

CHAPTER I

THE ALCHEMY OF HAPPINESS

THE SOUL in Sanskrit, in the terms of the Vedanta, is called Atman, which means happiness or bliss itself. It is not that happiness belongs to the soul; it is that the soul itself is happiness. Today we often confuse happiness with pleasure; but pleasure is only an illusion, a shadow of happiness; and in this delusion man may pass his whole life, seeking after pleasure and never finding satisfaction. There is a Hindu saying that man looks for pleasure and finds pain. Every pleasure seems happiness in outward appearance; it promises happiness, for it is the shadow of happiness, but just as the shadow of a person is not the person though representing his form, so pleasure represents happiness but is not happiness in reality.

According to this idea one rarely finds souls in this world who know what happiness is; they are constantly disappointed in one thing after another. That is the nature of life in the world; it is so deluding that if man were disappointed a thousand times he would still take the same path, for he knows no other. The more we study life, the more we realize how rarely there is a soul who can honestly say, 'I am happy.' Almost every soul, whatever his position in life, will say he is unhappy in some way or another; and if you ask him why, he will probably say that it is because he cannot attain to the position, power, property, possessions, or rank for which he has worked for years. Perhaps he is craving for money and does not realize that possessions give no satisfaction; perhaps he says he has enemies, or that those whom he loves do not love him. There are a thousand excuses for unhappiness that the reasoning mind will make.

But is even one of these excuses ever entirely correct? Do you think that if these people gained their desires they would be happy? If they possessed all, would that suffice? No, they would still find some excuse for unhappiness; all these excuses are only like covers over a man's eyes, for deep within is the yearning for the true happiness which none of these things can give. He who is really happy is happy everywhere, in a palace or in a cottage, in riches or in poverty, for he has discovered the fountain of happiness which is situated in his own heart. As long as a person has not found that fountain, nothing will give him real happiness.

The man who does not know the secret of happiness often develops avarice. He wants thousands, and when he gets them they do not satisfy him and he wants millions and still he is not satisfied; he wants more and more. If you give him your sympathy and service he is still unhappy; even all you possess is not enough, even your love does not help him, for he is seeking in a wrong direction, and life itself becomes a tragedy.

Happiness cannot be bought or sold, nor can you give it to a person who has not got it. Happiness in your own being, your own self, that self that is the most precious thing in life. All religions, all philosophical systems, have in different forms taught man how to find it by the religious path or the mystical way. And all the wise ones have in some form or another given a method by which the individual can find that happiness for which the soul is seeking.

Sages and mystics have called this process alchemy. The stories of the Arabian Nights, which symbolize mystical ideas, are all of the belief that there is a philosopher's stone, which will turn metals into gold by a chemical process. No doubt this symbolic idea has deluded men both in the East and West. Many have

thought that a process exists by which gold can be produced. But this is not the idea of the wise; the pursuit of gold is for those who as yet are only children. For those who have the consciousness of reality gold stands for light or spiritual inspiration. Gold represents the color of light, and therefore an unconscious pursuit after light has made men seek for gold. But there is a great difference between real gold and false. It is the longing for true gold that makes men collect the imitation gold, ignorant that the real gold is within. He satisfies the craving of his soul in this way, as a child satisfies itself playing with dolls.

This realization is not a matter of age. One man may have reached an advanced age and still be playing with dolls, his soul may be involved in the search for this imitation gold; while another may have begun in youth to see life in its real aspect. If one studied the transitory nature of life in the world and how changeable it is, and the constant craving of everyone for happiness, one would certainly endeavor at all costs to find something one could depend upon. Man placed in the midst of this ever-changing world yet appreciates and seeks for constancy somewhere. He does not know that he must develop the nature of constancy in himself; it is the nature of the soul to value that, which is dependable. But is there anything in the world, on which one can depend, which is above change and destruction? All that is born, all that is made, must one day face destruction. All that has a beginning has also an end. But if there is anything one can depend upon it is hidden in the heart of man, it is the divine spark, the true philosopher's stone, the real gold, which is the innermost being of man.

A person may follow a religion and yet not come to the realization of truth. But of what use is his religion to him if he is not happy? Religion does not mean depression and sadness. The spirit of religion should give happiness. God is happy. He is the perfection of love, harmony, and beauty. A religious person should be happier than one who is not religious. If a person who professes religion is always melancholy his religion is disgraced. The form has been kept, but the spirit lost. If the study of religion and mysticism does not lead to real joy and happiness, it may just as well not exist, for then it does not help to fulfil the purpose of life. The world today is sad and suffering as the result of terrible wars. The religion which answers the demand of life today is one which invigorates and gives life to souls, which illuminates the heart of man with the divine light which is already there. Not necessarily by any outer form, though for some a form may be helpful, but by showing that happiness which is the desire of every soul.

As for the question of how this method of alchemy is practiced, the whole process was explained by the alchemists in a symbolic way. They said gold is made out of mercury. The nature of mercury is to be ever-moving, but by a certain process the mercury is first stilled, and once stilled it becomes silver; then the silver has to be melted, and the juice of a herb is poured on to the molten silver, which is thereby turned into gold. This of course gives only an outline, but one can find detailed explanations of the whole process. Many childlike souls have tried to make gold by stilling mercury and melting silver, and they have tried to find the herb; but they were deluded, and they had better have worked and earned money.

The real interpretation of this process is that mercury represents the nature of the ever-restless mind. Especially when he tries to concentrate does a person realize that the mind is ever restless. The mind is like a restive horse: when it is ridden it is more restive than when it is in the stable. Such is the nature of mind: it becomes more restless when one desires to control it; it is like mercury, constantly moving.

When by a method of concentration one has mastered the mind, one has taken the first step in the accomplishment of a sacred task. Prayer is concentration, reading is concentration, sitting and relaxing and thinking on one subject are all concentration. All artists, thinkers, and inventors have practiced concentration in some form. They have given their minds to one thing, and by focusing on one object have de-

veloped the faculty of concentration. But for stilling the mind a special method is necessary which is taught by the mystic, just as a singer is taught by the teacher of voice-production.

The secret of this is to be learnt in the science of breath. Breath is the essence of life, the center of life, and the mind may be controlled by a knowledge of the proper method of breathing. For this, instruction from a teacher is a necessity. For since the mystical cult of the East has become known in the West, books have been published, and teaching which had been kept as sacred as religion has been discussed in words. But these can never truly explain the mystery of that which is the center of man's very being. People read these books and begin to play with breath, and often instead of benefiting they injure both mind and body. There are also those who make a business of teaching breathing exercises for money, thus degrading a sacred thing. The science of breath is the greatest mystery there is, and for thousands of years it has been kept as a sacred trust in the schools of the mystics.

When the mind is under perfect control and no longer restless, one can hold a thought at will as long as one wishes. This is the beginning of phenomena. Some abuse these privileges and by dissipating the power thus obtained they destroy the silver before turning it into gold. The silver must be heated before it can melt, and with what? With that warmth which is the divine essence in the heart of man, which comes forth as love, tolerance, sympathy, service, humility, unselfishness, in a stream which rises and falls in a thousand drops, each drop of which could be called a virtue, all coming from that one stream hidden in the heart of man: the love element. And when it glows in the heart, then the actions, the movements, the tone of the voice, the expression, all show that the heart is warm. The moment this happens a man really lives. He has unsealed the spring of happiness which overcomes all that is jarring and inharmonious, and the spring has established itself as a divine stream.

After the heart is warmed by the divine element, which is love, the next stage is the herb, which is the love of God. But the love of God alone is not sufficient. Knowledge of God is also necessary. It is the absence of the knowledge of God, which makes a man leave his religion, for there is a limit to man's patience. Knowledge of God strengthens man's belief in God, throws light on the individual and on life. Things become clear; every leaf on a tree becomes as a page of a holy book to one whose eyes are open to the knowledge of God. When the juice of the herb of divine love is poured on the heart, warmed by the love of his fellow men, then that heart becomes the heart of gold, the heart that expresses what God would express. Man has not seen God, but man has then seen God in man, and when this happens, then verily everything that comes from such a man comes from God Himself.

THE AIM OF LIFE

THE MAIN object of life can only be one object, though there may be as many external objects as there are things and beings. There is one object of life for the reason that there is only one life and this in spite of the fact that it appears outwardly to be many lives. It is in this thought that we can unite and it is from this thought that true wisdom is learned. No doubt that main object of life cannot be understood at once, and therefore the best thing for every person is first to pursue his object in life. For in the accomplishment of his personal object he will arrive some day at the accomplishment of that inner object. When man does not understand this he goes on thinking there is something else to accomplish, and he thinks of all that is before him that is not yet accomplished. That is why he remains a failure.

The person who is not definite about his object has not yet begun his journey on the path of life. One should therefore first determine one's object for oneself however small that object is. Once it is determined one has begun life. We find with many people that somehow they never happen to find their life's

vocation. And what happens then is that in the end they consider their life a failure. All through their life they go from one thing to another, yet as they do not know their life's object they can accomplish so little. When people ask why they do not succeed, the answer is: because they have not yet found their object. As soon as a person has found his life's object he begins to feel at home in this world, where before he had felt himself in a strange world. No sooner has a person found his way than he will prove to be fortunate, because all the things he wants to accomplish will come by themselves. Even if the whole world were against him, he will get such a power that he can hold on to his object against anything. He will get such a patience that when he is on the way to his object no misfortune will discourage him. There is no doubt that as long as he has not found it he will go from one thing to another, and again to another; and he will think that life is against him. Then he will begin to find fault with individuals, conditions, plans, the climate, with everything. Thus what is called fortunate or successful is really having the right object. When a person is wearing clothes, which were not made for him, he says they are too wide or too short, but when they are his clothes he feels comfortable in them. Everyone should therefore be given freedom to choose his object in life. And if he finds his object one knows that he is on the right path.

Also when a person is on the path there are certain things to be considered. When a person has a knot to unravel, and he is given a knife to cut it, he has lost a great opportunity in his life. It is a small thing, but by not accomplishing it he has gone backward. This is a minor example, but in everything one does, if one has not that patience and confidence to go forward, then one loses a great deal. However small the job a person has undertaken, if he completes it he has accomplished something great. It is not the work that a person has accomplished, it is the very fact of accomplishing which gives him power.

As to what is the main object of every soul, that object may be called spiritual attainment. A person may go through his whole life without it, but there will come a time in his life when although he may not admit it he will begin to look for it. For spiritual attainment is not only acquired knowledge, it is the soul's appetite; and there will come a day in life when a person will feel the soul's appetite more than any other appetite. No doubt every soul has an unconscious yearning to satisfy this soul's appetite, but at the same time one's absorption in everyday life keeps one so occupied that one has no time to pay attention to it.

The definition of spiritual attainment can be found in the study of human nature. For the nature of man is one and the same, be he spiritual or material. There are five things that man yearns for: life, power, knowledge, happiness, and peace, and the continual appetite which is felt in the deepest self yearns for one or other of these five things.

In order to fulfil the desire to live man eats and drinks and protects himself from all dangers of life. And yet his appetite will never be fully satisfied, because though he may escape all dangers, yet the last danger, which man calls death, he cannot escape.

In order to obtain power, which is the next thing, a man does everything to gain physical strength, influence, or rank. He seeks every kind of power. And he always runs up against disappointments, because he will find that wherever there is a power of ten degrees, there will always be another power of twenty degrees to run up against. Just think of the great nations whose military power was once so immense that one could never have believed that they would suddenly collapse. One would have thought that it would take them thousands of years to fall, so great was their power. We need not look for it in history, we have just seen this happen in the last few years. We have only to look at the map.

Then there is the desire for knowledge. This desire promotes a tendency to study. A man might study and study all through his life, but even if he read all the books in all the great libraries there would still

remain the question, 'why?' That 'why' will not be answered by the books he studies, by exploring the facts, which belong to outer life. In the first place nature is so profound that man's limited life is not long enough to probe its depths. Comparatively or relatively one may say that one person is more learned than another, but no one reaches true satisfaction by the outer study of life.

The fourth kind of appetite is happiness. Man tries to satisfy it by pleasures, not knowing that the pleasures of this world cannot make up for that happiness which his soul really seeks after. Man's attempts are in vain. He will find in the end that every effort he made for pleasure brought greater loss than gain. Besides that which is not enduring, which is not real in its nature, is never satisfactory.

