



HAZRAT INAYAT KHAN

The Way of Illumination

The Sufi Message Volume One

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Volume I - The Way of Illumination

Preface

The Way of Illumination is a beautiful introduction to some major aspects of the universal Sufism of Hazrat Inayat Khan. The four parts include three of his earlier publications, *The Way of Illumination*, *The Inner Life*, and *The Purpose of Life*. Besides it contains a crucial treatise on the being of man *The Soul, Whence and Whither?* which was given in the early 'twenties.

The title essay, *The Way of Illumination*, is a succinct presentation of his earlier teachings of Sufism. Much of it you will find elaborated in the further volumes of this series. It very much serves as a first guide both to those who seek inner guidance and initiation in the inner school as to those who simply seek for inspiration and attunement, for finding deep in oneself the spirit of the Self which essentially is the everlasting Life.

The Inner Life sheds further light in this journey of seeking and finding, going on in an upward spiral, donning one's life with ever growing insights and overwhelming views. Inner life is not separate from outer life. Nor does it require leaving the world renouncing all pleasures and comforts. It is the enrichment of life with qualities that will last, with a source of energy and love which is truly your own, permanently available if we but know how to tap it.

The Purpose of Life presents a further elaboration of the relationship between inner and outer life. What are we seeking for? Life? Knowledge? Power? Happiness? Love? Yes, sure. But do we find it? Yes, we do. At least it appears so. But it slips out of our hold sooner or later. It is not our control. We depend upon things outside ourselves. Let us find our real being. All is to be found there, inside ourselves. And yet, if our purpose would only be for ourselves, where do we go? What is this all for? Who is that being which is ourselves? The purpose of life is in the ideal. It is in serving one's fellow men, in realizing that God is everywhere, in ourselves, in our fellow man, inside and outside, everywhere, anywhere. To realize this deeply is the purpose of life.

This is further presented in *The Soul, Whence and Whither?*, a beautiful book describing the soul's journey from its divine origin to manifestation going through the worlds of heart and mind before being born on earth; the nature of our being and how to understand our origin and destination, our nature and potentialities; and the journey back, through the same spheres of mind and heart, until the soul returns to its origin purified and yet enriched with an expanded consciousness.

Section I - The Way of Illumination

Part I SUFİ THOUGHTS

THERE are ten principal Sufi thoughts, which comprise all the important subjects with which the inner life of man is concerned.

i

'There is One God, the Eternal, the Only Being; none exists save He.'

The God of the Sufi is the God of every creed, and the God of all. Names make no difference to him. Allah, God, Gott, Dieu, Khuda, Brahma, or Bhagwan, all these names and more are the names of his God; and yet to him God is beyond the limitation of name. He sees his God in the sun, in the fire, in the idol which diverse sects worship; and he recognizes Him in all the forms of the universe, yet knowing Him to be beyond all form; God in all, and all in God, He being the Seen and the Unseen, the Only Being. God to the Sufi is not only a religious belief, but also the highest ideal the human mind can conceive.

The Sufi, forgetting the self and aiming at the attainment of the divine ideal, walks constantly all through life in the path of love and light. In God the Sufi sees the perfection of all that is in the reach of man's perception and yet he knows Him to be above human reach. He looks to Him as the lover to his beloved, and takes all things in life as coming from Him, with perfect resignation. The sacred name of God is to him as medicine to the patient. The divine thought is the compass by which he steers the ship to the shores of immortality. The God-ideal is to the Sufi as a lift by which he raises himself to the eternal goal, the attainment of which is the only purpose of his life.

ii

'There is One Master, the Guiding Spirit of all Souls, Who constantly leads His followers towards the light.'

The Sufi understands that although God is the source of all knowledge, inspiration, and guidance, yet man is the medium through which God chooses to impart His knowledge to the world. He imparts it through one who is a man in the eyes of the world, but God in his consciousness. It is the mature soul that draws blessings from the heavens, and God speaks through that soul. Although the tongue of God is busy speaking through all things, yet in order to speak to the deaf ears of many among us, it is necessary for Him to speak through the lips of man. He has done this all through the history of man, every great teacher of the past having been this Guiding Spirit living the life of God in human guise. In other words, their human guise consists of various coats worn by the same person, who appeared to be different in each. Shiva, Buddha, Rama, Krishna on the one side, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad on the other; and many more, known or unknown to history, always one and the same person.

Those who saw the person and knew Him recognized Him in whatever form or guise; those who could only see the coat went astray. To the Sufi therefore there is only one Teacher,

however differently He may be named at different periods of history, and He comes constantly to awaken humanity from the slumber of this life of illusion, and to guide man onwards towards divine perfection. As the Sufi progresses in this view he recognizes his Master, not only in the holy ones, but in the wise, in the foolish, in the saint and in the sinner, and has never allowed the Master who is One alone, and the only One who can be and who ever will be, to disappear from his sight.

The Persian word for Master is Murshid. The Sufi recognizes the Murshid in all beings of the world, and is ready to learn from young and old, educated and uneducated, rich and poor, without questioning from whom he learns. Then he begins to see the light of *Risalat*, the torch of truth which shines before him in every being and thing in the universe, thus he sees *Rasul*, his Divine Message Bearer, a living identity before him. Thus the Sufi sees the vision of God, the worshipped deity, in His immanence, manifest in nature, and life now becomes for him a perfect revelation both within and without.

It is often for no other reason than clinging to the personality of their particular teacher, claiming for him superiority over other teachers, and degrading a teacher held in the same esteem by others, that people have separated themselves from one another, and caused most of the wars and factions and contentions which history records among the children of God.

What the Spirit of Guidance is, can be further explained as follows: as in man there is a faculty for art, music, poetry and science, so in him is the faculty or spirit of guidance. It is better to call it spirit because it is the supreme faculty from which all the others originate. As we see that in every person there is some artistic faculty, but not everyone is an artist, as everyone can hum a tune but only one in a thousand is a musician, so every person possesses this faculty in some form and to a limited degree; but the spirit of guidance is found among few indeed of the human race.

A Sanskrit poet says, 'Jewels are stones, but cannot be found everywhere; the sandal tree is a tree, but does not grow in every forest; as there are many elephants, but only one king elephant, so there are human beings all over the world, but the real human being is rarely to be found.'

When we arise above faculty and consider the Spirit of Guidance, we shall find that it is consummated in the Bodhisattva, the spiritual teacher or divine messenger. There is a saying that the reformer is the child of civilization, but the prophet is its father. This spirit has always existed, and must always exist; and in this way from time to time the message of God has been given.

iii

'There is One Holy Book, the sacred manuscript of nature, the only scripture which can enlighten the reader.'

Most people consider as sacred scriptures only certain books or scrolls written by the hand of man, and carefully preserved as holy, to be handed down to posterity as divine revelation. Men have fought and disputed over the authenticity of these books, have refused to accept any other book of similar character, and, clinging thus to the book and losing the sense of it, have formed diverse sects. The Sufi has in all ages respected all such books, and has traced in the Vedanta, Zend-Avesta, Kabbala, Bible, Quran, and all other sacred scriptures, the same

truth which he reads in the incorruptible manuscript of nature, the only Holy Book, the perfect and living model that teaches the inner law of life: all scriptures before nature's manuscript are as little pools of water before the ocean.

To the eye of the seer every leaf of the tree is a page of the holy book that contains divine revelation, and he is inspired every moment of his life by constantly reading and understanding the holy script of nature.

When man writes, he inscribes characters upon rock, leaf, paper, wood, or steel. When God writes, the characters He writes are living creatures.

It is when the eye of the soul is opened and the sight is keen that the Sufi can read the divine law in the manuscript of nature; and that which the teachers of humanity have taught to their followers was derived by them from the same source. They expressed what little it is possible to express in words, and so they preserved the inner truth when they themselves were no longer there to reveal it.

iv

'There is One Religion, the unswerving progress in the right direction towards the ideal, which fulfills the life's purpose of every soul.'

Religion in the Sanskrit language is termed Dharma, which means duty. The duty of every individual is religion. 'Every soul is born for a certain purpose, and the light of that purpose is kindled in his soul' says Sadi. This explains why the Sufi in his tolerance allows everyone to have his own path, and does not compare the principles of others with his own, but allows freedom of thought to everyone, since he himself is a freethinker.

Religion, in the conception of a Sufi, is the path that leads man towards the attainment of his ideal, worldly as well as heavenly. Sin and virtue, right and wrong, good and bad are not the same in the case of every individual; they are according to his grade of evolution and state of life. Therefore the Sufi concerns himself little with the name of the religion or the place of worship. All places are sacred enough for his worship, and all religions convey to him the religion of his soul. 'I saw Thee in the sacred Kaba and in the temple of the idol also Thee I saw.'

v

'There is One Law, the law of reciprocity, which can be observed by a selfless conscience, together with a sense of awakened justice.'

Man spends his life in the pursuit of all that seems to him to be profitable for himself and, when so absorbed in self-interest, in time he even loses touch with his own real interest. Man has made laws to suit himself, but they are laws by which he can get the better of another. It is this that he calls justice, and it is only that which is done to him by another that he calls injustice. A peaceful and harmonious life with his fellow men cannot be led until the sense of justice has been awakened in him by a selfless conscience. As the judicial authorities of the world intervene between two persons who are at variance, knowing that they have a right to intervene when the two parties in dispute are blinded by personal interest, so the Almighty Power intervenes in all disputes however small or great.

It is the law of reciprocity which saves man from being exposed to the higher powers, as a considerate man has less chance of being brought before the court. The sense of justice is awakened in a perfectly sober mind; that is, one which is free from the intoxication of youth, strength, power, possession, command, birth, or rank. It seems a net profit when one does not give but takes, or when one gives less and takes more; but in either case there is really a greater loss than profit. For every such profit spreads a cover over the sense of justice within, and when many such covers have veiled the sight, man becomes blind even to his own profit. It is like standing in one's own light. 'Blind here remains blind in the hereafter.'

Although the different religions, in teaching man how to act harmoniously and peacefully with his fellow men, have given out different laws, they all meet in this one truth: do unto others as thou wouldst they should do unto thee. The Sufi, in taking a favor from another, enhances its value, and in accepting what another does to him he makes allowance.

vi

'There is One Brotherhood, the human brotherhood which unites the children of earth indiscriminately in the Fatherhood of God.'

The Sufi understands that the one life emanating from the inner Being is manifested on the surface as the life of variety; and in this world of variety man is the finest manifestation, for he can realize in his evolution the oneness of the inner being even in the external existence of variety. But he evolves to this ideal, which is the only purpose of his coming on earth, by uniting himself with another.

Man unites with others in the family tie, which is the first step in his evolution, and yet families in the past have fought with each other, and have taken vengeance upon one another for generations, each considering his cause to be the only true and righteous one. Today man shows his evolution in uniting with his neighbors and fellow-citizens, and even developing within himself the spirit of patriotism for his nation. He is greater in this respect than those in the past; and yet men so united nationally have caused the catastrophe of the modern wars, which will be regarded by the coming generations in the same light in which we now regard the family feuds of the past.

There are racial bonds which widen the circle of unity still more, but it has always happened that one race has looked down on the other.

The religious bond shows a still higher ideal. But it has caused diverse sects, which have opposed and despised each other for thousands of years, and have caused endless splits and divisions among men. The germ of separation exists even in such a wide scope for brotherhood, and however widespread the brotherhood may be; it cannot be a perfect one as long as it separates man from man.

The Sufi, realizing this, frees himself from national, racial, and religious boundaries, uniting himself in the human brotherhood, which is devoid of the differences and distinctions of class, caste, creed, race, nation, or religion, and unites mankind in the universal brotherhood.

'There is One Moral, the love which springs forth from self-denial and blooms in deeds of beneficence.'

There are moral principles taught to mankind by various teachers, by many traditions, one differing from the other, which are like separate drops coming out of the fountain. But when we look at the stream, we find there is but one stream, although it turns into several drops on falling. There are many moral principles, just as many drops fall from one fountain; but there is one stream that is at the source of all, and that is love. It is love that gives birth to hope, patience, endurance, forgiveness, tolerance, and to all moral principles. All deeds of kindness and beneficence take root in the soil of the loving heart. Generosity, charity, adaptability, an accommodating nature, even renunciation, are the offspring of love alone. The great, rare and chosen beings, who for ages have been looked up to as ideal in the world, are the possessors of hearts kindled with love. All evil and sin come from the lack of love.

People call love blind, but love in reality is the light of the sight. The eye can only see the surface; love can see much deeper. All ignorance is the lack of love. As fire when not kindled gives only smoke, but when kindled, the illuminating flame springs forth, so it is with love. It is blind when undeveloped, but, when its fire is kindled, the flame that lights the path of the traveler from mortality to everlasting life springs forth. The secrets of earth and heaven are revealed to the possessor of the loving heart, the lover has gained mastery over himself and others, and he not only communes with God but also unites with Him.

'Hail to thee, then, O love, sweet madness! Thou who healest all our infirmities! Who art the physician of our pride and self-conceit! Who art our Plato and our Galen!' says Rumi.

'There is One Object of Praise, the beauty which uplifts the heart of its worshippers through all aspects from the seen to the unseen.'

It is said in the Hadith, 'God is beautiful, and He loves beauty.'

This expresses the truth that man, who inherits the Spirit of God, has beauty in him and loves beauty, although that which is beautiful to one is not beautiful to another. Man cultivates the sense of beauty as he evolves, and prefers the higher aspect of beauty to the lower. But when he has observed the highest vision of beauty in the Unseen by a gradual evolution from praising the beauty in the seen world, then the entire existence becomes to him one single vision of beauty.

Man has worshipped God, beholding the beauty of sun, moon, stars, and planets. He has worshipped God in plants, in animals. He has recognized God in the beautiful merits of man, and he has with his perfect view of beauty found the source of all beauty in the Unseen, from whence all this springs, and in Whom all is merged.

The Sufi, realizing this, worships beauty in all its aspects, and sees the face of the Beloved in all that is seen and the Beloved's spirit in the Unseen. So wherever he looks his ideal of worship is before him. 'Everywhere I look, I see Thy winning face; everywhere I go, I arrive at Thy dwelling-place.'

'There is One Truth, the true knowledge of our being, within and without, which is the essence of all wisdom.'

Hazrat Ali says, 'Know thyself, and thou shalt know God.'

It is the knowledge of self which blooms into the knowledge of God. Self-knowledge answers such problems as: whence have I come? Did I exist before I became conscious of my present existence? If I existed, as what did I exist? As an individual such as I now am, or as a multitude, or as an insect, bird, animal, spirit, jinn, or angel? What happens at death, the change to which every creature is subject? Why do I tarry here awhile? What purpose have I to accomplish here? What is my duty in life? In what does my happiness consist, and what is it that makes my life miserable?

Those whose hearts have been kindled by the light from above, begin to ponder such questions but those whose souls are already illumined by the knowledge of the self understand them. It is they who give to individuals or to the multitudes the benefit of their knowledge, so that even men whose hearts are not yet kindled, and whose souls are not illuminated, may be able to walk on the right path that leads to perfection.

This is why people are taught in various languages, in various forms of worship, in various tenets in different parts of the world. It is one and the same truth; it is only seen in diverse aspects appropriate to the people and the time. It is only those who do not understand this who can mock at the faith of another, condemning to hell or destruction those who do not consider their faith to be the only true faith.

The Sufi recognizes the knowledge of self as the essence of all religions; he traces it in every religion, he sees the same truth in each, and therefore he regards all as one. Hence he can realize the saying of Jesus; 'I and my Father are one.' The difference between creature and Creator remains on his lips, not in his soul. This is what is meant by union with God. It is in reality the dissolving of the false self in the knowledge of the true self, which is divine, eternal, and all pervading. 'He who attaineth union with God, his very self must lose,' said Amir.

'There is One Path, the annihilation of the false ego in the real, which raises the mortal to immortality, in which resides all perfection.'

'I passed away into nothingness – I vanished; and lo! I was all living.' All who have realized the secret of life understand that life is one, but that it exists in two aspects. First as immortal, all-pervading and silent; and secondly as mortal, active, and manifest in variety. The soul being of the first aspect becomes deluded, helpless, and captive by experiencing life in contact with the mind and body, which is of the next aspect. The gratification of the desires of the body and fancies of the mind do not suffice for the purpose of the soul, which is undoubtedly to experience its own phenomena in the seen and the unseen, though its inclination is to be itself and not anything else. When delusion makes it feel that it is helpless, mortal and captive, it finds itself out of place. This is the tragedy of life, which keeps the strong and the weak, the rich and poor, all dissatisfied, constantly looking for something they

do not know. The Sufi, realizing this, takes the path of annihilation, and, by the guidance of a teacher on the path, finds at the end of this journey that the destination was he. As Iqbal says:

I wandered in the pursuit of my own self;
I was the traveller,
and I am the destination.

Section I - The Way of Illumination

Part II

Some Aspects of Sufism

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE

Every soul at times asks itself, 'Why am I here?' This question arises according to the development of one's intelligence. A man may say, 'I am here to eat, drink, and to make merry,' but this even the animals do; therefore what more has he accomplished by being human? Another might affirm that the attainment of power and position is important, but he must know that both of these are transitory. Power of any kind has its fall as well as its rise. All things we possess are taken from others, and others in their turn await with outstretched hands to seize them.

A man may say, 'We are here to gain honor.' In this case someone has to be humbled in order to give him the honor he seeks; but he in his turn may have to be humbled by a still more ardent seeker of honor. We may think that being loved is all-important, but we should know that the beauty in ourselves which makes another love us, is transient. Furthermore the beauty we possess may pale in comparison with the beauty of another. When we seek the love of another we are not only dependent upon their love, but are ourselves devoid of love. If we think that it is desirable to love someone who deserves our love, we are mistaken, for we are always liable to be disappointed in the object of our love, who may perhaps never prove to be our ideal. One is led to suppose and believe that virtue is the only thing that matters in life, but it will be found that the greater number of sufferers from moral hallucination are to be met with among the self-righteous.

Then the only purpose of our life here on earth, if there be any, is the successful attainment of life's demands. It may seem strange at first sight that all which life demands should be allowable and worthwhile attaining; but on a closer study of life we see that the demands of our external self are the only ones we know, and we are ignorant of the demands of the true self, our inner life. For instance, we know that we want good food and nice clothes, comfort of living and every convenience for moving about; honor, possessions, and all necessary means for the satisfaction of our vanity, all of which for the moment appear to us as our life's only demands; but neither they nor their joy remain with us constantly. We then come to think that what we had was but a little and that perhaps more would satisfy us, and still more would suffice our need; but this is not so. Even if the whole universe were within our grasp it would be impossible fully to satisfy our life's demands. This shows that our true life has quite different demands from those with which we are familiar. It does not want the joy experienced by this individual self only; it desires joy from all around. It does not wish for a momentary peace, but for one that is everlasting. It does not desire to love a beloved held in the arms of mortality. It needs a beloved to be always before it. It does not want to be loved only for today and perhaps not tomorrow. It wishes to float in the ocean of love.

It is therefore that the Sufi seeks God as his love, lover and beloved, his treasure, his possession, his honor, his joy, his peace; and his attainment in its perfection alone fulfills all demands of life both here and hereafter.

Then again it may be said, there is a purpose above each purpose, and there is again a purpose under each purpose; and yet beyond and beneath all purposes there is no purpose. The creation is, because it is.

Life is a journey from one pole to another, and the perfection of the conscious life is the final destiny of the imperfect life. In other words, every aspect of life in this world of variety gradually evolves from imperfection to perfection; and if life's evolution were not so in its nature, there would be no difference between life and death, for life on the surface is nothing but the phenomena of contrast. This, then, is another way of expressing what is the purpose of life.

LIFE IN THIS WORLD

One may try to see from the point of view of another as well as from one's own, and so give freedom of thought to everybody because one demands it oneself; one may try to appreciate what is good in another, and overlook what one considers bad; if somebody behaves selfishly towards one, one may take it naturally, because it is human nature to be selfish, and so one is not disappointed; but if one appears oneself to be selfish, one should take oneself to task and try to improve. There is not anything one should not be ready to tolerate, and there is nobody whom one should not forgive. Never doubt those whom you trust; never hate those whom you love; never cast down those whom you once raise in your estimation. Wish to make friends with everyone you meet; make an effort to gain the friendship of those you find difficult; become indifferent to them only if you cannot succeed in your effort. Never wish to break the friendship once made.

If any one causes harm, one should try to think it is because one has deserved it in some way, or else it is that the one who harms knows no better. Remember that every soul that raises its head in life gets much opposition from the world. It has been so with all the prophets, saints and sages, so one cannot expect to be exempt. In this is the law of nature, and also God's plan working and preparing something desirable. No one is either higher or lower than oneself. In all sources that fulfill one's need, one may see one source, God, the only source; and in admiring and in bowing before and in loving anyone, one may consider one is doing it to God. In sorrow one may look to God, and in joy one may thank Him. One does not bemoan the past, nor worry about the future; one tries only to make the best of today. One should know no failure, for even in a fall there is a stepping-stone to rise; but to the Sufi the rise and fall matter little. One does not repent for what one has done, since one thinks, says, and does what one means. One does not fear the consequences of performing one's wish in life, for what will be, will be.

VOCATION

Every being has a definite vocation, and his vocation is the light which illuminates his life. The man who disregards his vocation is a lamp unlit. He who sincerely seeks his real purpose in life is himself sought by that purpose. As he concentrates on that search a light begins to

clear his confusion, call it revelation, call it inspiration, call it what you will. It is mistrust that misleads. Sincerity leads straight to the goal.

Each one has his circle of influence, large or small; within his sphere so many souls and minds are involved; with his rise, they rise; with his fall, they fall. The size of a man's sphere corresponds with the extent of his sympathy, or we may say, with the size of his heart. His sympathy holds his sphere together. As his heart grows, his sphere grows; as his sympathy is withdrawn or lessened, so his sphere breaks up and scatters. If he harms those who live and move within his sphere, those dependent upon him or upon his affection, he of necessity harms himself. His house or his palace or his cottage, his satisfaction or his disgust in his environment is the creation of his own thought. Acting upon his thoughts, and also part of his own thoughts, are the thoughts of those near to him; others depress him and destroy him, or they encourage and support him, in proportion as he repels those around him by his coldness, or attracts them by his sympathy.

Each individual composes the music of his own life. If he injures another, he brings disharmony. When his sphere is disturbed, he is disturbed himself, and there is a discord in the melody of his life. If he can quicken the feeling of another to joy or to gratitude, by that much he adds to his own life; he becomes himself by that much more alive. Whether conscious of it or not, his thought is affected for the better by the joy or gratitude of another, and his power and vitality increase thereby, and the music of his life grows more in harmony.

NUR-ZAHUR

To the view of a Sufi this universe is nothing but a manifestation of the divine Being, and this divine manifestation is called in Sufi terms *Nur-Zahur*. The supreme God, from His existence as the single and only Being, has, so to speak, journeyed as far as He could towards the surface. Through His activity and His will behind it, He has manifested on the surface, from the heavens He has descended upon earth. From the most unconscious state of existence, blind, unaware of His being, as is the rock, He has gradually awakened to consciousness of the surroundings on the surface. Also in the Quran, one finds the idea that the world was created out of darkness. The gradual progress of the journey brings the Inner Being to the condition of a plant, flower and fruit, then to the state of worm, germ, and animal, until He manifests as man, Ashraf al-Makhluqat, the ruler of this universe and the controller of the heavens. In man He reaches the final goal of His destiny, when He realizes Himself as the whole being, which He has not done hitherto. God has made man in His image, as is said in the Bible.

Hazrat Ali says, 'The secret of God can be studied in His nature.' Every traveler on foot as a rule lights his torch at the approach of night. So also this heavenly traveler. Seeing darkness overwhelming Him in the lower spheres on His path, He lights a torch. It is the light of this torch which is called in the Quran *Nur-i Muhammadi*, that has guided Him to the surface, whence He could clearly discern and find His path back. To the knower's eye, this Nur, this light, is the real Muhammad. This light it is which has beamed forth through all the Masters of humanity and is known as the Light of Guidance.

It is the nature of every luminous object to shed light all around, and yet a particular beam of light coming forth from it gives more illumination than light spread all around. This may be

seen in the light of the sun. The souls which happen to be in the zone of the beam of the Light of Guidance, whether by intention or accident, have been known to the world as the chosen ones of God. They saw God sooner, they heard Him more quickly than others, and they have been nearer to Him than others. They may be called the elect of God as it is said in the *Song to the Soul of the Saint*:

Before the righteous soul,
Servant of God, even the angels bend;
His lotus feet the long-desired goal
Where weary pilgrims find their journey's end
In pardon for their sin.
Thus, as the saint God comes, and man is healed,
And fortunate that happy one, within
Whose heart the mystic vision is revealed.

All souls since the creation of man who have been in this light have been Masters, coming one after the other connected by the link of the one current which first springs from the innermost being and broadens and expands in this universe.

The saints, sages, and mystics, who fare forth from the highest spheres, are attracted by this light, and they seek refuge in it from life's dark clouds. The invisible ones, who floated in this light even before man was created, are the angels.

The divine light has shone upon the mineral and vegetable kingdoms; and there too it has shown its phenomena, although its full radiance has been reached only in man. It can be seen in the developed intelligence, and this can be observed in the cosmic system as well as in the mineral and vegetable kingdoms. It is the light of the sun which shines upon the moon and the planets; each star is but a reflection of the same light; thus the whole cosmic system is illuminated by the sun alone.

In the vegetable kingdom we see one little plant, a fruit or flower, spreading its influence around it, covering that part of the forest in time with the same sweet fruit or with the same fragrant flower.

When we watch the animal kingdom closely, we see the special gift of intelligence in some animals. We find that among all birds there is a leader for every flock. Among the elephants of the forest especially, there is the wise elephant who walks in front of the herd, carefully caring the stem of a tree with his trunk. He uses it as a stick, and examines with it the path he walks upon to discover whether there are any pits in the way, for his own safety as well as that of his followers. In the jungle a troop of monkeys can be seen following the command of one among them. After he has jumped, they all jump. The foxes and dogs in the jungle have among them one who is most wary, who gives the alarm before every coming danger. In a flock of birds one wise and courageous bird leads the whole flock. And this is the case with many other birds and beasts also. This faculty of guidance, with the maturity of intelligence, fulfills the purpose of manifestation in the evolution of man.

The Quran tells that man was destined to be the Khalif of all beings, which can be rightly understood when we see that all beings in the world serve man, are being controlled and ruled by him. Obeying his command. The secret of their nature is disclosed to him, that he may use them for the purpose for which they are meant. Moreover it is man who may rightly be called

the seed of God, for in him alone intelligence develops so perfectly that he not only appreciates God's works and worships Him, but he is even enabled to attain self-sufficiency and all-pervading consciousness of the everlasting life of God. Man realizes his perfection in God, and God realizes His perfection in man.

We see this tendency of guidance in a small degree in parents, who, whatever their own life may have been, yet wish their children to benefit by their experience – that the children may live rightly. There are some people to be found, in this world of selfishness, who warn their friends against going astray; and we find a leader in a community who sacrifices his own life and welfare for the benefit of his fellow men, uniting them in the bond of love and harmony. The same attribute of self-sacrifice, in its higher grade of evolution, is seen among the Masters of humanity, who act as officials of the infinite government and are known in the world as messengers. Among them are holy beings of different grades, designed by Sufis as Wali, ghaus, Qutb, Nabi, and Rasul. They differ one from the other in degree, according to the depth to which they penetrate into the world unseen, or to the breadth of the space they occupy in the universal consciousness, and also according to the width of the circle of humanity that is placed in their charge for its guidance. Nabi is the guide of a community, Rasul has a message for the whole of humanity, and each has a certain cycle of time for his message.

This can be seen by an intelligent study of the cosmos. The laws of nature teach us and prove to the knower the influence of each planet upon souls, both individually and collectively, as families, nations, and races; and even upon the whole world, the condition of each and all being in accordance with the nature of the planet under whose influence they are. Over birth, death, and every rise and fall, and over all life's affairs the planet acts as ruler. If planets, the reflections of the sun, have power upon the external affairs of humanity, how much greater must the power of the God-conscious, the reflections of the divine light, of which the sun is merely a shadow! These are the Awatads, whom the Hindus call Avatars, who are not in power, as the earthly kings are, only for the time of their life on earth, but remain in power even after they have passed from this earthly plane. The knower therefore sees in the Masters of humanity, not only the deliverers of the divine message, but also the spiritual sovereigns, controllers of the universe during their cycles.

THE MASTERS

Every aspect of the life of an individual and of the life of the world has its cycle. In the life of an individual the period from his birth to his death is the first part, and from death to assimilation in the Infinite the second part. The sub-cycles in man's life are from infancy to youth where one part ends, and from youth to old age which is the close. There are again under-cycles: infancy, childhood, youth, maturity, senility; and there are the cycles of man's rise and fall.

So there is a cycle of the life of the world, and the cycle of the creation of man and his destruction, the cycles of the reign of races and nations, and cycles of time, such as a year, a month, a week, day, and hour.

The nature of each of these cycles has three aspects, the beginning, the culmination and the end, which are named Uruj, Kamal and Zawal; like, for example, new moon, full moon, and

waning moon; sunrise, zenith, and sunset. These cycles, sub-cycles and under-cycles, and the three aspects of their nature, are divided and distinguished by the nature and course of light. As the light of the sun and moon and of the planets plays the most important part in the life of the world, individually and collectively, so the light of the Spirit of Guidance also divides time into cycles. And each cycle has been under the influence of a certain Master with many controllers under him, working as the spiritual hierarchy which controls the affairs of the whole world, mainly those concerning the inward spiritual condition of the world. The Masters have been numberless since the creation of man; they have appeared with different names and forms; but He alone was disguised in them who is the only master of eternity.

Rejection of the stranger, and belief only in the one, whom he has once acknowledged, has kept man in darkness for ages. If he believed one message he would not accept the succeeding message, brought by another Master, who was perhaps a stranger to him. This has caused many troubles in the lives of all the Masters. Man refused to believe the Masters and their teachings, whether of the past or future, if their names were not written in the particular tradition he believed, or if he had not heard their names in the legends handed down for ages among his people. Therefore the people of that part of the world who have acknowledged the Hebrew prophets do not for instance recognize Avatars such as Rama, and Krishna, or Vishnu and Shiva simply because they cannot find these names in their scriptures. The same thing occurs in the other part of humanity which does not count Abraham, Moses or Jesus among its Devatas, as it does not find those names written in the legends with which it is familiar. Even if it were true that Brahma was the same Devata whom the Hebrews called Abraham, and if Christ was the same Master whom the Hindus have called Krishna, yet man would not recognize as one those whom he has distinguished as different, having a higher opinion of one of them and a lower opinion of the other.

If the Masters were not the same in their mortal garb, yet in spirit they were one; if it were not so, how could one and the same truth be disclosed by them all? The Masters of humanity have been the elder brothers who guided the younger ones out of their brotherly love, and owing to their love of the Father. It is humane to sympathize with one's fellow man when he is striving for something and cannot gain it, and to help him to the attainment of the ideal for which he strives.

This is very well illustrated by the myth of Ramachandra. It is said in the Purana that once Sita, the consort of Ramachandra, was staying in the guardianship of Vashita Rishi with her sons. The younger son Lahu, one day went to see the neighboring town. He saw Kalanki, a most beautiful horse, running about the city without a rider. When he inquired whose the horse was, people told him that this horse had been let loose so that whoever was able to catch it should be made the king of that kingdom. This tempted the youth, and he ran after the horse in order to catch it. He continued running a long time, and met with nothing but disappointments. Every time he came close to the horse, thinking now he would catch it, it slipped from his hand. When he reached the point of utter disappointment, he saw his brother coming in search of him, sent by his mother, and he told him that he would not come back till he had caught the horse. The brother said, 'That is not the way to catch a horse; in this way you will perhaps run forever and will not be able to catch it. Therefore, instead of running after the horse, run to meet it.' This caused the younger brother to succeed in a moment's time. Then both brothers were taken to the presence of Ramachandra, their father, who embraced both, acknowledging the guidance of the one and the achievement of the other.

