Master. *The appreciation of the divinity of the Master is the manner in which the Higher Self of the disciple is expressing its sense of divinity.*

In order to bring about a rapid dissolution of these two chief forms of the Ego, the Master may deliberately stir both of these complexes in alternation. If the disciple is on the point of losing heart and giving up the search, he might arouse in him deep self-confidence; and if he is on the point of being egotistic, he might break through this new barrier by creating situations in which the disciple has to accept and recognise his own incapacity or futility. Thus, *the Master wields his influence over the disciple to expedite the stages through which the melting Ego goes before its final disappearance.*

The superiority complex and the inferiority complex have to be brought into intelligent relation with each other if they are to counteract each other; and this requires a psychic situation, in which they will both, for the time being, be allowed to have their play at one and the same time, without requiring the repression of the one in order to secure the expression of the other. When the soul enters into a dynamic and vital

relation with the Master, the complexes concerned with the sense of inferiority and the sense of the superiority are both brought into play and they are so intelligently accommodated with each other that they counteract each other. In himself, the disciple feels that he is *nothing*, but in and through the Master, he is enlivened by the prospect of being *everything*. Thus, at one stroke, the two complexes are brought into mutual tension and tend to annihilate each other, through the attempt which the person makes for adjusting himself to the Master. With the dissolution of these opposite complexes, there comes the breaking down of the separative barriers of the Ego in all its forms ; with the breaking down of the barriers of separation, there arises divine love; and with the arising of divine love, the separate feeling of the 'I', as distinguished from 'you', is swallowed up in the sense of their unity.

In order that a car should be moving towards its destination, a driver is necessary. But this driver may be susceptible to cultivating strong attachments for the things that he encounters on the way and he might not only halt at the intervening places for indefinite time, but also get lost in the side-ways, in pursuit of the things that have only temporary charm. In that case, he might keep the car moving all the time without, in any way, coming nearer the goal; and he might even get further away from it. Something like this happens when the Ego assumes control and direction of human consciousness. The Ego may be compared to a driver, who has a certain amount of control over the car and a certain capacity to drive it, but who is in complete darkness about the ultimate destination of the car.

For a car to reach its ultimate destination, it is not enough merely to have a driver who can work and manage the

engine; it is equally necessary that this driver should be able to direct the car so as to take it nearer the destination. As long as the movement of consciousness is under the full and exclusive domination of the Ego, the spiritual advancement of the person is jeopardised by the natural tendency of the Ego to strengthen the separative barriers of false imagination. So, in spite of ego-centred activities, consciousness remains enclosed by the walls of its own creation and moves within the limits of this *mayavic* prison. If consciousness is to be emancipated from its limitations and rendered adequate for serving the original purpose for which it came into existence, *it must draw its directive momentum not from the Ego but from some other principle*. In other words, the *driver* who is ignorant of the ultimate destination must be exchanged for another driver, who is free from all the alluring prospects of the accidental things encountered on the way and who centres his attention not on the halting stations or side-attractions but on the ultimate goal of non-duality. *The shifting of the centre of interest from unimportant things to truly important values is comparable to the transference of power from the ignorant driver to the driver who knows the destination*; and corresponding to this gradual shifting of the centre of interest, there is the progressive dissolution of the Ego and the approximation towards the Truth.

If the Ego had been nothing but a medium for the integration of human experience, it would have been possible for man to get established in the final Truth merely by carrying further the activity of the Ego. But while playing a specific part in the progress of consciousness, the Ego also represents an active principle of ignorance which prevents further spiritual development. *The Ego attempts the integration of experience, but it does so around the false idea of separateness. And having taken an illusion as a foundation for the construction of its edifice,*

**The Ego Attempts
Integration around
a False Idea**

never succeeds in anything but the building of illusions upon each other. The arriving at the Truth is actually hindered rather than helped by the function of the Ego; but the process of arriving at the Truth can be fruitful, only if the integration which was hitherto presided upon by the Ego is carried, further without bringing in the basic ignorance of separateness.

As long as a human experience is within the limitation of duality, integration of experience is an inevitable condition of a rational and significant life. But the Ego

The Master becomes the New Nucleus of integration

as a nucleus of integration has to be renounced because of its inviolable alliance with the forces of ignorance; and there

arises an imperative need to have a *new* centre for integration, which would steer clear of the basic ignorance of separateness and which would allow the free scope for the incorporation of all the values which were inaccessible to the Ego-centre. Such new centre is provided for by the Master who expresses all that has real value and who represents the absolute Truth. *The shifting of interest from unimportant things to important values is facilitated by allegiance and self-surrender to the Master who becomes the new nucleus for integration.*

The Master, when truly understood, is a standing affirmation of the unity of all life; allegiance to the Master, therefore, brings about a gradual dissociation with the Ego-

Union with the Master is the Realisation of the Truth

nucleus which affirms separateness. After this important crisis in the life of man, all mental activity has a new reference and its import

is to be gathered in the light of its relation to the Master as the manifestation of the infinite Truth and not in the light of any relation to the Ego-centre as a limited 'I'. The person henceforth experiences that all the acts which flow from him are no longer initiated from the limited 'I', but that they are all inspired by the Truth as working through the Master. He is

also no longer interested in the well-being of the limited self, but is interested in the Master as representing universal and undivided life. He offers all his experiences and desires to the Master, reserving neither the good nor the evil for the limited 'I' and thus stripping the Ego of all its contents. This advancing bankruptcy of the Ego does not interfere with the process of integration, because the function is now performed around the new centre of the Master as representing the Truth. *When the Ego-nucleus is completely bankrupt and devoid of any power or being, the Master as Truth is firmly established in consciousness as its guiding genius and animating principle. This is at once the attainment of "union with the blaster and the realisation of the Infinite Truth.*

When the Ego is gradually adjusting itself to the spiritual requirements of life through the cultivation of humility, selflessness and love or whole-hearted surrender and offering to the Master as truth, it suffers drastic curtailment in being: and it not only offers increasingly reduced resistance to spiritual unfoldment, but also undergoes a radical transformation, which eventually turns out to be so great that in the end, the Ego, as an affirmation of separateness, completely disappears and is substituted by the Truth which knows of no separateness. The intermediate steps of the slimming down of the Ego and the softening of its nature are comparable to the trimming and the pruning of the branches of a wild and mighty tree, whereas the final step of the annihilation of the Ego amounts to the complete uprooting of this tree. When the Ego disappears entirely, there arises the knowledge of the True Self. Thus, *the long journey of the soul consists in developing from animal consciousness the explicit self-consciousness as a limited 'I' and then to transcend, the state of the limited 'I' and, through the medium of the Master, to get initiated into the consciousness of the Supreme and Real Self, as an everlasting and Infinite 'I Am' in which there is no separateness and which includes all existence.*