Lastly there is the appetite for peace. In order to find peace one leaves one's environment, which troubles one. One wants to get away from people, one wants to sit quietly and rest. But he who is not ready for that peace would not find it even if he went to the caves of the Himalayas, away from the whole world.

When considering these five appetites, which are the deepest man has, one finds that all the efforts man makes to satisfy them seem to be in vain. They can only be satisfied by spiritual attainment. That is the only answer to them. Thus the desire to live can only be satisfied when the soul realizes its eternal life. For mortality exists in conception rather than in reality. From a spiritual point of view mortality is the lack of the soul's understanding of its own self. It is like a person who had lived all his life in the conception that his coat was himself and when that coat was torn from him he believed that he would die. One experiences the same in life. The soul gets from this physical body a kind of illusion and identifies itself with this mortal being. Wise people of all times have practiced meditations to give the soul a chance to realize its independence of the physical body. Once the soul has begun to feel itself its own life, independently of its outer garb, it begins to have confidence in life and is no longer afraid of what is called death. As soon as this phenomenon takes place a person no longer calls death 'death'; he calls death a change.

If one makes a study of the desire to live one finds that one cannot have a desire if it is not in one's nature. If there is a desire there is an answer for it. Desire to live continually is a desire of the spiritual person as well as of the material person. A spiritual person will perhaps hope for the next life, and the pessimism of a material person works against his own desire. But the desire is there all the same. How does one attain to this continuity of life? It does not only depend upon a belief although belief may help some to realize that experience, and those who have no belief will not be able to find the way. Nevertheless, the continuity of life is possible logically since every man desires to live. For it is natural that no one will desire what is not possible, and where there is a natural desire the possibility of its fulfillment is already there. If there were no possibility there would be no desire.

Naturally this does not apply to an unbalanced person. Such a person can desire anything. But a person with reason will only desire what is possible to accomplish.

The secret of this question can be found by analyzing oneself. By studying the self one will find that the body is only a cover over one's real self. But by a still more profound study one will find that even one's mind is a cover over one's real self. As soon as one finds this out, one will become independent of the body as a means to live. Also, one will become independent of the mind to live. 'But', one might ask, 'if there is no body, then what is life?' One asks this because man has limited himself by experiencing life through the body, and has not tried to experience life without its help. When man is not conscious of his body, then he is conscious of his mind. When the eyes are open he is looking at things before him. When his eyes are closed then he is pondering upon what his mind has gained. In both cases he is dependent

either upon his body or upon his mind to live, and this dependence makes the soul limited. It not only limits it, but it makes the soul mortal. In reality the soul is not mortal, but if the soul believes in mortality it is just like being mortal.

The teaching of Jesus Christ, from beginning to end, is to rise above mortality, to find out about life, to learn the art, the science, of living. All the scriptures, every philosopher and mystic, teach this. And why do they teach this? Because if there is one thing undesirable it is mortality, death. No sane person would ask for death. Desire for death is not a natural desire, and even when the mind is craving for death the soul is longing for life.

The soul is living. It is life itself. Death is something foreign to it. It does not know death. That is why even the smallest insect protects itself in every way. It does not wish to die.

What we call death is our impression of a change. Life is subject to change, and death is only a change of life. But making people believe in immortality and making them rise above the fear of death should be done gradually and not suddenly, for otherwise this knowledge would frighten a person more than death itself. It is for that reason that the knowledge of this truth was made a mystical, secret science. Otherwise there would have been no reason for withholding something as precious as that knowledge from one's fellow men. When a person is awakened suddenly he suffers a great shock, physically and mentally, and it takes him a long time to recover. It is the same with all spiritual truths. This is why there are initiations and a vow of secrecy. One cannot place a dinner before a newborn infant. He must first be fed with milk.

Then there is the desire for power. Man desires power, because it is natural for him to gain. Somewhere a power is hidden in him, he cannot help it. But man is powerless in spite of the power, which is hidden in him. The powerlessness, the experience of being powerless, is his ignorance of the power within him. In order to open the doors, in order to see the power he has in store, it is necessary to seek the kingdom of God, as it is said in the Bible, for then he will find his divine heritage, which is all power.

True power is not in trying to gain power. True power is in becoming power. But how to become power? It requires an attempt to make a definite change in oneself and that change is a kind of struggle with one's false self. When the false self is crucified, then the true self is resurrected. Before the world this crucifixion appears to be lack of power, but in truth all power is attained by this resurrection.

As to knowledge, it has two aspects. One knowledge is what one gathers by learning the names and forms of this life. That cannot satisfy this appetite. It is only a stepping-stone to it. This outer learning only helps one to come to the inner learning, but the inner learning is quite different from the outer learning. How is it learned? It is learned by studying the self. One finds that all the knowledge one strives after and all that exists to study, is all in oneself. Therefore one finds a kind of universe in oneself, and by the study of the self one comes to that spiritual knowledge for which the soul hungers.

In order to get that knowledge one must try to meditate and to dive into the sea of knowledge, which cannot be taught by study. In this way one distinguishes two aspects of knowledge: one aspect of knowledge is intellect, the other aspect is wisdom. Therefore a wise man is not necessarily a clever man, nor a clever man a wise man.

Then there is the question of happiness. A person thinks that when his friends are kind to him, when people respond to him, or when he gets money, then he will be happy. But that is not the way to become happy: sometimes it proves the opposite. For lack of happiness makes him blame others, believing they

are standing in the way of his becoming happy. In reality that is not so. True happiness is not gained, it is discovered. Man's way itself is happiness that is why he longs for happiness. What keeps happiness out of one's life is the closing of the doors of the heart, and when the heart is not living, then there is no happiness there. Sometimes the heart is not fully alive but only partly. At the same time it expects life from the other heart. But the real life of the heart is to live independently in its own happiness and that is gained by spiritual attainment, by digging deep into one's own heart.

The one who has found his peace within himself may be in a cave of the mountain or among the crowd, yet in every place he will experience peace. What generally happens is that in order to get peace we blame the other person who jars upon our nerves. But in reality the true peace can come only by being so firm against all influences around us that nothing can disturb us.

Now the question is how these five things can be gained. As I have said, the first thing needed is to accomplish the object, which is standing before one immediately. However small it is, it does not matter. It is by accomplishing it that one gains power. As one goes further in this way through one's life, always seeking for the real, one will at the end come to reality. Truth is attained by the love of truth. When a person runs away from truth, truth runs away from him. If he does not run away, then truth is nearer to him than that which is without truth. There is nothing more precious in life than truth itself. And in loving truth and in attaining to the truth one attains to that religion which is the religion of all Churches and of all people. It does not matter then to what Church a man belongs, what religion he professes, to what race or nation he belongs. When once he realizes the truth he is all, because he is with all. The obstacle is the disagreement and the misunderstanding before he has attained to the truth. When once he has attained to the truth, there is no more misunderstanding. It is among those who have learned only the outer knowledge that disputes arise, but those who have attained to the truth, whether they come from the North or the South, from whatever country, it does not matter; for when they have understood the truth they are in at-one-ment.

It is this thought that we should keep before us in order to unite the divided sections of humanity, for the real happiness of humanity is in that unity which can be gained by rising above the barriers which divide men.

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE (1)

EVERY living being has a purpose in life and it is the knowing of that purpose which enables every soul to fulfil it. As it is said in the Gyan, 'Blessed is he who knoweth his life's purpose.'

Be not surprised if you find many groping in darkness all through life, doing one thing or another, going from one thing to the other, always dissatisfied, always discontented. And everything they undertake remains without result. The reason is the absence of that knowledge, the knowledge of the purpose of life.

Individuals apart, every object has its purpose. The mission of science is to discover the purpose in objects, and it is for this that science has come into being. Be it medical science or philosophy, all the various aspects of science are the result of the desire to discover the purpose of things. But the aim of mysticism is to find the purpose in the lives of human beings-the purpose in one's own life and the purpose in the lives of others. So long as a man has not found this purpose, though he may have success or failure, though he may seem to be happy or unhappy, in reality he does not live. For life begins from the moment a person finds the purpose of his life.

One finds people of great wealth, people who have position and every comfort and convenience, and yet who are missing something, missing the main thing which alone can make them happy: knowledge of the purpose of their life. This is the very thing they miss. And yet at the same time mankind is ignorant of this. A man will be interested in a thousand things, he will be interested first in one thing and then pass on to another, and so on, but he seems never to come to that point where he finds the purpose of his life. Why? Because he does not look for it.

Coming to children's education, to the education of youth, very often the parents do not think about this problem. Whatever seems to them beneficial for the child to do, that it must do. They do not pay attention to the fact that it is in one's childhood that one has to find the purpose of one's life. How many lives have been ruined for this reason! A child may have been brought up with every facility and yet kept away from the purpose of his life.

However unhappy a man may be, the moment he knows the purpose of his life a switch is turned and the light is on. He may not be able to accomplish anything at once, but the very fact of knowing the purpose gives him all the hope and vigor and inspiration and strength to wait for that day. If he has to strive after that purpose all his life, he does not mind so long as he knows what the purpose is. Ten such persons have much greater power than a thousand people working from morning till evening not knowing the purpose of their life.

Besides, what we call wrong or right, good or bad differs according to the purpose of life. The more one studies life, the more one realizes that it is not the action but the purpose that makes things right or wrong, good or bad. And as we progress we become more wide-awake, and the greater becomes the purpose before us.

Beyond this is the purpose of all, the ultimate purpose. We begin our lives with an individual purpose, but we come to a stage where the purpose of every soul is one and the same. And that can be studied by studying the inclinations of men. Every man has five inclinations hidden in the depths of his heart. Being absorbed in the life of the world he may forget that ultimate purpose, but at the same time there is a continual inclination towards it. That shows that the ultimate purpose of the life of all is one and the same.

The first of these five inclinations is the love of knowledge. It is not only intellectual and intelligent beings who seek after knowledge. Even an infant wishes to know what every little noise is. Every child seeing a beautiful color or line in a picture inquires about it. And therefore in greater or less degree every individual is striving after knowledge. No doubt in life as it is today many are placed in a situation where they never have a moment in which to gain that knowledge which they seek after. From morning till evening they have their duty to perform; they are so absorbed in it that after some time that hunger for knowledge is lost and their mind becomes blunted. There are many thousands of people whom life has placed in a situation where they cannot help but concentrate on some particular work and never have time to think about things that they would like to think about, that they would like to know. We have made this life. We call it progress, freedom, but it is not freedom of mind. The mind is imprisoned in a limited horizon and we call it a sphere.

If all thought, all life, consists in studying something only in order to earn one's bread and butter, then when can one give one's thought and mind to what one's soul is seeking after? Among those who have a little freedom in life, who have time to think about gaining some knowledge, there are many who seek only after novelty. They think that to learn means only to get to know something they did not know be-

fore. There are very few seekers who discover that from every idea, however simple, a revelation comes when they give their mind to it, and that it then begins to teach them more and more things which they had never known. I have experienced this myself. There was a couplet of a Persian verse I had known for twelve years. I liked it, it was a simple everyday conception, but after twelve years one day a glimpse of inspiration came and that very couplet became a revelation. It seemed as if there had been a seed and then a seedling sprang from it and turned into a plant, which produced fruit and flowers.

The difficulty that so-called truth-seeking people experience is that when they have a little time to look for truth they are restless. One thing does not satisfy them and so they go from one thing to another. Thus instead of coming to the real notion of truth, they only get into confusion.

Someone asked an artist if he could make a really new picture. 'Yes,' he said, 'I can.' He put two horns and two wings on the body of a fish, and people said, 'How wonderful, this is something no one has ever seen!' Everyone has seen wings on birds and horns on beasts. But there are many souls who need a novelty of that kind. Many admire it, and few think, like Solomon, that there is nothing new under the sun, especially when we come to the domain of wisdom, of knowledge. For one does not arrive at concentration, contemplation, or meditation by studying many things, nor by going from one idea to another.

The next inclination is the love of life, and not only in human beings for even little insects escape if one tries to touch them. Their life is dear to them. What does this show? It shows that every being wishes to live, however unhappy he may be, however difficult life may seem. Perhaps in the sadness of the moment a person might wish to commit suicide, but if he were in his normal condition he would never think of leaving this world. Not because the world is so dear to him, but because the soul's inclination is to live.