All the Teachers who came before taught for whatever community or group of people they were born, and prophesied the coming of the next Teacher, foreseeing the possibility and the necessity of the continuation of the Message until its fulfillment.

That the Messengers came successively did not mean that they were to give different messages, but that they should correct the corruption made in the message of the past by its followers. Also to revive principles in order to suit the evolution of the period, and to recall the same truth to the human mind which had been taught by the past Masters but had become lost from memory. It was not their personal message, but the divine message. They were obliged to correct the errors made by the misinterpretation of the religions, thereby renewing the same truth given by the past Masters which had in the course of time been changed from its real character. Man has ignorantly quarreled about the names and forms of Masters, traditions, principles, and their limited groups, forgetting that they are one in that which unites them.

Their messages differ from one another in their outer appearance, each message being given in accordance with the age of man's evolution, and also in order to add a particular part in the course of divine wisdom. Certain laws and principles were prescribed by them to suit the country where the message was given, the climate, the period, customs, manners and requirements.

It was most necessary for the Messengers to claim some exceptional position which might attract humanity to receive the message they had to give. Some were called Avatar; an incarnation of Brahma, such as Vishnu, Shiva, Rama, and Krishna, while others were called *Payghambar*, prophet, and intercessor. Their followers have had foolish disputes about the greatness of their assumption, or about what they did and taught, or about the sort of life they led while admiring and hating according to their personal liking.

The divine message has always been sent through those fitly endowed. For instance when wealth was esteemed the message was delivered by King Solomon; when beauty was worshipped, Joseph, the most handsome, gave the message; when music was regarded as celestial David gave his message in song. When there was curiosity about miracles Moses brought his message. When sacrifice was highly esteemed Abraham gave the message. When heredity was recognized, Christ gave his message as the Son of God. When democracy was necessary, Muhammad gave his message as the Servant of God, one like all and among all. This put an end to the necessity for more prophets, because of the democratic nature of his proclamation and message. He proclaimed *la ilaha illa-llah* (none exists but God). God constitutes the whole being, singly, individually and collectively, and every soul has the source of the divine message within itself. This is the reason why there is no longer the need for mediation, for a third person as a savior between man and God. For man has evolved enough to conceive the idea of God being all and all being God, and has become tolerant enough to believe in the divine message given by one like himself, who is liable to birth, death, joy, and sorrow, and all the natural vicissitudes of life.

All Masters from the time of Adam till the time of Muhammad have been the one embodiment of the Master-ideal. When Jesus Christ is represented as saying, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end,' it is not meant that either the name or the visible person of Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega, but the Master-spirit within. It was this spirit which proclaimed this, moved by its realization of past, present, and future life, confident of its eternity. It is the same spirit which spoke through Krishna, saying, 'We appear on earth when

Dharma is corrupted,' which was long before the coming of Christ. During his divine absorption Muhammad said, 'I existed even before this creation and shall remain after its assimilation.' In the holy traditions it is said, 'We have created thee of Our light and from thy light We have created the universe.' This is not said of the external person of Muhammad as known by this name. It refers to the spirit which spoke through all the blessed tongues and yet remained formless, nameless, birthless and deathless.

But the blind world, absorbed in its phenomena and impressed by a certain name and form, has clung to the name, forgetting the true being. It is this ignorance which has divided the children of men into so many divisions and separated one from the other by their own delusions: whereas in reality there exists one religion and one single Master, the only God. Man has considered his faithfulness to the Master in whom he believed his true religion; and to believe in the next teacher he considered a breach of faith. This is pictured in the following allegory.

THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

There was a man living with his wife and children in a little village. He was called away by the inner voice of his soul, and he renounced his life with his wife and children and went into the wilderness, to a mountain called Sinai, taking with him his eldest son, the only one of his children who was grown up. The children having a faint remembrance of their father wondered at times where he was, and longed to see him; they were then told by their mother that he had gone away long ago, and perhaps had passed from this earth. At times in answer to their longing she would say, 'Perhaps he will come or send word, for so he promised before his departure.' Sometimes the children grieved at their father's absence, their father's silence, and whenever they felt the need for him to be among them they would comfort themselves with the hope, 'perhaps some day he will be with us as he has promised.'

After some time the mother also passed away, and the children were left with guardians who were entrusted with their care, together with the care of the wealth left by their parents.

After some years, when their brother's smooth face had become bearded and when his cheerful look had given place to a serious expression, and his fair skin, now in the strong sun for years, had turned brown, he came home. He went away with his father in grandeur; he returns in poverty and knocks at the door. The servants do not recognize him, and do not allow him to enter. His language is changed; the long stay in a foreign country has made him forget all. He says to the children, 'Come, O brothers, ye are my father's children. I have come from my father, who is perfectly peaceful and happy in his retirement in the wilderness, and has sent me to bring you his love and his message, that your life may become worthwhile, and that you may have the great happiness of meeting your father, who loved you so greatly.'

They answered, 'How can it be that thou comest from our father who has been gone so long, and has given us no sign?' He said, 'If ye cannot understand, ask your mother. She will be able to tell you.' But the mother had already passed away; only her grave was left, which could never tell. He said, 'Then consult your guardians. Perhaps they will be able to tell you from the recollections of the past; or things that our mother may have said to them might bring to their memory the words of our father about my coming.' The guardians had grown careless, indifferent, blind, quite happy in the possession of all the wealth, and enjoying the treasured gold left in their charge, and using their undisputed power and complete hold over

all the children. Their first thought on hearing he had come was of annoyance. When they saw him they were quite heedless, for they found in him no trace of what he had been like before, and as they saw he was without power or wealth, and was altered in looks, in dress, in everything, they cared not for him. They said, 'By what authority claimest thou to be the son of our father, of our master, who has long since passed away, and may perhaps be dwelling in the heavens by now?' He then said to the children, 'I love you, O children of my father, although you cannot recognize me, and even if you do not acknowledge me as your brother, take my helping word for your father's word. Do good in life and avoid evil, for every work has its reward like unto it.'

The older ones, who were hardened in their ways, paid no heed, and the little ones were too young to understand; but the middle ones who hearkened to his words followed him quietly, won by his magnetism and charmed by his loving personality.

The guardians became alarmed at the thought that the children in their charge might be tempted and carried off. They thought, 'Some day even the remaining ones may be charmed by his magic; and our control over them, with the possession of their wealth and our comfort in their home, and our importance and honor in their eyes will all be lost if we let this go on any longer.' They made up their minds to kill him and incited the remaining brothers against him, declaring before them the pity of their dear brothers being led astray and carried away from their home and comfort, and how unfounded was the claim he made.

They came up to this man and arrested him, and bound his arms and legs threw him in the sea. But those children who had looked upon him as their guide and brother grieved and lamented at this. The brother consoled them, saying, 'I will come to you again, O children of my father. Do not give up hope and the things that you have not understood, being young will be taught to you fully; and as these people have behaved so harshly towards me, it will be shown them what it is to be heedless of our father's message brought by his own son; and you will be enlightened, O children of my father, with the same light which I came to help you.'

This man was a master swimmer. The sea had no power to drown him. He seemed to them to have sunk, but then he drew his hands and feet out of the knots, rose upon the water and began to swim in a masterly way, as he had been taught. He went to the father in the wilderness and told him all his experiences on his long journey, and showed his love and desire to obey his father's will and fulfill all his commandments. To go to the children of his father again with renewed strength and power, in order to bring them to that ideal which was the only desire of the father.

A bearer of the message of their father appeared again after a few years. He did not insist on proving himself to be the son of their father, but tried to guide them and help them towards the ideal set for them by their father. The guardians disturbed already by one who came and went, insulted him, stoned him, and drove him out of their sight.; but he, renewed in his power, strength, and courage, and coming fresh from the mighty influence of his father, withstood it courageously with sword and shield, and sought refuge among those of the brothers who responded to him and sympathized with him on his last coming. They said, 'Surely he who came before was from our father, whom our brothers did not recognize and have sunk in the sea, but we are awaiting his coming, for he promised us that he would come.' He answered, 'It is myself who promised, and went to our father, and now I have come, for the promise given to you was of two natures: 'I will come again' was said to those who could recognize me in a different garb, suited to the time and the situation. 'I will send another' or

'Another will come' was said to those who were likely to be confused by the external garb. It was said to them so that they might not refuse the word of guidance sent by our most loving father.' They understood his word better, but refused to acknowledge him to be the same as the first, whom they had formerly seen and now expected. He spoke, and he showed in his works the signs of their father, but they clung to the person whom they had seen at first, forgetting his word and their father.

But the little ones, who had not known him before, felt the tie of the blood relationship, for neither were their hearts hardened nor were they set strongly in their ideas. They loved him, and they recognized him more than had ever been his experience at his former coming, while the other brothers, under the influence of the guardians, fought and rebelled against all that this man did. But, in spite of all their resistance and the suffering caused to him, he guided the children of his father, as many as he could, until the name of his father was again glorified and his brothers were guided, directly or indirectly, through the puzzles of the world and the secrets of the heavens.

This story illustrates what has happened in the lives of the messengers, especially of Jesus Christ and Muhammad, though the terms Father, Son, Brother, are merely metaphorical. There has been one Teacher only, and He alone will be. All the names which the world has fought over, are His names, and all the physical forms that have won the adoration of the truth-seeking world are His forms. Therefore, though the foolish reject the message, there are wise ones who accept it.

SOME ESOTERIC TERMS

There are two aspects of intelligence: intellect, and wisdom.

Intellect is the knowledge of names and forms, their character and nature, gathered from the external world. It shows in an infant from birth, when he begins to be curious about all he sees; then, by storing in his mind the various forms and figures he sees he recognizes them as an addition to his knowledge of variety. Man thus gathers the knowledge of numberless forms of the whole world in his mind and holds them; some of them stand out luminously and predominate over, and cover, others. He also retains those forms which interest him. The nature of forms is to overpower one another in proportion to their material concreteness. The more concrete they are, the more luminous they appear; so the intellectual person takes an interest in their variety and law of change, and as knowledge is the food of the soul, he at least becomes increasingly interested in the knowledge of names and forms, and calls that 'learning'. This becomes his world, although it neither gives him a sense of unchanging comfort, nor does he thereby gain an everlasting peace.

Wisdom is contrary to the above-named knowledge. It is the knowledge which is illumined by the light within; it comes with the maturity of the soul, and opens up the sight to the similarity of all things and beings, as well as the unity in names and forms. The wise man penetrates the spirit of all things; he sees the human in the male and female, and the racial origin which unites nations. He sees the human in all people and the divine immanence in all things in the universe, until the vision of the whole being becomes to him the vision of the One Alone, the most beautiful and beloved God.

In giving a definition for some terms used in esotericism, one may say that *consciousness* is the wakeful state of the knowing faculty. *Knowledge* is that of which the consciousness is

conscious. *Conscience* is a sense which is born when consciousness holds before itself a scale, on the one side an action and on the other side an ideal. *Intelligence* is the grasping faculty of consciousness which by every means recognizes, distinguishes, perceives, and conceives all that is around it.

Ignorance is the state of the mind when it is in darkness.

When mental vibrations flow into the astral plane, without conscious direction, it is called *imagination*; when they do so under conscious direction, it is called *thought*. When the imagination is experienced during sleep it is called a *dream*.

Impression is a feeling which rises as a reaction on receiving a reflection coming from the external world (physical, mental, or astral).

Intuition is an inner message, given in the nature of warning or guidance, perceived by the mind independently of any external source.

Inspiration is the rising of a stream from the depth of the heart of the jinns and manifests in the realm of poetry, music, painting, sculpture, or any art.

Vision is a spiritual dream which is witnessed either when awake or asleep. It is called a dream because the radiance of the vision brings about a semi-sleep to the seer, even when awake.

Revelation is the disclosing of the inner self. The consciousness throughout manifestation facing towards the surface, turns its back to the world within, the sight of which is therefore lost to it. But when it begins to look within, the world unseen is disclosed, and *Choudatabaq*, the fourteen planes, consisting of the seven heavens and the seven earths, are revealed. 'The veil shall be lifted from thine eyes and thy sight shall be keen', as it is said in the Quran. And *annihilation (Fana)* is equivalent to 'losing the false self (*Nafs*)', which again culminates in what is called Eternal Life (*Baqa*).

ALIF

In the life of Bullah Shah, the great saint of Punjab, one reads a most instructive account of his early training when he was sent to school with boys of his own age. The teacher taught him Alif, the first letter of the Arabic alphabet. The other boys in his class finished the whole alphabet while he was mastering the same letter. When weeks had passed, and the teacher saw that the child did not advance any further than the first letter Alif, he thought that he must be deficient and sent him home to his parents, saying, 'Your boy is deficient, I cannot teach him.'

The parents did all in their power for him, placing him under the tuition of various teachers, but he made no progress. They were disappointed, and the boy in the end escaped from home, so that he should no longer be a burden to his own people. He then lived in the forest and saw the manifestation of Alif which has taken form in the forest as the grass, the leaf, the tree, branch, fruit, and flower; and the same Alif was manifested as the mountain and hill, the stones and rocks. He witnessed the same as a germ, insect, bird and beast, and the same Alif in himself and others. He thought of one, saw one, felt one, realized one, and none else besides.

After mastering this lesson thoroughly he returned to pay his respects to his old teacher who had expelled him from school. The teacher, absorbed in the vision of variety, had long ago forgotten him; but Bullah Shah could not forget his old teacher who had taught him his first and most inspiring lesson which had occupied almost all his life. He bowed most humbly before the teacher and said, 'I have prepared the lesson you so kindly taught me; will you teach me anything more there may be to learn?' The teacher laughed at him and thought to himself, 'After all this time this simpleton has remembered me.' Bullah Shah asked permission to write the lesson, and the teacher replied in jest, 'Write on this wall.' He then made the sign of Alif in the wall, and it divided into two parts. The teacher was astounded at this wonderful miracle and said, 'Thou art my teacher! That which thou hast learnt in the one letter Alif, I have not been able to master with all my learning,' and Bullah Shah sang this song:

Oh! friend now quit thy learning,
One Alif is all thou dost need.
By learning thou hast loaded my mind,
With books thou hast filled up thy room.
But the true knowledge was lost by pursuing the false,
So quit now, oh friend, the pursuit of thy learning.

Every form seems to be derived from another, all figures being derived from Alif which is originally derived from a dot and represents zero, nothingness ۰. It is that nothingness which creates the first form Alif. It is natural for everyone when writing to make a dot as soon as the pen touches the paper, and the letters forming the words hide the origin. In like manner the origin of the One Being is hidden in His manifestation. That is why Allah, whose name comes from Alif, is hidden under His own manifestation. The same form of Alif is the figure one in English, and in both aspects this form reveals its meaning. This meaning in its various forms is seen in all aspects of nature. As Omar Khayyam says.

A hair perhaps divides the false and true;
Yes, and a single Alif were the clue,

Could you but find it – to the treasure house,
And, peradventure, to the Master too.

My soul said, 'I desire the mystic knowledge:
Teach me if it be in thy power.'

I said, 'Alif.' She answered, 'Say no more;
If one is at home, a single letter is enough.'

SAMA, THE MUSIC OF THE SUFIS

It is very well known to all who have any knowledge of Sufis and Sufism, that music plays a great part in their spiritual attainment. The Chishtis, a particular school of Sufis, take a special interest in music. They call it *Ghiza-i-ruh*, the food of the soul, and they listen to the Qawwali, the special songs sung at their *Sama* ۃ, the contemplative musical assembly. It seems as if some potent life were there which is rarely met with elsewhere. The atmosphere is charged with magnetism, harmony, and peace which are emitted by the illuminated souls present. The Shaikh, the teacher, sits in the midst, and the other Sufis sit around him, and invoke one after the other the sacred names of God, and repeat surahs of the Quran turn by turn. This is an introduction which tunes the heart of each one present to its proper pitch, the hearts that are already prepared by *zikr*, the esoteric contemplation.

Their way of contemplation sets the heart in rhythm, which makes even the circulation of the blood regular, and the pulsation and the whole mechanism of the body become rhythmic. When the mind is also set in rhythm by its awakened response to tone, the Sufi's whole being becomes musical. This is why the Sufi can harmonize with each and all. Music makes all things in the world living to him and makes him alive to all things, and he begins to realize how life is dead to many in the world, and how many are dead to life.

There are different grades of progress, and the verses that are sung by the Qawwals are also of different kinds. Some verses are on praise of the beauty of the ideal which Sufis in the grade of *Fana-fi-Shaikh* enjoy. In this grade are those who see the divine immanence as the ideal, walking on earth.

There are verses which speak about the high merits of the 'ideal-in-name-and-not-in-form,' which appeals to those who are in the grade of *Fana-fi-Rasul*. These have not seen the ideal, neither have they heard its voice, but they have known and loved that ideal which alone exists as far as they know.

Then there are verses which speak of the ideal beyond name and form. To these verses those respond who are in the grade of *Fana-fi-Allah*; these are conscious of their ideal as beyond name and form, qualities and merits which cannot even be confined in knowledge, being beyond all limitations. Sometimes the coming of the ideal is pictured in verses which describe the sweetness of voice, the beauty of countenance, the grace of movement, the praise, the merits, the qualities, and the winning ways of the ideal. There are verses also in which are pictured the lover in love, his agony in separation, his caution in the presence of the beloved, his humility, his envy and rivalry, and all the natural vicissitudes of a lover. It is poetry, music, and art combined. It is not a simple song; it creates the whole vision in the realm of music before the mind of the Sufi who is capable of visualizing it against positive environments. In other words the Sufi produces his ideal vision in his imagination, by the help of music.

In the Qawwali the nature of love, lover, and beloved is expressed. In this the poetry of the Sufi excels the love poems known to the world, for in it is revealed the secret of love, lover and beloved, the three in one. Apart from the philosophy of the whole being, one can see the

delicacy and complexity of their poems, rich with conventions and adorned with metaphor. Hafiz, Rumi, Jami, and many others among the Sufi poets have expressed the secret of the inner and outer being in the terminology of love.

The Qawwals, the singers, sing these verses distinctly, so that every word may become clear to the hearers, that the music may not hide the poetry; and the *tabla* 4 players who accompany the singers emphasize the accents and keep the rhythm even, so that the being of the Sufi, already set to music, joins with the rhythm and harmony of the music. On these occasions the condition of the Sufi becomes different. His emotional nature at this time has its full play; his joy and feeling cannot be explained and language is inadequate to express them. This state is termed *Hal* or *Wajd*, the sacred ecstasy, and is regarded with respect by all present in the assembly. (*Wajd* means 'presence', *Hal* means 'condition'.)

This state of ecstasy is not different from the natural condition of man when touched on hearing a kind word spoken, or moved to tears either on separation from the one he loves. Or on the departure of his object of love. Or when overjoyed on the arrival of his long-expected beloved.

In the case of a Sufi the same feeling becomes sacred, his ideal being higher.

A pilgrimage is the same as an ordinary journey the only difference being in the aim. In a journey the aim is earthly, whereas the pilgrimage is made for a sacred purpose. Sometimes on hearing music, the Sufi is seen to be deeply touched, sometimes his feeling finds vent in tears, sometimes his whole being, filled with music and joy, expresses itself in motion which in Sufi terms is called *Raqs*.

When man analyzes the objective world and realizes the inner being, what he learns first and last is that his whole vision of life is created of love; love itself being life, all will in time be absorbed in it.

It is the lover of God whose heart is filled with devotion, who can commune with God; not the one who makes an effort with his intellect to analyze God. In other words, it is the lover of God who can commune with Him, not the student of His nature. It is the 'I' and 'you' which divide, and yet it is 'I' and 'you' which are the necessary conditions of love. Although 'I' and 'you' divide the one life into two, it is love that connects them by the current which is established between them; and it is this current which is called communion, which runs between man and God. To the question, 'What is God?' and 'What is man?' the answer is that the soul, conscious of its limited existence, is 'man', and the soul reflected by the vision of the unlimited, is 'God'. In plain words man's self-consciousness is man, and man's consciousness of his highest ideal is God. By communion between these two, in time both become one, as in reality they are already one. And yet the joy of communion is even greater than the joy of at-one-ment, for all joy of life lies in the thought of 'I' and 'you'.

All that man considers beautiful, precious and good is not necessarily in the thing or the being; it is in his ideal; the thing or being causes him to create the beauty, value and goodness in his own mind. Man believes in God by making Him an ideal of his worship, so that he can commune with someone whom he can look up to, in whom he can lay his absolute trust, believing Him to be above the unreliable world, on whose mercy he can depend, seeing selfishness all around him. It is this ideal when made of stone and placed in a shrine which is called an idol of God. When the same ideal is raised to the higher plane and placed in the

shrine of the heart, it becomes the ideal of God with whom the believer communes and in whose vision he lives most happily, as happily as could be, in the company of the sovereign of the whole universe.

When this ideal is raised still higher it breaks into the real, and the real light manifests to the godly; the one who was once a believer now becomes the realizer of God.

1 Devatas are deities, divine incarnations

2 In Arabic the zero is written as a dot

3 Sama' literally means hearing, listening, paying attention

4 tabla is a kind of drum

Section I - The Way of Illumination

Part III The Sufi

i

WHAT is a Sufi? Strictly speaking, every seeker after the ultimate truth is really a Sufi, whether he calls himself that or not. But as he seeks truth according to his own particular point of view, he often finds it difficult to believe that others, from their different points of view, are yet seeking the same truth, and always with success, though to a varying degree. That is in fact the point of view of the Sufi and it differs from others only in its constant endeavor to comprehend all others as within itself. It seeks to realize that every person, following his own particular line in life, nevertheless fits into the scheme of the whole and finally attains not only his own goal, but the one final goal of all.

Hence every person can be called a Sufi either as long as he is seeking to understand life, or as soon as he is willing to believe that every other human being will also find and touch the same ideal. When a person opposes or hinders the expression of a great ideal, and is unwilling to believe that he will meet his fellow men as soon as he has penetrated deeply enough into every soul, he is preventing himself from realizing the unlimited. All beliefs are simply degrees of clearness of vision. All are part of one ocean of truth. The more this is realized the easier is it to see the true relationship between all beliefs, and the wider does the vision of the one great ocean become.

Limitations and boundaries are inevitable in human life; forms and conventions are natural and necessary; but they none the less separate humanity. It is the wise who can meet one another beyond these boundaries.

What is the Sufi's belief regarding the coming of a World Teacher, or, as some speak of it, the 'Second Coming of Christ?' The Sufi is free from beliefs and disbeliefs, and yet gives every liberty to people to have their own opinion. There is no doubt that if an individual or a multitude believe that a teacher or a reformer will come, he will surely come to them. Similarly, in the case of those who do not believe that any teacher or reformer will come, to them he will not come. To those who expect the Teacher to be a man, a man will bring the message; to those who expect the Teacher to be a woman, a woman must deliver it. To those who call on God, God comes. To those who knock at the door of Satan, Satan answers. There is an answer to every call. To a Sufi the Teacher is never absent, whether he comes in one form or in a thousand forms he is always one to him, and the same One he recognizes to be in all, and all Teachers he sees in his one Teacher alone. For a Sufi, the self within, the self without, the kingdom of the earth, the kingdom of heaven, the whole being is his teacher, and his every moment is engaged in acquiring knowledge. For some, the Teacher has already come and gone, for others the Teacher may still come, but for a Sufi the Teacher has always been and will remain with him forever.

What is the position of the Sufi with regard to Christ? The question asked by Jesus Himself, 'What think ye of Christ?' itself provides the answer. The emphasis is on the 'ye'. There are as many thoughts of Him as there are people who express them. The Sufi does not limit himself

by expressing them. Christ is the name of his ideal, or *Rasul* as it is called in Arabic. All that centers on Rasul centers in Christ. The two conceptions are one. All the names and functions which have helped to form the conception of Christ, Prophet, Priest, King, Savior, Bridegroom, Beloved, all these are understood by the Sufi. By constant meditation he realizes all these aspects of the One, and beyond that Allah or God.

ii

In considering the question of being initiated into the Sufi Order. There is in the first place the inclination to know something different from what is taught in the world. One feels the desire to seek for something though one knows not what. One feels that the opposite, good and evil, right and wrong, friend and foe are not so far apart as one used to think. At the same time the heart is felt to be more sympathetic than ever before, and the sense of justice makes one wish to judge oneself before judging others. This all shows that one may look for a guide through these unknown paths.

Then there is the feeling, especially after reading or hearing something about Sufism that one is already really a Sufi that one is at one with the circle of Sufis. One may now feel drawn to the spirit of the Teacher from whose hand initiation may be taken.

And thirdly there is the feeling, after studying the books published by the movement, or after speaking with the Pir-o-Murshid, that the message is genuine.

Then the question arises: what is meant by initiation? Initiation, or in Sufi terms *Bayat*, first of all has to do with the relationship between the pupil and the Murshid. The Murshid is understood to be the counselor on the spiritual path. He does not give anything to or teach the pupil, the mureed, for he cannot give what the latter already has; he cannot teach what his soul has always known. What he does in the life of the mureed is to show him how he can clear his path towards the light within by his own self. This is the only purpose of man's life on earth. One may attain the purpose of life without a personal guide, but to try to do so is to be like a ship traversing the ocean without a compass. To take initiation, then, means entrusting one self in regard to spiritual matters to a spiritual guide.

The next thing to be decided is, if I must have a personal guide, whom shall I take as guide? There is no stamp of spirituality, or seal of perfection marked upon any man's forehead which enables one to say, 'This is the man from whose hand to take the Bayat.' neither his appearance nor his words can be relied on as evidence of his worth. The only thing that can be relied upon is the appeal of his soul in one's heart. Even so, one must satisfy oneself whether it is evil appealing to the devil in one, or God appealing to the good in one.

There are three ways in which people trust. One is not to trust a person until he proves in time to be trustworthy. To those who trust in this way there will be no satisfactory gain on this path, for they will go on, like a spy, trying and testing the Murshid with their eyes focused downward. Hence they can only see the imperfect self of the teacher, and will never be able to see the beauty of the perfect self, above and beyond the limits of their view.

The second way of trusting is to trust and to continue to do so until the person is proved unworthy of trust. Those who trust in this way are better suited than the first, for if their trust makes their sight keen they will have every prospect of development, provided that intelligence guides them all the way.

But the third way of trusting a person is to have an absolute trust, and to continue until it be proved true. This is the trust of devotees. It is these mureeds who make the Murshid. It is such worshippers who made God. 'By faith, a tongue is produced from the rock, and it speaks to us as God, but when faith is lacking, even God, the Eternal Being, is as dead as a rock.' The word of the Murshid is as useless to the doubting mind as a remedy to the unbelieving patient.

To become an initiate in the Sufi Order therefore implies a willingness to agree with its teachings and objects; a willingness to cease to attach importance to the differences of the world's various faiths, and to see in all the Masters only one embodiment of the divine Spirit, and thirdly it implies that one is not already following another course of spiritual training. In such a case, why go to another kind of teacher as well? It would be like traveling in two boats, one foot in each. When each boat goes its own way, although they meet in the end at the same goal, yet the traveler will sink in the sea. No one could seek guidance under two teachers except out of lack of patience with the one or lack of confidence in the other, making him still cling to the first.

The objects one should have in taking initiation under the Murshid are: to realize the self within and without; to know and communicate with God, whom alone the world worships; to kindle the fire of divine love, which alone has any value; to be able to read nature's manuscript and to be able to see in the world unseen; to learn how to control oneself; to light the torch of the soul and to kindle the fire of the heart; to journey through this positive existence and arrive in this life at the goal at which every soul is bound in the end to arrive. It is better to arrive in the light than to be only transported through the dark. 'Who is blind here will be blind in the hereafter.'

Therefore, one does not take initiation for the sake of curiosity to see what is going on in a 'secret' Order. Such a one will certainly not be able to see what he wishes to, for only the eye of sincerity can see. The eye of curiosity has the cataract of doubt, and is blind already. Neither does one take initiation for the sake of gaining some material advantage in one's occupation. Initiation is not a scientist's process, or an engineer's invention, or a business enterprise; it is not something that can be stolen, nor anything to be bought. It is revelation, which has new offspring at every moment, which can never be stolen by a thief. The only process for gaining it is righteousness, and when its light is covered under a bushel, even the *Jam* 1 of mystery stolen from *Jamshed* will serve no better than an earthen bowl.

One does not take initiation for the sake of attaining happiness. It is true that one cannot attain wisdom without deriving a certain advantage from it, as it is more advantageous to be wise than ignorant. But it is not for this that the journey is entered upon. However, as he progresses on the spiritual path the Sufi becomes aware of a wonderful peace which inevitably comes from the constant presence of God.

Many people of various beliefs and faiths have written about the practice of the presence of God, and all speak of the happiness they receive from being in His presence. So it is no wonder that the Sufi also, should he wish to speak of it, should testify to similar happiness.

He does not claim to a greater happiness than his fellow men because he is a human being and subject to all the shortcomings of mankind. But at the same time others can decide about his happiness better even than his words can tell it. The happiness which is experienced in God has no equal in anything in the world, however precious it may be, and everyone who experiences it will realize the same.

One should not seek initiation if one has set before oneself certain principles one does not wish to abandon. One might find that the foundation one has built does not correspond with the building now to be erected upon it. Such is the person who goes from one teacher to another, from one method to another, and is never able to gain that which is only to be obtained through steadfastness. Those who have a desire to teach while coming to learn should not pose as disciples; they must come as teachers.

Are there any conditions imposed in a would-be initiate? No one need fear taking initiation from the idea that he undertakes something he may not be able to fulfill. If he does not wish to progress beyond a certain point, that is only for himself to say. The only thing that happens when a person is initiated, is that from the hour of initiation one is the brother of all in the Sufi Movement, of all other Sufis outside the Sufi Movement, of all knowers of truth, whether they call themselves Sufi or not, and of every human being, without distinction of caste, creed, race, nation, or religion. One is the companion of the illuminated souls of the Sufis living on earth and of those who have passed to the other side of life. Thus one is linked with the chain of Murshids and Prophets, and so enabled to receive the light running through this current, through the chain of masters. And one is the confidant to the Murshid and of the Order. Therefore the initiate takes a vow in his heart to make use to the best of his ability of all he receives from the Sufi teaching and practices, not using any parts for selfish purposes. These teachings have been kept secret for thousands of years, so why should they go out of the Order without the Pir-o-Murshid's authorization?

One may ask why there is any secrecy about the teaching. If true, why should it not be scattered broadcast? This implies that secrecy is objectionable. The answer however is quite easy. A certain secrecy is necessary in that some of the Sufi conceptions might easily be misunderstood and misused, were they exposed to the general public. The earnest pupil will not speak of them without due consideration of his audience. A further point is that when a teacher is not absolutely dependent on his pupils, he will prefer to select his pupils. If a person wished to go to the very best master of the violin, he would seek out a virtuoso of fame. But the latter might not care to spend time upon him; he would if he were sure that the pupil would faithfully do all he was asked to do and attain to something like the standard of the virtuoso himself.

Whatever instruction he gives his pupil is naturally 'secret'; it is a personal matter; the pupil may hand it on to his own pupils later, but he does not have it printed and circulated indiscriminately. The secrecy is no more than this. It may also be said that every school which gives the initiate special personal instruction trusts that respect shall be paid to that which it teaches. All teaching can be misconstrued and perverted and made to appear ridiculous. To do this with Sufi teachings, consciously or inadvertently, will not help the pupil. A certain medicine may be good for a sick person at a certain time, but this does not mean it should be used by every sick person in the world. Nor would it be any advantage to anyone, if the exact medicine were to be published indiscriminately. If there should arise need to say what it was, the doctor would not withhold the information.

Where there is a need to explain the Sufi teachings, the Murshid will explain them. The books published by the Sufi Movement set forth many of the teachings, so that it cannot be said that they are kept rigidly secret. But the very intimate thoughts, to which the Sufi is accustomed, are naturally not uttered indiscriminately, any more than an ordinary person will speak of his private affairs to a stranger.

The fruit must be of a certain degree of ripeness before its taste becomes sweet. So the soul must be of a certain development before it will handle wisdom with wisdom. The developed soul shows his fragrance in his atmosphere, color, the expression of his countenance, and sweetness of his personality, as a flower spreads its fragrance around, and as a fruit when ripe changes its color and becomes sweet.

One may ask why the awakened ones do not awaken people in the world from the sleep of confusion. The answer is that it is not to be advised that little children, whose only happiness is slumber, should be awakened. Their growth depends on their sleep. If they are kept up late they become ill, and will not be so useful in the affairs of life when they are grown up. Childhood needs more sleep, and the children must sleep. Such is the nature of immature souls. They are children, however old their bodies may appear. Their fancies, their joys, their delights are for unimportant things in life, as the life of children is absorbed in sweets and toys. Therefore those who are awakened walk slowly and gently, lest their footsteps may disturb the slumber of the sleeping ones. They only awaken on their way those whom they find tossing in their beds. They are the ones to whom the travelers on the spiritual path give their hand quietly. It is for this reason that the spiritual path is called the mystical way. It is not unkind to awaken a few and to let many sleep, but on the other hand it is great kindness to let those slumber who require sleep.

During his mureedship the initiate should avoid wonder-working; claiming to know or possess something unfamiliar to one's fellow men; casting out devils; communication with spirits; character-reading; fortune-telling; appearing otherwise in conversation with others about spiritual things, and looking to others for approbation. Also sanctimoniousness, over-righteousness, and teaching and advising others before having learnt one's own self, which is as dangerous as giving the same medicine to another that the doctor has prescribed for oneself.

During discipleship, the habit of discipline should be adopted which makes the ideal mureed. Self-denial is the chief religion, and this can only be learnt by discipline. It is as necessary in the path of discipleship as for a soldier on the battlefield; in the absence of it the mureed holds fast the very thing which he wishes to crush by taking the initiation. 'Mastery is in service, and it is the servant who alone can be master.'

One should also have a respectful attitude to the Murshid. This is not to raise the honor of the teacher in his own eyes, or in the eyes of others. It is to learn a respectful attitude by first having it towards one who deserves it. The mureed may then be able to develop in his nature the same respect for all, as a little girl by playing with a doll learns the lesson of motherhood. To respect another means to deduct that much vanity from ourselves, the vanity which is only the veil between man and God.

During the period of mureedship sobriety, and equable mind, and serious habit, regularity in all things, diligence, a desire for solitude, a reserved demeanor, and unassuming manner, a pure life, and uninterrupted daily spiritual meditations, are desirable.

The Sufi is the student of two worlds, the world within and the world without. The world within is equivalent to what is popularly named 'the next world', because of the widespread belief that time is the all-important factor; that we have a life now, and another life at another time. The Sufi knows otherwise. The world without has two aspects, the social world in which we are placed, and the greater world which is the topic of history, past, present, or prophetic. The world within can be entered only by the student himself, though he may learn about it as 'esotericism', a subject which also has two aspects, that of the forces in the mind and that of the divine light. The latter is the real goal of the Sufi's inquiry, it is his Shekinah, and it is his Holy of Holies.

iii

Is Sufism a religion? It should be clear from the above explanation that the religion of the Sufi is not separate from the religions of the world. People have fought in vain about the names and lives of their saviors, and have named their religions after the name of their savior, instead of uniting with each other in the truth that is taught. This truth can be traced in all religions, whether one community calls another pagan or infidel or heathen. Such persons claim that theirs is the only scripture, and their place of worship the only abode of God. Sufism is a name applied to a certain philosophy by those who do not accept the philosophy; hence it cannot really be described as a religion; it contains a religion but is not itself a religion. Sufism is a religion if one wishes to learn religion from it. But it is beyond religion, for it is the light, the sustenance of every soul, raising the mortal being to immortality.

As matters stand today, each one claims his own religion to be the best, and he has his own religion. The Sufi tolerates all, and considers them all his; therefore he does not belong to a religion but all religions belong to him. He can see all the religions like so many forms in a school: some are in one, others are in higher forms, that is, some study life more deeply. And in each class in the school there are pupils who like to play.

To say, 'You are not of my religion; my religion alone is true,' is as reasonable as to say, 'You are not a lawyer, a merchant, a scholar; your way of carrying on life is false; you must become as I.'

To say, 'All who are in my religion are saved' is as reasonable as to say, 'Every lawyer, merchant, scholar (as the case may be) is earnest, and performs his work perfectly.' Some speak of 'nominal' Christians, and 'true' Christians; this is only another way of saying that some persons are earnest about their work and others play.

Is Sufism a belief? What do we mean by the word 'belief?' It is the nature of mind to believe, and disbelief comes after. No unbeliever was born an unbeliever; for if a soul disbelieved from childhood he would never learn to speak. All the knowledge that man possesses he has acquired by belief. When he strengthens his belief by knowledge then comes disbelief in things that his knowledge cannot cope with, and in things that his reason cannot justify. He then disbelieves things that he once believed in. An unbeliever is one who has changed his belief to disbelief; disbelief often darkens the soul, but sometimes it illuminates it. There is a Persian saying, 'Until belief has changed to disbelief, and, again, the disbelief into a belief, a man does not become a real Muslim.' But when disbelief becomes a wall and stands against the further penetration of mind into life, then it darkens the soul, for there is no chance of further progress, and man's pride and satisfaction in what he knows limit the scope of his vision.

A constant 'why' arises in the minds of the intelligent, and when this 'why' is answered by life to man's satisfaction, he goes on further and further, penetrating through all different planes of life. When this 'why' does not get a satisfactory answer from life, the doubt, dismay, and dissatisfaction arise and result in confusion, bewilderment, and despair. Sometimes belief proves to be worse than disbelief. This is when a person, set in his belief, hinders his own progress not allowing his mind to go further into the research of life, refusing guidance and advice from another, in order that he may preserve his own belief. Thus a belief which is preserved as a virtue becomes the greatest sin. Both belief and disbelief, by practice, in time become natural tendencies; the person who is inclined to believe gets into a habit of believing all things and everything, and an unbeliever in time comes to disbelieve everything whether right or wrong. The optimistic temperament is the temperament of the believer, and pessimism is as a rule the nature of the unbeliever. The prophets have always promised a reward for the believer, and have threatened the unbeliever with punishment, because the chance for spiritual enlightenment is only in the life of the believer, while the unbeliever covers his soul by his own disbelief.

Sufis are inclined to recognize four stages of belief:

Iman-i Muhmil, when someone believes in a thing which others believe in, but no matter how strong his belief may be, when those in his surroundings change their belief, he will likewise change his.

Iman-i Kamil, the next stage of belief, is the belief of the idealist who has faith in his scripture and savior. He believes because it is written in the scripture, or taught by the savior. His belief, of course, will not change with the weather, but still it may waver, if by any means reason were awakened in his soul. At least it would be dimmed just as the light of a candle would become dimmed by the rising sun. When the sun of the intelligence rises, it would break through and scatter the clouds of emotion and devotion made by this belief.

Haqq al-Iman, the third stage of belief, when man believes because his reason allows him to believe. Such a man is journeying through life with a torch in his hand. His belief is based on reason, and cannot be broken except by a still greater reason, for it is the diamond that alone can cut the diamond, and reason alone can break reason.

'Ain al-Iman, the fourth stage of belief is a belief of conviction; not only reason, but every part of one's being is convinced and assured of the truth of things, and nothing on earth can change it. If a person were to say to him, 'Do not cross over this place, there is water here,' he will say, 'No, it is land. I can see for myself.' It is just like seeing with the eyes all that one believes. This belief is the belief of the seer whose knowledge is his eyewitness, and therefore his belief will last forever and ever. Of course, as a soul evolves from stage to stage, it must break the former belief in order to establish the later, and this breaking of the belief is called by Sufis *Tark*, which means abandonment; the abandoning of the worldly ideal, the abandoning of the heavenly ideal, the abandoning of the divine ideal, and even the abandoning of abandonment. This brings the seer to the shores of the ultimate truth.

'Truth is that which cannot be fully spoken, and that which can be spoken is not necessarily the truth.'

Is Sufism Muslim? Is a Sufi a Muhammadan? In joining a Sufi community, is one associating with Muslims? Is a Sufi a follower of Islam? The word *Islam* means 'peace'; this is the Arabic

word. The Hebrew word is *Salem* (Jeru-salem). Peace and its attainment in all directions is the goal of the world.

But if the following of Islam is understood to mean the obligatory adherence to a certain rite; if being a Muslim means conforming to certain restrictions, how can the Sufi be placed in that category, seeing that the Sufi is beyond all limitations of this kind? So, far from not accepting the Quran, the Sufi recognizes scriptures which others disregard. But the Sufi does not follow any special book. The shining ones, such as 'Attar, Shams-i Tabriz, Rumi, Sadi, and Hafiz, have expressed their free thought with a complete liberty of language. To a Sufi, revelation is the inherent property of every soul. There is an unceasing flow of the divine stream, which has neither beginning nor end.

What is the position of Sufism with regard to Christianity? There is a place in the Sufi understanding for all the teachings contained in that Faith, and there can be no antagonism in the mind of him who understands. The writings of the Christian mystics evidence the intensity of their pursuit and devotion to the Beloved – and there is only one Beloved. The devotion to the Sacred Heart will be found to be a link with the Sufi philosophy, which recognizes and practices it in the truest sense.

Is Sufism mysticism? As green is considered to be the color of Ireland, yet it cannot be said to belong exclusively to the Irish people, for anybody can wear green, and green is found all over the world, so mystics in Islam have been called Sufis. Sufism, divine wisdom, is for all, and is not limited to a certain people. It has existed from the first day of creation, and will continue to spread and to exist until the end of the world. Sufism is a mysticism of one wishes to be guided by it in the unfoldment of the soul. Yet it is beyond mysticism.

Is Sufism theosophy? Sufis have no set belief or disbelief. Divine light is the only sustenance of their soul, and through this light they see their path clear, and what they see in this light they believe, and what they do not see they do not blindly believe. Yet they do not interfere with another person's belief or disbelief, thinking that perhaps a greater portion of light has kindled his heart, and so he sees and believes that the Sufi cannot see or believe. Or, perhaps a lesser portion of light has kept his sight dim and he cannot see and believe as the Sufi believes. Therefore Sufis leave belief and disbelief to the grade of evolution of every individual soul. The Murshid's work is to kindle the fire of the heart, and to light the torch of the soul of his mureed, and to let the mureed believe and disbelieve as he chooses, while journeying through the path of evolution. But in the end all culminates in one belief, *Huma man am*, that is, 'I am all that exists'; and all other beliefs are preparatory for this final conviction, which is called Haqq al-Iman in the Sufi terminology.

As soon as the word 'theosophy' is taken to mean certain fixed beliefs or disbeliefs, there is a difference from Sufism. Beliefs and disbeliefs are the cause of sects, each of these being blinded from the vision of the singleness of the whole of existence. As soon as thought is restricted, it ceases to be Sufism.

Is Sufism a school of thought? Wisdom is not restricted to one geographical spot such as a country, a city, a building or meeting place. Sufism cannot be correctly described as a school of thought, if by that is meant the instruction of a certain doctrine. It might be correct to speak of it as a school of thought in the sense that through Sufism one learns wisdom, just as in a school one learns wisdom of a certain kind. Sufism is beyond philosophy.

In regard to the Sufi's attitude towards right and wrong – that these are man-made – one may ask how then it can matter what a person does.

The answer is, it matters to those to whom it matters, and it does not matter to those whom it does not matter. In this respect, if the Sufi has to say anything to his follower, it is this: refraining from doing that which hinders you from accomplishing the purpose in your inner and your external life. Do not act against your ideal, for it will never be satisfactory to you; you will not be pleased with yourself, and this inharmony in your inner and your external self will prevent peace, which is your life's craving, without which life becomes unhappy. 'Right' is the straight path which the soul is inclined to take in life, but when one walks astray, leaving the straight path in life owing either to negligence or ignorance, or by reason of weakness, or by the attraction of some temptation on the way, one can say that is wrong.

What is good and what is evil? There are two answers to this question. First it may be said: good is that which you consider to be good, and the effect of which is agreeable to you both in its beginning and end. Evil is that which you consider to be evil and the effect of which is disagreeable in the beginning as well as in the end. If good and evil have no agreeable or disagreeable effect at first, or have a contrary effect at the beginning, whether they are really agreeable or disagreeable will appear in the end. The second answer is that all things that seem good and evil are the opposite ends of one line, and it is difficult to say where evil ends and good begins, for these are comparative terms. A lesser good would seem evil when compared with a greater good, and the lesser evil in comparison with the greater evil would appear good. If there were no evil, good would not have been valued. Without injustice, justice would not have been appreciated. Therefore the whole of life's joy is expressed in duality.

Why is there so much suffering in life, when God is described as merciful? If God were a separate being from man, and if He rejoiced in the suffering of man, then He could be blamed. But He, as the Sufi realizes, is the sufferer and the suffering; yet He is beyond all suffering. This fact can be understood, not merely by believing in God, but in knowing Him. Suppose your hands dropped a heavy weight upon your feet and hurt them, are your hands to be blamed? No, for they share the pain with the feet, and although the feet seem to have been hurt, yet the one that feels hurt is your absolute being. In reality that being feels hurt, and therefore the hand shares the hurt of the foot. So it is with God. Our very life is His, and He is not void of the feeling of joy or of pain which we feel. In reality, He feels what we imagine we feel, yet at the same time His perfect Being keeps Him above all earthly joys and pains; and our imperfection limits us, so that we become subject to all joys and pains, however small they may be.

According to the Sufi the difference between sin and virtue is like the difference between good and evil. They are comparative terms. Lesser virtue compared with greater sin is considered virtue. The inclination of the soul is towards good; it is only when the soul is helpless in the hands of the lower self that it is inclined towards evil.

Again, it may be said: sin and virtue are the standards of good and evil made by the teachers of religion. It is the standards of morals that keep the world in order, and it is the breaking of this order that causes the decline of religion, with the effect of wars, famines, and disaster. In order to uphold this order, messengers are sent from time to time, and spiritual controllers are

appointed in every part of the earth. One might ask, 'Why tread the path of righteousness and piety; why spend your life in teaching and preaching to humanity?' It is natural. Every loving and illuminated heart has a desire to see others partake in its vision of glory. On the other hand, it seems that some persons are quite happy in committing sin. Is there then no restriction to be imposed on sin? The answer is: sin can never make one happy. Even were there pleasure in it for the time being, it would re-echo, and the re-echo of a false note is never pleasing to the musical ear. If a person were really happy in his 'sin', one might be satisfied that it was really his virtue, and that it is only to us, from our point of view, that his action is sinful. Therefore the Sufi attends to his own journey, and does not judge others.

It there is only a comparative difference between good and evil, sin and virtue, why should there be punishment for evil and reward for good? The effect of good itself is a reward for good, and the effect of evil is itself a punishment. From our limited view, perhaps, we attribute these effects to a third person, to a divine ideal. But what then of the belief of the orthodox, that if anybody asks forgiveness before his death, his sins would be forgiven by God? It seems hard to believe that a person who has sinned all through life could be forgiven at a simple request made at the hour of death. The answer is, that it is absolutely true that the whole of life's sins may be forgiven by divine mercy in one moment, just as a chemical solution may wash away the stains of years from the surface of a rock in a moment. The real question is, is the request earnest enough? It is not so easy as it seems, for this is a matter of divine mercy; and if a person has continued to commit sins, at every sin he has lost his belief in the judgment of the divine Being and in His power. Therefore he has sown the seed of disbelief in his heart and has reared this plant by his sins. That being so, how can he in the end develop sufficient faith in a moment to believe in divine mercy? The simplest thing becomes the most difficult for him.

For this reason, the teachers of humanity have taught man faith as the first lesson in religion. Those are forgiven the sins of their whole life, who have always believed that any moment death might come and have safeguarded themselves against doing anything that does not meet with the pleasure of their Lord, and whenever, owing to human imperfection, they have failed in doing right, they most earnestly have asked forgiveness.

I jam (Persian)-- drinking glass. The jam of Jamshed was the mirror-like reflecting cup of the mythical Persian king Jamshīd in which he saw the reflection of the events of the whole world, past, present or future.

Section II - The Inner Life

Chapter I

THE PREPARATION FOR THE JOURNEY

THE inner life is a journey, and before starting to take it there is a certain preparation necessary. If one is not prepared, there is always the risk of having to return before one has arrived at one's destination. When a person goes on a journey, and when he has to accomplish something, he must know what is necessary on the path and what he must take with him, in order that his journey may become easy and that he may accomplish what he has started to accomplish. The journey one takes in the inner life is as long as the distance between the beginning of life and death, it being the longest journey one ever takes throughout life; and one must have everything prepared, so that after reaching a certain distance one may not have to turn back.

The first thing that is necessary is to see that there is no debt to be paid. Every soul has a certain debt to pay in life; it may be to his mother or father, his brother or sister, to his husband or wife or friend, or to his children, his race, or to humanity; and if he has not paid what is due, then there are cords with which he is inwardly tied, and they pull him back. Life in the world is fair trade, if one could only understand it, if one knew how many souls there are in this world with whom one is connected or related in some way, or whom we meet freshly everyday. To everyone there is something due; and if one has not paid one's obligations, the result is that afterwards one has to pay with interest.

There is the inner justice which is working beyond the worldly justice, and when man does not observe that inner law of justice, it is because at that time he is intoxicated, his eyes are closed, and he does not really know the law of life. But that intoxication will not last; there will come the day when the eyes of every soul will be opened; and it is a pity if the eyes open when it is too late. It is better that the eyes are open when the purse is full, for it will be very difficult if the eyes open at a time when the purse is empty. To some consideration is due, to some respect, to some service, to some tolerance, to some forgiveness, to some help. In some way or another, in every relationship, in every connection, there is something to pay; and one must know that before starting the journey that one has paid it, and be sure that one has paid it in full, so that there is nothing more to be paid. Besides this it is necessary that man, before starting his journey, realizes that he has fulfilled his duties, his duty to those around him and his duty to God. But one who considers his duty to those around him sacredly does his duty to God.

Man must also consider, before starting on his journey, whether he has learned all he has desired to learn from this world. If there is anything he has not learned, he must finish it before starting the journey. For if he thinks, 'I will start the journey, although I had the desire to learn something before starting', in that case he will not be able to reach his goal; that desire to learn something will draw him back. Every desire, every ambition, every aspiration, that he has in life must be gratified. Not only this, man must have no remorse of any kind when starting on his journey, and no repentance afterwards. If there is any repentance or remorse, it must be finished before starting. There must be no grudge against anybody, and no complaining of anyone having done him harm, for all these things which belong to this world, if man took them along, would become a burden on the spiritual path. The journey is difficult enough, and it becomes more difficult if there is a burden to be carried. If a person is

lifting a burden of displeasure, dissatisfaction, discomfort, it is difficult to bear it on the path. It is the path to freedom, and to start on this path of freedom, man must free himself, no attachment should pull him back, no pleasure should lure him back.

Besides this preparation one needs a vehicle, a vehicle in which one journeys. That vehicle has two wheels, and they are balanced in all things. A man who is one-sided, however great his power of clairvoyance or clairaudience, whatever be his knowledge, yet is limited; he cannot go very far, for it requires two wheels for the vehicle to run. There must be a balance, the balance of the head and the heart, the balance of power and wisdom, the balance of activity and repose. It is the balance which enables man to stand the strain of his journey and permits him to go forward, making his path easy. Never imagine for one moment that those who show lack of balance can ever proceed further on the spiritual journey, however greatly in appearance they may seem to be spiritually inclined. It is only the balanced ones who are capable of experiencing the external life as fully as the inner life; to enjoy thought as much as feeling; to rest as well as to act. The center of life is rhythm, and rhythm causes balance.

On this journey certain coins are necessary also, to spend on the way. And what are these coins? They are thoughtful expressions in word and in action. On this journey man must take provision to eat and drink, and that provision is life and light. And on this journey man has to take something in which to clothe himself against wind, and storm, and heat, and cold; and that garment is the vow of secrecy, the tendency to silence. On this journey man must bid farewell to others when starting, and that farewell is loving detachment; before starting on this journey he has to leave something behind with his friends, and that is happy memories of the past.

We are all on the journey; life itself is a journey. No one is settled here; we are all passing onward, and therefore it is not true to say, that if we are taking a spiritual journey we have to break our settled life; there is no one living a settled life here; all are unsettled, all are on their way. Only, by taking a spiritual journey you are taking another way, one which is easier, better and more pleasant. Those who do not take this way will also come in the end: the difference is in the way. One way is easier, smoother, better, the other way is full of difficulties; and as life has no end of difficulties from the time one has opened one's eyes on this earth, so one may just as well choose the smoother way to arrive at the destination at which all souls will sometime arrive.

By 'inner life' is meant a life directed towards perfection, which may be called the perfection of love, harmony, and beauty; in the words of the orthodox, towards God.

The inner life is not necessarily in an opposite direction to the worldly life, but the inner life is a fuller life. The worldly life means the limitation of life, the inner life means a complete life. The ascetics who have taken a direction quite opposite to the worldly life, have done so in order to have the facility to search into the depths of life; but going in one direction alone does not make a complete life. Therefore the inner life means the fullness of life.

In brief, one may say that the inner life consists of two things: action with knowledge, and repose with passivity of mind. By accomplishing these two contrary motions, and by keeping balanced in these two directions one comes to the fullness of life. A person who lives the inner life is as innocent as a child, even more innocent than a child; but at the same time wiser than many clever people put together. This shows as a development in two contrary directions. The innocence of Jesus has been known through the ages. In his every moment, in

his every action, he appeared to be as a child. All the great saints and sages, the great ones who have liberated humanity, have been as innocent as children and at the same time wiser, much more so, than the worldly-wise. And what makes it so? What gives them this balance? It is repose with passiveness. When they stand before God, they stand with their heart as an empty cup; when they stand before God to learn, they unlearn all things that the world has taught them; when they stand before God, their ego, their self, their life, is no more before them. They do not think of themselves in that moment with any desire to be fulfilled, with any motive to be accomplished, with any expression of their own; but as empty cups, that God may fill their being, that they may lose the false self.

Therefore the same thing helps them in their everyday life to show a glimpse of the quiet moment of repose they had with God. They show in their everyday life innocence and yet not ignorance; they know things and they do not know. They know if somebody is telling a lie; but do they accuse that person? Do they say, 'you are telling a lie'? They are above it. They know all the plays of the world, and they look at them all passively; they rise above things of this world which make no impression on them. They take people quite simply. Some may think that they are ignorant in their world-lives, that they take no notice of things that are of no importance. Activity with wisdom makes them more wise, because it is not everybody in this world who directs his every action with wisdom. There are many who never consult wisdom in their action; there are others who seek refuge under wisdom after their action; and very often it is then too late. But the ones who live the inner life all direct their activity with wisdom; every moment, every action, every thought, every word is first thought out, is first weighed, and measured, and analyzed before it is expressed. Therefore in the world everything they do is with wisdom, but before God they stand with innocence; there they do not take worldly wisdom.

Man often makes mistakes, either by taking one way or the other, and therefore he lacks balance and does not come to touch perfection. For instance, when he takes the way of activity in the path of God, he also wishes to use his wisdom there; in the path of God also he wishes to be active, where he does not need action. It is just like swimming against the tide; where you must be innocent, if you use your wisdom there it is the greatest error. Then there are others who are accustomed to take passivity as a principle with which they stand before God in their innocence; and they wish to use the same principle in all directions of life, which would not be right.

Section II - The Inner Life

Chapter II

THE OBJECT OF THE JOURNEY

THE first and principle thing in the inner life is to establish a relationship with God, making God the object with which we relate ourselves, such as the Creator, Sustainer, Forgiver, Judge, Friend, Father, Mother, and Beloved. In every relationship we must place God before us, and become conscious of that relationship so that it will no more remain an imagination; because the first thing a believer does is to imagine. He imagines that God is the Creator, and tries to believe that God is the Sustainer, and he makes an effort to think that God is a Friend, and an attempt to feel that he loves God. But if this imagination is to become a reality, then exactly as one feels for one's earthly beloved sympathy, love and attachment, so one must feel the same for God. However greatly a person may be pious, good or righteous, yet without this his piety or his goodness it is not a reality to him.

The work of the inner life is to make God a reality, so that He is no more an imagination; that this relationship that man has with God may seem more real than any other relationship in the world; and when this happens, then all relationships, however near and dear, become less binding. But at the same time, a person does not thus become cold; he becomes more loving. It is the godless man who is cold, impressed by the selfishness and lovelessness of the world, because he partakes of those conditions in which he lives. But the one who is in love with God, the one who has established his relationship with God, his love becomes living; he is no more cold; he fulfills his duties to those related to him in this world much more than does the godless man.

Now, as to the way a man establishes this relationship, which is the most desirable to establish with God, what should he imagine? God as Father, as Creator, as Judge, as Forgiver, as Friend, or as Beloved? The answer is, that in every capacity of life we must give God the place that is demanded by the moment. When, crushed by the injustice, the coldness of the world, man looks at God, the perfection of Justice, he is no more agitated, his heart is no more disturbed, he consoles himself with the justice of God. He places the just God before him, and by this he learns justice; the sense of justice awakens in his heart, and he sees things in quite a different light.

When man finds himself in this world motherless or fatherless he thinks that there is the mother and father in God; and that, even if he were in the presence of his mother and father, these are only related on the earth. The Motherhood and Fatherhood of God is the only real relationship. The mother and father of the earth only reflect a spark of that motherly and fatherly love which God has in fullness and perfection. Then man finds that God can forgive, as the parents can forgive the child if he was in error; then man feels the goodness, kindness, protection, support, sympathy coming from every side; he learns to feel that it comes from God, the Father-Mother, through all.

When man pictures God as the Forgiver, he finds that there is not only in this world a strict justice, but there is love developed also, there is mercy and compassion, there is that sense of forgiveness; that God is not the servant of law, as is the judge in this world. He is the Master of law. He judges when He judges; when He forgives He forgives. He has both powers, He

has the power to judge and He has the power to forgive. He is judge because he does not close his eyes to anything that man does; He knows, He weighs, and measures, and He returns what is due to man. And He is Forgiver, because beyond and above His power of justice there is His great power of love and compassion, which is His very being, which is His own nature, and there for it is more, and in greater proportion, and working with a greater activity than His power of justice. We, the human beings in this world, if there is a spark of goodness or kindness in our hearts, avoid judging people. We prefer forgiving to judging. Forgiving gives us a naturally greater happiness than taking revenge, unless a man is on quite a different path.

The man who realizes God as a friend is never lonely in the world, neither in this world nor in the hereafter. There is always a friend, a friend in the crowd, a friend in the solitude; or while he is asleep. Unconscious of this outer world, and when he is awake and conscious of it. In both cases the friend is there in his thought, in his imagination, in his heart, in his soul.

And the man who makes God his Beloved, what more does he want? His heart becomes awakened to all the beauty there is within and without. To him all things appeal, everything unfolds itself, and it is beauty to his eyes, because God is all-pervading, in all names and all forms; therefore his Beloved is never absent. How happy therefore is the one whose Beloved is never absent, because the whole tragedy of life is the absence of the beloved; and to one whose Beloved is always there, when he has closed his eyes the Beloved is within, and when he has opened his eyes the Beloved is without. His every sense perceives the Beloved; his eyes see Him, his ears hear His voice. When a person arrives at this realization he, so to speak, lives in the presence of God; then to him the different forms and beliefs, faiths and communities do not count. To him God is all-in-all; to him God is everywhere. If he goes to the Christian church, or to the synagogue, to the Buddhist temple, to the Hindu shrine, or to the mosque of the Muslim, there is God. In the wilderness, in the forest, in the crowd, everywhere he sees God.

This shows that the inner life does not consist in closing the eyes and looking inward. The inner life is to look outwardly *and* inwardly, and to find one's Beloved everywhere. But God cannot be made a Beloved unless the love element is awakened sufficiently. The one who hates his enemy and loves his friend cannot call God his Beloved, for he does not know God. When love comes to its fullness, then one looks at the friend with affection, on the enemy with forgiveness, on the stranger with sympathy. There is love in all its aspects expressed when love rises to its fullness; and it is the fullness of love which is worth offering to God. It is then that man recognizes in God his Beloved, his ideal; and by that, although he rises above the narrow affection of this world, he is the one who really knows how to love even his friend. It is the lover of God who knows love when he rises to that stage of the fullness of love.

The whole imagery of the Sufi literature in the Persian language, written by great poets, such as Rumi, Hafiz, and Jami, is the relationship between man as the lover and God as the Beloved; and when one reads understanding that, and develops in that affection, then one sees what pictures the mystics have made and to what note their heart has been tuned. It is not easy to develop in the heart the love of God, because when one does not see or realize the object of love one cannot love. God must become tangible in order that one may love Him, but once a person has attained to that love he has really entered the journey of the spiritual path.

Section II - The Inner Life

Chapter III

FULFILLMENT OF THE OBLIGATIONS OF HUMAN LIFE

THE position of the person living the inner life becomes like that of a grown-up living among many children. At the same time there seems outwardly no such difference as is apparent in the ages of the children and the grown person, the difference lying in the size of his outlook, which is not always apparent. One who lives the inner life becomes much older than those around him, and yet outwardly he is the same as every other person. Therefore the man who has arrived at the fullness of the inner life adopts quite a different policy from the one who is just beginning to tread that path, and also a different one from that of the man who knows intellectually something about the inner life, but who does not really live it. The action again is different in the world, for the latter person will criticize others who do not know what he thinks he knows, and will look upon them with pride and conceit, or with contempt, thinking that they have not risen to the mystery, to the height, to which he has risen, and which he understands. He wishes to disconnect himself from people, saying that they are backward in their evolution, and that he cannot go with them. He says, 'I am more advanced; I cannot join them in anything; they are different, I am different.' He laughs at the petty ideas of those who surround him, and looks upon them as human beings with whom he must not associate, with whom he must not join in all the things they do, because he is much more advanced than they are.

But for the one who comes to the fullness of the inner life it is a great joy to mingle with his fellow man, just as it is for parents to play with their little children. The best moments of their lives are when they feel as a child with their children and when they can join in their play. Parents who are kind and loving if a child brings them a doll's cup, will pretend that they are drinking tea, and that they are enjoying it; they do not let the child think they are superior, or that this is something in which they must not join. They play with the child, and they are happy with it, because the happiness of the children is theirs also. That is the action of the man who lives the inner life, and it is for this reason that he agrees and harmonizes with people of all grades of evolution, whatever be their ideas, their thoughts, their belief, or their faith; in whatever form they worship or show their religious enthusiasm. He does not say, 'I am much more advanced than you are, and to join you would be going backward.' The one who has gone so far forward can never go backward, but by joining them he takes them along with him, onward. If he went on alone he would consider that he avoided his duty towards his fellow man, which he should perform. It is the empty pitcher that makes a noise when you knock upon it, but the pitcher which is full of water does not make any sound; it is silent, speechless.

So the wise live among all the people of this world, and they are not unhappy. The one who loves all is not unhappy. Unhappy is he who looks with contempt at the world, who hates human beings and thinks he is superior to them; the one who loves them thinks only that they are going through the same process that he has gone through. It is from the darkness that he has to come into the light. It is just a difference of moments; and he, with great patience, passes those moments while his fellow men are still in darkness, not making them know that they are in darkness, not letting them feel hurt about it, not looking upon them with contempt;

only thinking that for every soul there is childhood, there is youth and maturity. So it is natural for every human being to go through this process. I have seen with my own eyes souls who have attained saintliness and who have reached to great perfection; and yet such a soul will stand before an idol of stone with another, with a fellow man, and worship, not letting him know that he is in any way more advanced than other men, keeping himself in a humble guise, not making any pretence that he has gone further in his spiritual evolution.