It is said in the Gayan, 'Life lives, death dies.' Since life lives, life longs to live, and nobody wishes for one moment that death should ever take him. The great prophets, masters, saints, sages, philosophers, mystics, what was their striving? Their striving was to find some remedy to cure man of mortality. But is his mortality his conception or his condition? It is a condition when seen outwardly. In reality it is a conception. The soul keeps the physical body as its garb only until its purpose is fulfilled and it wishes to leave this garb. For no one wishes always to carry his heavy coat. Even the king feels more comfortable when the crown is put in the cupboard.

The soul's happiness comes when it is freed from its physical burden. It can only be happy when it can be itself. As long as man thinks he is his body, so long is he mortal, being only conscious of his mortal existence. But this, intellectually understood, will not help. The soul must see itself, the soul must realize itself. How does the soul do this? In the scriptures it is said, 'Die before death.' What is this dying? This dying is playing at death. The mystics have all through their life on earth practiced playing at death. By playing at it they were able to see what death is. Then it was not only intellectual knowledge. They actually saw that the soul stands independently of this physical garb. Buddha has called it Jnana, which means realization. The absence of it is called Ajnana, the lack of realization.

Every thoughtful person, when he thinks of the day when he will have to depart from this earth where he has his friends whom he loves and his treasure, feels very sad. Not only that, but it makes him sadder still to feel that once he is gone he will be gone for ever, for life does not wish to become death. Life wants to live.

But this shows ignorance and a false conception of life, a conception gained by the senses, by experience through the senses. The one who has realized life and things through the senses does not know life. Life can be very different from this.

The third inclination man shows is to gain power in any way whatever. Every person strives throughout life to gain power. The reason is that the soul strives to exist against the invasion of life, because life's conditions seem to sweep away everything that has no strength. When the leaf has lost its strength it falls from the tree. When the flower has lost its strength it is thrown away. Naturally the soul wishes to keep its strength. Therefore every individual seeks for power. But the mistake lies in the fact that however much power a man may have, it is limited. With the increase of power there comes a time when the man sees that another power can be greater than the one he possesses. This limitation makes man suffer. He becomes disappointed. Besides when one looks at the power that man possesses, the power of the world, what is it? Powerful nations, which were built thousands of years ago, can be crushed in a very short time. Then what is their power? If there is any power it is the hidden power, the almighty power. And by getting in touch with that power one begins to draw from it all the power that is needed.

The secret of all the miracles and phenomena of the sages and masters is to be seen in the power that they are able to draw from within. There are fakirs and dervishes who practice jumping into the fire or cutting their body and healing it instantly. But there exists a power even greater than that. Those who can really do such things do not do them openly. But at the same time there is this power which gives proof that spirit has power over matter, though spirit may be buried under matter for some time-which makes one powerless.

The fourth inclination man shows is to be happy. Man seeks happiness in pleasure, in joy, but these are only shadows of happiness. The real happiness is in the heart of man. But man does not look for it. In order to find happiness, he seeks pleasure. Anything that is passing and anything that results in unhappiness is not happiness. Happiness is the very being of man. Vedantists have called the human soul Ananda, happiness, because the soul itself is happiness. That is why it seeks happiness. And because the soul cannot find itself it is always looking for something that will make it happy. But what it finds can never make it really happy, perfectly happy.

Sin and virtue, good and bad, right and wrong, can be distinguished and determined on this principle. Virtue is what brings real happiness. What is called right is that which leads to happiness. What is good is good because it gives happiness. And if it does not do so it cannot be good, it cannot be virtue, it cannot be right. Whenever man has found virtue in unhappiness he has been mistaken. Whenever he was wrong he has been unhappy. Happiness is the being of man. That is why he craves for it.

The fifth inclination man shows is for peace. It is not rest or comfort or solitude, which can give peace. It is an art, which must be learnt, the art of the mystics, by which one comes to experience peace. One may ask why, if it is natural for the soul to experience peace, one must strive for peace by practice, by meditation, by contemplation. The answer is that it is natural to experience peace, but life in the world is not natural. Animals and birds all experience peace, but not mankind, for man is the robber of his own peace. He has made his life so artificial that he can never imagine how far he is removed from what may be called a normal, natural life for him to live. It is for this reason that we need the art of discovering peace within us. We shall not experience peace by improving outside conditions. Man has always longed for peace and he has always brought about wars. At the same time every individual says he is seeking for peace. Then where does war come from? It comes because the meaning of peace has not been fully understood. Man lives in a continual turmoil, in a restless condition, and in order to seek for

peace he seeks war. If this goes on we shall not have peace till every individual begins to seek peace within himself first.

What is peace? Peace is the natural condition of the soul. The soul, which has lost its natural condition, becomes restless. The normal condition of mind is tranquillity, yet at the same time the mind is anything but tranquil. The soul experiences anything but peace.

The question which arises in the mind of every thoughtful person is, what was the reason, what was the purpose of the creation of this world? The answer is, to break the monotony. Call it God, call it the only Being, call it the source and goal of all. Being alone, He wished that there should be something for Him to know. The Hindus says that the creation is the dream of Brahma. One may call it a dream, but it is the main purpose. The Sufis explain it thus: that God, the Lover, wanted to know His own nature. And that therefore through manifestation the Beloved was created, in order that love might manifest. And when we look at it in this light, then all that we see is the Beloved. As Rumi, the greatest writer of Persia says, 'The Beloved is all in all, the lover only veils Him. The Beloved is all that lives, the lover a dead thing.'

Sufis have therefore called God the Beloved. And they have seen the Beloved in all beings. They did not think that God was in heaven, apart, away from all beings. In everything, in all forms, they have seen the beauty of God. And in this realization the main purpose and the ultimate purpose of life is fulfilled. As it is said in the ancient scriptures, when God asked Adam, 'Who is thy Lord?' he said, 'Thou art my Lord.' This means that the purpose of creation was that every soul might recognize his source and goal, and surrender to it and attribute to it all beauty and wisdom and power, so that by doing so he might perfect himself. As the Bible says, 'Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.'

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE (2)

EVERY intelligent person comes to a stage in his life, sooner or later, when he begins to question himself as to what purpose there is in life, in being on earth. 'Why am I here? What am I to accomplish in life?' he asks. No doubt the moment this question has arisen in a person he has taken his first step in the path of wisdom. Before, whatever he did, not being conscious of his life's purpose, he remained discontented. Whatever be his occupation, his condition in life, whether he is wise or foolish, learned or illiterate, there is always discontent. He may have success or failure, but the desire that his life's purpose should be accomplished remains, and unless it is accomplished a person cannot be satisfied. That is why many people who are successful in business, doing very well in their profession, comfortable in their domestic life, and popular in society, yet remain dissatisfied because they do not know the purpose of their life.

After knowing the purpose of life we may be handicapped by many things, we may lack means, but the conditions will be favorable to go forward, in spite of all. When someone has found his life's purpose, no matter how difficult life is for him nor how many hindrances he has to contend with, from that moment there is nothing he will not withstand, no sacrifice he will not make, nothing he will not endure. He will wait with patience all his life, and if he does not succeed in this life he will wait even till the hereafter, happy because he is accomplishing his life's purpose. When a person knows, 'I am here for this particular purpose,' that knowledge in itself gives a great strength of conviction.

There is a story told of the Prophet Mohammad. At the time when the Prophet, who was born for that particular purpose in life, felt a kind of restlessness, a dissatisfaction with everything in life, he thought he had better go into the forest, into the wilderness, into the mountains and sit there alone to get in touch

with himself, to find out why there was that yearning after something he did not know. He asked his wife if she would allow him that solitude which his soul longed for, and she agreed. Then he went into the wilderness and sat there for days together. And when the vibrations of the physical body and mind, which are always upset and in turmoil in the midst of the world, calmed down, and when his mind became quiet and his spirit was tranquil, when the heart of the Prophet became restful, he began to feel in touch with all nature there, the space, the sky, the earth. And then it seemed as if everything was talking to him, as if the water and the clouds were talking. He was in communication with the whole world, with the whole of life.

Then the word came to the Prophet: 'Cry out in the Name of thy Lord.' This is the lesson of idealism: not only being in touch with nature, but idealizing the Lord. In these days there is the great drawback that when people become very intelligent they lose idealism. If they want to find God they want to find Him in figures. There are many who would rather meditate than worship, than pray. In this way there has always been conflict between the intellectual person and the idealistic person. The Prophet was taught as the first thing to idealize the Lord. And when the ideal he thus made became his conception of God, then in that conception God awakened. And he began to hear the voice saying, 'Now you must serve your people, you must awaken in your people the sense of religion, the ideal of God, the desire for spiritual attainment, and the wish to live a better life.' Then he knew that it was now his turn to accomplish all those things that the prophets who had come before had been meant to accomplish.

We are all born in this world to accomplish a certain purpose, and as long as a man does not know this purpose he remains ignorant of life. He cannot call himself a living being. A machine has no choice, it cannot find its life's purpose, but an individual is responsible to a great extent. Very often out of weakness a man gives in to something which otherwise he would have refused to accept. This weakness comes through lack of patience and endurance, lack of self-confidence, and lack of trust. A person who does not trust in Providence, who cannot have patience, who cannot endure, will take what comes at the moment. He will not wait till tomorrow. Perhaps the purpose of his life would have opened up before him if he had had more power of endurance, more self-confidence, more trust in Providence. But when he possesses none of these things he is just like a machine. He is not pleased with what comes in life, he is grudging every day, he is confused; and yet he goes on like a horse, which is not willing to go on, but is yoked to the cart and has to go on. The first knowledge we must gain is the knowledge of the purpose of our life.

It is a great pity that education as it is today pays very little attention to this question. Children, youths, and grown-ups all go through life toiling from morning till evening, studying or working, and at the same time not knowing what purpose they have to accomplish. Among a thousand persons there may be one exception, but nine hundred and ninety-nine are placed in a situation, whether they desire it or not, where they are working just like a mechanism, a machine put in a certain place which is made for it and where it must work. Out of a hundred perhaps ninety-nine are discontented with the work they are doing. Either it is their environment that has placed them there, or it is because they must work for their living, or because they have the idea that they should first gather what they need. By the time they have gathered the means to be able to do something in life, the desire of accomplishing something is gone.

It is a great drawback that in spite of progress individuals often have no opportunity to accomplish something they desire. Many youths never realize this. They think, 'We must do that work and that is all.' And they have no time to think about the purpose of their particular life. Thus hundreds and thousands of lives are wasted. In spite of all the money they make their hearts are not satisfied, for it is not the wealth one gains that can give that satisfaction.

On hearing from the Prophet that all things and beings were created for a certain purpose, someone said, 'O Prophet, I cannot understand why mosquitoes were created!' And the Prophet answered, 'They were created so that you may get up quickly at night and engage yourself in prayer!' Everything is created with a purpose, in order that we may use it for its purpose. And so it is with people. Sa'di says, 'Every being is created for a purpose, and the light of that purpose is already kindled in his soul.' As we need blacksmiths and goldsmiths and farmers and others, so we need philosophers and mystics and prophets. That creates the harmony, just as we need sharp and flat in music. If it were not so there would be no beauty, for beauty is created through variety.

When we look at life with a philosopher's view we see that every person is like one note in this symphony of life. That we all make this symphony of life, each contributing the music, which is needed in that symphony. But if we do not know our own part in the symphony of life, naturally it is as if one of the four strings on the violin is not tuned, and if it is not tuned it cannot give the music, which it should produce. So we must each produce that part for which we are born. If we do not contribute what we are meant to and what we should contribute, we are not in tune with our destiny. It is only by playing that particular part which belongs to us that we shall get satisfaction.

Maybe many people will not think as I do, for instance those who believe strongly in pacifism, in the peace ideal. They will say, 'Is it not madness that anybody should make a war!' But everything one does, though it may look better or worse, yet belongs somewhere in the scheme of life, and we have no right to condemn it. The principal thing for every individual is to become conscious of the duty for which he is born.

There are in reality two purposes of life. One is the minor, the other is the major purpose of life. One is the preliminary, and the other is the final purpose. The preliminary purpose of life is just like a stepping-stone to the final one. Therefore one should first consider the preliminary purpose of life.