The further such souls go, the more humble they become; the greater the mystery they have realized, the less they speak about it. You would scarcely believe it if I were to tell you that during four years of the presence of my Murshid, hardly more than once or twice I had a conversation on spiritual matters. Usually the conversation was on worldly things, like everybody else's; nobody would perceive that here was a God-realized man, who was always absorbed in God. His conversation was like that of every other person; he spoke on everything belonging to this world, never a spiritual conversation, nor any special show of piety or spirituality; and yet his atmosphere, the voice of his soul and his presence revealed all that was hidden in his heart.

Those who are God-realized and those who have touched wisdom speak very little on the subject. It is those who do not know who try to discuss it, not because they know, but because they themselves have doubts. When there is knowledge, there is satisfaction, there is no tendency towards dispute. When one disputes, it is because there is something not satisfied. There is nothing in this world, wealth, rank, position, power, or learning, that can give such conceit as the slightest little amount of spiritual knowledge; and once a person has that conceit, then he cannot take a further step, he is nailed down to that place where he stands; because the very idea of spiritual realization is in selflessness. Man has either to realize himself as something or as nothing. In this realization of nothingness there is spirituality. If one has any little knowledge of the inner laws of nature and is proud of it, or if one has any sense of thinking, 'How good I am, how kind I am, how generous, how well-mannered, how influential, or how attractive', the slightest idea of anything of this kind coming into the mind closes the doors which lead into the spiritual world. It is such an easy path to tread, and yet so difficult. Pride is most natural to a human being. Man may deny a virtue a thousand times in words, but he cannot help admitting it with his feelings, for the ego itself is pride. Pride *is* the ego; man cannot live without it. In order to attain to spiritual knowledge, in order to become conscious of the inner life, a person does not need to learn very much, because here he has to know what he already knows; only he has to discover it himself. For his understanding of spiritual knowledge he does not need the knowledge of anything except himself. He acquires the knowledge of the self which is himself, so near and yet so far.

Another thing the lover of God shows is the same tendency as the human lover's: he does not talk about his love to anybody; he cannot talk about it. Man cannot say how much he loves his beloved; no words can express it; and, besides, he does not feel like talking about it to anybody. Even if he could, in the presence of his beloved he would close his lips. How then could the lover of God make a profession, 'I love God'? The true lover of God keeps his love silently hidden in his heart, like a seed sown in the ground; and if the seedling grows, it grows in his actions towards his fellow man. He cannot act except with kindness, he cannot feel anything but forgiveness; every movement he makes, everything he does, speaks of his love, but not his lips.

This shows that in the inner life the greatest principal that one should observe is to be unassuming and quiet, without any show of wisdom, without any manifestation of learning,

without any desire to let anyone know how far one has advanced, not even letting oneself know how far one has gone. The task to be accomplished is the entire forgetting of oneself and harmonizing with one's fellow man; acting in agreement with all, meeting everyone on his own plane, speaking to everyone in his own tongue, answering the laughter of one's friends with a smile, and the pain of another with tears, standing by one's friends in their joy and their sorrow, whatever be one's own grade of evolution. If a man through his life became like an angel he would accomplish very little; the accomplishment which is most desirable for man is to fulfill the obligations of human life.

Section II - The Inner Life

Chapter IV

THE REALIZATION OF THE INNER LIFE

THE principle of the one who experiences the inner life, is to become all things to all men throughout his life. In every situation, in every capacity, he answers the demand of the moment. Often people think that the spiritual person must be a man with sad looks, with a long face, with a serious expression, and with a melancholy atmosphere. Really speaking, that picture is the exact contrary of the real spiritual person. In all capacities the one who lives the inner life has to act outwardly as he ought in order to fit the occasion; he must act according to the circumstances, and he must speak to everyone in his own language, standing upon the same level, and yet realizing the inner life.

For the knower of truth, the one who has attained spiritual knowledge and who lives the inner life, there is no occupation in life which is too difficult; as a business man, a professional man, a king; as a ruler, a poor man, a worldly man; as a priest or a monk, in all aspects he is different from what people know and see of him. To the one who lives the inner life the world is a stage; on this he is the actor who has to act a part in which he has sometimes to be angry and sometimes loving, and in which he has to take part both in tragedy and comedy. So also the one who has realized the inner life acts constantly; and, like the actor who does not feel the emotions he assumes, the spiritual man has to fill fittingly the place in which life has placed him. There he performs everything thoroughly and rightly, in order to fulfill his outer commission in life. He is a friend to his friend, a relative to his relatives. With all to whom he is outwardly related he keeps the right relationship with thought, with consideration; and yet in his realization he is above all relationships. He is in the crowd and in the solitude at the same time. He may be very much amused, and at the same time he is very serious. He may seem very sad, and yet there is joy welling up from his heart.

Therefore the one who has realized the inner life is a mystery to everyone; no one can fathom the depth of that person, except that he promises sincerity, he emits love, he commands trust, he spreads goodness, and he gives an impression of God and the truth. For the man who has realized the inner life every act is his meditation; if he is walking in the street it is his meditation; if he is working as a carpenter, as a goldsmith or in any other trade or business, that is his meditation. It does not matter if he is looking at heaven or at the earth, he is looking at the object that he worships. East or west or north or south, upon all sides is his God. In form, in principle, nothing restricts him. He may know things and yet may not speak; for if a man who lives the inner life were to speak of his experiences it would confuse many minds.

There are individuals in the world who from morning until evening have their eyes and their ears focused on every dark corner, wanting to listen, or to see what they can find out; and they find out nothing. If someone were to tell such people wonders, he would have a very good occupation, the whole world would seek him. But such is not the work of the self-realized man. He sees, and yet does not look; if he were to look, how much would he see! There is so much to be seen by one whose every glance, wherever it is cast, breaks through every object and discovers its depth and its secret. And if he were to look at things and find out their secrets and depths, where would it end, and of what interest is it to him?

The inner life, therefore, is seeing all things and yet not seeing them; feeling all things and not expressing them, for they cannot be fully expressed; understanding all things and not explaining. How far can such a man explain, and how much can another understand? Each according to the capacity he has, no more. The inner life is not lived by closing the eyes; one need not close one's eyes from this world in order to live in it, one can just as well open them.

The exact meaning of the inner life is not only to live in the body, but also to live in the heart, to live in the soul. Why, then, does not the average man live an inner life when he too has a heart and a soul? It is because he has a heart, and yet is not conscious of it; he has a soul, and knows not what it is. When he lives in the captivity of the body, limited by that body, he can only feel a thing by touching it, he sees only by looking through his eyes, he hears only by hearing with his ears. How much can the ears hear and the eyes see? All this experience obtained by the outer senses is limited. When man lives in this limitation he does not know that another part of his being exists, which is much higher, more wonderful, more living, and more exalted. Once he begins to know this, then the body becomes his tool, for he lives in his heart. And then later he passes on and lives in his soul. He experiences life independently of his body; and that is called the inner life. Once man has experienced the inner life, the fear of death has expired; because he knows death comes to the body, not to his inner being. When once he begins to realize life in his heart and in his soul, then he looks upon his body as a coat. If the coat is old he puts it away and takes a new one, for his being does not depend upon his coat. The fear of death lasts only so long as man has not realized that his real being does not depend upon his body.

The joy, therefore, of the one who experiences the inner life is beyond comparison greater than that of the average man living only as a captive in his mortal body. Yet the inner life does not necessitate man's adopting a certain way of living, or living an ascetic or a religious life. Whatever his outer occupation be it does not matter; the man who lives the inner life lives it through all. Man always looks for a spiritual person in a religious person, or perhaps in what he calls a good person, or in someone with a philosophical mind, but that is not necessarily the case. A person may be religious, even philosophical, he may be religious or good, and yet he may not live the inner life.

There is no distinct outward appearance which can prove a person to be living the inner life, except one thing. When a child grows towards youth, you can see in the expression of that child a light beaming out, a certain new consciousness arising, a new knowledge coming which the child has not known before. That is the sign of youth, yet the child does not say so; he cannot say it, even if he wanted to, he cannot explain it. And yet you can see it from every movement that the child makes; from his every expression, you can find that he is realizing life now. And so it is with the soul. When the soul begins to realize the life above and beyond this life, it begins to show; and although the man who realizes this may refrain from purposely showing it, yet from his expression, his movement, his glance, his voice, from every action and from every attitude, the wise can grasp and the others can feel that he is conscious of some mystery.

The inner life is a birth of the soul; as Christ said, that unless the soul is born again it cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore the realization of the inner life is entering the kingdom of heaven; and this consciousness when it comes to the human being shows itself as a new birth, and with this new birth there comes the assurance of everlasting life.

Section II - The Inner Life

Chapter V

FREEDOM OF ACTION

As man grows through the inner life, so he feels a freedom of thought, speech and action which comes as a natural course through his spiritual journey. And the reason why this freedom comes and whence it comes can be explained by the fact that there is a spirit of freedom hidden within man, covered by outward conventionalities. When man grows out of the outward conventionalities, then the spirit of freedom, which was closed in so far, becomes manifest.

The laws given to humanity are given by those far from such laws, the Elder Ones. As for children, certain laws, certain rules are necessary, so those who have not yet evolved to look at life from the higher point of view are fixed under certain laws which are taught to them as religion; and these are as necessary for mankind as the rules given to the children in the home. If there were no rules given, the children would become unruly; but when the children become grown-up, then they begin to see for themselves the reason why rules were given to them and the benefit that these rules were to them; then they can make such rules for themselves as suit them best.

The inner life helps a soul to grow up; when the soul evolves from subjection to mastery, then it makes rules for itself. In the East, therefore, no one tries to criticize a spiritual person; no one stands up to judge his action or to accuse him of something which he himself calls wrong. For this reason Jesus Christ has said, 'Judge not'. But this teaching has been given to point out that 'judge not' applies to your equal; for the one who is still more advanced no one can judge. When man has the tendency to judge one more advanced than himself, the consequence is that spiritual advancement deteriorates; because however advanced he may be those who have not yet advanced pull him down. Therefore humanity, instead of going forward, goes backward. What happened in the case of Jesus Christ? He was judged. The liberated soul, the soul that was made free by divine nature, was judged at the court of man. The less advanced men considered themselves sufficiently learned to judge Christ, and not only to judge, but also to give sentence.

In whatever period of civilization, therefore, the tendency has shown itself to judge the one who is advanced, there has always come a collapse of the whole civilization. Sarmad, a great Sufi saint who lived in Gwalior, was asked by the Emperor Aurangzeb to attend the mosque, for it was against the rules of the time that anyone kept away from the regular prayers which took place in the mosque of the State. Sarmad, being a man of ecstasy, living every moment of his day and night in union with God, being God-conscious himself, perhaps forgot or refused. A certain time of prayer or a certain place for prayer to him was nothing; every place to him was a place of prayer; every time was a time of prayer; his every breath was a prayer. As he refused to attend prayers he was beheaded for breaking the rules which were made for everyone. The consequence was that the Mogul Empire declined and its downfall can be dated from that time; the entire Mogul civilization, unique in its period, fell to pieces.

The Hindus have always known this philosophy, for the reason that they had a perfect religion, a religion in which one aspect of God was characterized as human; and their various

Devas are nothing but various characteristics of human nature, each of them adored and worshipped. In this way not only God, but the whole human nature in all its aspects, was adored and worshipped. It is that which makes the Hindu religion perfect. When people say, 'This place is sacred, and that other place is not sacred; that particular thing is holy, and all other things not holy,' in this way they divide life into many pieces, the life which is one, the life which cannot be divided.

Therefore those who rise above the ordinary conventionalities of life by their inner development come to another consciousness. For them worldly laws are the laws for the children. Those who begin to see this difference between the laws they set before themselves and the laws that are observed by mankind, at first sometimes condemn and then disregard the common laws. They criticize them, and ask, 'What is it all for?' But those who come to the fuller realization of the inner laws, show respect even for the laws of the children; knowing that they *are* the laws for the children and not for the grown-up yet they respect them, for they know that it cannot be otherwise. The laws which they know can only manifest to the one whose soul rises to that realization; but before that soul rises it must have some law by which to live in harmony. Therefore advanced souls regard such laws with respect, and observe them when they are in the community. They do not condemn them; they will not criticize them. They realize that harmony is the principal thing in life, and that we cannot be happy through life if we cannot harmonize with all those around us. Whatever be our grade of evolution, whatever be our outlook on life, and whatever be our freedom, we must have regard for the laws of the majority.

Now the question is, do those who are spiritually advanced have any special conception of morals? Indeed they have; and their morals are great morals, much greater than the average human being can conceive. It is not that by becoming free spiritually from the laws of the generality, they become free from their own laws. They have their own laws to bind them; and these are much higher and much greater laws. No doubt their way of looking at things may be criticized and may not be generally understood. Yet their law is more akin to nature; their laws are in harmony with the spirit. Their laws have their effect as phenomena. And by regarding two morals which are contrary to each other, the morals of the generality and their own morals, they arrive at a plane and a condition where their hands and feet are nailed. That is the symbolical meaning of the nailing of Christ to the cross.

Section II - The Inner Life

Chapter VI

THE LAW OF THE INNER LIFE

Those who live the inner life begin to see a law which is hidden from the average man. There is the law of nature which is known as science, and that of life which is called moral law; but beyond science and morals there is another law. It may be called occult law, or in other words inner law; a law which can be understood by an open heart and an awakened soul.

This law manifests to the view of the seer in many and varied forms; sometimes it appears in a quite contrary form to the effect that it has later on in its manifestation. The eye of the seer becomes a sword which cuts open, so to speak, all things, including the hearts of men, and sees clearly through all they contain; but it is cutting open which is at the same time healing.

In the Quran it is said, 'He who taught with the pen, taught man that which he knew not.' And what does that mean? It means that to the man who lives the inner life, everything that he sees becomes a written character and this whole visible world a book. He reads it as plainly as a letter written by his friend. And besides this, he hears a voice within which becomes to him a language. It is an inner language; its words are not the same as the words of the external language. It is a divine language. It is a language without words which can only be called a voice, and yet it serves as a language. It is like music which is as clear as a language to the musician. Another person enjoys music, but only the musician knows exactly what it says, what every note is, how it is expressed and what it reveals. Every phrase of music to him has a meaning; every piece of music is a picture to him. But this is only with a real musician.

Some people profess to have clairvoyance and clairaudience, and very often delude others by giving false prophecies; but the one who lives the inner life does not need to prophesy; he does not need to tell others what he sees and what he hears. It is not only that he is not inclined to do so, but also he sees no necessity for it; besides, he cannot fully express himself. How difficult it is to translate fully the poetry of one language into the poetry of another! Yet it is only interpreting the ideas of one part of the earth, to the people of another part of the same earth. How much more difficult, then, it must be to translate or to interpret the ideas of the divine world to the human world! In what words can they be given? what phrases can be used for them? And after being given even in words and phrases, who would understand them? It is the language of a different world.

Therefore, when the prophets and seers of all ages have given to humanity a certain message and law, it was only the giving of a drop from the ocean, which they received into their hearts. And this also is a great difficulty, for even this drop is not intelligible. Does every Christian understand the Bible? Does every Muslim know the Quran, or every Hindu the Vedanta? No, they may know the words of the verses, but not always the real meaning. Among the Muslims there are some who know the whole Quran by heart, but that does not fulfill the purpose. The whole of nature is a secret book, yet it is an open book to the seer. How can man translate it? How can man interpret it? It is like trying to bring the sea on to the land; one can bring it, but how much?

The understanding of this law gives quite a different outlook on life to the seer; it makes him more inclined to appreciate all that is good and beautiful, to admire all that is worth admiring, to enjoy all that is worth enjoying, to experience all that is worth experiencing. It awakens the sympathy of the seer to love, to tolerate, to forgive, to endure and to sympathize; it gives the inclination to support, to protect, and to serve those in need. But can he say what he really feels, how he really feels? No, he cannot say it even to himself.

Therefore, the one who lives the inner life is all things. He is as a physician who knows things that a physician cannot know; an astrologer who knows much more than an astrologer; an artist who knows that which an artist could not know; a musician who knows what a musician does not know; a poet who knows what the poet cannot perceive. For He becomes the artist of the entire world, the singer of the divine song; he becomes an astrologer of the entire cosmos, which is hidden from the sight of men. He does not need outer things as the signs of knowing the eternal life. His very life is the evidence of the everlasting life. To him death is a shadow; it is a change; it is turning the face from one side to the other. To him all things have their meaning, every movement in this world; the movement of the water, of the air, of the lightning and the thunder and the wind. Every movement has a message for him, it brings to him some sign. To another person it is only the thunder, it is only a storm, but to him every movement has its meaning. And when he rises in his development, not only has every movement its meaning, but in and above every movement there is his command. It is that part of his life which brings him mastery.

Besides this, in all affairs of this world, of individuals and multitudes, which confuse people, which bring them despair, and cause them depression, which give joy and pleasure, which amuse them, he sees through all. He knows why it comes, whence it comes, what is behind it, what is the cause of it, and behind the seeming cause what is the hidden cause; and if he wished to trace the cause behind the cause he could trace back to the primal cause, for the inner life is lived by living with the primal cause, by being in unity with the primal cause. Therefore the one who lives the inner life, in other words, who lives the life of God, God is in him and he is in God.

Section II - The Inner Life

Chapter VII

THE OBJECT OF THE INNER LIFE

IS it power which is the object of the spiritual person, or is it inspiration after which he seeks? It is in fact neither of these things which he pursues, but all such things as power and inspiration follow him as he proceeds on his path towards the spiritual goal. The goal of the spiritual person is self-realization, and his journey is towards the depth of his own being, his God, his ideal.

Does such a person sacrifice all interests in life, or does he consider the different objects that people have in their lives as something leading astray? Not at all. No doubt his object is the highest that any soul can have, but all other objects which he sees before himself in life do not necessarily hinder him on his path; they become as a staircase on his way, making his path easy to tread. Therefore, the person living the inner life never condemns and does not criticize the objects of another, however small or ridiculous they may appear, for he knows that every object in the life of a person is but a stepping stone which leads him forward if he only wishes to go forward.

There is a time in the life of a soul when it has the desire to play with dolls; there is a seeking after toys. From the spiritual point of view there is no harm in that, and man sees in time the way that leads to the goal; these are only passing interests leading to others, and in this way man goes forward.

Therefore, according to the view of the seer, man places before him at different times such objects as riches, pleasure, or material heaven; the spiritual person starts his journey from the point where these end. The process of evolution is not a straight way, it is more like a wheel that is ever turning. So the experience of a person who treads the spiritual path begins to show a downward tendency, and from that again upwards. For instance, in the spiritual path a person goes backwards, he experiences youth again, for spirituality gives health to the mind and the body, it being the real life. He experiences vigor, strength, aspiration, enthusiasm, energy, and a living spirit that makes him feel youthful, whatever be his age. Then, he becomes as a little child: eager to play, ready to laugh, and happy among children. He shows in his personality, childlike traits: especially that look that one sees in children, where there is no worry, anxiety, or bitter feeling against anyone, where there is a desire to be friendly with all, where there is no pride or conceit, but readiness to associate with anybody, whatever be his class or caste, nation or race. So the spiritual person becomes like a child. The tendency to tears, the readiness for laughter, all these are found in the spiritual person.

As the spiritual person goes further he shows in his nature infancy. This can be perceived in his innocence. His heart may be lighted with wisdom, yet he is innocent; he is easily deceived, even knowingly, besides being happy under all conditions, like an infant. As the infant has no regard for honor or for insult, neither has the spiritual person. When he arrives at this state, he answers insult with a smile. Honors given to him are like honors given to a little baby, who does not know to whom they are offered. Only the person who has given the honors knows that they have been given to somebody. The spiritual one is not conscious of it, nor happy in it, nor proud of it. It is nothing to him. The one who has honored him has

honored himself, since to the baby it is nothing if somebody should speak in favor of him or against him; the baby does not mind, he is ready to smile at both; so is the spiritual soul.

As the spiritual soul proceeds further he begins to show the real traits of humanity, for here real humanity begins. One can see in such a soul the signs which are the pure characteristics of the human being, devoid of the animal traits. For instance, there is a tendency in him to appreciate every little good deed done by anyone, to admire good wherever he sees it in any person: a tendency to sympathize, whatever be the condition of a person, saint or sinner; a tendency to take interest in the affairs of his friends when called upon to do so; a tendency to sacrifice, not considering what he sacrifices, as long as he is moved to do that action. Respect, gratitude, sincerity, faithfulness, patience, endurance, all these qualities begin to show in the character of that man. It is in this stage that truly he can judge, for at this stage the sense of justice awakens.

But as he grows he continues also to grow backward. He now shows the signs of the animal kingdom; for instance, such a quality as that of the elephant, which, with all its strength and power of giant bulk, is ready to take the load put upon it; the horse which is ready to serve the rider; and the cow which lives in the world harmoniously, comes home without being driven, gives milk which is the right of her calf. These qualities come to the spiritual person. The same thing is taught by Christ.

When he goes on further still there develops in him the quality of the vegetable kingdom, of the plants that bring forth fruit and flowers; patiently waiting for the rain from above; never asking any return from those who come to gather flowers and fruit, giving and never expecting a return, desiring only to bring forth beauty according to the capability which is hidden in them, and letting it be taken by the worthy or unworthy, whoever it be, without any expectation of appreciation or thanks.

And when the spiritual person advances still further he arrives at the stage of the mineral kingdom. He becomes as a rock; a rock for others to lean on, to depend upon; a rock that stands unmoved amidst the constantly moving waves of the sea of life; a rock to endure all things of this world whose influence has a jarring effect upon sensitive human beings; a rock of constancy in friendship, of steadfastness in love, of loyalty to every ideal for which he has taken his stand. One can depend on him through life and death, here and hereafter. In this world where nothing is dependable, which is full of changes every moment, such a soul has arrived at the stage where he shows through all these changes that rock-like quality, proving thereby his advancement to the mineral kingdom.

His further advancement is into the jinn quality, which represents the all knowing, all understanding. There is nothing he cannot understand; however difficult the situation, however subtle the problem, whatever be the condition of those around him, he understands it all. A person may come to him hardened with faults that he has committed all his life; before this understanding he melts, for whether it be friend or an enemy, he understands both. Not only has he the knowledge of human nature, but of objects as well, of conditions of life in general in all its aspects.

And when he advances still further his nature develops into that of an angel. The nature of the angel is to be worshipful. He therefore worships God in all creatures; he does not feel to be any greater or better or any more spiritual himself than anybody else. In this realization he is the worshipper of all the names and forms there are, for he considers them all the names and

forms of God. There is no one, however degenerate or looked down upon by the world, who is any less in his eyes. In his eyes there is no one but the divine Being; and in this way every moment of his life is devoted to worship. For him it is no longer necessary that he must worship God at a certain time, or in a certain house, or in a certain manner. There is no one moment that he is not in worship. Every moment of his life he is in worship, he is before God; and being before God at every moment of his life he becomes so purified that his heart becomes a crystal where everything is clear. Everything is reflected there, no one can hide his thoughts from him, nothing is hidden from him; all is known as clearly as it is known to the other person, and more so. For every person knows his own condition and yet not the reason, but the spiritual being at this stage knows the condition of the person and the reason behind it. Therefore he knows more about every person than that person knows himself.

It is in this stage that his progress culminates and comes to its fullness; and Christ has spoken concerning this in the words: 'Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.' When that stage arrives, it is beyond all expression. It is a sense, it is a realization, and it is a feeling, which words can never explain. There is only one thing that can be said, that when a person has touched that stage which is called perfection, his thought, speech, action, his atmosphere, everything becomes productive of God; he spreads God everywhere. Even if he did not speak, still he would spread God; if he did not do anything, still he would bring God. And thus God-realized ones bring to the world the living God. At present there exists in the world only a belief in God; God exists in imagination, in the ideal. It is such a soul which has touched divine Perfection that brings to the earth a living God, who without him would remain only in the heavens.

Section II - The Inner Life

Chapter VIII

THE ATTAINMENT OF THE INNER LIFE

In the attainment of the inner life there are five things necessary. The first thing that is necessary is the mastery of mind; and this is done by unlearning all that one has learned. The inner knowledge is not gained by adding to the knowledge one has already achieved in life, for it requires a rock foundation. One cannot build a house of rocks on a foundation of sand. In order to make the foundation on rocks, one has to dig into the sand and build the foundation on the rocks below. Very often therefore it becomes difficult for an intellectual person, who through life has learned things and understood them by the power of intellect, to attain to the inner life. For these two paths are different: the one goes to the north and the other goes to the south. When a person says, 'I have now walked so many miles to the south, shall I therefore reach sooner something that exists in the north?' He must know that he will not reach it sooner, but later, because as many hours as he has walked to the south he must walk back in order to reach the north.

Therefore, it must be understood that: all man learns and experiences in this life, in the world, all that he calls learning or knowledge, is only used in the world where he is learning, and bears the same relation to himself as the eggshell does to the chick. But when he takes the path to the inner life that learning and knowledge are of no use to him. The more he is capable of forgetting that knowledge, of unlearning it, the more capable he is of attaining the object for which he treads the spiritual path. It has been a great struggle for those learned and experienced in the outer life, to think that after their great advancement in worldly knowledge they have to go back again. Often they cannot understand; many among them think it is strange, and are therefore disappointed. It is like learning the language of a certain country, when wanting to go into another country where that language is not understood, nor the language of the latter country understood by oneself. Just as there is the North Pole and the South Pole, so there is the outward and the inward life. The difference is still vaster, because the gap between the inner life and the outer life is vaster than the distance between the North Pole and South Pole. The one who advances to the south is not getting nearer to the north pole, but on the contrary he is going further from it; in order to reach it he must turn right round. However, it is not difficult for the soul that is an earnest traveler on the path. It is only using the enthusiasm in the opposite direction; to turn the enthusiasm one has for learning something of the world into forgetting and unlearning it, in order to learn something of the inner life.

Now the question is, how does one unlearn? Learning is forming a knot in the mind. Whatever one learns from experience or from a person, one makes a knot of it in the mind; and there are as many knots found as there are things one has learned. Unlearning is unraveling the knot; and it is as hard to unlearn as it is to untie a knot. How much effort it requires, how much patience it requires, to unravel when one has made a knot and pulled it tight from both sides! So it requires patience and effort to unravel the knots in the mind. And what helps the process? The light of reason working with full power unravels the mental knots. A knot is a limited reason. When one unravels it, its limitation is taken away, it is open. And when the mind becomes smooth by unlearning and by digging out all impressions, of good and bad, of right and wrong, then the ground of the heart becomes as cultivated ground, just as the land does after plowing. All the old stumps and roots and pebbles and

rocks are taken off, and it is made into ground which is now ready for the sowing of the seed. But if there are rocks and stones and bricks still scattered there, and still some of the old roots lying there, then it is difficult for the seed to be sown; the ground is not in the condition the farmer wishes it to be.

The next thing in the attainment of the inner life is to seek a spiritual guide, someone whom a man can absolutely trust and have every confidence in; someone to whom he can look up, and with whom he is in sympathy, which would culminate in what is called devotion. And if once he has found someone in life whom he considers his Guru, his Murshid, his guide, then to give to him all confidence, so that not a thing is kept back. If there is something kept back, then what is given might just as well be taken away, because everything must be done fully, either have confidence or not have confidence, either have trust or no trust. On this path of perfection all things must be done fully.

Now there are the particular ways of the guide, which depend upon his temperament and upon his discrimination in finding for everyone who is being guided a special way. He may lead them to their destination by the royal road, or through the streets and lanes; down to the sea or through the town, by land or by water; the way that to him seems the best under certain circumstances.

The third thing necessary for spiritual attainment is the receiving of knowledge. This being the knowledge of the inner world, it cannot be compared with the knowledge one has learned before. That is why it is necessary to unlearn the former. Man cannot adjust what he receives in this path to the ideas which he has held before; the two things cannot go together. Therefore there are three stages of receiving knowledge which the one being guided has to go through. The first stage is the receiving of the knowledge, when he does nothing but receive. The next stage is the period after this; and that stage is the assimilating of what has been learned. Man thinks upon it, he ponders upon it, in order that it may remain in his mind. It is just like eating food and then assimilating it. The third stage is the reasoning it out by oneself. Man does not reason it out as soon as he has received it; if he did, he would lose the whole thing. Because it is like a person who has learned A and B and C at one stage, and then would ask how about words that did not begin with those letters. He would reason it out much sooner than he ought, for he has not yet learned the other letters. There is a time which must necessarily be given to receiving, as one gives time to eating. While one is eating one does not run about in the street in order to assimilate the food. After a person has finished his dinner, then he does everything possible to help digest it. Assimilating is clearly understanding, feeling and memorizing knowledge within oneself; not only that, but waiting until its benefit and its illumination come as a result of achievement.

The third part, then, to the receiving of knowledge is reasoning, to reason it through: why was it like that? What benefit has come to me from it? How can it be made practicable in life? How can it benefit myself and others? That is the third stage. If these stages are confused, then the whole process becomes confused, and one cannot get that benefit for which one treads the spiritual path.

The fourth grade of attainment of the inner life is meditation. If one has unlearned all that one has learned, if one has a teacher, and if one has received the knowledge of the inner life, still meditation is a thing which is most necessary, which in the Sufi words is called *Ryazat*. In the first place meditation is done mechanically, at an hour which one has fixed upon as the hour for devotion or concentration. The next step is to think of that idea of meditation at other

times during the day. And the third stage is continuing meditation throughout the day and night. Then one has attained to the right meditation. If a person does meditation only for fifteen minutes in the evening and then forgets altogether about it all day, he does the same thing as going to church on Sunday and the other days of the week forgetting all about it.

Intellectual training no doubt has its use in the achievement of the inner life, but the principal thing is meditation. That is the real training. The study of one year and the meditation of one day are equal. By this meditation is meant the right kind of meditation. If a person closes his eyes and sits doing nothing, he may just as well go to sleep. Meditation is not only an exercise to be practiced; in meditation the soul is charged with new light and life, with inspiration and vigor; in meditation there is every kind of blessing.

Some become tired of meditation, but that does not mean that they meditate, they become tired before having arrived at a stage where they really experience the effect of meditation, like those who become weary of practicing the violin. They are tired because they have not yet played the violin; if once they played, they would never be weary. The difficulty is in playing the violin, and the difficulty is having patience with one's own playing.

Patience is required in meditation; a person gets tired because he is accustomed to activity throughout the day. His nerves are all inclined to go on and on in that activity which is not really for his benefit. Yet, it is giving him the inclination to go on; and when he sits with his eyes closed he feels uncomfortable, for the mind which has been active all day becomes restive, just like a horse after having had a long run. Then if you want that horse to stand still, it is restive. It cannot stand still, because every nerve has been active, and it becomes almost impossible to keep that horse still.

And so it is with man. Once I was with a man who was in the habit of meditating, and while we were sitting near the fire and talking about things he went into the silence, and I had to sit quiet until he opened his eyes. I asked him, 'It is beautiful, is it not?' and he said, 'It is never enough.' Those who experience the joy of meditation, for them there is nothing in this world which is more interesting and enjoyable. They experience the inner peace and the joy that cannot be explained in words; they touch perfection, or the spirit of light, of life and of love, all is there.

The fifth necessity in the spiritual path is the loving of the everyday life. There are no strict morals which a spiritual guide enforces upon a person, for that work has been given to the outward religions. It is to the esoteric side of spiritual work that the outer morals belong, but the essence of morals is practiced by those treading the spiritual path. Their first moral principle is constantly to avoid hurting the feeling of another. The second principle is to avoid allowing themselves to be affected by the constantly jarring influences which every soul has to meet in life. The third principle is to keep their balance under all different situations and conditions which upset this tranquil state of mind. The fourth principle is to love unceasingly all those who deserve love, and to give to the undeserving their forgiveness; and this is continually practiced by them. The fifth principle is detachment amidst the crowd; but by detachment I do not mean separation. By detachment is only meant rising above those bondages which bind man and keep him back from his journey towards the goal.