In the East there are various stories told about sages and saints who have awakened someone to the purpose of his particular life. And the moment that person was awakened his whole life changed. There is an account in the history of India, of the life of Shivaji. There was a young robber who used to attack travelers passing along the way where he lived and he robbed from them whatever he could. And one day before going to his work he came to a sage and greeted him and said, 'Sage, I want your blessing, your help in my occupation.' The sage asked what his occupation was. He said, 'I am an unimportant robber.' The sage said, 'Yes, you have my blessing.' The robber was very pleased, and went away and had greater success than before. Happy with his success he returned to the sage and greeted him by touching his feet and said, 'What a wonderful blessing it is to be so successful.' But the sage said, 'I am not yet satisfied with your success, I want you to be more successful. Find three or four more robbers and join together and then go on with your work.' He joined with four or five other robbers who went with him and again had great success. Once more he came to the sage and said, 'I want your blessing.' The sage said, 'You have it. But still I am not satisfied. Four robbers are very few. You ought to form a gang of twenty.' So he found twenty robbers. And eventually there were hundreds of them.

Then the sage said, 'I am not satisfied with the little work you do. You are a small army of young men, you ought to do something great. Why not attack the Moghul strongholds and push them out, so that in this country we may reign ourselves?' And so he did, and a kingdom was established. The next move of the robber would have been to form an empire of the whole country. But he died. Had he lived Shivaji would have formed an empire. The sage could have said, 'What a bad thing, what a wicked thing you are doing. Go in the factory and work!' But the sage saw what Shivaji was capable of. Robbery was his first lesson, his a b c. He had only a few steps to advance to be the defender of his country, and the sage real-

ized that he was going to be a king, to release his people from the Moghuls. The robbers did not see it, the young man did not think about it. He was pushed into it by the sage. The sage was not pushing him into robbery. He was preparing him for a great work.

Why in the East is the greatest importance given to a teacher in the spiritual path? For this reason: as Hafiz has said, 'If your teacher says, "Sprinkle your prayer-rug with wine," do it.' A prayer-rug is a holy object. Wine is considered unwholesome. But Hafiz continues, 'For the knower knows best which way to go.' For instance if a person wishes to collect wealth, his whole mind is absorbed in it. He may be told, 'No, that is not a good thing. What is wealth after all? It is unreal, useless. You ought to be devotional, spiritual!' But his mind will not be there. He cannot be spiritual. He is concentrated on that particular thing, and because he cannot collect the money he wants he is unhappy. If one forces upon him spirituality, religion, devotion, prayer, they will not help him. Very often people in place of food give water, and in place of water give food. That is not good. Spirituality comes in its time. But the preliminary purpose is what a man will contribute to the world as the first step before awakening to spiritual perfection.

All the great teachers of humanity have taught that preliminary purpose of life in their religions. Whatever teachings they have given to their followers, their motive has been to help them to accomplish that first purpose in life. For instance when Christ called the fishermen he said, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.' He did not say he would make them more spiritual. That was the first step. He wanted them to accomplish the first purpose of life. The next purpose was to become more spiritual. To the teachers of spiritual knowledge who look at it in this way, their first duty is to show someone how to accomplish the first purpose of life. When they have done this, then they show the second purpose.

There are four different ways people take in their lives. One way is the way of material benefit. By profession, by occupation, business, or industry, a person wants to make money. Something is to be said both for and against this ideal. Against it may be said that while working for money one very often loses the right track, thought, and consideration. One easily overlooks the rights of others when one is working for money. And what is to be said for it is this: that it is after all those who possess wealth who can use wealth for the best purpose. All charitable institutions, hospitals, schools, colleges, are raised by charitable people who have given generously to such organizations. There is therefore nothing wrong in earning money and in devoting one's time to it, as long as the motive is right and good.

Another aspect is duty. One considers that one has a duty to one's community, town, or country; one does some social work, one tries to do good to others and considers it one's duty. It may be that one has a duty towards one's parents. One may be looking after one's mother and sacrifice one's life for her, or for one's wife and children. There is great merit in this also. No doubt what speaks against it is that very often such lives are spoiled, and they have no chance to do anything worth while in the world. But if it were not for the dutiful the world would be devoid of love and affection. If the wife had no sense of duty towards her husband, nor the neighbor towards his friend, then they would be living like creatures of the lower creation. It is the sense of duty that makes man greater than other beings. That is why we admire it. Heroes who give their lives for their country are not doing a small thing. It is something great when a person gives his life for the sake of duty. Besides duty is a great virtue.

At the time of the last war there was a young woman who was always displeased and in disagreement with her husband and she was always wanting a separation. When the call to arms came, her husband went to the battlefield, and he hoped that in his absence she would find someone else. As the war went on she thought that while her husband was fighting she would enroll as a nurse. And it happened that near the place where she was working, the husband was wounded. He lost his eyes, and she became his

nurse. When she saw him in that condition she was astonished that it had so come about that she was to be his nurse. She had just received a letter containing a proposal of marriage, but she tore it up and changed her mind in an instant. She said, 'Now that he has lost his eyes and that he is helpless, I shall remain his wife, I shall take care of him all his life.'

Duty, the sense of duty, is a great virtue. And when it is perfected and deepened in the heart of a man it wakens him to a greater and higher consciousness. In that way people have accomplished noble things. The great heroes have lived a life of duty.

The sense of duty comes from idealism. The greater his ideal of duty the greater the man. According to the Hindus the observers of duty are considered religious, because Dharma, the Sanskrit word which means religion, also means duty.

The third purpose one chooses in life is to make the best of the present. It is the point of view of Omar Khayyam who told one to 'Drink the cup of life just now.' There is a quatrain in the Rubayat where he says:

O my Beloved, fill the cup that clears
Today of past regrets and future fears.
Tomorrow! why, tomorrow I may be
Myself with yesterday's sev'n thousand years!

It is the point of view of the person who says, 'If I was great in the past, what does it matter? The past is forgotten. And the future who knows what will come out of it? No one knows his future. Let us make the best of this moment, let us make life as happy as we can.' It is not a bad point of view. It is a philosophical point of view. Those who adhere to it are happy and give happiness to others.

No doubt all these different points of view have a wrong side also. But when we look at their right side there is something in it to appreciate.

People nowadays use a phrase: 'He is a jolly good fellow.' In songs and on different occasions this phrase is used to show appreciation for that tendency of mind, which tries to make this moment happy. It is difficult, very difficult, and not everyone can manage to do it. For life has so many conflicts, so many troubles. One has to face so many difficulties in life that to be able to keep on smiling is not everyone's achievement. In order to keep smiling a person must either be very foolish and not feel or think about anything, but just close both his eyes and his heart to the world, or a person must be as high as the souls meant by the story of the miracle of Christ walking upon the water. There are some who sink and some who swim, and others who walk over the water. Those who are drowned in life's misery are those who cannot get out of it. They are tied down in the depths of life. They cannot get out and they are miserable there. They are the ones who sink. Then there are others who are swimming. They are those who strive through the conflicting conditions of life in order some day to reach the shore.

There are, however, others who walk upon life. Theirs is the life, which is symbolically expressed in the miracle of Christ walking upon the water. It is like living in the world and not being of the world, touching the world and not being touched by it. It needs a clear perception of life, keen intelligence and thorough understanding, together with great courage, strength, and bravery. By this I do not mean to say that the man who makes the best of each present moment is the same as the man whom we call happy-go-lucky, the simple man. That man is the one who lives in another world. He is not aware of life's conditions, he is not awake to the conflicting influences of life. If he is happy it is not surprising, for he is

happiness himself. I mean those who are awakened to life's conditions, those who are tender and sensitive to the thoughts and feelings of others. For them it is very difficult to go on living and at the same time to keep smiling. If a man can do it, it is certainly a great thing.

The fourth aspect is that of those who think, 'What is life on earth after all! Is it not only a few days to pass somehow?' The day ends, the months and the years pass, and so time slips by. One comes to the end of life before one has expected it, and the whole past becomes like a dream in the night. Ask a man who has lived a hundred years, 'What do you think about life on earth?' He will say, 'One night's dream, my child, it is no longer than that.'

If that is all there is to life, then those who consider it thus will realize they should think about the hereafter. Just as some think, 'While we are able to work we must strive in order to make provision for our old age that we may be more comfortable,' so those who think of the hereafter say, 'Life is short, it is nothing but an opportunity. We must prepare something so that later we shall have the benefit of it.' Maybe there will be some who have the right understanding, while others make too much of it and have a wrong conception of the hereafter. Yet the wise ones who believe that they must use the time and opportunity which is given to them in this life to prepare for the next one, have accomplished a great deal. It is something to admire.

It is said that the earth and the sky and space do not accommodate a person who does not answer life's demands, although for exceptional souls there are exceptional laws, for the lives of exceptional beings cannot be explained in ordinary terms. One may ask what will be the future of those who have not fulfilled the demand of life. Will they have to come back to learn their lesson once more? We must all learn our lesson right now. Life is lived right now, its demand is right now, and we must answer it right now. At every moment we are asked to perform a certain duty, to fulfil a certain obligation. And to become conscious of this and to do it in the most fitting and right manner, that is the true religion.

We understand life's demands by understanding life better. There are some who do not answer life's demands because they do not know what life asks of them. And there are others who do not answer life's demands although they do know. When the demands of the outer life are different from what the inner life asks of us, we should fulfil the demands of the outer life without neglecting those of the inner life, as it is said in the Bible, 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.'

We have to become like the ebb and flow. This is a symbolical expression. A certain thing is accomplished at one time by sympathy, and at another time by indifference. One situation we must meet by taking interest in it, in another situation we must become indifferent, not concerned with it. If in a sea there were always ebb and no flow, or always flow and no ebb, then this would be a dead sea. The living sea is both inhaling and exhaling. Thus in everything we do in life, we should be able to meet every situation and event with the manner that the situation demands.

These are the four different ways people take in order to accomplish the purpose of their lives: making wealth, being conscientious in their duty, making the best of every moment of life, and preparing for the future. All these four have their good points. And once one realizes this there is no need to blame anyone for having taken another path than our own for the accomplishment of life's purpose. By understanding this one becomes tolerant.

And now we come to the ultimate purpose of life, which is always one and the same: for every man has in the end to accomplish the same purpose, in whatever way he will. He will come to it either con-

sciously or unconsciously, easily or with difficulty. But he has to accomplish it. That is spiritual attainment. One might wonder if a person who is so material that he never thinks about it and who refuses to consider this question will ever attain to spiritual realization, but the answer is yes. Everyone, consciously or unconsciously, is striving after spiritual attainment. Sometimes he does not take the same way as we do, sometimes his point of view and his method differ, and sometimes one person attains to spiritual realization much sooner than another. It may be reached in a day, and another person may have striven for it all his life and yet not have attained to it. What determines it? It is the evolution of a particular soul.

There are Stories told in India of how a person was awakened to spiritual consciousness after hearing one word from his Guru. That one word inspired him instantly to touch the higher consciousness. And then again we hear the stories in the East of people who went to the forest or to the mountains, who fasted for days and months, who were hanging by their feet, their head downwards, or who stood erect for years and years. This shows how difficult it is for one person and how easy for another. We make a great mistake today when we consider every man's evolution as the same. There are great differences between people. One is creeping, one is walking, one is running, and another is flying. And yet they all live under the same sun.

It is the custom in the East for those who begin to seek for a spiritual purpose to look for a spiritual teacher. They do not set forth on the spiritual journey by themselves, for thousands of years of experience have taught that to tread the spiritual path it is necessary to have some leader to whom one can give one's confidence and trust in order to follow him to the end. No doubt in the West there is a general awakening. Everyone wishes to know something about the spiritual path. But the difficulty is that everyone does not stick to one and the same thing. There are many who will go first to one esoteric school and then to another, and so on. In the end they have learnt so much that they do not know what is true and what is false, which is right and which is wrong. It is just like visiting a restaurant and eating so much that one is not able to digest it. Besides when a person takes in all that is false and true, there remains no discrimination between false and true.