Section II - The Inner Life

Chapter IX

THE ANGEL-MAN

The Hindu word *Deva* denotes an angel-man, and the Sufi term for this is *Firishta Khaslat*. Every soul has as its first expression angelic life, and therefore it is not surprising if man shows angelic traits in his life, for it is in the depth of his soul. The soul coming through different spheres and planes of existence partakes of different attributes; and the attributes of the lower world become so collected and gathered around the soul, that it almost forgets its very first experience of itself, its purest being. The soul that through all the worldly experiences has a tendency to turn towards its origin, its angelic state, shows a different character from the general characteristics of human beings. This soul shows the tendency of the compass, that always points in a certain direction, whichever way it is moved or turned; and it is the same with a soul whose nature it is to be pointing to the origin and source from which every soul comes.

Now this soul may have the same tendency from childhood and through youth, and when grown-up it may still have the same tendency; it may develop it more and more, but this tendency is born with the soul and its magnetism is great. It attracts every other soul, because it is in contact with its real self, and that real self is the real self of every soul which it contacts; and therefore it acts as a magnet towards these souls. *Deva* is the name of this pure kind of human soul.

The next type of soul is the jinn. This is characteristic of a soul that keeps in contact with the inner region, which is reflected outwardly in all that is beautiful. While the soul of every person is looking for the beauty which is outward, the attention of the jinn soul is directed not so much to the beauty which is reflected outwardly as is to the source of that beauty which is within.

It is among those who live the inner life that these two characteristic types of the *Deva* and the jinn are mostly to be found, because they are less absorbed in the life of this world, and thus more attracted to the inner life. It does not mean that they are not occupied with the worldly life; it does not mean that they take no interest in this world; in fact it is the interest in the external life which brings the soul towards it. If the soul were not interested in the world, it would not come; it is its interest which brings it. But to such a soul, while the external life is of interest, at the same time it is a disappointment. All that interests a fine soul in this world only interests it as long as the soul does not touch it; once it has touched it this soul loses interest. Its natural inclination is to withdraw. The things which hold the average soul cannot hold this soul. They can only attract, for this soul is seeking for something, and it sees its reflection outwardly, but when it touches it, it finds it was a shadow and was not real, and it goes back disappointed; and so the life of the *Deva* or jinn is spent in this manner.

The characteristic of the deer, as described by the poets of India, is that when it is thirsty it runs about in the forests looking for water, and it is greatly delighted on hearing the sound of thunder and runs about with a desire to drink. But sometimes there is only thunder and no rain afterwards, or if it rains it is perhaps only a shower and not enough to drink, and the deer still remains thirsty. And so is the thirst of a fine soul in this world. The soul of the spiritually

inclined man is constantly thirsty, looking for something, seeking for something; and when it thinks it has found it, the thing turns out to be different; and so life becomes a continual struggle and disappointment. And the result is that instead of taking interest in all things, a kind of indifference is produced; and yet in the real character of this soul there is no indifference, there is only love.

Although life seems to make this soul indifferent, it cannot really become indifferent. It is this state, working through this life, that gives a man a certain feeling, to which only a Hindu word is applicable, no other language having a word which can render this particular meaning so adequately. The Hindus call it *Vairagya* from which the term *Vairagi* has come. *Vairagi* means a person who has become indifferent; and yet indifference is not the word for it. It describes a person who has lost the value in his eyes of all that attracts the human being. It is no more attractive to him; it no more enslaves him. He may still be interested in all things of this life, but is not bound to them. The first feeling of the *Vairagi* is to turn away from everything. He shows the nature of the deer, which runs away at the flutter of a leaf; for he becomes sensitive and convinced of the disappointing results that come from the limitation and changeableness of life in the world. Hurt within, he becomes sensitive, and the first thing that occurs to his mind is to fly, to hide somewhere, to go into a cave in the mountains, or into the forest where he will meet no one. No affair of this world, no relation, no friendship, no wealth, no rank, position or comfort, nothing holds him. And yet that does not mean that he in any way lacks what is called love or kindness, for if ever he lives in this world it is only out of love. He is not interested in the world and it is only love that keeps him here, the love which does not express itself any more in the way of attachment, but only in the way of kindness, forgiveness, generosity, service, consideration, sympathy, helpfulness, in any way that it can; never expecting a return from the world, but ever doing all that it can, pitying the conditions, knowing the limitations of life and its continual changeability.

When this *Vairagi* becomes more developed, then he becomes like a serpent, he becomes wise like a serpent; he seeks solitude as the serpent seeks solitude. The serpent is never interested in moving among the crowd; it always has its home where it hides itself. It only comes out when it is hungry or thirsty; and once it has taken its food it does not hunger or thirst after more as the dogs and cats do. You can give them food again and again, and they still want more. When the serpent is once fed it goes into its hole and stays there until it wants food again; it has lost all voraciousness.

And so has the soul of the *Vairagi*; he only wants to live in this world for the sake of others, not for himself. His connection with people in the world is to serve them, not asking for their service; to love them, not asking for love; to be friends with them, not asking for friendship. He never allows himself to be deceived a second time; once disappointed is sufficient. Once the *Vairagi* has come to realize the falsehood of ordinary life he never allows himself to be deceived again. He sees the world with the eye of experience, and he says, 'I do not expect anything from you; if I come to you it is to give to you, not to take from you, I do all things for you, but will not be bound to you.' That is the watchword of the *Vairagi*.

When the *Vairagi* is still more developed in this feeling of *Vairagya*, then he becomes a lion. He is no more the serpent seeking solitude, although he loves it still; he is no more the deer running away from the crowd. He is the lion, who stands and faces all difficulties. No longer sensitive, but with all strength and power, with all balance, with patience, he endures, and with a brave spirit he stands in the crowd in the world. For what? To bear all things that come

to him; to endure all the jarring influences that the world offers to a sensitive person; to look into the eyes of all, being brave in spirit and strengthened in truth and clear of conscience.

It is in this way that the lion-like soul of the Deva, the angel-man, comes to the rescue of humanity. What is called the Master or Saint or Prophet or Sage is this developed Vairagi. He is like the fruit that has ripened on the tree, helped by the sun. In this way, this soul that is ripened by experience in life, and has not allowed itself to become decayed by that experience, but has upheld the truth with balance, with hope and patience, directed by love for humanity and desire to serve God, without any desire for appreciation or return from below or from above. It is this soul of the Deva that brings the divine Message, whenever the Message comes, to a community, a nation, or to the world.

Section II - The Inner Life

Chapter X

THE FIVE DIFFERENT KINDS OF SPIRITUAL SOULS

THOSE who live the inner life have to adopt a certain outer form of living in the world amidst people of all kinds. There are five principle ways known which the spiritual souls adopt to live life in the world, although there are many more ways. Very often these souls are found in such forms of life that one could never imagine for one moment that they were living the inner life. It is for this reason that the wise of all ages have taught respect for every human being, whatever be his outward character, and have advised man to think who is beneath that garb, and what it is.

Among the five principle characteristics of the spiritual being the first is the religious character. This is he who lives the religious life, the life of an orthodox person, like everybody else, showing no outward trace of a deeper knowledge or wider view, though he realizes it within himself. Outwardly he goes to his temple or his church, like everybody else. He offers his prayers to the Deity in the same form as everybody, reads the scriptures in the same way that everybody else does, receives the sacraments and asks for the benediction of the church in the same way that everybody does. He shows no difference, no special characteristics outwardly showing him to be spiritually advanced; but at the same time, while others are doing all their religious actions outwardly, he realizes them in his life in reality. Every religious action to him is a symbolical revelation; prayer to him is a meditation; the scripture to him is his reminder, for the holy Book refers him to that which he reads in life and in nature. And therefore, while outwardly he is only a religious man like everybody in the world, inwardly he is a spiritual man.

Another aspect of a spiritual man is to be found in the philosophical mind. He may show no trace at all of orthodoxy or piety; he may seem to be quite a man of the world in business, or in the affairs of the worldly life. He takes all things smoothly, he tolerates all things, endures all things. He takes life easily with his understanding. He understands all things inwardly; outwardly he acts according to life's demand. No one may ever think that he is living the inner life. He may be settling a business affair, and yet he may have the realization of God and truth at the same time. He may not appear at all meditative or contemplative, and yet every moment of his life may be devoted to contemplation. He may take his occupation in everyday life as a means of spiritual realization. No one outwardly may consider for one moment that he is spiritually so highly evolved, except that those who come in contact with him may in time be convinced that he is an honest person; that he is fair and just in his principles and life; that he is sincere. That is all the religion he needs. In this way his outward life becomes his religion, and his inner realization his spirituality.

The third form of a spiritual being is that of a server, one who does good to others. In this form there may be saints hidden. They never speak about spirituality, nor much about the philosophy of life. Their philosophy and religion are in their action. There is love gushing forth from their heart every moment of their life, and they are occupied in doing good to others. They consider everyone who comes near them as their brother or their sister, as their child; they take an interest in the joy and the sorrow of all people, and do all they can to guide them, to instruct them, to advise them through their lives. In this form the spiritual person may be a teacher, a preacher, or a philanthropist. But in whatever form he may appear, the

chief thing in his life is the service of mankind: doing good to another, bringing happiness to someone in some form. The joy that rises from this is high spiritual ecstasy, for every act of goodness and kindness has a particular joy which brings the air of Heaven. When a person is all the time occupied doing good to others, there is a constant joy arising; and that joy creates a heavenly atmosphere, creating within him that heaven which is his inner life. This world is so full of thorns, so full of troubles, pains and sorrows. In this same world he lives; but by the very fact of his trying to remove the thorns from the path of another, although they prick his own hands, he rises and this gives him that inner joy which is his spiritual realization.

There is the fourth form of a spiritual person, which is the mystic form; and that form is difficult to understand, because the mystic is born. Mysticism is not a thing which is learned; it is a temperament. A mystic may have his face turned towards the north while he is looking towards the south. A mystic may have his head bent low and yet he may be looking up. His eyes may be open outwardly while he may be looking inwardly; his eyes may be closed and yet he may be looking outwardly. The average man cannot understand the mystic; and therefore people are always at a loss when dealing with him. His 'yes' is not the same 'yes' that everybody says; his 'no' has not the same meaning as that which everybody understands. In almost every phrase he says there is some symbolical meaning. His every outward action has an inner significance. A man who does not understand his symbolical meaning may be bewildered by hearing a phrase which is nothing but confusion to him.

A mystic may take one step outwardly, inwardly he has taken a thousand; he may be in one city, and may be working in another place at the same time. A mystic is a phenomenon in himself and a confusion to those around him. He himself cannot tell them what he is doing, nor will they understand the real secret of the mystic. For it is someone who is living the inner life, and at the same time covering that inner life by outer action; his word or movement is nothing but the cover of some inner action. Therefore, those who understand the mystic never dispute with him. When he says 'Go', they go. When he says 'Come', they come. When he comes to them they do not say, 'Do not come'; they understand that it is the time when he must come; and when he goes from them they do not ask him to stay, for they know it is the time when he must go.

Neither the laughter of a mystic nor his tears are to be taken as any outward expression which means something. His tears may perhaps be a cover for very great joy, his smile, his laughter may be a cover for a very deep sentiment. His open eyes, his closed eyes, the turning of his face, his glance, his silence, his conversation, none of these has the meaning one is accustomed to attribute to them. Yet it does not mean that the mystic does this purposely; he is made thus; no one could purposely do it even if he wished, no one has the power to do it. The truth is that the soul of the mystic is a dancing soul. It has realized that inner law. It has fathomed that mystery for which souls long and in the joy of that mystery the whole life of the mystic becomes a mystery. You may see the mystic twenty times a day, and twenty times he will have a different expression. Every time his mood is different; and yet his outward mood may not at all be his inner mood. The mystic is an example of God's mystery in the form of man.

The fifth form in which a person who lives the inner life appears is a strange form, a form which very few people can understand. He puts on the mask of innocence outwardly to such an extent that those who do not understand may easily consider him unbalanced, peculiar, or strange. He does not mind about it, for the reason that it is only his shield. If he were to admit before humanity the power that he has, thousands of people would go after him, and he would

not have one moment to live his inner life. The enormous power that he possesses governs inwardly lands and countries, controlling them and keeping them safe from disasters such as floods and plagues, and also wars; keeping harmony in the country or in the place in which he lives. All this is done by his silence, by his constant realization of the inner life. To a person who lacks deep insight he will seem a strange being. In the language of the East he is called *Majzub*. That same idea was known to the ancient Greeks and traces of it are still in existence in some places, but mostly in the East. There are souls to be found today in the East, living in this garb of a self-realized man who shows no trace outwardly of philosophy or mysticism or religion, or any particular morals. And yet, his presence is a battery of power, his glance most inspiring, there is a commanding expression in his looks; and if he ever speaks, his word is the promise of God. What he says is truth; but he rarely speaks a word, it is difficult to get a word out of him; but once he has spoken, what he says is done.

There is no end to the variety of the outward appearance of spiritual souls in life; but at the same time there is no better way of living in this world and yet living the inner life than being *oneself*, outwardly and inwardly. Whatever be one's profession, work, or part in the outer life, to perform it sincerely and truthfully, to fulfill one's mission in the outer life thoroughly; at the same time keeping the inner realization that the outer life, whatever be one's occupation, should reflect the inner realization of truth.

Section III - The Soul: Whence and Whither?

INTRODUCTION

BEFORE Manifestation what existed? *Zat*, the Truly Existing, the Only Being. In what form? In no form. As what? As nothing. The only definition that words can give is as the Absolute. In the Sufi terms this existence is termed *Ahadiat*.

A consciousness arose out of the Absolute, the consciousness of Existence. There was nothing of which the Absolute could be conscious, except Existence. This stage is called *Wahdat*. Out of this consciousness of existence, a sense developed: a sense 'that I exist'. It was a development of the consciousness of existence. It was this development which formed the first Ego, the Logos, which is termed *Wahdaniat* by the Sufis.

With the feeling of I-ness the innate power of the Absolute, so to speak, pulled itself together; in other words concentrated on one point; thus the all-pervading radiance formed its center, the Center which is the divine Spirit or the *Nur*, in Sufi terms called *Arwah*. This central light then divided existence into two forms, light and darkness. In point of fact, there is no such thing as darkness; there has never been darkness; it is only less light compared with more light. This light and darkness formed an Akasha or Asman, an accommodation, a mold; and the phenomenon of light and shadow working through this mold furthered the manifestation into a great many accommodations, Asmans or Akashas, one within the other. Every step manifestation has taken has resulted in a variety of forms made by the different substances which are produced during the process of spirit turning into matter. The working of this process has been according to the law of vibration, which is the secret of motion; and it is the plane of the definite forms of nature which is called *Asman* in Sufi terminology. Out of these forms the vegetable kingdom came gradually from the mineral and from the animal came the human race. This provided for the divine Spirit, the *Ajsam*, the bodies which it has needed from the time it centered itself in one point, and from there spread its rays as various souls.

Thus six definite steps towards manifestation are recognized by Sufis. The first three are called *Tanzi*, and the next three *Tashbi*; the first three imperceptible, and the next three distinguishable.

There is also the phenomenon of four elements. Besides one which is the source and goal of all elements; *Nur*, the ether; this makes them five. *Bad* the air, *Atish* the fire, *Ab* the water, *Khak* the earth. These elements have worked in consonance with one another in order to bring about the results desired by the divine wisdom working behind them. In every Akasha or Asman they have been present either more or less; one without the other did not exist; the four together brought the fifth. In this way the whole manifestation has taken place through a gradual process of development.

Manifestation finished half its task in the creation of man, in whom is born the wisdom of controlling and using all that is on the earth to its best advantage. And in man the purpose of manifestation is fully accomplished, especially in the man who has on his return journey become more and more conscious of the purpose, by widening his outlook and by living a fuller life, the man who has reached that stage of realization which is called divinity, in which is the fulfillment of the purpose of this whole manifestation.

Section III - The Soul: Whence and Whither?

Part I TOWARDS MANIFESTATION

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THE divine Spirit is known by the mystics of all ages as the Sun; and therefore in all ancient mystical symbols the sun has been pictured as the sign of God. This conception gives further help in the knowledge of metaphysics. The sun is that aspect of the Absolute God in which He begins to manifest, and the first step towards manifestation is contraction. That contraction is seen in all living beings and in all objects. It is first contraction that takes place, and then expansion, which comes as a matter of course as a reaction. The former tendency is the desire of inhalation, and the latter exhalation. The contraction and expansion which are seen in all aspects of life come from God Himself.

The Omnipresent Light by this tendency becomes concentrated; and it is this concentrated Light of Intelligence which is the sun recognized by the mystics. As Shams-i Tabriz has said, 'When the Sun of His countenance became manifest, the atoms of both worlds began to appear; as its light fell every atom donned a name and a form.' The Hindus have called it in the Vedanta *Chaitanya*, the Spirit or the Light of God. In the Quran it is mentioned, 'we have made thy light out of Our Light, and of that Light we have made the Universe.' In plain words this means that when there was nothing – no form, no name, no person, no object – except Intelligence; and it is the contraction of that intelligence; which brought its essence into a form of light which is called the divine Spirit; and the expansion of the same light has been the cause of the whole of manifestation. Creation is the exhalation of God; and what is called destruction is absorption, which is the inhalation of God.

The divine Spirit spreads itself; this we call creation and it consists of various names and forms. There arises a conflicting condition or entanglement of the Breath of God, disorder in its rhythm, which manifests in destruction, and culminates in what is called by Hindus *Pralaya*, the end of the world. For this many blame God many judge Him, and many think it is unfair on the part of God to create, and to destroy; but for God, who is the only Being, this is the natural condition, by which He eternally lives. The beginning and the end of the world is only His one Breath, the duration of which is numberless years. During this one Breath myriads of beings have been born, have lived and died, and experienced both this world and the next. Souls therefore are the rays of this Sun, which is called in Sanskrit *Brahma*. The nature of the ray is to extend and withdraw, to appear and disappear; and the duration of its existence is short when compared with the duration of the eternal God the divine Spirit. There are living creatures, small germs, worms and insects who live no longer than a moment; and there are other beings whose life is a hundred years; and some live longer still; and yet even if it were a thousand years it is a moment compared with eternity. Time, as man knows it, is in the first place discerned by the knowledge of his own physical constitution.

From the Sanskrit word *Pala*, which means moment, has come the word 'pulse'; that which is pulsation. This knowledge has been completed to some extent by the study of nature, the changes of the seasons, and the journeys the world makes round the sun. Many wish to limit divine law to this man-made conception of time, and they make speculations about it; but the

tendency of the mystic is to bend his head low in worship, as the thought of the eternal life of God, the only Being, comes to his mind. Instead of questioning why and what, he contemplates the being of God, and so raises his consciousness above the limitations of time and space, thus liberating his soul by lifting it to the divine spheres.

The soul, which is the ray of the divine Sun in one sphere, the sphere in which it does not touch any earthly being, is called *Malak* or angel. Therefore every soul passes through the angelic heavens; in other words, every soul is an angel before it touches the earthly plane. The angels it is who become human beings; and those who do not become human beings, remain angels. The human being, therefore, is a grown-up angel; or an angel is a soul who has not grown sufficiently. Infants who come on earth with their angelic qualities, and sometimes pass away without having experienced the life of the grown-up man, show us the picture of the original condition of the soul.

The idea that the angels are nearer to God is right according to this doctrine. Souls who have not journeyed farther are naturally close to the divine Spirit; they are angels. Someone asked the Prophet why man was greater than the angels; man, who causes all the bloodshed on the earth, while the angels are always occupied in the praise of God. It is said in the Quran that the angels knew nothing of the earth; they knew God. And so they occupied themselves with God; but man is greater, for when he comes on earth he has much in the world to be occupied with, and still he pursues God. That angelic sphere is free from passions and emotions, which are the source of all wrong and sin; souls pure of all greed and desires given by the denseness of earth are angels who know nothing else but happiness; for happiness is the real nature of the soul.

The Hindus call the angels *Suras*; Sura also means breath and breath means life. Suras, therefore, mean pure lives, lives that live long. In the Hindu scriptures there is another word used: *Asura*, meaning lifeless; in other words, not in tune with the infinite. Man may retain angelic qualities even in his life on the earth as a human being; and it is the angelic quality which can be traced in some souls who show innocence and simplicity in their lives. This is not necessarily weakness; it only shows the delicacy of a flower in the personality, together with fragrance.

Angelic souls on the earth-plane are inclined to love, to be kind, to be dependent upon those who show them love. They are ready to believe, willing to learn, inclined to follow that which seems to them for the moment good, beautiful and true. The picture of the angels that we read of in the scriptures as sitting upon clouds and playing harps is but an expression of a mystical secret. Playing the harp is vibrating harmoniously; the angels have no actual harps, they themselves *are* the harps; they are living vibrations; they are life itself.

One can see in a person who is vibrating harmoniously that his presence becomes the inspiration of music and poetry. The person whose heart is tuned to the pitch of the angelic heavens will show on earth heavenly bliss; therefore the wise seek the association of spiritual beings. And sitting on clouds means that the angels are above all clouds; clouds are for the beings of the dense earth; the angels are free both from transitory pleasures and from constant spells of depression; clouds do not surround them, for they are above clouds. Such souls, who are in direct touch with the spirit of God, and who have no knowledge of the false world which is full of illusion, who live and know not death, whose lives are happiness, whose food is divine light, make around '*Arsh*, the divine Spirit, an aura which is called the Highest Heaven.

The souls in the angelic heavens are all goodness; and this shows that goodness is natural, and what is contrary to our nature we call evil. Souls in the angelic heavens are innocent; this also shows that innocence is the natural condition of the soul, and the lack of innocence is a foreign element which the soul acquires after coming upon earth. In the angelic spheres the souls are happy; this shows that unhappiness does not belong to the soul. It is something which is foreign to it; therefore in the experience of man the discomfort coming out of life gives unhappiness. Souls on the earth retain something of the angelic quality; therefore they readily respond and are attracted without resistance to the innocence, happiness, and goodness of another person. If they knew that it is because this is the original quality of the soul they would develop the same in their own being. As Rumi has said, 'People are drawn to me, and they shed tears with my cries, and yet they know not what it is in me that attracts them.'

Seeking after goodness, innocence, and happiness helps the angelic qualities to develop in a soul. Spirituality, therefore, is the development of the angelic quality; and love of spirituality is the longing for the angelic heavens; it is homesickness.

Does death frighten the spiritual being? No; death for the spiritual soul is only a gate through which it enters into that sphere which every soul knows to be its home. Souls who become conscious of the angelic heavens, even in the smallest degree, hear the call of that sphere; and if they have any discomfort in this world it is that of the homesickness which the call of the angelic heavens gives.

The soul may be likened to a ray of the sun; so the souls of the angels, being not adorned with a physical garb, are as flames themselves. The scriptures therefore say that the angels are made of Nur or light; Nur is specially that light which comes from the divine Sun, the spirit of God. All souls are made of that essence which is the essence of the whole manifestation; and the quality of that essence is that it absorbs all that is around it, and in time develops so that it will merge into its own element, which is the divine.

The soul going towards manifestation which is still in the angelic heavens is free from all the differences and distinctions which are the conditions of the soul's life on earth. The dual aspect starts even in the angelic heavens; God alone is above duality; in all other conditions and aspects of life this is to be seen; though it is more distinct on the earth-plane. In the angelic heavens it is not distinguishable. People often question if the angels are in touch with those on earth; and the answer is that their life does not necessitate any communication with human life on earth, except in the case of some who are destined to perform a certain duty on the earth.

It is mentioned in the ancient scriptures that angels came with messages to the prophets of Beni Israel; but the explanation of this from the metaphysical point of view is quite different from what an ordinary person would imagine. No man on earth is capable of communicating with the angels in heaven, nor is an angel from heaven inclined to communicate with man. But in the exceptional lives of the prophets what happens is, that they rise above all the planes which keep man removed from the angelic heavens, and by doing so they are able to touch these heavens. And being charged with the ever-glowing fire of inspiration from the angelic spheres, where they come into touch with angels they descend to the plane of the earth; and it is then that their words become tongues of flame, as spoken of in the scriptures.

This means that every word of theirs becomes a torch given into the hands of those who listen, to illuminate their paths through life. Specially is this so in the lives of the Great Ones who have given a divine message, a religion, to the world; their souls have never been disconnected in any way with the angelic world; and it is this current, which linked their souls with the souls of the angels, that always kept them in contact with both heaven and earth. The soul of the prophet is therefore a link between heaven and earth; it is a medium by which God's message can be received.

Then there are some spiritual souls who have had the experience in their lives of having been helped or warned by an angel. It is such souls who have kept a thread unbroken which they brought with them from the angelic world; they may be conscious of it or not, but there is a telegraphic wire which connects their souls with the souls of the angels, and they are conscious of having had contact with the angels.

Common disease is called normal health; when many cannot experience something which is rare, they think the person who can experience such a rare thing has gone mad. Therefore it is the law of the mystics to see all things, to experience all things, either of heaven or earth, and yet to say little; for the souls incapable of understanding the possibility of their reach will ridicule them.

There is another aspect of the contact with the angels, and that is at the time of death. Many have seen in their lives the angels of death, yet when death's call comes some have seen them in human form. Others have not seen them, but have heard them speak. The reason is that there are some souls who have already departed from the earth-plane, though the breath is still connecting the soul with the body; and such souls experience the angelic spheres while still on the earth at the time of their death. They see angels clad in the form of their own imagination and hear the words of the angels in their own language. The reason is that a person who has lived on the earthly plane has to clothe a being of the higher planes in earthly garments, and to interpret the language of the higher spheres in his own words. For instance, the angel Gabriel spoke to Moses in the Hebrew language, and to Muhammad in Arabic. One would ask, which was the language of the angel Gabriel, Arabic or Hebrew? Neither Arabic nor Hebrew was the language of Gabriel; His language was the language of the soul and the soul knows the language of the soul; it is when a person interprets what he hears, even to himself, that he clothes the words he hears in his own language. When the Spirit descended upon the twelve apostles they began to speak all languages, and the meaning of this is, that when they were inspired by the angelic world, by the divine Sun or the Holy Ghost, they knew the language of languages; that is they knew the language of the soul, which means that they heard the voice of the soul before men spoke to them in earthly words. They were able to hear the voice of every soul through that inspiration. It would not give any special credit to the apostles if one said they knew all the languages in the world instantly; for there are people even now to be found whose genius as linguists is so great that they know more than twenty or thirty languages. There is only one language, which may be called all languages and that is the language of the soul. Before the illuminated soul all souls stand as written letters.

The Guardian Angel is a term known to many. This angelic protection comes to some souls on earth; souls who are walking on the earth, and yet are linked in some way or other with the heavenly spheres. Often one sees an innocent child being saved from an accident; and often a person is warned to save a child at the moment when it is in danger. This guardian angel also appears in the same form as the angels sent to people on various duties. There are recording angels, who take a record of our good and bad actions; and the most interesting thing is that

those who keep the record of the good actions do not keep the record of the bad actions. Those who keep a record of the bad actions are other angels; and there is a further explanation given by the prophet on this subject: that often a discussion takes place between those who keep a record of the good deeds and those who record the evil deeds. The former do not believe in the evil deeds because they are only conscious of man's goodness; they cannot believe that one who is good can be bad also. Also those who record the good points want their record to be filled and the other angels want their record to be filled, and so there is a great rivalry between them. Is this not the condition which we see in human nature? There is no person living on earth of whom all say good things; and there is no person living about whom all say bad things and no one says any good; and the most interesting point for a keen observer of life is how each tries to prove his argument to be correct.

In Sufi terms these two are called the angels of *Khair* and of *Khar*, and the difference in the spelling is very small. This suggests how little difference there is between goodness and badness. As Omar Khayyam says:

A hair perhaps divides the false and true;
Yes, and a single Alif were the clue,
Could you but find it – to the treasure house,
And, peradventure, to the Master too.

The ancient belief is that immediately after a dead person is buried these two kinds of angels come to his grave with their records and dispute about him. But do we not see in human nature the same thing? People do not even wait until after death; they begin to say things about the people they know, about their friends and foes, and dispute about them even during their lifetime. The ancient belief was that after a dead person is put into his grave and buried, two angels come to ask him questions, and by this cross examination to prove their arguments for and against. Their names are *Munkir* and *Nakir*. There is a story in the Bible that Jacob wrestled with an angel all night; and before the breaking of the dawn Jacob won, and the angels asked his name, blessed him, and gave him a new name. The interpretation of this is that the illuminated souls of the angels coming into contact with earthly beings are in conflict, and that conflict ends when man has given up his earthly point of view and has adopted the heavenly point of view. Then there is no more conflict, but a blessing. And the asking of the name is a paradox, for when once the false ego is crushed, the soul does not know what its real name is; for the old name belongs to the false ego, and he is given the true name, Israel, the great Name of God. In reality there is only one kind of angel; but their relation with human beings, and their desire to experience life through human beings, divides them into nine degrees. Then there is a belief that there are angels who are the inhabitants of heaven, and others who live in the contrary place; Those of the heaven are called *Nur*, light, and the others *Nar* which means fire in Arabic. This is an extreme point of view; in reality, they can be distinguished as two kinds, *Jalal* and *Jamal*, Angels of Power and Angels of Beauty. A question arises as to why the angels who descend on earth as angels do not come as human beings, for every human being was originally an angel. The angels who are related with human beings are souls now in the angelic world, and they keep connection with human beings because of their wish; and now that they have returned from the earthly regions to the angelic heavens, they still keep in touch with the earth, either being on a certain duty or because of their own pleasure.

The angelic spheres, the highest heavens, are the spheres of light which are called Nur; and that current of power which runs through the divine Sun causes rays to spread, each ray being an angel or a soul. It is the divine current, which is really *Nafs*, the breath, or the ego. Breath is the ego, and ego is the breath. When the breath has left the body, the ego has gone. The nature of this current, which spreads as a ray and which is a life current, is to collect and to create. It collects the atoms of the sphere through which it is running; and it creates out of itself all that it can create. Therefore in the angelic heavens, which is the sphere of radiance, the soul collects the atoms of radiance. A Sufi poet of Persia has given a most beautiful expression of this idea in a verse: 'A glow garbed with a flame came.' Before the angels were conceived by artists in the form of human beings they were symbolized as burning lamps; from this comes the custom of lighting candles in religious services, showing thereby to some extent what the angels were like before they became human souls.

In the ancient scriptures it is mentioned that human beings produced angels by their virtues; but this is only a symbolical expression; it is not that human beings produced angels by their virtues, but that their virtues lifted their souls to the angels. One may ask, 'If the souls who have settled in the angelic heaven are angels, then what makes them come to the earth? The answers that it is not the angels who have settled in the angelic heaven who come to the earth; for these rays have finished their creative power in manifesting as angels. If they had had a greater power they would certainly have gone farther, even to the physical plane, and would preferably have manifested as human beings; for the desire of every soul is to reach the culmination in manifestation, and that culmination is the stage of the human plane.

It is the work of the souls who return from the earth to communicate with the earth very often, and it is such angels who are generally known to man. Angels, who have never manifested as men on earth, only experience life on earth by the medium of other minds and bodies which by their evolution come closer to the angelic heavens. They take these as their instruments, and at times reflect themselves in them, and at times have them reflected in themselves. This is not obsession, but inspiration.

Souls in the angelic heavens live as a breath. The soul in its nature is a current; a current the nature of which is to envelop itself with all that may come along and meet it on its way. The soul collects all that comes to it; therefore it becomes different from its original condition. Yet in its real being the soul is a vibration, the soul is a breath, the soul is intelligence, and the soul is the essence of the personality.

The question very often arises, 'If an angel comes from above, does it descend outwardly before a person; or, manifest within a person in the heart?' The 'lift' which brings a soul down and takes it back to heaven is situated within; that 'lift' is the breath; the soul comes to earth with the breath, and with the same breath it returns. Those among human beings who are not even aware of their own breath, how can they know who comes within themselves and who goes out? Many seem wide-awake to the life without, but asleep to the life within; and though the chamber of their heart is continually visited by the hosts of heaven, they do not know their own heart; they are not there.

There is a very interesting story told in the Arabic scriptures. It is that God made Iblis the chief among the angels, and then told him to bring some clay that he might make out of it an image. The angels, under the direction of Iblis, brought the clay and made an image; then

God breathed into that image, and asked the angels to bow before it. All the angels bowed; but Iblis said, 'Lord, Thou hast made me chief of all angels, and I have brought this clay at Thy command, and made with my own hands this image which Thou commandest me to bow before.' The displeasure of God arose and fell on his neck as the sign of the outcast.

This story helps us to understand what Jesus Christ meant when He said, 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.' What Iblis denied was the reflection of God in man; and one can observe the same law in every direction of life. A person may be rich in wealth or high in position, but he still must obey the policeman; it is not the rank and wealth which the latter has, but in him is reflected the power of the government, and when a man takes no heed of the policeman, he refuses to obey the law of the state. In everything small or great it is the same law; and in every person there is a spark of this tendency of Iblis; the tendency which we know as egotism, the tendency to say, 'No, I will not listen; I will not give in; I will not consider. Because of what? Because of 'I'; because 'I am.' 'But there is only one 'I' – the perfect 'I'. He is God, whose power is mightier than any power existing in the world, whose position is greater than that of anyone; and He shows it in answer to the egotistic tendency of man, who is limited. This is expressed in the saying, 'Man proposes, but God disposes.' It is this thought which teaches man the virtue of resignation, which shows him that the 'I' he creates is a much smaller 'I', and that there is no comparison between this 'I' and the 'I' of the great Ego, God.

Another story tells how frightened the soul was when it was commanded to enter the body of clay; it was most unwilling, not from pride, but from fear. The soul, whose nature is freedom, whose dwelling-place is heaven, whose comfort it is to be free and to dwell in all the spheres of existence, for that soul to dwell in a house made of clay, was most terrifying. Then God asked the angels to play and sing, and the ecstasy that was produced in the soul by hearing that music made it enter the body of clay where it became captive to death.

The interpretation of this idea is, that the soul, which is pure intelligence and angelic in its being, had not the least interest in dwelling in the physical plane, which robs it of its freedom and makes it limited. But what interested the soul, and made it come into the body, is what this physical world offers to the senses; and this produces such an intoxication that it takes away for the moment the thought of heaven from the soul and so the soul becomes captive in the physical body. What is Cupid? Is not Cupid the soul? It is the soul; the angel going towards manifestation, the angel which has arrived at its destination, the human plane; and before it manifests there is Cupid.

iv

The soul, which has passed through the angelic heavens in its descent to earth, comes next into the sphere of the Jinn or genius. This is the sphere of mind, and may be called the spiritual sphere, for it is mind and soul which make spirit. The souls who halt in this sphere, being attracted by its beauty, settle there; also the souls who have no power to go further into outer manifestation become the inhabitants of this sphere. Therefore there are three kinds of souls who touch this sphere on their way to manifestation: the souls who are attracted to this sphere, and who decide to remain there; the souls who are unable to go farther, and who have to settle there; and the souls who are continuing their journey towards the earth-plane, and who are there on their way to the earth.

The jinn is an entity with a mind; but not a mind like that of man; a mind more pure, more clear, and illuminated by the light of intelligence. The mind of the jinn is deeper in perception and in conception, because it is empty, not filled with the thoughts and imaginations as is that of man. It is the mind of the jinn which may be called the 'empty cup'; a cup into which knowledge can be poured, in which there is accommodation. It is for this reason that the Teachers on the spiritual path appreciate the quality of the jinn in the minds of their pupils, in which they find accommodation for knowledge. A cup which is already filled, or even partly filled, does not give free accommodation for that knowledge which the Teacher wishes to pour into the heart of his pupil. As the jinns are keen in perception and conception so they are keen in expression either in word or deed. The action of the jinn extends as far as the mind can reach; and the word of the jinn reaches even farther than the voice, for it takes as its route the mental sphere which is above the airwaves.

The jinn comes closer to man than the angel; for in the jinn there is something like the mind which is completed in man. All the intuitive and inspirational properties are possessed by the jinn, because that is the only source that the jinn have of receiving its knowledge. Subjects such as poetry, music, art, inventive science, philosophy and morals are akin to the nature of the jinn. The artist, the poet, the musician and the philosopher show in their gifts throughout their lives the heritage of the jinn. The words genius and jinn come from a Sanskrit word *Jnana*, which means knowledge. The jinns. Therefore, are the beings of knowledge; whose hunger is for knowledge, whose joy is in learning, in understanding, and whose work is in inspiring, and bring light and joy to others. In every kind of knowledge that exists, the favorite knowledge to a jinn is the knowledge of truth, in which is the fulfillment of its life's purpose.

The sphere of the jinn is the universe of minds. It may be called a mental world; and yet the soul is with the mind. The soul with the mind is called spirit, and therefore it may also be called a spiritual world. The questions, 'What are the jinns like? What do they look like?' may be answered in the same way as in explaining the forms of angels: that things are not always as they are, but as we see them. Man always pictures the beings he imagines and cannot see with his physical eyes as something like himself; or man's imagination may gather together different forms: for instance, wings from the birds. Horns from the oxen, hooves from horses and paws from tigers. He puts them all together and makes a new form.

It is beyond possibility to explain exactly what the jinn looks like. And yet there is no being who lives without a form. There is much that can be said in support of man's imagination, which pictures the angels or jinn more or less in the form of man. For everything in the world proves on examination that it is striving to culminate in the form of man. Rocks, trees, fruits, flowers, mountains and clouds, all show a gradual development towards the image of man. A keen observer of nature will prove this a thousand times; there is everything in the world to support this argument. Every form shows either a part of the human form or an undeveloped outline of it. As it is with material things and with the lower creation, so it is that even the form of the jinn and the angel is growing towards the human form. It is this idea which is expressed in the words of the scriptures. 'We have made man in our own image.' If I were to add a word of explanation I would say, 'We have made all forms in order to complete the image of man. 'The world of the jinns is the world of mind; yet the minds of the jinns are not so developed as the minds of men. The reason for this is that the experience of life on the earth completes the making of mind. In the world of the jinns the mind is only a design, an outline; a design which is not yet embroidered. 'What is the occupation of the jinns? What does the world of the jinns look like? One may give a thousand explanations, but nothing can

explain it fully. For instance, if a person were to ask me what China looks like, I would say, 'Most wonderful, most interesting,' but if he said, 'What is wonderful in China?' I would say, 'Go and take a tour through China in order that you may see it fully.'

We have not adequate words to explain what the jinn is like, or what the world of the jinn is; but what little can be said that it is a world of music, art, poetry; a world of intelligence, cheerfulness and joy; a world of thought, imagination and sentiment; a world that a poet would long for and a musician would crave to dwell in. The life of the jinn is an ideal life for a thinker; a life which is free from all illness, pure from all bitterness of human nature, free to move about through space without any hindrance. This sphere is a most joyful place, where the sun of intelligence shines; where the trouble of birth and death is not so severe, life not so short as on the earth. If there is any paradise it is the world of the jinn. Hindus have called it *Indra-Loka*, and picture *Gandharvas* and *Apsaras* to be there; it is a paradise, of which every prophet has spoken to his followers in the way in which they could understand it.

The question, how does a prophet know of this? May be answered by saying that the soul of the prophet is like a fruit which by its weight touches the ground; it has not dropped on to the earth like other fruits; it is still connected with the branch to which it is attached, the branch which droops through all the planes of existence; and so he, in his experience of the different planes, so to speak, touches all worlds. It is this mystery which is hidden behind the life of the prophet. It is through this branch that the fruit is connected with the stem. Therefore, though on earth, he calls aloud the name of God. While to many God is an imagination, to him God is the reality.

v

The soul is a current. We may call it an electric current, yet one unlike the electric current we know on this physical plane, different from it in its power and phenomena; a current which runs more speedily than anything we know; a current which is beyond time and space; a current which runs through all the planes of life. If manifestation is the breath of God, souls are breaths of God. According to the conception of the Yogi, there is one Breath, and there are many breaths. The one, or central, Breath is called by Yogis *Prana*, and all other breaths which have a certain part to play in the mechanism of the human body are lesser breaths; and again *Prana* and all other breaths when put together make one Breath, which man calls life. Souls therefore are the different breaths of God. This idea may be pictured as a tree which has a stem and various branches; each branch in its place representing the stem.

The elements of every sphere are different. Just as the air, the water and the earth of every part of the world are different in their effect upon the human being. So the atoms of every plane are different; their nature and character are as different as their effect. Therefore the form of the angel cannot be compared in any way with the form of the jinn; neither can the form of the jinn be compared with the form of man, for the atoms of which the jinn is made belong to another sphere.

A man who is accustomed to physical forms cannot very well grasp the idea of the forms of the jinns. This shows us that the soul shoots forth and functions in a body which that particular sphere offers it. The heavens, for instance, offer that luminous body to the soul which in the Sufi term is called *Nur*, because heaven consists of luminous atoms; it is all illumination. It was recognition of that angelic body in the Buddha which caused his disciples

to make the statue of Buddha in gold. Often artists have had the conception of painting angels in gold, for gold represents light.

The soul that goes as far as the sphere of the jinn as a current coming from the heavens functions in a body of the sphere of jinn. The question is, a soul which comes from the heavens, through the world of angels, does it come to the world of the jinns without a body? It comes with a body, the angelic body; yet it becomes necessary for the soul coming with the angelic body into the world of jinns to adopt a body of that particular world in order to withstand the weather of that plane. Animals which live in cold countries have a different skin from those that live in a tropical climate. That is the condition for going into any other sphere. Even if a person were journeying, going from a tropical country to another tropical country, and on the way he had to pass through a cold climate, he would need suitable garments for that climate. The body is a garment of the soul; the soul wears this garment in order to stand the conditions of that particular sphere.

Souls which are passing through the sphere of the jinns towards the physical plane, and who do not stop in that sphere, meet with other travelers who are on their journey back home, and they learn from them a great many things. There is give and take, there is buying and selling, there is learning and teaching; but who teaches the most? The one with most experience, the one who is going back home.

This latter gives the map of the journey to the soul traveling towards manifestation. It is from this map that the traveling soul strikes his path rightly or wrongly. One soul may have one kind of instruction, another soul may have another kind; one soul may be clear, another may be confused. Yet they all go forward as the travelers of a caravan, taking with them all the precious information, all the things which they have learned from the others on the journey.

It is for this reason that every child born on earth possesses, besides what he has inherited from his parents and ancestors, a power and knowledge quite peculiar to himself and different from that which his parents and ancestors possessed; yet he knows not whence he received it, or who gave him the knowledge; but he shows from the beginning of his life on earth signs of having known things which he has never been taught.

One soul is more impressionable than another, one soul is perhaps more impressed by the angelic heavens, and that impression has remained more deeply with it throughout the whole journey; another is more impressed by the sphere of the jinns, and that impression lasts through the whole journey. Then there is another soul who is not deeply impressed with the angelic heavens or the world of the jinn, and that soul does not know of these worlds; he comes through blindly, and is only interested in things of the earth when he reaches it.

One generally finds among artists, poets, musicians, thinkers, as well as among philosophers, great politicians and inventors, souls of the world of the jinns, who have brought with them to the earth some deep impression which causes them in their lives to be what men term great geniuses. Impression is a great phenomenon in itself: as a man thinketh so is he.

And what does man think? He thinks of that with which he is most impressed; and whatever he is most impressed with he himself is. Do we not see in our life on earth that people, who are deeply impressed with a certain personality, wish, thought, or feeling, become in time the same? If this is true, what is man? Man is his impression. The soul impressed deeply in the world of the jinns by some personality coming back from the earth, an impression deeply

engraved upon that soul, which it can never throw away, certainly becomes that personality with which it is impressed. Suppose a soul is impressed in the world of the jinn with the personality of Beethoven; when born on earth he is Beethoven in thought, feeling, tendency, inclination and knowledge. Only in addition to that personality he has the heritage of his parents and of his ancestors. As the son of a certain family is called by the name of that family, so the impression of a certain personality may rightfully be called by that name. Therefore if Shankaracharya claims to be the reincarnation of Krishna, there is every reason for his claim, and this theory stands in support of it. Life from the beginning to the end is a mystery. The deeper one dives in order to investigate the truth the more difficulty one finds in distinguishing what is called individuality. But it is not the aim of the wise to hold on to individuality. Wisdom lies in understanding the secret of individuality, its composition or its decomposition, which resolves in the end onto one individuality, the individuality of God. As it is written, 'There is one God; none exists save He,'

Souls who are impressed in the world of the jinns by the personalities of those they meet on their way towards manifestation receive different kinds of impressions. Some are deeply impressed by one personality, and some are slightly impressed by one personality. Some souls receive many impressions on that plane, and it is hardly distinguishable which impression has more effect and which less. However, it is certainly true that in reality one impression is predominant in every soul. The soul, so to speak, conceives this impression; an impression which is not only the outline of the personality which impresses it, but is the very essence of that personality. A soul cannot be compared with an object, for the soul is all the life there is; therefore it not only takes an impression like a photographic plate, but it becomes nurtured by it. The soul is creative; therefore it expresses all that it has absorbed on its way.

The question whether a jinn is sent on earth on a mission to human beings, may be answered by saying that whether it be angel, jinn or man, all are intended to play their part in the scheme of working of the whole universe; and all are used by the wisdom of God for the purpose for which they were created. No doubt the angels are primarily for the angelic heavens and the jinns for the sphere of the jinn, yet in a house the inhabitants of the second or third floor are sometimes sent to the ground floor on an errand when it is necessary. The most remarkable thing that one notices in all those planes of existence is that the beings of these separate planes are not imprisoned there by the Creator. They become captive themselves, just as a man who lives in a village passes his whole life in the same place, and when he is told of the history of the neighboring county it is another world to him. He never tries to leave his village, and the neighboring county is foreign to him. He has heard the name of the next village all through his life. But he has never tried to visit it.

It is this nature of the soul which arises from its ignorance that limits that which is, in point of fact, limitless. How does the soul of a jinn communicate with human beings on earth? It focuses itself upon the heart of man, and experiences all that the man experiences, and knows all that the man knows. It is easy for a jinn to do this, because its mind is clear like crystal, and it can accommodate and reflect all that falls within its range of vision.

One might ask, 'If the souls on their return journey from the earth give their experience to the souls coming from above, what do the souls coming from above give to the souls on their return journey?' They can do a great deal too; for they know the forgotten ways through which they have recently traveled, and the laws and customs of the way that the souls on the return journey need to learn. Besides this they give to them that light and life which is

necessary to those worn out and withered souls, who have probably given most of themselves to the ever-robbing and consuming plane of the earth. In this way a man is helped towards his goal by the soul he meets on his own return journey.

The question in what manner the jinns can help man on the earth may be answered by saying that they are capable of inspiring man, not with a definite knowledge of things. But with the sense of the knowledge; especially of the knowledge of art, beauty, tone and rhythm; with knowledge of the inventive nature, and sometimes with a sense of knowledge that might help to accomplish great things in life. But though they meet as inhabitants of different countries, who do not know the language, it is the language of the heart which becomes the medium of communication; heart talks to heart, and soul speaks to soul.

Section III - The Soul: Whence and Whither?

Part II MANIFESTATION

i

After the soul has passed through the sphere of the jinns it arrives on the physical plane. What helps this soul to come on to the physical plane? What opens the way for this new-coming soul to enter physical existence? The coming soul enters the physical sphere by the channel of the breath. Breath is the power at the back of every action. It works as a battery, which keeps the physical mechanism of the human body going. The secret of birth and death is to be found in the mystery of the breath. What is Cupid? It is the soul, which is being born. Before it appears on the physical plane it is pictured by the wise as a cupid or angel; it is an angel, for the soul itself is the angel.

Duality in every aspect of life, and on whatever plane, is creative; and its issue is the purpose and the outcome of the dual aspect of nature. The affinity which brings about the fulfillment of the purpose is the phenomenon of Cupid; in reality it is the phenomenon of the soul.

When the soul is born on earth its first expression is a cry. Why does it cry? Because it finds itself in a new place which is all strange to it. It finds itself in captivity, which it has not experienced before. Every person, every object is new, and is something foreign to this soul; but soon this condition passes away. Soon the senses of the infant become acquainted with the outer life which so continually attracts its attention. It first becomes interested in breathing the air of the world, then in hearing the sounds, and then in seeing the objects before it; then in touching them and then its taste develops. The more familiar the soul becomes with this physical world the more interested it becomes; though sometimes it shows homesickness in the fits of crying that it so often has during its infancy. It is not always illness; it is not always that it is crying for things outside. No doubt, as it grows it longs for things outside itself; but it often cries from the feeling of having been removed from a place which was more pleasant and comfortable, and having come to a foreign land of which it knows so little. It is this which causes the infant to have fits of crying.

The wisdom of nature is perfect; and there is no better vision of the splendor of the divine wisdom for the thinker than a child in its early infancy. If the senses of an infant were developed, as are the senses of a grown-up person, it would lose its reason from the sudden pressure of the physical world falling instantly upon it. Its delicate senses would not have been able to stand the pressure of so many and various and intense activities of this world. How marvelously the wisdom behind it works, the wisdom which is the evidence of the divine Protector, Father, Mother, Creator, the support and protection of all; so that the senses of the child develop gradually as it becomes more familiar with life. The more it knows the more its mind expands; and it cannot know more than its mind can grasp. So that in every way an infant is protected in both mind and body.

When the soul comes into the physical world it receives an offering from the whole universe; and that offering is the body in which to function. It is not offered to the soul only by the parents, but by the ancestors, by the nation and race into which the soul is born, and by the

whole human race. This body is not only an offering of the human race, but is an outcome of something that the whole world has produced for ages; a clay which has been kneaded a thousand times over; a clay which has been prepared so that in its very development it has become more intelligent, more radiant, and more living; a clay which appeared first in the mineral kingdom, which developed in the vegetable kingdom, which then appeared as the animal, and which was finished in the making of that body which is offered to the new-coming human soul. One may ask, 'It is not true then, as some scientists say in their biological study, that man has risen from the animal kingdom?' Certainly it is true; but true in the sense explained above.

We need not understand by this that every rock turned into a plant, and every plant into an animal, and every animal into a man. The soul is direct from heaven; it functions in a body, and it is this body through which it experiences life on the earth more fully. Rocks, trees and animals, therefore, may not be considered as the ancestors of the soul. It is the body which is the outcome of the activity of all these different kingdoms, which are the development of one another. A question arises, 'Why must a soul function in a human body? Why not in an animal, bird or insect?' The answer is that it does so function. Every soul is not the same ray, has not the same illumination, the same far-reaching power, or the same volume of light; and therefore it is true that souls do not only function in a human body, but in all forms, however insignificant and small.

What about rocks, mountains, seas and rivers? Are they not the outcome of the soul? Nature in general in its various aspects is the materialization of that Light which is called divine Spirit; but not everything in nature has what man understands by soul, for he recognizes only that ray which functions in the human body as a soul. He does not recognize the ray which functions in the lower creation to be the same, although it comes from the same source. There are two things: there are the rays, and there is light from which they spring. If the rays are the souls of living beings, then the light of that same divine Sun is the spirit of the whole of nature. It is the same light; but not divided, not distinct, as are the rays which we call souls. Why has nature its different aspects? If the spirit behind it is one, why is everything in nature separate and different? Creation is a gradual evolution of that light which is the source and goal of all beings. For instance, plant-life is a development of the mineral kingdom, animal life of the vegetable kingdom, and human life the culmination of this evolution. But this culmination is only the finishing of the vehicle which the soul uses; by this evolution the soul is not evolved. This evolution only means that the soul has adopted a more finished instrument in order to experience life more fully. No doubt the better the instrument the greater the satisfaction of the soul. When one looks from this point of view at the whole creation one feels it to be the truth that not only man, but the whole of manifestation, was created in the image of God.

ii

The soul which has already brought with it from the angelic heavens a luminous body, and from the sphere of the jinn a body full of impressions, functions in the end in the human body which the physical plane offers it; and it settles for some time in this abode. This completes what we understand by the word individuality. These three planes, which are the principal planes of existence, are called in the terms of Vedanta: *Bhu-Loka*, *Deva-Loka*, *Svar-Loka*, meaning three worlds: *Buh-Loka* the physical world, *Deva-Loka* the world of the jinns, and *Svar-Loka* the world of the angels. The human being therefore has all three beings in him, the angel, the jinn, and man. What man acquires on the earth is the experience gained by the

means of his senses, an experience which he himself goes through; and it is this experience which man collects in that accommodation within himself which he calls the heart. The surface of the heart, which is the collection of his knowledge, he calls the mind. This word comes from the Sanskrit *Manas*, mind, and from this word 'man' has come.

Man shows the signs of the angelic heavens and the sphere of the jinn by his tendencies; his tendency towards light, truth, love and righteousness; his love of God; his seeking for the truth of life. This all shows the angel in him.

In his longing for beauty, in his attraction towards art, in his love for music, in his appreciation of poetry, in his tendency to produce, to create, to express, he shows signs of the sphere of the jinn. And the impressions which constitute his being, which he has brought as a heritage from the sphere of the jinn, which have been imparted to him by the souls on their way back towards the goal, he shows as something peculiar and different from what his family possess.

No doubt it often happens that a child possesses qualities of his ancestors which were perhaps missing in his parents, or even two or three generations back; however, this is another heritage, a heritage which is known to us as such. I might express this by saying that a soul borrows a property from the spheres of the jinn, and a more concrete property from the physical world; and as it borrows this property, together with this transaction it takes upon itself the taxation and the obligations as well as the responsibilities which are attached to the property. Very often the property is not in proper repair, and damage has been done to it, and it falls to his lot to repair it; and if there be a mortgage on that property that becomes his due. Together with the property he becomes the owner of the records and the contracts of the property which he owns. In this is to be found the secret of what is called *Karma*.

What makes the soul know of its own existence? Something, with which it adorns itself, something which it adopts, possesses, owns and uses. For instance, what makes a king know that he is a king? His palace, his kingly environment, people standing before him in attendance; if all that were absent the soul would be no king. Therefore the king *is* a palace, and it is the consciousness of the environment which makes the soul feel, 'I am so and so.' What it adorns itself with makes it say, 'I am this or that.' Otherwise by origin it is something nameless, formless.

On the earth-plane the personality develops out of the individuality. The soul is an individual from the moment it is born upon the earth in the worldly sense of the word; but it becomes a person as it grows. For personality is the development of individuality, and in personality, which is formed by character-building, is born that spirit which is the rebirth of the soul. The first birth is the birth of man; the second birth is the birth of God.

The law that governs the soul's manifestation may be divided into three parts: that of the angelic heavens, that of the sphere of the jinn, and that of the world of man, or the physical plane.

In the angelic heavens there are no distinct impressions; but there is a tuning. The soul is tuned to a certain pitch by the law of vibration, high or low according to the impression it receives from the souls coming back home. In this tuning it gets, so to speak, a tone and rhythm which directs its path towards the world of the jinn. Souls in themselves are not different in the angelic heavens, as they are immediately next to that of the divine Being. If

there is a difference of souls in the angelic heavens, it is the difference of more or less radiance, and the longer or shorter scope of their range.

That which attracts souls from the sphere of the jinn to the human world is what they receive from the souls who are homeward bound. In accordance with this they take their direction towards the physical world. If I were to give this idea in a more expressive form, I would say it is like a person whose heart is tuned to love and light, and to the appreciation and admiration of beauty. He will certainly take a direction towards a greater beauty, and will seek such friends to be with and learn from as seem to him in some way similar to his nature or ideal. This is an example of the soul which is attracted from the angelic heavens to the sphere of the jinn. A person who has studied music and practiced through his life will certainly seek the association of musical friends, artists, singers, composers and lovers of music. Among these he will find his friends, his comrades; and so a soul from the sphere of the jinn is directed according to its love for certain things on the physical plane. This shows that God does not thrust certain conditions upon the souls going towards manifestation, but in this manner they choose them.

A person may say, 'But no soul can have chosen miserable conditions for itself!' The answer to this we find before us in this world. Many here cause their own miseries; they may not know it, they may not admit it; nevertheless many of man's joys and sorrows are caused by himself. This does not mean that this is the only law that governs life. This is a law which answers the question that rises out of common sense. But if one raised one's head from this world of illusion and looked up, and asked God, 'Tell me the secret and the mystery of Thy creation,' one would hear in answer that every thing and being is put in its own place, and each is busy carrying out that work which has to be done in the whole scheme of nature. Life is a symphony; and the action of every person in this symphony is the playing of his particular part in the music.

When the war was going on all people were called to arms, and were placed where they were needed regardless of their profession, qualifications or moral standard. The reason was that the 'call of the purpose' was the first consideration. If there is anything which will bring peace to the thinker it is the understanding of this. The thought, 'I am suffering now because of my sins in a past life', may bring an answer to the inquiring and reasoning mind and stop it from rebelling for the moment. But will this take away the irritation that the misery is causing in the heart? Will that mind ever excuse God for having so severely judged him? He may own his mistakes of the past, but will he ever believe in God as a God of love and compassion, as a God of mercy, or as a God of forgiveness?

iii

The soul comes on earth rich or poor, ripened or unripened, through three phases where it has either enriched or lost its opportunity. It takes light from the angelic heavens, knowledge from the sphere of the jinn, and it inherits qualities from its parents and ancestors on the earth-plane.

Of the things which it has collected on its way to manifestation on the earth it has made that accommodation which is called the mind. The body in which the soul functions on the physical plane also contributes to the soul the properties of all the worlds to which it has belonged: the mineral, the vegetable, and the animal kingdoms. It is for this reason that man is called a universe in himself; for man consists in himself of all that is in heaven and all that

is on earth. The Quran tells how God made man His representative on earth, His chief in whose care the universe was given.

Man shows in his life traces of all the conditions through which the clay that makes his body has gone. There are atoms of his body which represent the mineral kingdom, the vegetable kingdom and the animal kingdom; all these are represented in him. Not only his body but his mind shows the reflection of all the kingdoms through which it has passed. For the mind is the medium between heaven and earth. Man experiences heaven when conscious of his soul; he experiences the earth when conscious of his body. Man experiences that plane which is between heaven and earth when he is conscious of his mind. Man shows by his stupidity the mineral kingdom, which is in him, thick, and hard; he shows by his pliability the vegetable kingdom, by his productive and creative faculties, which bring forth the flowers and fruits of his life from his thoughts and deeds. Man shows the traces of the animal kingdom in him by his passions, emotions, and attachments, by his willingness for service and usefulness. And if one were to say what represents the human in him, the answer is all things, all the attributes of earth and heaven; the stillness, hardness and strength of the stone; the fighting nature, the tendency to attachment from the animals; the fruitfulness and usefulness of the vegetable kingdom; the inventive, artistic, poetical and musical genius of the sphere of the jinn; the beauty, illumination, love, calm and peace of the angelic planes. All these put together make man. The human soul consists of all. And thus culminates in that purpose for which the whole creation has taken place.

The soul manifested on the earth is not at all disconnected with the higher spheres. It lives in all spheres, but knows mostly one sphere, ignorant of the others, on which it turns its back. Thus the soul becomes deprived of the heavenly bliss, and conscious of the troubles and limitations of life on the earth. It is not the truth that Adam was put out of the Garden of Eden; he only turned his back on it, which made him an exile from heaven. The souls of seers, Saints, masters and prophets are conscious of the different spheres. It is therefore that they are connected with the worlds of the angels and jinns, and with the Spirit of God.

The condition of the former is like that of a captive imprisoned on the ground floor of the house, he has no access to the other floors of the building, and that of the latter is that he has access to all the different floors of the building wherever he may wish to dwell. The secret of life is that every soul by its nature is an *Asman* or *Akasha*, an accommodation, and has in it an appetite; and of all that it takes it creates a cover which surrounds it as a shell, and the life of that shell becomes dependent upon the same substance of which it is made. Therefore the shell becomes susceptible to all influences, and subject to the laws of that sphere from which it seeks its sustenance; or rather, the sustenance of the shell. The soul cannot see itself; it sees what is round it, it sees that in which it functions; and so it enjoys the comforts of the shell which is around it, and experiences the pains and discomforts which belong to the shell. And in this way it becomes an exile from the land of its birth, which is the Being of God, which is divine Spirit; and it seeks consciously or unconsciously once again the peace and happiness of home. God therefore is not the goal but the abode of the soul, its real self, its true being.

There are five spheres of which the soul can be conscious. What are these spheres? They are the different shells, each shell having its own world.

The first sphere of which man becomes conscious after his birth on earth is *Nasut*, a sphere which is commonly known as the physical plane. How are the comforts and discomforts of this sphere experienced? By the medium of the physical body; and when there is something

wrong with an organ of the senses the soul is deprived of that particular experience that it would like to have on this physical plane. The physical body is susceptible to all changes of climate and becomes dependent in its experience and expression, thus making the soul dependent and limited. Therefore, with all the riches that the world can give, man, who is only conscious of this sphere is limited. 'God is free from all wants, it is ye that are needy,' says the Quran.

Malakut is the next sphere, the sphere of thought and imagination, where there is a greater freedom and less limitation than is experienced on the physical plane. A man with thought and imagination can add to life that comfort and beauty which is lacking on the physical plane. And the more real his imagination becomes the more conscious of that sphere of mind he proves to be. This sphere of mind is his world, not smaller than this world, but much larger; a world which can accommodate all that the universe holds, and still there would be a place in it to be filled.

The third sphere, *Jabarut*, is a sphere in which the soul is at home. In the waking state the soul of the average man only touches this sphere for a moment at a time. Man does not know where he is at that moment. He calls it abstraction. Do they not say when a person is not listening that he is not here? Every soul is lifted up to that sphere, even if it be for only a moment, and the life and light with which the soul is charged in that sphere enable it to live on this earth the life full of struggles and difficulties.

Nothing in the world could give man the strength that is needed to live a life on the earth if there were not blessings from heaven reaching him from time to time, of which he is so little aware.

The other two spheres are experienced in sleep; but they are not different spheres; they are only different because they are experienced in sleep. They are *Malakut*, which is experienced in dreams the world of mind, of thought and imagination; and *Jabarut*, the state of deep sleep when even the mind is still. This sleep frees the suffering patient from pain, and gives to the prisoner freedom from his prison; it takes away from the mind its load of worry and anxiety, and removes from the body every exhaustion and tiredness. Bringing to mind and body repose, rest and peace; so that after man has wakened from his deep sleep he feels comfortable, rested, invigorated, as if a new life had come to him. One would give anything in the world to have a deep sleep, though so few know its value. That state of *Malakut* is reached while in the waking state by the great thinkers. The great inventive minds and the gifted artists; and it is experienced by the seers and sages. It is to experience this that all the concentrations are given by spiritual teachers to their disciples. This fuller experience is also called *Lahut*.

Still another experience is *Hahut*, a further stage which is experienced by souls who have reached the most high spiritual attainment, which is called *Samadhi* in Vedantic terms. In this experience a person is conscious of *Jabarut* while awake; and this state he brings about at will. Though for the sake of convenience these spheres are explained as five spheres, yet chiefly they are three: *Nasut*, the plane of the world of man, *Malakut*, the sphere of the jinn and *Jabarut*, the angelic world.

Now there is the question if a soul by rising to all these spheres becomes conscious of the sphere of the jinn and of the angelic heavens, or if it only sees within itself its self-made world of mind, and the spheres of joy and peace within itself. The answer is first it sees its

own world by rising to the sphere called Malakut. It experiences the joy and peace which belong to its own heart. And which are of its own being. But that is only one part of spiritual attainment. This part of the attainment is the way of the Yogi. The way in which the Sufi differs from the Yogi is in his expansion; and it is these two sides of the journey which are pictured by the two lines of the cross, the perpendicular and the horizontal. The perpendicular line shows a progress straight within from Nasut to Jabarut, experiencing one's self within; but that which the horizontal line denotes is expansion. The Sufi therefore tries to expand as he progresses; for it is the largeness of the soul which will accommodate all experiences and in the end will become God-conscious and all-embracing. The man, who shuts himself up from all men, however high spiritually he may be, will not be free in Malakut, in the higher sphere. He will have a wall around him, keeping away the jinns and even the angels of the angelic heavens; and so his journey will be exclusive. It is therefore that Sufism does not only teach concentration and meditation, which help one to make one-sided progress, but the love of God which is expansion; the opening of the heart of all beings, which is the way of Christ and the sign of the cross.

iv

Every person shows from his earthly heritage a nature, which is one of four types: The first is that of the idealist, who lives in the world for his ideals; a man of principles, intelligent, modest, moderate in everything, patient; and a man with refined manners, dreamy by nature, or a deep thinker; a man of dignity who guards his reputation as one would take care of a thin glass. His contact with the earth is like that of a bird who builds its nest upon a tree in the air, descends to the earth to pick up a grain when hungry, and then flies off. He dwells on the earth because he is born on the earth, but in reality he lives in his thoughts. The earth and all that belongs to the earth is his need, not his want.