To realize the preliminary purpose of our life we must find our natural rhythm. Today people adopt wrong methods. They go to a clairvoyant and ask him about the purpose of their life. They do not know it themselves. Anybody else must tell them except their own spirit, their own soul. They ask others because they do not tune themselves to that pitch where they can feel intuitively what they live for. If another person says, 'You are here to become a carpenter or a lawyer or a barrister,' that does not satisfy our need. It is our own spirit that must speak to us. We must be able to still ourselves, to tune our spirit to the universal consciousness in order to know the purpose of our life. And once we know this purpose the best thing is to pursue it in spite of all difficulties. Nothing should discourage us, nothing should keep us back once we know that this is the purpose of our life. Then we must go after it even at the sacrifice of everything, for when the sacrifice is great the gain in the end gives a greater power, a greater inspiration. Rise or fall, success or failure does not matter as long as you know the purpose of your life. If ninety-nine times you fail, the hundredth time you will succeed.

Thus the ultimate purpose for which the soul is seeking every moment of our life, is our spiritual purpose. And you may ask how to attain to that purpose. The answer is that what you are seeking for is within yourself. Instead of looking outside, you must look within. The way to proceed to accomplish this is for some moments to suspend all your senses such as sight, hearing, smell, touch, in order to put a screen before the outside life. And by concentration and by developing that meditative quality you will sooner or later get in touch with the inner self which is more communicative, which speaks more loudly than all the noises of this world. And this gives joy, creates peace, and produces in you a self-sufficient

spirit, a spirit of independence, of true liberty. The moment you get in touch with your self you are in communion with God. It is in this way, if God-communication is sought rightly, that spirituality is attained.

THE ART OF PERSONALITY

SOME believe that art is inferior to nature. But that is not so. Art completes nature. In art there is something divine, for it is God Himself who through man completes the beauty of nature, and this is called art. In other words, art is not only an imitation of nature, art is an improvement upon nature, be it painting, drawing, poetry, or music. But the best of all arts is the art of personality. This must be learned, in order to use it in every walk of life. It is not necessary for every man to become a musician, nor is it necessary to become a painter or an architect. But it is necessary for every man to learn the art of personality. Someone once came to me and said with great pride and satisfaction, 'I was brought up by my parents just like a plant in the forest, growing naturally.' I answered, 'It is a pity. If your parents wanted you to grow naturally they should have kept you in the forest. It is a pity that you are in the midst of the world. The world is made by art. In order to be in the world you need to know the art of personality.'

Very few of us distinguish between individuality and personality. Individuality is that which we brought with us at our birth. We are born as a separate entity. That itself makes us individual. Individuality is the soul's consciousness of its oneness, in spite of its various belongings with which it still identifies itself; and that individuality can be seen in the child, which says, 'No, I don't want this toy, I want that other toy.' The moment the soul says 'I' it becomes conscious of an individuality in spite of having different organs in the body and different thoughts which direct these organs. Then the tendency is to attribute to oneself all the different parts while realizing that one is one in spite of being many, or in other words, in spite of being composed of many aspects.

Personality is an improvement on individuality. In becoming a person the beauty which is hidden in an individual develops itself, and it is the development of the individuality which is personality. Individuality is nature, whereas personality is art. It is something that is acquired or gained. It has not come with us.

Therefore in ancient times people had to learn and practice the art of personality as part of their education. That was the ancient culture. Today a person has to pass examinations and as long as he has got a degree he thinks he is safe, he thinks he can go into the world and will get on. But such an external qualification is not enough. It is the inner qualification, the inner culture that counts and it can only be obtained by the development of personality.

How does one make use of personality? In business the salesman makes a success according to the power of his magnetism. His influence depends entirely on his personality. It is his personality that attracts, whether he goes to a shop or to other business. It is his personality which stands out and which gives one the idea of buying or selling or dealing with him. And the lack of this makes one go away never to come back. A statesman, a politician, a teacher, a solicitor, a barrister, a lawyer, all require personality. A physician may be a great physician, a highly qualified one, and yet if his personality is not agreeable, if he is rude or unsympathetic, however many patients he may have his medicines will make them feel bad and his personality will make them feel worse. And very often a doctor with a sympathetic personality, a good manner, and wisdom, can cure a patient by a word of consolation before he has given him any medicine. It is the same with a barrister, a lawyer. He can dishearten a client in one visit. And when a person has lost courage and hope then naturally there is little chance of being successful.

Power of mind is needed, and if the power of mind is strong then a lawyer can succeed. In all walks of life what counts is the personality. The one whose personality is against him has the world against him.

There are four categories of personality. The first personality is likened to a date, the next is like a walnut, the third like a pomegranate, and the fourth like a grape.

The date-like personality is soft outside and hard inside. As soon as one puts a date into one's mouth and feels the stone between the teeth one has a horror of it. And then there is another personality, which is walnut-like. There is a hard shell, hard to penetrate, but when you know the person more it is like breaking the shell, and finding a nut which is soft. Thirdly there is a pomegranate personality. It is hard outside and hard inside. The pomegranate is hard, the skin is hard, the seed inside is hard too. Lastly there is the grape-like personality which is soft outside and soft inside. You will always find these four classes of persons.

The one whose personality is soft outside and hard inside will at once attract people. But they will not stay with him. They will stay for some time, but then they leave him. Then they know him and turn away from him.

The personality who is hard outside and soft inside is repellent at first, but in the end you will become his friend. That is why he does not make so many friends. You can only understand this man when you reach his inner being. And the personality who is hard outside and hard inside is isolated in the world. This is no place for him. Everyone will want to keep away from him, and then after some time he will find himself in difficulties. But the one whose personality is soft outside and soft inside will naturally be most magnetic. The grape is the most attractive fruit.

At every stage in the evolution of man there is a different kind of magnetism. There are four different aspects of magnetism: physical magnetism, intellectual magnetism, sympathetic magnetism which is sometimes called personal magnetism, and spiritual magnetism.

Freshness, purity, good health, cleanliness, harmonious movements, regular form, all these help physical magnetism. Every man who is loving, affectionate, kindly, gentle, and who has developed a sympathetic nature will always attract without knowing it. For sympathy has the greatest power, and this magnetism is lasting. In whatever relationship you may be to a person, if there is no link of sympathy there is no attraction.

By the lack of development of the sympathetic nature a blockage is produced in the mind and in the body. In the physical body there are some nerve centers which are awakened by the development of sympathy. Otherwise they are closed. It is for this reason that a butcher will seldom be intuitive, as everything that keeps a man away from sympathy robs him of intuition. Sympathy develops life in the finer centers, and the absence of that sympathy takes away that life. And so it is with the mind. When the heart is not sympathetic there is something missing in the man's mentality. Very often a person may be highly qualified, very intellectual, imposing in appearance, and yet being without feeling he will lack magnetism and in many cases will fail to succeed because of his lack of sympathy.

The fourth kind of magnetism is spiritual magnetism. It can be recognized in the innocence of a man, in his purity, in his simplicity. A spiritual person is considered very evolved, but in his appearance the spiritual person may be the most simple, the most innocent one. He is not ignorant but less complicated, broader in outlook, keener in perception, with lofty ideals, with a high consciousness. And yet humble and democratic in the true sense of the word.

The idea of democracy is wrongly understood by many today. The principle that 'I am as good as you' is a wrong principle of democracy. It takes away humbleness, gentleness, and the high ideal. Besides how childish to think that camphor and bone, chalk and sugar are all equal! It seems a very kind idea that everybody is equal. But when you tune the piano with all the notes at the same pitch there is no more music. This wrong conception of democracy is like tuning the whole piano to the same note. Then the music of the soul becomes dull. It is more an obsession with democracy than democracy itself. Real democracy is raising oneself higher by appreciating the ideal one meets. In this way one rises to a higher ideal. But many people do not appreciate a high ideal. Democracy means being equal on a higher plane instead of being ignorant. Pulling a high person down to the earth and then speaking of democracy is wrong democracy. It is the spirit of the revolutionary, of people who are obsessed by one particular idea, regardless of anything else, as has been seen in many places. For instance, when there came a revolt against the Catholic Church, what happened? The revolt was not only against the Church, but against the ideals of the Church. Every good aspect was disregarded. It was not only a revolt against what was not desirable, but against everything connected with it. It is from that time that the sense and depth of religion which existed in the Western

world seem to have been diminishing, and they are diminishing further every day. In spite of the many churches there is less idealism. The ideal which is necessary in some form or other for every soul has been drowned. It is drowned because people have revolted against something regardless of what is good in it.

When a person disregards the God-ideal his tendency is to disregard everything that is related to it. And so the art of personality has been lost in the obsession with democracy, instead of being realized as a higher spiritual evolution. It is the spiritual outlook alone that gives man real democratic feeling. It means that for such a person any other man, be it his enemy or his great friend, is his parent, his brother. The spiritual man sees everyone as himself. He sees his own spirit, his own soul reflected in the other. That is real democracy, when one sees oneself in both a higher and a lower person. That is the highest ideal of spiritual attainment, and that is what makes man really democratic.

One only rises to such an ideal by degrees. And the first degree is gentleness. That is why in the English language the word gentleman was used. Why gentle? Because he had taken the first step towards the art of personality. It is not necessary for a person to be rich, or to be in a good position, or to hold a high rank. That does not necessarily make him gentle. However high the position and rank one may have, one may still not be gentle. Once a person has become thoughtful his first step is to become gentle. As soon as thoughtfulness is developed in him, he takes his first step towards real evolution. Gentleness is the greatest power of all. Gentleness is like the power of water: water is purifying, and if there is a rock in the path of a stream of water it will surround the rock. It will not break it, for water is pliable, and so is the one who is gentle. Gentleness in the long run will always purify everything.

We might imagine that everyone tries to be thoughtful. And yet when we consider two things in our daily life-when silence is needed and when speech-we find that we make a thousand mistakes. Often we speak more than we need to speak. Or we give our confidence to someone to whom it would have been better not to have given it, or we have spoken to someone and we should not have done it. But it is too late when we think of it afterwards. Sometimes in a mood of haste, or opposition, or in a distressed condition, a person might say something hurtful without meaning it. He says it and then he repents. By speaking he has not gained anything, except that it might have been a pastime, it has released a desire to say something. But afterwards it has a result just the same. The heart of man is so delicate. It is just like a fragile glass, and once it is broken is very difficult to mend. Any hurt and harm once given is never

really mended. One can apologize and ask forgiveness, but what is done is done. What is said is said. The word is not lost. Every word we speak remains somewhere: in the heart of the one listening, in space or in the ground, it stays and has some result. Moreover, by learning to be thoughtful one develops dignity in one's nature. The more one thinks of others the more dignified one becomes, because dignity springs from thoughtfulness.

Then very often a person makes a habit of being talkative. He wastes his own time, his own thought, and the thought and time of the other person. And very often it ends in confusion. One accomplishes nothing by useless arguments. It is amusing to notice that very often a person argues because he lacks knowledge. He goes on arguing because he does not know, he wants to find out from the other person what he knows about it. Besides, how can one understand by discussing or arguing that which one can only understand by one's own wisdom, by the intuition within? It is very often a loss of time.

Some have a real passion for talking. To them it is an amusement, a pastime. But in the end they exhaust themselves and become nervous, and nothing is gained. Silence seems sometimes very hard to keep, but surely it has great advantages, as disagreement and inharmony can often be avoided by it. Silence is good for both the wise and the foolish. For the wise man it is good because it avoids unnecessary talk. He can keep his precious thought well cherished within himself. And so he rears the good thought, which is like a plant. And the foolish one covers up his stupidity as long as he keeps silent, and so much the better. Silence raises the dignity of the wise and hides the stupidity of the foolish. Besides the more one evolves the more one will discover the different grades of people, just like the different keys on the piano. One is lower, another is higher. Every person has a different grade of evolution. Also, the higher you evolve the more you will find that you cannot drive everyone with the same whip. You have to speak to everyone differently, in fact in his own language. If you speak a language he does not understand, it will be gibberish to him. If he is less evolved he will abuse you for what you have said. If he is highly evolved and you say something which does not reach his state of evolution it will make you small in his eyes. What is the use? Besides you will always find that inharmony is caused unnecessarily by words. On the other hand, however inharmonious the atmosphere created by other persons may be, if you have the words of wisdom you can dissolve the clouds of inharmony.

Once when travelling I met a man of a very dense evolution, a soldier who always lived in military surroundings and who had very fixed ideas of his own. And when we were talking together and it appeared that we thought differently about something, I happened to say in order to preserve harmony, 'Well, we are brothers!' He looked at me with great anger, and said, 'Brothers! How dare you say such a thing!' I said, 'I forgot. I am your servant, Sir.' He was very pleased. I could have argued, but this would have created disharmony without reason. The foolishness of that man blazed up just like fire. I put water on it and extinguished it. I did not diminish myself. We are all servants of one another. And it pleased and satisfied him.

There is a story of a wise healer. A woman went to him and asked, 'Can you tell me what to do? I am having a difficult time with my husband. There is a quarrel at home every day.' He said, 'That is very easy.' She said, 'I would be so grateful.' He said, 'I will give you these lozenges, these sweets. You keep them in your mouth when your husband comes home and all will be well. They are magnetized sweets.' And every day she noticed that there was no quarrel any more. After ten days when the sweets were finished she went back to the healer and said, 'I would give anything if you could let me have some more of those sweets. They were wonderful.' Then the teacher said, 'My friend, you must understand after eating the sweets for ten days, that your husband, having toiled all day, is nervous and tired and weary when he comes home. Naturally he is not in tune. And you made him worse by talking. By keeping silent you

gave him nothing to quarrel about, and your home became more harmonious. This should teach you a lesson: that silence is the key to harmony.'

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONALITY

ANY efforts made in developing the personality or in character-building must be not for the sake of proving oneself superior to others, but of becoming more agreeable to those around one and to those with whom one comes in contact. Conciliation is not only the moral of the Sufi: it is the sign of the Sufi. This virtue is not learned and practiced easily, for it needs not only goodwill but wisdom. The talent of the diplomat consists in bringing about such results as are desirable with mutual agreement. Disagreement is easy. Among the lower creation one sees it so often. It is agreement that is difficult, for it needs a wider outlook, which is the true sign of spirituality. Narrowness of outlook makes man's vision small. The person with a narrow outlook cannot easily agree with another. There is always a meeting-ground for two people, however much they differ in thought. But the meeting-ground may be far off, and when that is so a man is not always willing to take the trouble to go so far in order to come to an agreement. Very often this is due to his lack of patience. What generally happens is that each wants the other to meet him at the place where he is standing. There is no desire on either part to move from the spot.

This does not mean that in order to become a real Sufi one should give up one's own ideas in order to agree with someone else. And there is no advantage in always being lenient towards every thought that comes from another, nor in erasing one's own ideas from one's heart. That is not conciliation. The one who is able to listen to another is the one who will make another listen to him. The one who finds it easy to agree with another will have the power of making another agree easily with him. Therefore in doing so one really gains in spite of the apparent loss which might sometimes occur. When a man is able to see both from his own point of view and from that of another, he has complete vision and a clear insight. He so to speak sees with both eyes.

No doubt friction produces light, but light is the agreement of the atoms. Two people having their own ideas and arguing about them can be a stimulus to thought, and then it does not matter so much. But when a person argues for the sake of argument, the argument becomes his game. He has no satisfaction in conciliation. Words provide the means of disagreement and reasons become the fuel for this fire. But wisdom is found where the intelligence is pliable, where it understands all things, even the wrong of the right and the right of the wrong. The soul who arrives at perfect knowledge has risen above right and wrong. He knows them and yet knows not. He can say much and yet what can he say? Then it becomes easy for him to conciliate each and all.

There is a story of two Sufis who met after many years, having traveled their different ways. They were glad to meet each other after many years of separation as they were both mureeds of the same murshid. One said to the other, 'Tell me, please, your life's experience. After all this time of study and practice of Sufism I have learned one thing: how to conciliate another. And I can do it very well now. Will you please tell me what you have learned?' The other one said, 'After all this time of study and practice of Sufism I have learned how to master life. And all that there is in this world is for me, and I am the master. All that happens, happens by my will.' Then came the murshid, whose mureeds both of them were, and they spoke to him of their experience during their journey. The murshid said, 'Both of you are right.' In the case of the first it was self-denial, in the right sense of the word, which enabled him to conciliate others. In the case of the second there was no longer any of his will left. If there was any, it was the will of God.

In human beings one finds millions of qualities. Every quality has its origin in the heredity and is in reality a mixture of different qualities, a kind of solution. So every person will have different qualities unlike those of others, and every person is unique in his way; in this lies the secret of the oneness of God. Not only is God one, but man is one too.

One should never be discouraged or disappointed in life. Man has the key of his own life in his hand, if he only knew it. It is absurd to say, 'I have not got that quality.' There is no quality in the world that man has not got, either good or bad. And the soundest psychology is to say to oneself that one has the quality one thinks most desirable, most attractive; and not that quality which one does not think desirable.

There is infinite variety in personality. The law of variety comes from the nature of manifestation. Every current taking a different direction becomes different and manifests differently. Variety is also caused by time and space. Every personality differs because of time and space. A person born in one year will be different from a person born in another year. A person born in one month or on a certain day will be different from a person born in another month, or on another day. Every moment makes a difference because of the difference in people's breath. But not only this; the difference of personality comes also through the difference in the direction of one's thought. One's personality depends on the direction in which one's thought goes, and also on one's action, motive, expression. All these things cause difference in personality.

There is a story of a dervish who was standing in the middle of the street when the procession of the king was approaching. First came the pages who ran before the procession and they pushed him and said, "Don't you see, the king is coming! Go away!" And the dervish smiled and said, 'That is why.' And he remained in the same place. Then there came the horsemen, the bodyguards. They said, 'Get out of the way, the procession is coming!' The dervish smiled and said, 'That is why.' Next the courtiers came and saw the dervish standing there. And instead of telling the dervish to go away, they moved their horses a little away from where he stood. And again the dervish said, 'That is why.' Finally came the king, and when the king saw the dervish standing there, he greeted him first; and the dervish in reply said, 'That is why.' An intelligent young man asked him, 'What is it you mean by this remark?' The dervish answered, 'You can see, that is why he is what he is.'

This ideal people have wiped away from their minds. Where is democracy? The kingliness of greeting the dervish, that is democracy. But the man who is not evolved, who is pulling the most evolved down to his level, has a wrong conception of democracy. It is going downwards instead of upwards. If lack of manners and consideration can be democracy, it loses its real ideal and true spirit. Democracy is the result of aristocracy. When the spirit of aristocracy has evolved sufficiently, it becomes democracy. Then a person thinks, 'I am the equal of any person in the world. There is no person lower than I.' But if a person says, 'There is no person higher than I', that is not democracy.

In Burma one finds Buddhists of a very wonderful kind. It is the only race which for centuries has believed that there is no religion that is not as good as their own. Imagine, today, when the followers of most religions look down upon the followers of another! These people say, 'Whatever be the religion, Christian or Muslim or Jewish, it is not worse than ours. Perhaps it is better.' They all had this same thought, and even today they still have this belief. That is something wonderful. But when a person says, 'Nobody is better than I am', it is no democracy. It is sinking lower, because it means closing one's eyes to what is greater, higher, and better. If one cannot appreciate or see it one cannot rise to it. One can only rise towards that which one values and towards which one aspires.

If I were to speak before the world today about occult power, psychic power, spirit-communication, breathing practices, people would be glad to listen, but if I say simple things like this, it means nothing to them. Yet suppose one did not develop personality, what about spirituality? A person must be a person first, and spiritual afterwards. If he is not a person, then what is the use of being spiritual? It is going back instead of going forward. Man is born to fulfil the purpose of his life. He is made to be a man, to prove he is a human being. A man who can be relied upon, a man whose word carries authority, who uses thought and consideration, whom one can trust with one's secret. A man who will not humiliate himself under any conditions, who will lose his life rather than humble himself, who will not deceive or cheat anybody, who will never go back on his word. A man who will carry through what he has once undertaken. All these qualities make a man a human being. Today our condition is such that we cannot believe in one another's word. We have to have a stamp on a contract. Why are we in such a condition? Because we are not evolving towards the ideal the ancient people had. That is why we cannot trust each other individually. That is why nations cannot trust one another.

Human beings live only from day to day, striving and working for a loaf of bread. That is all. But is that all, to earn a loaf of bread? In that case we do no better than the animals in the forest, and even they appear better than we. Rich and poor, all are wretched, in every walk of life whether it be a business, a profession, or politics, because there is nothing but competition between individuals, nations, parties, and communities. We have made our lives wretched. What are we here for? If we were born only to meditate and to be spiritual, then we had better go into the forest and into the caves of the mountains. Then it would not be necessary to be in the world. If we only had to live as the animals do, we could do as the worldly person is mostly doing today, and accomplish nothing. Therefore the first necessity for those who are seeking after truth is to develop the spirit of personality. Gold and jewels are worthless if one has no personality. Nothing is valuable then. Personality is more valuable than wealth. How strange it is that there is such a large population in this world and that there are so few personalities! Think of that Greek philosopher who went about with a lighted lantern in daytime. People asked, 'What are you looking for?' He said, 'For a human being.'

Very often when I speak of the development of personality, people ask me 'What about annihilation?' But it depends on what form of annihilation they mean. One can only be a spendthrift if one has wealth. One cannot annihilate what one does not possess. When an individual has no personality he can annihilate nothing. There must be something first. If a person started in life with self-effacement he would never become a self. What would he efface? Effacing comes afterwards. First he must be a self, a real self that is worth being.

One makes one's nature by one's likes and dislikes, by what one favors or disfavors. When a person says, 'I don't like this food,' he has built something into his nature. And then that food, when eaten, will often disagree with him. It is not that it was meant to disagree with him, but he made it disagree by disliking it. By control, bravery, endurance, steadiness, by all such qualities one makes one's nature either agreeable or disagreeable. Either one makes one's nature as hard as a rock, a rock that will not allow anything to pass, or one makes one's nature as pliable as water.

One may ask if it is not conceit to try to be better than others. There are many thorns and few flowers. We should not try to become a flower in order to feel ourselves superior to a thorn, but only for the benefit of others. All that trouble and pain and difficulty should be suffered for others. If among so many thorns we turn into a flower, it should be for others. That must be the idea. Besides it is not an easy task to become a flower. It is far easier to become a thorn. For one is naturally born a thorn and one has to become a flower. It is easy to say, 'You have hurt me, insulted me, disturbed me, troubled me.' But one does better to ask oneself if one has not harmed or disturbed someone else. One never thinks enough

about this. Therefore to develop personality one learns self-effacement. It is an annihilation, a continual unconscious annihilation which turns the self from a thorn into a flower.

One may also wonder whether with the development of personality one would not develop self-consciousness. But personality contains all: spirit, mind and thought, and body. A self-conscious person is not necessarily one who has developed his personality, although it does sometimes give a tendency to vanity. But vanity is the power, which can lead man to either good or bad. It is the living spark of the ego: the soberness of the ego is divine vanity, and the intoxication of the ego is the conceit of man. Conceit is difficult to conquer; it is almost impossible to get rid of. The reason is that wherever there is light there is darkness. Wherever there is a form there is shadow.

The word vanity is generally used in a very ordinary sense; there is no really good expression for the higher form of vanity. It is difficult to express this in any other way. The Hindus call it Vairagya, and the Sufis use the word Kibria for divine vanity. It is God's satisfaction in the manifestation, which He wanted to create. But this is not the same as the satisfaction of the ignorant soul in its limitation. When it is in its proper place it is divine virtue. When it is out of its proper place it is a sin.

The understanding of vanity is the most fascinating vision of the phenomenon of life. What the Sufi calls wine is the pleasure he derives from it. When this phenomenon is disclosed to him and he sees what activates all the different lives, it is almost like wine. What Omar Khayyam has called wine is the amusement one gets by looking at the phenomena of life, which lifts one above the worries of life. One will always find that the most evolved sages can be amused. That is why they are pleasant to meet and to speak to. Worrying comes from self-pity and fear. And fear is made of the clouds of ignorance. The light will dissolve it. Humor is the sign of light. When the light from above touches the mind it tickles the mind, and it is the tickling of mind, which produces humor.

The one who develops his personality enriches and ennobles himself in manner, principle, and ideal. This subject has been much overlooked. It is not that man is not capable of it. Man is more capable of it than ever before because he has to suffer so much. This life as we live it is a most painful life. It crunches and grinds a person and in that way can make him a better man. If he gave his thought to it he would profit by it and become a better person. In ancient times people willingly went through different sufferings, trials, and tests. We today do not need to do so. We have other trials today. We do not need to look for them if we only learn how to profit by them, otherwise this experience is lost. Nowadays man can make use of all the skin and bones and nails of every animal in some way or another, and yet we do not use our own life's experience which is more precious than anything else. When people hear of an oil-well or of a gold-mine they are all interested in it. But they are not interested in this gold- and silver-mine, this mine of jewels and gems, the cultivation of which will produce all that can be produced. What is most valuable they do not even think about.