The second type is that of the artist; an artist not necessarily by profession, but by nature. Artistic by temperament, this man shows discrimination in his love; he is distinct in his likes and dislikes; subtle, clever, witty, observing conventions, and yet not bound by them; one who notices everything, and yet does not show himself fully; elusive by nature, yet tender and affectionate; fine and simple, social and yet detached. He is like a deer in the woods, who is one moment in one part of the forest, and at another quite a distance away. One may think by coming into contact with him that one has got him, but at the next moment one will find him far away from one's reach. This is the type of man of whom many say, 'I cannot understand him.'

The third is the material man, material in his outlook, devoid of the love of beauty, concerned only with what he needs, clever but not wise. He lives all through life in the pursuit of earthly gains, ignorant of the beauty life can offer, looking hopefully from day to day to that gain for which he is working. One might say that he is waiting for the day when his ships will arrive.

The fourth is a man with mundane desires, who enjoys his food and drink; what he thinks about is his bodily comfort, his momentary pleasures, his passing joys; the slave of his passions and captive to the things of the earth. He is uninterested in every thing but himself. He belongs to no one, nor does anyone in reality belong to him. He is happy-go-lucky by nature, yet susceptible to depression and despair. One might say that he lives to eat.

These four different qualities belong to the body that the earth offers to the soul; the third and fourth classes more than the first and second. It is thus that one can trace back the origin of

this clay that the soul has adorned and called 'myself'; this clay that has passed through so many different conditions while being kneaded. It developed through the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms and then of it was made the image of man. 'Verily in man is reflected all that is on the earth and in heaven.'

The questions, why do souls come on earth? why has this creation taken place? what is the purpose of this manifestation? may be answered in one word: satisfaction; for the satisfaction of God. Why is God not satisfied without it? Because God is the only Being, and the nature of being is to become conscious of being. This consciousness experiences life through various channels, names and forms; and in man this consciousness of being reaches its culmination. In plain words, through man God experiences life at its highest perfection. If anyone then asks, 'What is man's duty if that be the purpose?' the answer is, that his most sacred duty is to attain to that perfect consciousness which is his Dharma, his true religion. In order to perform his duty he may have to struggle with himself, he may have to go through suffering and pain, he may have to pass many tests and trials. By making many sacrifices, and practicing renunciation, he will attain that consciousness which is God-consciousness, in which resides all perfection.

But why must man suffer and sacrifice for God? At the end of his suffering and sacrifice he will find that though he began to do so for God, it has proved to be for himself. It is the foolishly selfish who is selfish, and the wisely selfish proves to be selfless.

Now comes the question how this consciousness may be attained. It is to be attained by self-realization. First man must analyze himself, and find out of what he is composed, He is composed of spirit and matter. He consists in himself of the mineral, vegetable and animal worlds, the jinn and the angel; and it is his work to balance all these knowing that he has neither been created to be as spiritual as an angel, nor to be as material as an animal. And when he strikes the happy medium he will certainly tread the path which is meant for a human being to tread, the path which leads straight to the goal. 'Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way'; narrow because any step taken on either side will lead to some other path. Balance is the keynote of spiritual attainment. In order to attain to God-consciousness the first condition is to make God a reality, so that He is no longer an imagination. No sooner is the God-ideal brought to life than the worshipper of God turns into truth. There is no greater religion than truth. Then truth no longer is the object of his seeking; then truth becomes his being, and in the light of that absolute Truth he finds all knowledge. No question remains unanswered; that continual question that arises in the heart of man, 'why?' then becomes non-existent, for with the rising of every 'why?' rises its answer. The moment a man has become the owner of a house, then he becomes acquainted with all there is in it; it is the stranger who finds it difficult to find any room in the house, not the one who lives in it; he knows about the whole house. What is rooted out in the quest of truth is ignorance; it is entirely removed from the heart, and the outlook becomes wide; as wide as the Eye of God; therein is born the divine Spirit, the spirit, which is called Divinity.

The sphere of the jinn has as many worlds as there are planets in the universe; as many and as different from one another as the planets in the universe; yet not so far apart, not so much out of communication with each other. The heaven of the angels is created on the same model. But is it on the model of the heaven of the angels that our universe has been molded, and also that of the jinns? What is the life there? What is it like? It is difficult to explain, and difficult to put into words, but for example one might see the difference in the life of the birds which can fly over seas and forests, over hills and dales, and feel in tune with nature, and express

their joy in song. Then the deer in the woods dwelling in the caves of the mountains, drinking water at the natural springs, moving about in the open spaces, looking at the horizon from morning till evening, the sun their timekeeper and the moon serving as their torch. And then imagine our lives, the lives of human beings in crowded cities, days in the factories and nights indoors away from God, away from nature, even away from self; a life fully absorbed in the struggle for existence, an ever-increasing struggle to which there is no end. There is the picture which helps us to imagine what life the angels live in the highest heavens, what life the jinns live in the middle heaven, and to compare our life as human beings in the universe with their lives.

Are there suns, are there moons, in their worlds as in ours? Yes, this outer solar system is the reflection of the inner solar system. What difference is there between time, our conception of time, and the idea of time they have there? There is an incomparable difference. No words will give the exact idea of the comparison between these conceptions of time; but for the sake of convenience let us say that our year is the hour of the jinns and the moment of the angels.

Are there angels and jinns of longer and shorter lives, as with men on earth? Certainly there are; but there is no comparison between the length of their life and that of the human being. Are there differences among the jinns and the angels as among men of different kinds? Indeed there are; but among the jinns not so many as among men; still less among the angels.

What about the time that every soul spends in the heavens of the angels and the sphere of the jinns? The speed of every soul is different. It is according to the speed with which they manifest; it is a different dimension. The difference in speed is like traveling on the earth, sailing on the water, and flying through the air. Difference in speed between different souls may be likened to one child advancing in its thought so that it may learn in ten years things which another could not learn in a hundred years of life on the earth. Nevertheless, as they say, 'Slow and sure.' Souls with balance and rhythm throughout their manifestation learn and experience much more than by a rapid run through the heavens.

v

The word Akasha in the language of the Hindus is expressive of a meaning that explains its object. Akasha means accommodation; not necessarily what man calls the sky, although the sky is an accommodation. On the model of the Akasha the whole creation has been based. The organs of the senses, the ears, the eyes, the nostrils, the mouth are all different aspects of Akasha and thus is the human body constructed. The purpose of this construction can be found in its own nature; as the purpose of the ears is in hearing, of the nostrils in breathing, of the eyes in seeing, so is the purpose of the whole body.

The purpose of the body is to experience life fully. The body becomes a vehicle for the intelligence by which it is able to experience life fully. In order to make sound more audible people build domes and other places where resonance is produced and the voice and the words become more clear. So the construction of the body is intended to make all that is perceptible clear. By nature the body is the vehicle of the intelligence or the soul, by which it experiences life fully. But as man has lived for generations a life of increasing artificiality, he has moved farther and farther from nature; therefore this vehicle which was made a perfect instrument to experience life fully has become less and less capable of attaining that object. It is this incapability of experiencing life fully, and the innate desire to experience it, which makes the soul strive for spiritual attainment. What man does not know he thinks does not

exist; in this is to be found the origin of materialism. But the tendency towards spiritual realization remains there as an innate desire which is consciously or unconsciously felt by every soul, whether spiritual or material. It is for this reason that even a material person has a silent craving in his heart to probe the depth of the very spiritual ideal which he disowns. The work of the senses is to experience, to taste, smell, touch, hear, and see; but besides these senses there is the inner sense which is one sense. It is by experiencing through the different organs of the senses that this one sense becomes many senses. It is the same sense which hears, smells, tastes, feels, touches; but because it experiences life through different organs, man divides one sense into five senses. The depth of that sense which is the inner sense is more subtle than one can imagine. When that sense finds a free expression it not only experiences life more keenly through the organs of the senses, but it becomes independent of the organs of sense. It penetrates through life deeply, and as Kabir says, 'It sees without eyes and hears without ears.' The reason is this: that all that exists is contained in an accommodation, in the Akasha, and by being in Akasha the nature of all things is revealing.

In fact there is nothing in this world which does not speak. Everything and every being is continually calling out its nature, its character and its secret; and the more the inner sense is open, the more it becomes capable of hearing the voice of all things. In every person this sense exists, but for the most part, hidden, buried; and its being buried gives discomfort, for it is something which is living, the only living being there is. The idea of the 'lost word' has its secret in this; when once this inner sense has broken the walls which keep it enclosed, it breathes the freedom and happiness which belong to the soul; the soul attains. Every discomfort, from whatever source, comes through the lack of understanding. The more the inner sense is covered, the more the soul finds itself in obscurity. It is for this reason that the sign of the enlightened soul is readiness to understand; therefore these souls are easy to conciliate. When a person himself understands better, he can make another person understand better also. But when a person is perplexed himself, instead of making another person understand, he confuses him. In this way differences are produced.

The organs of the senses are the Akashas or accommodations of grosser and finer nature. The finer the organ the more perception it has; the grossness takes away from the organ its power of perception.

This shows that the body may be likened to a glass house made of mirrors. In Persian language the poets have called it *Aina Khana*, meaning the 'temple of mirrors'. The eye stands as a mirror before all that is visible; it reflects all that it sees. The ears are the accommodation for the re-echo of every sound that falls upon them; in other words they are the mirror of every sound. The senses of touch and of taste are grosser than the senses of sight and hearing. At the same time their nature is the same; all the different sweet, sour and salt savors, and the feeling of warmth and cold, are perceived by them, and they stand as mirrors in which taste and touch are reflected. Therefore, as one sees oneself reflected in the mirror, so this body stands as a mirror in which every experience of the outer life is reflected, and is made clear. If the mirror is dusty it does not reflect the image clearly, so the experience of life is not clear when the body is not looked after according to the spiritual point of view.

The Sufis say that the body is the Temple of God; but the right interpretation of this saying would be that the body is made to be the Temple of God; a temple cannot be called a Temple of God if God is not brought and placed there. So it is natural when a soul feels depressed that there is something wrong with the vehicle. When the writer wishes to work, and the pen is not in order, it annoys him; there is nothing the matter with the writer; it is the pen which is

not right. No discomfort comes from the soul; the soul is happy by nature; the soul is happiness itself. It becomes unhappy when something is the matter with its vehicle, which is its instrument, its tool, with which to experience life. Care of the body, therefore, is the first and the most important principle of religion. Piety without this thought is of little significance.

The soul manifests in this world in order that it may experience the different phases of manifestation, and yet may not lose its way and be lost, but may attain to its original freedom, in addition to the experience and knowledge it has gained in this world. The different exercises that the Sufis and Yogis do in order to enable the mind and body to experience life more fully, exercises such as fasting, pose, posture, movement, they all help to train the body, that it may become a fitting vehicle for the experience of life. Wonder-working, such as psychometry, feeling the atmosphere of places, of objects, of people, comes when the body is also prepared for it.

A person may be intelligent, clever, learned, good or pious, and yet his sense of perception may not be fully awake. It must be remembered as the first principle of life that manifestation was destined for keener observation of life within and without.

The greatest unhappiness that a person feels is from lack of mastery; the unhappiness comes when knowing his mastery he yet cannot practice that which he knows. Sadness comes from limitation, limitation in different forms: lack of perception, lack of power over oneself, or over conditions, or from the lack of that substance which is happiness itself, which is love.

There is sometimes lack of understanding, though there may be love, or lack of love through lack of understanding; there may be both things and lack of power. If love has reached perfection it will attain all three powers; when love becomes power, it becomes understanding. The nature of love is as the nature of water in the depths of the earth. If one does not dig deep enough one finds sand, not water; but when one digs deep enough one finds water. Many lovers of God lose patience, trust and hope; they have touched sand and not reached water, but when they have dug deep enough they find pure water.

As there are different organs of senses, so there are five centers of inner perception. These centers are seats of the intuitive faculties. Two among them are of great importance: the heart and the head. If the Sufi training differs from that of the Yogis, it is in the training of both these centers together, by which the Sufi achieves balance. The head without the heart shows dry intellect. The heart without the head represents an unbalanced condition. Balance is the use of both these faculties. The Sufi training is based upon this principle.

The centers may be likened to the space that one finds in the apple. It is an Akasha, an accommodation, where not only scent, touch, hearing and sight are perceived, but even the thought and feeling of another; the condition in the atmosphere, the pleasure and displeasure of one's fellow man are perceived, and if the sense of perception is keener, then even past, present and future can be perceived. When man does not perceive in this way it does not mean that it is foreign to his nature; it only means that the soul has not developed that power of perception in his body. The absence of such fine perception naturally causes depression and confusion, for the soul longs for a keen perception; and it feels confused, and at times agitated, owing to a lack of a fuller perception, as the person who is blind feels nervous agitation, because the inner longing is to see, and when the organ of sight fails he becomes agitated.

This is generally the cause in many souls who feel restless. And the life man lives is a life of artificiality, it works against him. It is not necessary to read the ancient traditions to find out the truth about this. Today in the people who live a less artificial life, a more simple life, a life in and near nature, the intuitive faculties are more keen, and these people show a greater happiness.

The centers become blocked by certain foods and by living a more materialistic life. They are located in certain places; and as there are some plants in the caves of the mountains where the sun and the air do not reach, and it is difficult for the plants to live, so are the centers of perception located in the physical body; the body is nourished by food, but these centers remain without any nourishment.

The physical body is made of matter, its sustenance is matter; but the centers of perception are of still finer matter, and though they are located in the physical body, no nourishment can reach them, except that which is drawn through the breath, the fine substance which is not even visible. In the language of the mystics it is called *Nur*, which means light. The body does not only want food, but also breath, in other words vibration, and that vibration is given to it by the repetition of sacred words. The sounds, the vowels, and the composition of the sacred words is chemical, and it is this process which was called by the ancient philosophers Alchemy. These centers are the Akasha or domes where every sound has its echo, and the echo once produced in this Akasha or Asman reaches all other Asmans which exist within and without. Therefore the repetition of a sacred word has not only to do with oneself and one's life, but it spreads and rises higher than man can imagine, and wider than he can perceive. Verily every action sets in movement every atom of the universe.

When once the inner sense has become keen it shows its development first by working through the organs of the senses. The vision becomes clearer, the hearing becomes keener, the sense of touch felt more keenly, the sense of taste and smell clearer. Therefore among those who tread the mystic path one finds many who are sensitive, and become more sensitive as they develop spiritually. As the standard of health known by the average person is much beneath the mystical ideal, so to the uninitiated the sensitiveness of a person of mystical temperament may often seem peculiar. At the same time when this sensitiveness is developed by spiritual training, and is under control, it manifests as the first quality in the life of a seer. The body, which covers the soul, keeps it blind by depriving it of its freedom of expression and of keener perception. It is like a captivity for the soul. When the centers of the body are awakened and at work, then the soul experiences life more clearly, and naturally clouds which give depression clear away. The soul begins to look forward to life with hope, with trust, and with courage; and thus attains that power and understanding which is needed in the struggle through life.

When a little more advanced, the intelligence begins to see through the eyes what every eye cannot see: the finer forces of nature manifesting in color and form. There are many who talk much about this, and some who know and say little, for they do not see wisdom in speaking about something which their neighbor does not see. And among those who speak much about seeing things which others do not see, there is hardly one who really sees.

There is no doubt that, as the sight becomes keen, first the colors of different elements working in nature manifest to the view; secondly, the atmosphere that is created around man, which is composed of semi-material atoms also becomes manifest. This is what is called the *aura*. The different colors of this aura express the meaning, for there is nothing in this world

which is without meaning. The one who pursues the meaning of life in all its aspects hears again in the end the Word which was once lost for him. No doubt the life of a sensitive person becomes difficult, especially when one has to live among the crowd. It is for this reason the Brahmins lived an exclusive life, which has been criticized by some who do not know the meaning of it. Different practices of breathing are a great help in training both mind and body to make them more perceptive, in order that they may become fitting vehicles to fulfill the purpose of life.

vi

The mind is made after the body. It is therefore that its form is that of the body. We read in the Old Testament that the heavens were made after the earth; the real place where the heavens are made is within man. The mind is made of all one learns, one experiences, one loves and one remembers. It is therefore that man *is* that which his mind contains. If his mind contains a sorrow, a man is sorrowful; if his mind contains joy, he is joyous, if it contains success, he is successful; if it contains failure, failure awaits him, everywhere he moves he finds failure. The mind is an accommodation in which man collects all that he learns and experiences in life. In short, man is his mind. How true therefore the claim of the Dervishes when, sitting on the bare earth cloaked in rags, they address one another, 'O King of Kings, O Monarch of Monarchs!' That is their usual way of addressing one another. Their voice is that of true democracy; for this claim of theirs is the expression of their being conscious of the Kingdom of God. The mind is not only the treasure-house of all one learns, but it is creative by nature. The mind improvises upon what it learns, and creates not only in imagination, but it finishes its task when the imagination becomes materialized. The heavens and the infernal regions are both the creations of the mind and are experienced in the mind.

But the question arises, is the body not born with a mind? did the mind not exist before the body? Yes, it did exist; it existed as Akasha or accommodation. Was this accommodation formed on any special model or design? The first design of this Akasha is molded upon the impression that falls deeply upon the soul, the soul coming towards manifestation from the infinite Spirit. If we picture the infinite Spirit as the sun, The soul is like its ray. The nature of the soul is to gather on its way all that it can gather, and to make a mold out of it.

It is this impression that has helped to form the first mold of the mind. It manifests its original nature and character through the body with which it is connected and identified. The impression of the nature and character of the parents, of the ancestry, of the nation and race, follows after the first impression that the soul has taken on its way. If it happens to be the impression of one personality, falling upon the mind going towards manifestation the distinct characteristics of a certain personality who has lived in the past will show clearly in the life of that person. It is in this that the secret of the doctrine of reincarnation, which the Hindus hold, can be recognized. There are souls that come from the Infinite existence to the finite, and there are souls who return from the finite existence to the Infinite, and their meeting-ground is on the way. It may be one impression or it may be several impressions which help to mold this *Akasha*, which, after it is once connected with the body, becomes the mind; for the mind is not complete until it is filled with the knowledge and experience the soul gains by the help of the physical body.

The mind is not the brain. The mind is a capacity, an Akasha, which contains all the experiences we have in life, all the impressions we gain through our five senses. It is not only within the body but also around the body. But the centers of perception reflect every thought

and feeling, and then men feels that the mind is within him. In point of fact the body is within the mind, and the mind within the body. As the eye sees an object before it and reflects it, so the centers of perception reflect every thought and feeling. For instance man feels the sensation of joy and depression in the center called solar plexus; however, this does not mean that joy or depression is there, but that this center is sensitive to such experiences.

The mind for the sake of convenience may be called a substance, but a substance quite different from physical matter in its nature and character. There are some objects which give more resonance to sound, and there are other objects which respond less to sound. There are sonorous objects, such as metals of different kinds which reproduce sound clearly, and then there are stones and solid wood which do not respond to sound. Such is the difference between mind and body.

The mind is a much better vehicle for the intelligence than the body. Therefore, though the mind experiences life even through the material organs of the senses, yet it is itself more perceptive, and can experience life in its different aspects apart from the body. In other words, the mind can see for itself; it can even hear without the ears, for the mind has its own eyes and ears. Though it needs the physical eyes and ears to see and to hear, yet there things which the physical eyes and ears cannot see and hear; the mind sees and hears these. The more independent the mind is made of the outer senses, the more freely it perceives life and becomes capable of using the outer organs of sense to their best advantage.

To the question: if the mind has a form, it may be answered that the mind has the same form as that with which the soul is most impressed. And what is the form with which the soul is most impressed? One's own. That is why, when man says 'I', he identifies himself with the form which is most impressed upon his mind, and that is his own. But the mind is a world within itself, a magic world, a world which can be very easily changed, very quickly altered, compared with the physical one. The phenomenon of the mind is great, and wonders could be performed if only one had the key of the mind in one's hand. The difficulty is that man becomes so fixed in his physical body, that he hardly realizes in life that he has a mind. What man knows of himself is of the body, through the mind; verily man is his own mind.

The mind is not only the Akasha which contains all that one learns and experiences through life, but among five different aspects of the mind, each having its own work, there is one aspect which may be specially called the mind and which shows the power of the creator. All that we see before our eyes, and all objects made by the skill of man, every condition brought about in life, whether favorable or unfavorable, all are the creation of the human mind; of one mind or of many minds. Man's failures in life, together with his impression of limitation, keep him ignorant of that great power which is hidden in the mind. Man's life is the phenomenon of his mind; man's happiness and success, his sorrows and failures, are mostly brought about by his own mind, of which he knows so little. If this secret had been known by all, no one in this world would have been unhappy, no soul would have had failure. For unhappiness and failure are both unnatural; the natural is what man desires; the only question is: how to get it? The words of Emerson support this idea: 'Beware of what you want, for you will get it.'

The whole of life is continual learning, and for the one who really learns from life, the knowledge is never enough. The more he learns, the more there is to learn. The secret of this idea is in the Quran: 'Be! He said; and it became.' The Seers and Knowers of life do not only know this theory, but by their life's own experience.

The mind has the power of creating; it creates all, but out of what does it create? Out of *Maya*, a substance subject to change, to death and destruction. However, the power of the mind is beyond question, and it teaches us that mostly our unhappiness and failures are caused by our own mind, more than by the mind of another; and if caused by the mind of another, our mind then is not in working order. The knowledge of the power of mind is worth knowing when the moral conception of life is understood better; when man knows what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil, and judges himself only, and sees these two opposite things in his own life, person and character. For when man sees the folly of another, and wishes to judge another, then his sense of justice is not awake. The great ones whose personality has brought comfort and healing to their fellow men were those who only used the faculty of justice to judge themselves; who tried to correct themselves of their own follies, and, being engaged in correcting themselves had hardly time in life to judge another. The teaching of Christ, 'Judge not, lest ye be judged', will always prove the greatest example to be followed.

The mind is a magic shell in which a design is made by the imagination, and the same imagination is materialized on the surface. And then arises the question, 'Why does not all that man thinks come true, why is not all he wishes realized?' The answer is that by man's limitations he so to speak buries the divine creative power in his mind. Life confuses man so much that there is hardly one among a thousand who really knows what he wants; and perhaps there is one among a million who knows why he wants it; and even among millions you will not find one with the knowledge of why he should want it, and why he should not want it. With all the power of the mind one thing must be remembered that man proposes, and God disposes. This will always prove true when man stands against the will of God Almighty. Therefore the path of the saints in life has been to seek with resignation the will of God, and in this way to swim with that great tide, so that with the accomplishment of their wish the purpose of God may be fulfilled.

The key to the mind is the knowledge of life. There is only one real knowledge. It is learnt in one moment; but the nature of life is such that we forget. The key to the mind is the knowledge of life; in other words, it is the psychology of life, and there is rarely a person who knows the psychology of life profoundly. Man has the faculty of knowing, but he is so absorbed in life that he does not give time to practice the psychology of life, which is more precious than anything in the world.

By psychology is meant that before uttering a word a man should think what effect it might have on the atmosphere, upon this person, on the whole of life. Every word is a materialization of thought; it has a dynamic power. If one considered one would find that every little thought, every little feeling, every movement one makes, even a smile, or a frown, such a small thing has its effect. If one knew the effect of every cause before bringing that cause into thought, speech, or action one would become wise. Generally man does everything mechanically, influenced by the conditions of the moment, by anger or depression; so every man in life lives a life without control, in other words, without mastery. What we learn through spiritual knowledge is to gain mastery, to learn what consequences our actions will bring. A man cannot be perfect in this knowledge; all souls have their limitations; but it is something to strive after, and in this is the fulfillment of God's purpose. Even this knowledge alone does not make a man capable; practice is necessary and practice may take a whole life. Every day man seems to make more mistakes; this is not really so, but his sight becomes more keen.

But what of those who do not think of all this? Every change of mood or emotion changes their actions, words, and thoughts, and so they can never achieve what they have come to accomplish; all their life is passed in failure and mistakes, and in the end they have gained only what they have made. So it is always true that life is an opportunity; every moment of life is valuable. If one is able to handle oneself one has accomplished a great deal.

The mind has different aspects which are distinguished as different departments, which have their own work to do. First, the heart which feels, and which contains in itself four other aspects of mind; second, the mind which creates thought and imagination; third, memory; fourth, the will which holds the thought; fifth, the ego, that conception of mind which claims to be 'I'. There is no mind without a body, for the body is a vehicle of the mind; also it is made by the mind, not the same mind, but by other minds. The child does not only inherit the form and feature of his parents and ancestors, but also their nature and character; in other words their mind, which molds its mind and body.

The mind is not only the creator of thought, but it is the receptacle of all that falls upon it. The awakened mind makes the body sensitive to every kind of feeling. The sleeping mind makes the body dull. At the same time the fineness of the body has its influence in making the mind finer, and the denseness of the body makes the mind dense. Therefore the mind and body act and react upon one another. When there is harmony between the mind and the body health is secure, and affairs will come right. It is the disharmony between mind and body which most often causes sickness, and makes affairs go wrong. When the body goes south and the mind north then the soul is pulled asunder, and there is no happiness. The secret of mysticism, therefore, is to feel, think, speak, and act at the same time, for then all that is said, or felt, or done, becomes perfect.

The different minds in the world may be likened to various mirrors, capable of projecting reflections, and reflecting all that falls upon them. No one, however great in wisdom and power, can claim to be free from influences. It is like the mirror claiming, 'I do not reflect all that falls upon me.' Only the difference between the wise and the foolish is that the wise man turns his back to what he must not reflect; the foolish not only reflects the undesirable thought, but most proudly owns to it.

The mind is creative and the mind is destructive; it has both powers. No thought ever born of the mind, be it even for a second, is lost. Thought has its birth and death like a living being, but the life of the thought is incomparably longer than that of any living being in the physical body. Therefore man is not only responsible for his action, but also for his thought. Souls would become frightened if they had a glimpse of the record of the thoughts they have created, under the spell of their ever-changing moods. As the prophet has said, this life of the world which was once so attractive will one day appear before them as a horrible witch; they will fly from it, and will cry, 'Peace, peace.'

It would not be an exaggeration if one called the mind a world; it is the world that man makes and in which he will make his life in the hereafter, as a spider weaves his web to live in. Once a person thinks of this problem he begins to see the value of the spiritual path. The soul learns on the path in which it is trained not to be owned by the mind, but to own it; not to become a slave of the mind, but to master it.

It has been asked of the sages and thinkers of all times by the seekers of truth that they should explain the meaning of the word 'soul'. Some have tried to explain it and some have given answers which are difficult for everyone to understand. About the meaning of the word soul many statements of thinkers differ, though all mystics arrive at the same understanding of the idea of the soul. As the air, by being caught in water, becomes a bubble for the moment, and as the waves of the air, being caught in a hollow vessel, become a sound, so Intelligence, being caught by the mind and body, becomes the soul. Therefore, intelligence and the soul are not two things. It is only a condition of the intelligence which is the soul. The intelligence in its original aspect is the essence of life, the spirit, or God. But when this intelligence is caught in an accommodation such as body and mind, its original nature of knowing then knows, and that knowing intelligence becomes consciousness.

The difference between consciousness and the soul is that the soul is like a mirror, and the consciousness is a mirror which shows a reflection in it. The Arabic word *Ruh* and the Sanskrit word *Atma* mean the same thing: soul.

There is another word 'sole' in the English language, which means one or single; although different in spelling, yet it is expressive of the same idea, namely, that the soul is that part of our being in which we realize ourselves to be one single being. When one thinks of the body, it has many organs; when one thinks of the mind, it has various thoughts; when one thinks of the heart, it has many feelings; but when one thinks of soul in the right sense of the word, it is one single being; it is above division, and therefore it is the soul which really can be called the individual. Very often philosophers have used this name for the body, mind, and consciousness, for all three.

Sufism may be related to the word *Saf* which means purity. This purity is attained by purifying the soul from all foreign attributes that it has acquired, thereby discovering its real nature and character. Pure water means water which is in its original condition; if it happens that there is sugar and milk in the water, then the one who wishes to analyze it will separate the elements, and will try to see the water in its pure condition. Sufism, therefore, is the analyzing of the self, the self which has for the moment become a mixture of three things, of body, mind, and soul. By separating the outer garments of the soul the Sufi discovers the real nature and character of the soul, and in this discovery lies the secret of the whole life.

Rumi has said in the *Masnavi* that life on earth is a captivity of the soul. When one looks at the bubble in which the air has been caught by the water, one sees the meaning of Rumi's words that something which is free to move about becomes a captive of the atoms of water for a time, and loses its freedom for that moment.

Man in all conditions of life, whatever be his rank, position or possessions, has trouble, pains and difficulties. Where do these come from? From his limitations. But if limitations were natural, why should he not be contented with his troubles? Because limitation is not natural to the soul; the soul, which is by nature free, feels uncomfortable in the life of limitation. In spite of all that this world can offer, when the soul experiences the highest degree of pain it refuses everything in order to fly from the spheres of the earth, and seek the spheres of liberty and that freedom which is the soul's destination. There is a longing hidden beneath all the other longings which man has, and that longing is freedom. This longing is sometimes satisfied by walking in the solitude, in the woods, when one is left alone for a time, when one

is fast asleep, when even dreams do not trouble one; and when one is in meditation, in which for a moment the activities of body and mind are both suspended. Therefore the sages have preferred solitude, and have always shown love for nature; and they have adopted meditation as the method of attaining that goal which is the freedom of the soul.

The *Zat*, the primal Intelligence, becomes captive to knowledge; that which is its sustenance limits it, reduces it; and pain and pleasure, birth and death, are experienced by the intelligence in this captivity which we call life. Death, in point of fact, does not belong to the soul, and so it does not belong to the person. Death comes to what the person knows, not to the person himself. Life lives, death dies. But the mind which has not probed the depths of the secret of life becomes perplexed and unhappy over the idea of death. A person once went to a Sufi and asked him what happened after death. He said, 'Ask this question of someone who will die, of some mortal being, which I am not.'

Intelligence is not only a knowing faculty, but is creative at the same time. The whole of manifestation is the creation of the intelligence. Time and space are both nothing but the knowledge of the intelligence. The intelligence confined to this knowledge becomes limited, but when it is free from all knowledge, then it experiences its own essence, its own being. It is this which the Sufi calls the process of unlearning, which purifies and makes the intelligence free from knowledge. It is the glimpses of this experience which are called ecstasy; for then the intelligence has an independent joy which is true happiness.

The soul's happiness is in itself; nothing can make the soul fully happy but self-realization. Phenomena which the intelligence creates by its creative power becomes the source of its own delusion; as the spider is caught in its own web, so the soul is imprisoned in all it has created.

This picture we see in the lives of individuals and of the multitude. Motive gives power, and at the same time it is motive which limits power; for the power of the soul is greater than any motive. But it is the consciousness of the motive which stimulates the power, and yet robs it of its power. The Hindus have called the whole phenomenon of life by the name *Maya*, which means illusion, and once the true nature and character of this puzzle is realized the meaning of every word of language becomes untrue, except one: Truth, which words cannot explain. Therefore the soul may be considered to be a condition of God, a condition which makes the only Being limited for a time. And the experience gained in this time, with its ever-changing joy and pain, is interesting, and the fuller the experience the wider becomes the vision of life. What one has to experience in life is its true being.