There is, however, no need to scorn a rich man. Sometimes the rich man is poorer than the poor. With all the money in the bank his condition is sometimes much worse than that of the poor man. It is a mistake to say a person is rich because he has money or high rank. Besides the question whether a person is poor or rich has nothing to do with personality. One can develop personality regardless of being rich or poor. Neither poverty nor riches necessarily draw one back from spiritual progress, for all that exists in the world is there for our use. If one has it, so much the better. If one does not have it, it is better still.

The great gurus and teachers of all times have taught that to give one's thought and mind to the development of personality is of the greatest importance for those who wish to seek for truth.

Where does the difference between religious faiths come from? From looking superficially. People argue about things, which in essence are the same. The difference is only in words. A keen observation of life in time awakens us to the fact that when once the light is thrown upon life, life begins to reveal itself. As Sa'di has said, 'Even the leaves of the tree become as pages of the sacred Book once the eyes of the heart are open.'

THE ATTITUDE

IT IS very often the attitude of mind, which makes right and wrong. At the same time it is the attitude of mind which draws friends to one or gives one a repelling influence. Also, it is the attitude of mind, which brings happiness or unhappiness. It is true that there is the influence of time. There is a certain time in our life which has an influence for good or bad, for rise or fall, for happiness or unhappiness. Yet it is our attitude which either controls it or is controlled by it. If our attitude is controlled by it, then the situation at that time conquers us. But if our attitude is under control then there is a chance of conquering the situation.

Mostly our failure, our unhappiness, and our disagreements with friends come from a wrong attitude. When a person starts an enterprise and doubts whether he will have success or not, doubts whether his partners in business will help him or not, his attitude will create in that situation all that he imagines. His partners in business will act wrongly and perhaps unjustly towards him, and the situation will follow the attitude. For the attitude is the current which moulds the situation. Therefore however promising a business or a work may be, if our attitude is not right it must go wrong. It cannot come right. It is a hidden influence, and yet a most powerful influence underlying all circumstances of life.

It is the same with our attitude towards our friends. Whether we feel that our friend will prove to be kind and faithful and constant, or whether we think, 'I doubt if I can hold his friendship. I feel this friend will one day deceive me. I think he will disappoint me one day,' in either case we are creating that thought in the friend, we are inspiring him. And the friend without knowing it will act accordingly. In any enterprise or in anything we wish to accomplish, what is most wanted is the right attitude.

If a person thinks, 'Everything I touch and everything I do and everywhere I look, it is all wrong,' certainly it is wrong, there is no doubt about it. But it is his attitude that is wrong, and therefore whatever he does is wrong. It is just like taking a red lantern and throwing its light upon everything: every object in that light will appear red, and one will become frightened oneself and see danger everywhere. But the danger is in one's own hand. It is the red lantern.

Sometimes a person gets into a wrong attitude out of humbleness. By correcting oneself one can arrive at correcting too much, and then one calls oneself wrong. With every move such a person then makes he thinks that he has done something wrong, something dangerous, and that may result in a great danger too. Very often people do not progress in their lives because of their attitude towards life. They are their own enemies, and they themselves are the hindrance to their progress. They might think that one thing or another is the reason: lack of money, unkindness of friends, lack of acquaintances, a thousand things. They may say that the planets are against them. But what is most against them is themselves. They cannot progress. Once one has analyzed and understood attitude, and has controlled oneself so as to be able to take any attitude one wishes, then the latent influence in man naturally begins to manifest.

There are three gifts of God given to some in this world, and these gifts are greater than jewels, gems, wealth, or anything else in the world, and nothing can buy them. One may be born with them, yet not

know it. One gift is the influence to progress, another gift is the influence to attract, and the third gift is the influence to make difficult situations easy.

Nothing in the world can keep back a soul who has the gift of progress, in other words of flourishing, of prospering. There is a story about a poor man whose job was to sell empty bottles in Bombay. He came to a merchant and asked a certain salary to do this work for him, and from the day the merchant engaged him he steadily became more prosperous. So one day he thought, 'I have worked for twenty years in this shop, and it is only since this young man has come that I have prospered.' He did not tell this to the young man, but the next day he made him a partner in his business. And from that time he began to flourish a hundred times more. After six months he was flourishing and prospering in every way, and in the end, as he had no children, he gave his business to this young man, who in time became the wealthiest man in the whole country.

This is not a spiritual influence, and yet it is the influence of spirit, there is no doubt about it. It cannot be a material influence, as influence is never material. An influence that works from within and works towards perfection, in whatever form, is a wonderful influence. Whether people like the man in the story act alone or whether they act with someone else, in whatever they do there is progress. It cannot be helped. Whatever they touch flourishes.

The effect of the next influence is that a person will never be without friends. If he left the whole of humanity and went to live among lions, tigers, bears, and rhinoceroses, they would be his friends. Let him go among the educated, illiterate, wise, or foolish, wherever this person goes he will attract friends. He will never be alone, in riches, in poverty, in health, in sickness. At all times he will attract friends from every side. This person is born with that gift. Other people may have perhaps three or four or five or six relations or friends, but when a person possesses this influence, every man is his friend.

Not only human beings, but even animals such as cats, dogs, wolves, or foxes will all come to him. Very often dervishes without one penny, wandering here and there, have that influence. And if they sit in a place, in the desert, in a forest, or somewhere in the country, people are attracted to them. Maybe at first after having been away for six months or one year or two years only the animals of the country know such a man, only the birds recognize him. But then the time comes when human beings begin to come, when they too are attracted.

Sometimes people say that a certain place has an attraction because of its beautiful nature, splendid mountains, rivers, seashores, forests. But man has a greater influence than all these places. The Prophet Mohammad was born in Mecca, a place in the Hejaz of no special interest. There was no industry, there were no gold mines, there was no coal and no oil. Even nature was not beautiful, there was nothing to be had from that country, no art, no science, no literature; there was nothing. There was only a soul which was interesting—a soul which was a magnet and attracted the people of the whole world. And after the Prophet had passed away, then the tomb of the Prophet attracted. It attracted millions. In his lifetime thousands were attracted and after his death millions, to this same spot without any interest.

Then there is a third influence, and through this influence, however difficult a situation may be, when a certain person handles it, it becomes easy. For instance there may be a strike going on of thousands of miners and workmen, and after everyone has tried to make peace without success one man comes along who has some of that influence given to him by God. It is neither intellect, nor knowledge, nor psychology, but with this influence he goes among them and puts everything right.

If one wanted to develop this influence one could not do it; it is God's gift. A man who has it is called 'the man of the day.' That man may be in politics or in industry or business, it does not matter in what form of activity; the influence is there. But no doubt any of these three great gifts may belong to a person, and yet if his attitude is not right it is just like a lantern which is burning dimly. It could burn much better if the attitude were right.

There are many examples of those who are born with this influence. The gift is there for anyone to see and yet they never use it, they do not know they possess it. The reason may be that their attitude is wrong. A person may have the greatest opportunities to progress in life and to flourish, and yet in spite of this and in spite of having all the power to make things easy for himself, he may fail because of his wrong attitude.

One might wonder what is meant by the right attitude, and how it can be acquired. One can have the right attitude by right thinking, and by keeping one's mind focused on what is just and true. Wrong always attracts wrong, and right always attracts right. What is right and what is wrong? What you think to be right at the moment is right for you. And what you think to be wrong at the moment is wrong for you. It does not mean that what another person says is wrong for you is wrong, or that what another person says is right for you is right. The real basis is what you are thinking yourself at the moment. Never for one moment think that those who do wrong believe it to be right. It is not true; they do not believe it. They know it is wrong and yet they do it, out of weakness, lack of power, or lack of discrimination. They are not clear in their minds. There are not many who do wrong thinking that it is right. But the one, who thinks that it is right today, may tomorrow think that it is wrong. Well then, tomorrow it will be wrong, though it is right today.

All one says, does, and thinks comes from an impulse; one end of it is in one's own mind and the other end is in the mind of God. Therefore whatever people think about it, whether they think it right or wrong, one end of every impulse is in the heart of God. It is the spark that manifests in the heart of God first. Then it manifests outwardly.

One might say, 'God cannot guide a person wrongly, because God is just and good and perfect.' God's justice and goodness and perfection cannot be compared with what we consider just and good and right. It may be that God's justice and what is considered right and perfect by God is thought imperfect and unjust by man, for the horizon of his vision is very narrow. He cannot imagine what God means by every action that takes place. In the Qur'an it is said that there is not one atom that moves without the command of God.

All things are wrong or right, perfect or imperfect from our point of view. But our point of view is a narrow, small, limited point of view; we see and hear according to our eyes and ears; our ears cannot hear more than they can, our eyes cannot see farther than they can. If from our limited point of view we judge God's right and wrong, it is the greatest pity. On the other hand we cannot say that we should let everything happen as it does because everything happens according to God's right point of view. As individuals we have a certain responsibility, towards ourselves and towards others. And since the idea of justice and of what is right is given to us, we are responsible for acting in accordance with that idea. It may be that tomorrow there will be a greater light given to us so that we shall act still better. And in this way, by acting thus every day, we shall prove a better instrument for the work of God.

THE SECRET OF LIFE

MAN'S attitude is the secret of life, for it is upon man's attitude that success and failure depend. Both man's rise and fall depend upon his attitude. By attitude I mean that impulse which is like a battery behind the mechanism of thought. It is not man's thought, which is man's attitude. It is something behind man's thought pushing it to the fore. And according to the strength of that impulse the thought becomes realized. Behind every word one speaks, the attitude is the most important factor in bringing what one says to its successful accomplishment.

There are three different aspects of this subject, which one should observe. One aspect is one's attitude towards oneself: whether one treats oneself as a friend or as an enemy, whether one is in harmony with oneself or in disharmony. Not everyone is in harmony with himself, and not everyone treats himself as a friend, although he may think so. For man is generally his own enemy. He does not know it, but he proves it in his doings. One reads in the Qur'an, 'Verily, man is foolish and cruel.' Foolish because he does not even know his own interest, and cruel because he very often proves to be his own enemy. Apart from cruelty to others, man begins by being cruel to himself, and that cruelty is the cause of foolishness. Man may consider himself very practical and clever, yet he often proves to be his own enemy.

As Sa'di says, 'My cleverness, very often thou provest to be my worst enemy.' Worldly cleverness without faith and strength and trust is usually nothing but a delusion. It is the development of trust in the heart, the development of faith, that first gives a man a friendly attitude to himself. And he becomes his own friend by bringing his external being into harmony with his inner being. For it is when the inner being seeks one thing, and the external being does something else, that there is disharmony in the self. When the higher self desires to go one way, and the lower self another way, then there is disharmony, the result of which is like a volcanic eruption. The two parts of his own being which should unite together in love, clash together and the result is fire. What causes people to commit suicide? What brings illness and depression and despair? Very often the conflict which exists within oneself, and therefore the attitude towards oneself must first be friendly, kindly, and harmonious. Even in spiritual matters one should not go against oneself. I remember that when beginning to get interested in spiritual matters I once asked my teacher, 'Murshid, do you approve of my staying up most of the night for my vigils?' 'Whom do you torture?' said my murshid, 'Yourself? Is God pleased with it?' I had not another word to say.

When one thinks about one's dealings with friends, with relatives, with those with whom one comes in contact in everyday life, one will see that one attracts them or repulses them according to one's attitude. Whether a person is in business, in commerce, or in any other walk of life, he either repulses or attracts them, and on that depends his success or failure in life. The secret of magnetism depends on whether one considers oneself to be a friend or an enemy, a stranger. To him who considers everyone else to be a stranger, even a friend is a stranger, while to him who considers everyone else to be a friend, even a stranger is a friend. If one is afraid of someone who may harm one, then one inspires that person to do harm. If one distrusts someone, and thinks that one day that person will deceive one, he will certainly be inspired to do so. But if one has trust, the power of that trust may some day turn even an enemy into a friend.

Honesty and dishonesty are reflected in the same way in everything one does. If the attitude is not right then this wrong attitude is reflected upon whatever work one does or whomever one sees, and that person will respond in the same way. Therefore right and wrong doing is not only a religious teaching, something forced upon people. It is a scientific and logical truth. For with a wrong attitude nothing right can be accomplished, and with the right attitude nothing can go wrong, even if there are difficulties.

There is hidden in our heart a wonderful power. It is a divine power, a sacred power, and it can be developed and cherished by keeping our attitude right. No doubt it is not always easy to keep our attitude right. The influence of this life on earth, so full of changes, of temptations and of falsehood, continually upsets the steadiness of our attitude. Nevertheless the strength still lies in the steadiness of the attitude, and any lack of steadiness is the cause of every failure and disappointment. There is a Hindustani saying, 'A steady attitude secures success,' and when we enter the spiritual realm the same rule applies. It is not the prayer that a man says, it is not the house where he prays, it is not the faith that he claims, it is the attitude that counts in religion. It is just like the ticket one is asked to show at the railway barrier. They do not ask what position one has, what property or what ancestors. No, they say, 'Ticket please!' and if one has it one is admitted. That ticket is man's attitude. In order to enter into the spiritual spheres that right attitude is needed, and it shortens the path.

Now the question is how to know the right attitude from the wrong. To know the right attitude from the wrong is as easy as seeing things when the eyes are open. When one does not realize the attitude is wrong it means that at that time one closes one's eyes. The eyes do not fail one. One closes them. Man does not like to admit his wrong attitude to himself. He is afraid of his own faults. But the man who looks his own error in the eye, the man who criticizes himself has no time to criticize others. It is that man who will prove to be wise. But human nature is generally such that one does something quite different. Everyone seems to be most interested in criticizing another. If one would criticize oneself there are endless faults, however saintly or wise one may be. There are no end of faults in a human being. And the consciousness of correcting one's faults, of making oneself better, of taking hold of the right attitude, is the only secret of success, and by it one attains to that goal which is the object of every soul.

According to the Sufi point of view there is only one teacher, and that teacher is God Himself. No man can teach another man. All one can do for another is to give him one's own experience in order to help him to be successful. For instance if a person happens to know a road, he can tell another man that it is the road which leads to the place he wishes to find. The work of the spiritual teacher is like the work of Cupid. The work of Cupid is to bring two souls together. And so is the work of the spiritual teacher: to bring together the soul and God. But what is taught to the one who seeks after truth? Nothing is taught. He is only shown how he should learn from God. For no man can ever teach spirituality. It is God alone who teaches it. And how is it learned? When these ears which are open outwardly are closed to the outside world and focused upon the heart within, then instead of hearing all that comes from the outer life one begins to hear the words within. Thus if one were to define what meditation is, that also is an attitude: the right attitude towards God.

The attitude should first be to seek God within. And, after seeking God within, then to see God outside. In the story of Aladdin in the Thousand and One Nights we read that Aladdin went to look for a lantern. That lantern is the divine light within, and it is very difficult to find. Once a person has found that lantern the next thing is to throw that light on the outer life, in order to find God both within and without. Prayer, night vigil, any form of worship, all these things are helpful. But if a man is not inclined to make peace with his brother, to harmonize with his fellow-men, to seek to please those around him, then he has not performed his religious duties. For what can a man give to God who is perfect? His goodness? His goodness is very little. His prayers? How many times will he pray? The whole day he spends for himself. If he prays two or three times, it is not much. If a man can do anything to please God, it is only to please His creatures, to seek their pleasure. There cannot be a better prayer and a greater religion than being conscientious in regard to the feelings of other men, being ready to serve them, to please them in every way, to forgive them, to tolerate them. And if when doing wrong he would realize that he was doing wrong to God, and in doing right that he was doing right to God, then his attitude would be right.

The end and the sum total of all mysticism, philosophy, and meditation, of everything one learns and develops, is to be a better servant to humanity. Everything from the beginning to the end in the spiritual path is a training to be able to serve mankind better, and if one does not do it with that intention, one will find in the end that one has accomplished nothing. There are many, who seek wonder-working or great power to accomplish things. They may perhaps try and gain some power or other; but their soul will never be satisfied. The true satisfaction of the soul is in honest, humble service to another. If there were two people before me, one with great power of wonder-working who could perform miracles, and another humble and kind and gentle and willing to do anything he could for his fellow-men, I would prefer this last man. I would say: the first is wonderful; but the other is a sage.

The soul of man is goodness itself, if only he begins to love goodness. This is not something, which is acquired. It springs up of itself. Right attitude towards God is a direct response to God. For His voice is continually coming as an answer to every call. The ears of the heart should be open and focused on that source whence the voice is coming. When that is done then the teacher within is found. Then there is continual guidance, and one is guided to the extent that one keeps close to it. Then one needs no other guidance. But first the guidance of a spiritual teacher is necessary in order to come nearer to it.

Attitude forms a channel for an effort, and a right attitude makes a channel for a right effort. The world is the place of tests and trials. If one did not live in the world one would have no chance of doing good or bad. And even if one lived a very spiritual life in the wilderness it would do no good to anybody, not even to oneself. For one would not have gone through the tests and trials of the world. One can neither praise the life of a hermit, nor can one condemn it. If he is happy it is good. Everyone knows his own life, and if he is happy he will give happiness to others also.

Sometimes a man is born to live a hermit's life. In living that life he will not find any torture or trouble. Let him live it. In that way he will prove to be his own friend. At the second step he takes he will be the friend of another. If someone asked me if the hermit's life is ideal, I would say it may be ideal for him, but you need not follow it. Is a hermit's life selfish then? If we observe life it is very difficult to say who is selfish and who is not. The life of a hermit is not a life for which one should sacrifice everything in order to follow it. I would be the last to recommend it to anyone. But if one followed it for one's own pleasure and found happiness in it, I would not prevent it. For a Sufi maintains from first to last the freedom of the soul.

WHAT IS WANTED IN LIFE?

IF THIS question were asked of several people each would perhaps make out a list of not less than a thousand things that he wanted in life. And yet even after writing them all down one rarely knows what one really wants. What one apparently wants in life is not what one really wants, for the nature of the outer life is illusion. As soon as one feels that one wants this or that, then the world of illusion will answer, 'Yes, you want me, this is the particular thing you want in life,' but when a person thinks he lacks something in life he only sees the outer lack. He does not find the lack, which is within himself.

There is no doubt that what we lack most in life is to be tuned with the infinite and to be in rhythm with the infinite. In other words to be in rhythm with the conditions of life and to be in tune with the source of our existence. Our perpetual complaints against all things in life come from our not being in rhythm with the diverse conditions of life that we have to face. And then we think that if these conditions would only change into something that we wish, it would make our life easier. But that is an inexperienced expectation. If we were placed in the very conditions that we had just desired, believing them to be the

best, we would not even then say that we were quite satisfied. We would surely find something lacking in that condition also. For with all the errors and mistakes and shortcomings we find in our external life, we see a perfect hand working behind it all. And if we looked at life a little more closely than we generally do we would certainly find that all the lacks and errors and mistakes and faults add up to something, making life as complete as the wise hand which is working behind it wishes it to be.

There is a Persian saying, 'The Gardener of this garden of the world knows best which plant to rear and which to remove.' One might say that this comes close to fatalism, but I do not wish to take you further in that direction. We come now into the sphere of action. No doubt man has it in his power to improve his life's conditions greatly if only he does not lose patience before a desirable condition is brought about, if his courage has not been exhausted, and if his hope has endured.

And now the question is how can one become at one with the rhythm of life, in other words with the conditions of life? One's condition of life and one's own desire are generally two conflicting things. If desire gives in to the condition, then the condition gets the upper hand. And if the condition is mastered, then no doubt desire has the upper hand. But the condition is not always master when there is a conflict, a struggle; only one needs caution in fighting a condition in life. If harmony can be established peacefully it is better to avoid battling, though it is a fact that those who complain most about life and those who are most disappointed and troubled with life are the ones who struggle most with life's conditions. Therefore in achieving at-one-ment with the conditions of life one need not always use a weapon. One should first try to harmonize with a particular condition of life. The great heroes who have really fought through life and gained life's victory in the real sense of the word, have not been those who have fought against conditions. They made peace with the conditions of life. The secret of the lives of the great Sufis, in whatever part of the world they have been, was that they met conditions, whether favorable or unfavorable, with the aim of becoming at one with the rhythm of life.

A desire is sometimes our friend and sometimes our own enemy. Sometimes in unfavorable conditions desire becomes agitated and loses its patience, and wishes to break the condition. And instead of breaking the conditions it breaks itself. The great souls have extended their hand first to their worst enemy, because the one who makes his enemy his friend will make a friend of his own self. A condition as bitter as poison will be turned into nectar if we can get into rhythm with that condition, if we can understand it, if we will endure that condition with patience, with courage, with hope. When there is a favorable condition we are very often afraid that it may pass, but when there is an adverse condition we do not generally think that it will pass. We think that it will last for ever. This comes from fear, from agitation, from the desire to get out of this condition, and thus we lose even hope, the only source that keeps us alive. When we see the nature of life, and how from morning till evening everything changes, why should we not keep the hope that an unfavorable condition will change and turn into a favorable condition? A person gets into the habit of expecting the worst. He who has had some bad experiences in his life always thinks that whatever comes to him will not be good. That nothing good will come to him because he has once gone through bad times. He thinks anybody else can have a better time than he because he is born under an unfavorable star.

In the same way there are many imaginative and intelligent people who day after day read the newspapers and always come to the conclusion that there will be a war. Every insignificant struggle they read about gives them the idea that the world must go to pieces. There are other people interested in astrology who have gone further and are expecting the end of the world year after year, month after month. It gives people a topic to speak about at the dinner table, and at the same time it gives a shock to those who wish to live a little longer than the world's end. Many such threats of the world's destruction have passed, but the prophecy and expectation still remain and will continue. Therefore the best thing is to go

through every condition that life presents with patience, with understanding, with open eyes, and so try to rise above it with every little effort we can make.

Tuning ourselves to the infinite is achieved by the way of silence, by the way of meditation, by the way of thinking of something which is beyond and above all things of this mortal world. By giving some moments of our life to the thought of getting in tune with that which is the source and goal of all of us, realizing that in that source alone is the secret of our happiness and peace.

The nature of being in tune with the infinite is this: comparing our soul to a string of an instrument, it is tied at both ends. One is the infinite, and the other is the finite. When a person is conscious all the time of the finite then he is tuned to the finite, while the one who is conscious of the infinite is tuned to the infinite. Being in tune with the former makes us limited, weak, hopeless, and powerless. But by being in tune with the latter we obtain the power and strength that will pull us through life in whatever adverse conditions may arise.

The work that a Sufi considers to be his sacred task has nothing to do with any particular creed, nor has it to do with any particular religion. It is only this simple thing: to be in rhythm with life's conditions and to be in tune with the infinite. And when one asks how one can arrive at being in accord with life instead of being frightened by life's conditions, the answer is: by meeting it and observing it keenly, and then by trying to harmonize oneself for the time being with that condition, while the next effort is to rise above it if it is an adverse one.

Once a young Arab was sleeping in a field and a serpent happened to crawl over his palm, and in his sleep he held the serpent with all his might. The serpent was helpless and could not bite, but as soon as the young man awoke from his sleep he was frightened at the sight of a snake in his hand and at once let it go. And when the serpent was out of his hand the first thing it did was to bite. One can manage a condition better when it is in one's hand than when it has been lost. Then the situation is out of one's hand. For instance, if a person is cross, if he has lost his temper, the natural tendency is to pay him back in the same coin that he deals out. The outcome is a struggle, which will culminate in disappointment. But when a person is cross and has lost his temper, then he is the weak one, and that is the time that you can manage him. That is the time that the situation is in your hand, when he is weak and you are strong.

In our life in this world we are dependent on one another, and wealth, however powerful it seems to be, is in the end not so powerful as it appears. Its power is limited and it does not always take away the dependence of one person upon another. The point is to meet one's condition with understanding and with complete resignation. Thus the first thing is to meet the condition as it is and the second is to better the condition. The more one can avoid conflict the better. At the same time we cannot always avoid a conflict, and we must not turn our back on it if it comes to us. After all, life is a struggle and we must be ready to struggle. Only, struggle must not make us drunk so that we lose the way of peace which is the first thing to consider. We must not be like a boxer who is always looking for another person to box with.