The life which everyone knows is this momentary period of the soul's captivity. Beyond this man knows nothing, therefore every seeming change that takes place he calls death or decay. Once the soul has risen above this illusive phase of life, by surmounting all that exists apart from itself, it experiences in the end that happiness for which this whole creation took place. The uncovering of the soul is the discovering of God.

The word intelligence as it is known by us, and spoken in everyday language, does not give a full idea; especially the word intelligence as used by modern science will only convey to us something which is the outcome of matter or energy. But according to the mystic, intelligence is the primal element, or the cause as well as the effect. While science acknowledges it as the effect, the mystic sees in it the cause. One may ask, 'How can intelligence create this dense earth which is matter? There must be energy behind it.' But this question comes because we

separate intelligence from energy or matter. In point of fact it is spirit which is matter, and matter which is spirit; the denseness of spirit is matter, and the fineness of matter is spirit. Intelligence becomes intelligible by turning into denseness; that denseness being manifest to its own view, creates two objects: *Zat*, the self, and *Sifat*, what is known by the self. And then comes of necessity a third object, the medium by which the self knows what it knows *Nazar*, the sight or the mind. The Sufi poets have pictured these three in their verse as Bagh, Bahar, and Bulbul, the garden, the spring, and the nightingale. And it is these three aspects of life which are at the root of the idea of Trinity. The moment these three are realized as one, life's purpose is fulfilled.

As matter evolves so it shows intelligence, and when one studies the growing evolution of the material world one will find that at each step of evolution the natural world has shown itself to be more intelligent, reaching its height in the human race. But this is only the predisposition of what we call matter which is manifested in the end; and everything in nature, even in the vegetable world, if we could see it, is the seed of which the root is the evidence, and thus the intelligence, which is the effect, is also the cause.

Section III - The Soul: Whence and Whither?

Part III

TOWARDS THE GOAL

i

THE soul during its journey towards manifestation, and during its stay in any plane, whether in the heaven of the angels, the sphere of the jinn, or the plane of human beings, feels drawn towards its source and goal. Some souls feel more drawn than others; but there is a conscious or unconscious inner attraction felt by every soul. It is the ignorant soul, ignorant of its source and goal, which fears leaving the spheres to which it has become attached. It is the soul that knows not what is beyond which is afraid of being lifted up above the ground its feet are touching. Is the fish afraid of going to the depths of the sea? But apart from fish, even men who are born on land and have been brought up on land, make a practice of swimming and diving deep into the sea, and bringing up the pearl shells from its depths. There are seamen who are happier on the sea than on the land; and their daring, to those unaccustomed to the phenomenon of water, is sometimes perfectly amazing.

Life is interesting in every phase; on the journey towards manifestation as well as on the soul's return towards the goal. Every moment of life has its particular experience, one better than the other, one more valuable than another. In short, life may be said to be full of interest. Sorrow is interesting as well as joy; there is beauty in every phase, if only one can learn to appreciate it. What dies? It is death that dies, not life. What then, is the soul? The soul is life, it never touches death. Death is its illusion, its impression; death comes to something which the soul holds, not to the soul itself. The soul becomes accustomed to identify itself with the body it adopts, with the environment which surrounds it, with the names by which it is known; with its rank and possessions which are only the outward signs that belong to the world of illusion. The soul, absorbed in its child-like fancies in things that it values and to which it gives importance, and in the beings to which it attaches itself, blinds itself by the veils of its illusion. Thus it covers with a thousand veils its own truth from its own eyes.

What is the return journey? Where does one return to? When does one return? The return begins from the time the flower has come to its full bloom, from the moment the plant has touched its summit; from the time that the object, the purpose for which a soul is born upon earth is fulfilled. For then there is nothing more to hold it, and the soul naturally draws back as the breath is drawn in. But does man die by drawing in his breath? No. So the soul does not die owing to this drawing in, though it gives to the dying person and to those who watch an impression of death.

The physical body may be likened to a clock, it has its mechanism and it requires winding, and this winding keeps it going. It is the healthiness of the physical body which enables it by its magnetic power to hold the soul which functions in it. As this body for some reason or other, either by disorder or by having been worn out, loses that power of keeping together by which it holds the soul functioning in it; it gives way, and the soul naturally departs, leaving the material body as one would throw away a coat which one no longer needs.

The connection of the body and the soul is like man's attachment to his dress. It is man's duty to keep his dress in good order, for he needs it in order to live in the world; but it would be ignorance if he thought his dress to be himself. Yet as a rule this is what man does; how few in this world stop to think on this subject, whether this body is *myself*, or whether *I am* apart from this body; whether higher or greater, more precious or longer living than this body! What then is mortality? There is no such thing as mortality, except the illusion and the impression of that illusion, which man keeps before himself as fear during his lifetime, and as an impression after he has passed from this earth.

Both life and death are contrary aspects of one thing, and that is change. If there remains anything of death with the soul which has passed away from this earth, it is the impression of death, according to the idea it has had of death. If the soul has had a horror of death, it carries that horror with it. If it has agitation at the thought of death, it carries that feeling with it; also, the dying soul carries with it the impression of the idea and regard for death of those surrounding it in life, especially at the time of its passing from the earth. This change paralyses every activity of the soul for some time. The soul which has become impressed by the idea it held of death, and by the impression which was created by those around the deathbed, is kept in a state of inertia which may be called fear, horror, depression or disappointment.

It takes some time for the soul to recover from this feeling of being stunned; it is this which may be called purgatory. Once the soul has recovered from this state it again begins to progress, advancing towards its goal on the tracks which it had laid before. How many souls foolishly believe in the idea of death, and carry with them that thought while passing from the earth to a life which is a still greater life! And how many souls do we find in the world who believe the end of life to be death; a belief in mortality which cannot be rooted out from their minds! The whole teaching of Jesus Christ has as its central theme the unfoldment, the realization of immortality.

What is purgatory? The Sufis call it *Naza*, a suspension of activity. If there is any death it is stillness and inactivity. It is like a clock which for some time is stopped; it wants winding, and a little movement sets a clock going. So there comes the impulse of life, which, breaking through this cloud of mortality, makes the soul see the daylight after the darkness of the night. In Sufi terms this may be called *Nahazat*. And what does the soul see in this bright daylight? It sees itself living as before, having the same name and form and yet progressing. The soul finds a greater freedom in this sphere, and less limitation than it has previously experienced in its life on the earth. Before the soul now is a world, a world not strange to it, but which it had made during its life on the earth. That which the soul had known as mind, that very mind is now to the soul a world; that which the soul while on earth called imagination is now before it a reality.

If this world is artistic it is the art produced by the soul. If there is absence of beauty, that is also caused by the neglect of beauty by the soul while on earth. The picture of *Jannat*, paradise, the ideas about heaven, and the conception of the infernal regions, is now to the soul an experience.

Is the soul sent to the one or the other place, among many who are rejoicing there or suffering for their sins? No, this is the kingdom that the soul had made while on earth, as some creatures build nests to stay in during the winter. It is the winter of the soul, which is the immediate hereafter. It passes this winter in the world, which it has made either agreeable or

disagreeable for itself. But one might ask, 'Does the soul live a solitary life in this world that it has made?' No, how can it be solitary? The mind, whose secret so few in the world know, can be as large as the world, and larger still. This mind can contain all that exists in the world, and even all that the universe holds within itself. Though some might say, 'What a wonderful phenomenon; I never thought that the mind could be so large; I thought my mind was even smaller than my body, that it was hidden somewhere in a corner of my brain.'

The understanding of mind indeed widens one's outlook on life. It first produces bewilderment, and then the vision of the nature of God, which is a phenomenon in itself, becomes revealed. Does one see, then, all those whom one has known while on the earth? Yes, especially those whom one has loved most, or hated most. What will be the atmosphere of that world? It will be the echo of the same atmosphere which one has created in this. If one has learned while on earth to create joy and happiness for oneself and for others, in the other world that joy and happiness surrounds one. And if one has sown the seeds of poison while on earth the fruits of these one must reap there; that is where one sees justice as the nature of life.

The idea of the prophets which one finds in the ancient scriptures, that there will be a Judgment Day, and that man will be called before the great Judge to answer for his deeds, must not be understood literally. No, the Judgment Day is every day, and men know it as his sight becomes more keen. Every hour, every moment in life, has its judgment, as the Prophet has said, 'one will have to give account for every grain of corn one eats.' There is no doubt about this, but the Judgment Day has been especially mentioned in the scriptures as taking place in the hereafter because in the hereafter one cover has been lifted from the soul. Therefore the judgment which every soul experiences here on earth, and yet remains ignorant, being unconscious of it, becomes more clearly manifest to the view of the soul after it has passed from this earth.

What connection has the soul which has passed from the earth with those who are still on the earth? No doubt there is a wall now which divides those on this earth from those in the other plane, yet the connection of the heart still keeps intact, and it remains unbroken as long as the link of sympathy is there. But why do the lovers of those who have passed away from the earth not know of the condition of their beloveds on the other side? They know it in their souls, but the veils of the illusion of the physical world cover their hearts, therefore they cannot get through clear reflections. Besides, it is not only the link of love and sympathy, but it is the belief in the hereafter to the extent of conviction which lifts those still on earth to knowledge of their beloved ones who have passed over to the other side. Those who deny the hereafter deny to themselves that knowledge which is the essence of all learning.

It is more easy for those who have passed from the earth to the other side to get into touch with those on the earth, for they have one veil less.

ii

What does a soul do after having arrived at the sphere of the jinn on its return journey? It continues to do the same things which it was doing while on earth, right or wrong, good or evil. It goes along the same lines that it went on through life. Is there no progress for that soul? Yes, there is, but in the same direction. No change necessarily takes place; the soul finds itself in more clear spheres, therefore it knows its way better than it did when on earth.

What is its destination? The same destination, though it may be hidden under a thousand objects, for every soul is bound for the same goal. How can it be otherwise? Think how a person becomes attached to a place where he has been before. How one is attracted to a spot in a solitude where once one has sat and enjoyed the beauty of nature. How much more then the soul must be attracted, either consciously or unconsciously, to its source which is its eternal abode.

What connection do the souls who have passed from the earth have with those whom they have left on the earth? No particular connection, except that which is made by the link of love and sympathy. Do they all know of the conditions of the earth? If they care to. How can they know if they care to? Is there no wall between the people on the earth and those who have passed away? There is a wall which only stands before those who are still on the earth, but not before the ones who have passed over to the other side. They rise above this wall, so they see, if they care to see, the conditions of the world as clearly as we do, and even more so.

Do they need some medium in order to observe the conditions on earth, or can they observe without any medium? No, they must have a medium, a medium on the earth, as their instrument; for they must have the physical eyes to see, the physical ears to hear, and the physical senses to experience life in the physical world. Then what do they do in order to experience life in the physical world? They seek for an accommodation in the heart of a being on the earth, and they focus themselves on the mind of that person, and receive through this medium all the knowledge and experience of this earth that they desire as clearly as the person himself. For instance, if a scientist wishes to learn something from the earth he may try to focus himself upon the mind of someone still in the body. He may choose an artist who knows nothing about science, and he can thus learn all he wishes about art, and yet the artist will remain as ignorant as before of science, except that he might have some vague idea of, or interest in, scientific discovery.

Do the spirits always learn from the earth? or do they teach those on the earth? Both; they learn, and they also teach. Are there any spirits who care little for the life they have left behind? Many, and among them good ones who are only concerned with the journey onwards. It is those as a rule whose heart is still attached to life on the earth, and in whose heart interest for the journey onward has not yet been kindled, who are inclined to keep in communication with the earth. Yet there are exceptions, there are spirits, who out of kindness to one, to a few or to many, wish still to keep in connection with the earth in order to serve and to be useful. The spirits of this latter kind still go on advancing towards the goal instead of being detained when they communicate with the people on the earth.

What connection have the returning spirits with the inhabitants of the sphere of the jinns? They are as far removed from them as one planet is from the other, and yet are in the same universe. Do they meet with the inhabitants of that sphere? They do, but only such spirits as are not closed in or imprisoned in their own world; those who have gained strength and power even while on earth to break the ropes that bind them, and have liberated themselves from any situation, however difficult. But how do these brave ones arrive at this stage? By rising above themselves. If this limited self which makes the false ego is broken, and one has risen above the limitations of life on all the planes of existence, the soul will break all boundaries, and will experience that freedom which is the longing of every soul.

The soul, which functions in different bodies on its way to manifestation covers itself thus with one body over another, has a power which it uses to a smaller or greater degree in the

renewing of the tissues of the body, or in healing it. The child born into a family in which there are physical infirmities is often born already healed from hereditary conditions and with its tissues renewed. The reason is that the soul is the divine Breath; it purifies, revivifies and heals the instrument in which it functions.

On its return journey the soul shows the same phenomenon in a different way; freed from all the impressions of illness, sadness and misery which it has experienced while on the earth, and has taken into the spirit world, it heals its own being, and renews the tissues of that body, which still remains with it after it has left the physical form. It purifies itself from all illness and the impression of illness, and thus renews the life in the spirit world in accordance to its grade of evolution. But apart from evolution it is the tendency of the soul to repel all that is foreign to it, either from the physical body, or from the mental body which it still has in the spirit world. The soul is on a continual journey, on whatever plane it is; it is journeying all the time, and on this journey it has a purpose to accomplish; many purposes contained and hidden in one purpose.

There are objects which remain unfulfilled in one's lifetime on earth; they are accomplished on the further journey in the spirit world. For nothing that the human heart has once desired remains unfulfilled. If it is not fulfilled here, it is accomplished in the hereafter. The desire of the soul is the wish of God; small or great, right or wrong, it has a moment of fulfillment. If that moment does not come while the soul is on the earth-plane it comes to the soul in the spirit world.

The soul proves its divine origin on all the planes of existence, in creating for itself all it desires, in producing for itself the wish of its heart, in attracting and drawing to itself all that it wants. The source of the soul is perfect, and so is its goal; therefore even in its limitation the soul has the spark of perfection. The nature of perfection is that no want remains. The limitation that the soul experiences is on the earth, where it lives the life of limitation; yet its one desire is perfection. So every want is supplied, for the reason that the Perfect One, even in the world of variety, does everything possible to experience perfection.

iii

There is a process to be seen both in the soul coming to earth and in its return. When coming to earth it adorns itself with the veils of the particular planes through which it passes; and on its return it unveils itself from the bodies it has adopted for its convenience in experiencing that particular plane. In this way there is a process of covering and uncovering. The soul, so to speak, throws off its garment on the same plane from which it borrowed it, when it has no more use for it. Then what becomes of these bodies? Earthly bodies are composed of physical atoms, and so all that has been composed decomposes and returns to its own element; breath to air, heat to fire, liquid to water, and matter to earth. In spite of all the diverse ways in which the body may apparently be absorbed – various insects may eat it, birds may share it in their food, wild animals may devour it, or it may be swallowed by a fish, in time it may turn into the soil, or it may be used to nourish a plant or a tree – in every case the first rule remains.

As the physical body composes and decomposes, so does the mental or spiritual body. This body has an incomparably longer life than the physical body has on the earth. Its end is similar to the end of the physical body. When the soul unveils itself of its mental garb this garb falls flat, as did the body of the earth, in that plane to which it belongs; for it is not the

body which has strength to stand; the strength of standing belongs to the soul. It is therefore that man, in whom the soul manifests in the most pronounced form, stands upright; all other animals bow or bend in their natural form.

The decomposing of the spirit body is used in making the bodies of the spirit world, but not in such a crude way as happens with the earthly body; in a much finer way, for this is a finer body. There is joy in the composing or decomposing of this body, as there is even some pleasure in the composing and decomposing of the physical body. What does the body that the soul wears on the spirit-plane look like? Exactly the same as it looked on the earth. Why must it be so? Because of man's love for his body. Does this change? Yes, if it wishes to change; if the soul wishes, it can be changed according to its own ideal. It can be made as young and as beautiful as possible, but it must be remembered that by nature the soul becomes so attached to its form that it clings to it, and as a rule it does not like to become different.

The condition of the next world is very like the condition of the dream world. In dreams one does not see oneself as very different from what one appears, except in some cases and at some times; and for that there are reasons. Nevertheless, the power that the soul has in the next world is much greater than that which it has in this world of limitations. The soul in the other world, so to speak, matures, and finds within itself the power of which it was ignorant during its life on earth; the power of creating and producing all that it wishes. And its movements being not so much hindered by time and space, it is capable of accomplishing and doing for itself things which are difficult for the soul to do and accomplish on the earth-plane.

A soul which has passed from the earth, and is in the spirit world, can still live on the earth in one way, and that is by obsessing another soul. Very often people have explained this idea wrongly, when they have said that spirit takes hold of a dead body, and, entering into it, makes use of it. The body once dead *is* dead; it has entered upon the process of returning to its own origin. It has lost that magnetism which attracts the soul and holds it, in order to allow it to function in the physical body. If the dead body had magnetism, then it would not have allowed the soul to return; it would have held it back. For it is the body which holds the soul to the earth; the soul has a pull from within which draws it continually towards its source. But there are many living dead in the good or bad sense of the words. It is in these cases that single-pointed spirit takes hold of their minds and bodies as its own instrument, using them to the best advantage; this is generally known as obsession. In point of fact there is no soul which has not experienced obsession in the true sense of the word; for there are moments in every day life when those on the other side take the souls on the earth as their medium through which to experience life on the physical plane.

Impression upon the soul is a much deeper experience than that which obsession gives; for in time the spirit which enters into the being of a person on earth makes that person entirely void of himself. In time he loses his identity, and becomes like the spirit who has obsessed him, not only in his thought, speech and action, but also in his attitude and outlook. In his habits and manners, even in his looks, he becomes like the obsessing entity.

Might one say, then it is a good thing from a mystical point of view thus to become selfless? No, this is not the way to become selfless; in this way one is robbed of the self. The mystical way to become selfless is to realize the self by unveiling it from its numberless covers which make the false ego.

The soul, arriving on its return towards the goal in the sphere of the jinns has collected during its life on the earth some riches in the form of merits, qualities, experiences convictions, talents, and a certain outlook on life. The belongings of the earth it has returned to the earth on its passing, but in the spirit world the soul offers these riches or allows them to be taken from it, and it imparts them to the souls coming from their source who are on their way to the earth. These souls on their way to the earth, full of heavenly bliss but poor in earthly riches, purchase with the current coin of the plane of the jinns, guarantees, contracts, mortgages, and all the accounts that the spirit had left unfinished on the earth; these they have to undertake to pay when coming on the earth. Among these souls there are some who take from one spirit all they can as their heritage from the spirit world; some take from many. Yet the souls who absorb, attract, conceive and receive all that is given to them on the spirit plane have perhaps received more from one spirit than all the gifts they have received from other spirits they have met.

Does this exchange rob the spirit on his way to the goal of his merits and qualities? No, not in the least. The riches that the soul can take to the sphere of the jinn are safe and secure. Any knowledge or learning, merit or talent given to another person is not lost by the person who gives; it only makes the giver richer still. When the Hindus told in ancient times to a wicked person, 'Next time you are born it will be as a dog or monkey,' it was to tell him, who did not know any thing of life except himself, that his animal qualities would come again as the heritage of the animal world, so that he would not be known again to his human friends as a man, but as an animal. When they said, 'Your good actions will bring you back as a better person,' it was said so that the man who did not know the two extreme poles of his soul might understand that no good action could be lost; and for the man who had no hope in the hereafter, and who only new of life as lived on the earth, it was a consolation to know that all the good he had done would come again. The theory, which was thus explained, was true in that sense.

It is only a difference of words; the soul who comes from above has no name or form, no particular identity. It makes no difference to the soul what it is called; since it has no name it might just as well adopt the name of the coat which was put on it, as that is the nature of life. The robe of justice put on a person makes him a judge, and the uniform of a policeman makes him a constable; but the judge was not born a judge, nor the constable a policeman; they were born on earth nameless, if not formless. Distinctions and differences belong to the lower world, not to the higher; therefore the Sufi does not argue against the idea of reincarnation. The difference is only in words; and it is necessary that a precaution be taken that the door may be kept open for souls who wish to enter the Kingdom of God; that they may not feel bound by the dogma that they will be dragged back after having left the earth-plane by their Karma. The soul of man is the spark of God. Though this spark is limited on the earth, still God is all-powerful; and by teaching the prayer 'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven', the Master has given a key to every soul who repeats this prayer; a key to open that door behind which is the secret of that almighty power and perfect wisdom which raises the soul above all limitations.

Does the spirit impart its merits, talents, experiences and knowledge consciously or unconsciously to the new-coming soul passing through the spirit spheres towards the earth? In some cases it imparts consciously, in others unconsciously; but in the conscious action there is the greatest pleasure for the spirit. For the soul, which receives the knowledge from a

spirit as its heritage from the sphere of the jinn, is considered by the spirit as a child is by his parents or a pupil by his teacher; in giving the heritage to this soul there is a great joy for that spirit.

Do they keep connection in any way? No connection except a sympathetic link, for one goes to the north and the other to the south; one ascending to heaven, the other descending to the earth. A connection or an attachment between them would do nothing but hinder the progress of both. A soul lives in the spirit world while it is busy accomplishing the purpose of its life, which may last for thousands of years. Does a soul in the spirit world continue to do the same work which it did during its life on the earth? It does in the beginning; but it is not bound to the same work because it is not subject to the same limitations as it was while on the earth. The soul eventually rises to the standard of its ideal; it does that work which was its desire.

Are there difficulties in the spirit world as on the earth, in doing something and in accomplishing something? Certainly there are; but not so many as here on the earth. And what if there were one object which was desired by various spirits, how can they all attain to it? Will they all get parts of that object? And if it is a living being, what then?

The law of that world is different from the law of this world of limitations. There souls will find in abundance all which is rarely to be found here on earth. The picture of the spirit world is given in the story of Krishna. The Gopis of Brindaban all requested the young Krishna to dance with them. Krishna smiled, and answered each one that on the night of the full moon he would do so. All the Gopis gathered in the valley of Brindaban, and a miracle happened. However many Gopis there were, every Gopi had a dance with Krishna, and all had their desire fulfilled; which is a symbolical way of teaching that the One Divine Being may be found by every soul.

The spirit world is incomprehensible to the mind which is only acquainted with the laws of the physical world; an individual who is a limited being here is as a world there; a soul is a person here and a planet there. When one considers the helplessness of this plane one cannot for a single moment imagine the greatness, the facility, the convenience, the comfort and the possibilities of the next world; and it is human nature that that which is unknown to man means nothing to him. A pessimist came to Ali and said, 'Is there really a hereafter for which you are preparing us by telling us to refrain from things of our desire, and to live a life of goodness and piety? What if there is no such thing as a hereafter!' Ali answered, 'If there is no such thing as a hereafter I shall be in the same situation as you are; and if there is a hereafter, then I shall be the gainer, and you will be the loser.' Life lives and death dies; the one who lives *will* live, *must* live; there is no alternative.

v

Life in the sphere of the jinn is the phenomenon of mind; the mind is not the same there, with all the thoughts and imaginations which it carries from the earth to this plane. Mind, which is a mind here on earth, is the whole being there on the return journey. Thoughts are imaginations here, but realities there. One thinks here, but the same action there instead of a thought becomes a deed; for action which here depends upon the physical body; there is the act of mind.

There is a story which gives a picture of this idea. A man who had heard of there being a tree of desire was once traveling; and he happened to find himself under the shade of a tree which

he felt to be restful and cooling, so he sat there leaning against it. He said to himself, 'How beautiful is nature; how cooling is the shade of this tree, and the breeze is most exhilarating; but I wish I had a soft carpet to sit on, and some cushions to lean against' No sooner had he thought about it than he saw himself sitting in the midst of soft cushions. 'How wonderful,' he thought, 'to have got this'; but now he thought, 'If only I had a glass of cooling drink' and there came a fairy with a most delicious glass of cold drink. He enjoyed it, but said, 'I would like a good dinner.' No sooner had he thought of a dinner than a gold tray was brought to him, with beautifully arranged dishes of all sorts. Now he thought, 'If only I had a chariot, that I might take a drive into the forest'; and a four-horse chariot was already there, the coachman greeting him with bent head. He thought, 'Everything I desire comes without any effort. I wonder if it is true, or all a dream.' No sooner had he thought this than everything disappeared, and he found himself sitting on the same ground leaning against the tree.

This is the picture of the spirit world. It is the world of the optimist. The pessimist has no share in its great glory, because he refuses to accept the possibility which is the nature of life. Thus he denies to himself all he desires, and even the possibility of achieving his desires.

The pessimist stands in his own light, and defeats his own object here, and even more so in the hereafter, where the desire is the seed which is sown in the soil of the spirit world. Optimism is the water which rears the plant; but the intelligence at the same time gives that sunshine which helps the plant to flourish on the earth as well as in the spheres of the jinn.

Is there death for the spirits in the sphere of the jinns? Yes they have so-called death, but after a much longer time, a death not so severe as on the earthly plane, where everything is crude and coarse; but a change which is slightly felt after a very long life of the fulfillment of every desire. What causes this death? Are there illnesses or diseases? Yes, there are discomforts and pains peculiar to that sphere, not to be compared with the diseases in the plane of the earth. What especially brings about death in the sphere of the jinn is the moment when hope gives way, and there is no ambition left. It is the loss of enthusiasm which is change there, and the cause of death here on the earth.

Souls in the spirit world have more control over their life and death than those on the earth. The world of the spirit is his own world; it is a planet; when it loses that strength and magnetism which hold the soul functioning in it, it falls like a star from heaven, and the soul departs to its own origin.

The soul now enters the angelic heavens, and it is allowed to enter under the same conditions as before. It has to leave all that belongs to the sphere of the jinn in that sphere. Thus by unveiling itself from the garb of the spirit world, it finds its entrance into the world of the angels.

Does it take anything to the world of the angels? Yes, but not thoughts; it takes the feelings that it has collected; therefore the life of the soul in this sphere is more felt by its vibrations. Every soul that enters the heaven of the angels vibrates with the same vibrations that it has gathered during its life in the physical world and in the world of the jinn.

Examples of this are manifest to our view here if we would observe life more keenly. Every person before he does anything, or says one word, begins to vibrate aloud what he is, what he has done, what he will do. There is an English saying, 'What you are speaks louder than what you say.' The soul apart from the body and mind is a sound, a note, a tone, which is called in

Sanskrit *Svara*. If this note is inharmonious, and has dissonant vibrations, it is called in the Sanskrit language *Asvara*, or out of tune. The soul therefore in the heaven of the angels has no sins or virtues to show; nor has it a heaven or hell to experience; nor does it show any particular ambition or desire; it is either in tune or out of tune. If it is in tune it takes its place in the music of the heavens as a note in the tune; if it is not in tune it falls short of this, producing discordant effects for itself and for others. What occupation has the soul there? Its occupation is to be around the light and life, like the bee around the flower. What is its sustenance? Its sustenance is divine light and divine life; divine beauty it sees, divine air it breathes, in the sphere of freedom it dwells, and the presence of God it enjoys. Life in the heaven of the angels is one continual music. Therefore it is that the wise of all ages have called music celestial, a divine art; the reason is that the heaven of the angels is all music. The activity, the repose, and the atmosphere there is all one symphony continually working towards greater and greater harmony.

What connection has the soul with the sphere of the jinn whence it has arrived in the angelic heavens? No connection necessarily, except a sympathetic link, if it happens to have such with anyone there; or if it happens that the body in which it functioned gives way before it has accomplished what it wanted to accomplish. The happiness of the angelic heavens is so great that the joy of the sphere of the jinns cannot be compared with it and the pleasures of the earth are not even worth mentioning. For earthly pleasures are mere shadows of that happiness which belongs to the heaven of the angels, and the joy of the sphere of the jinn is like wine that has touched the lips but has never been drunk. That wine one drinks on arriving at the heaven of the angels. In the Sufi terminology that bowl of wine is called *Jam-i Kauthir*.

There is a saying that there are four things which intoxicate the soul: physical energy, wealth, power, and learning; but the intoxication that music gives excels all other forms of intoxication. Then imagine that music of the heavens where harmony is in its fullness; man here on earth cannot imagine the happiness which that can give. If the experience of that music is known to anyone, it is to the awakened souls whose bodies are here, whose hearts are in the spheres of the jinn and whose souls are in the heaven of the angels; who, while on earth, can experience all the planes of existence. They call the music of the angelic spheres *Saut-i Sarmad* and find in it a happiness which carries them to the highest heavens, lifting them from worries and anxieties and from all the limitations of the plane of this earth.

vi

What body has the soul in the heaven of the angels? Though the soul continues in the sphere of the jinn with a body resembling the one it had while on earth, it has undergone an enormous change in its body and form while in the sphere of the jinn; and when the soul reaches the angelic heavens there is still a greater change, for there it is turned into a luminous being. Its body then consists of radiance; it is light itself. The difference is that light as we understand it on the physical plane is of another character. For here it is visible, but there it is both light and life in one, so the light is audible as well as visible, besides being intelligent.

One might say that the physical body is intelligent also; it is. It is its intelligence which we call sensitiveness; but the body in the sphere of the jinn is even more intelligent, and the body that remains in the angelic heavens is more intelligent still. It may be called Intelligence itself.

The life of the souls in the angelic heavens is incomparably longer than the life of those in the sphere of the jinns. They have no more desires, no more ambitions, no more strivings; only aspiration to reach farther, to experience greater happiness, and to get closer to that light which is now within their sight. They fly around this light like the moth around the lantern; the 'magic lantern', which is the seeking of all souls, is now within their horizon. Nothing has a greater attraction for them than this light which is continually burning before them. They live and move and have their being in this divine light. Have they anything to offer to the souls going towards manifestation? Yes, their feelings. In what way do they offer them? Souls coming from the source and going towards the earth are tuned by them and set to a certain rhythm. It is this offering which determines the path they tread in the future. The Sufis call that day of tuning *Azal*; the day when the plan was first designed of the life of that particular soul.

It is not necessarily one soul only which impresses the soul newly coming towards earth with its tune and rhythm, with its feelings and sentiments; many souls may impress; but there is one impression which is dominant. Is there any link or connection established between the souls which give and take one from the other? There is a link of sympathy, a feeling of love and friendliness, an impression of joy, which a soul carries with it even to its destination on the earth.

The crying of an infant is very often the expression of its longing for the angelic heavens; the smiles of an infant are a narrative of its memories in heaven and of the spheres above. Does the returning soul who meets with the new-coming soul receive anything? It does not require much; it is full of joy in its approach to the culmination of life, the goal of its journey. Yet the purity that the new-coming soul brings with a new life and light gives ease to the soul striving towards the goal, and illuminates its path.

The sizes of the bodies in the sphere of the jinn, and in the heaven of the angels, are as numerous as on the earth-plane. The size of the body that the soul brings from the sphere of the jinn is much larger than the size of the physical body, and the size of the body brought by the soul from the angelic heavens is larger still. When the soul dons the body from the sphere of the jinn, that body not only covers the physical body, but also enters into it. And so the body brought from the angelic heavens covers both the body of the sphere of the jinn and that of the physical plane, and yet enters into the innermost part of man's being. In this way the angelic and the jinn bodies not only surround the physical body, but exist within it.

There is almost too much that a soul has to do on the earth; there is also much that it has to accomplish in the spirit world or plane of the jinns. But there is much less to be done in the heaven of the angels; for as the soul proceeds forward, so its burden becomes lighter. The only condition of proceeding forward and drawing closer to the goal is that of throwing away the heavy burden which the soul has taken upon itself throughout its journey. If one may say that the soul lives in the spheres of the jinns for thousands of years, for the sake of convenience one may use the expression millions of years in speaking of the time that the soul passes in the heavens of the angels; until at last there comes the moment when the soul is most willing to depart, even from that plane of love, harmony and beauty, in order to embrace the source and goal of love, harmony and beauty which has attracted it through all the planes. As the soul approaches nearer, so it has been drawn closer, It is throwing off of that radiant garment which is its body in the angelic heavens that brings the soul to its real destination, the goal which it has continually sought either consciously or unconsciously.

What will be the mystery hidden behind the accomplishment of all desire in the next world to the earth-plane? will power, with optimism. It is the conviction called *Yaqin* by the Sufis, that will be the guiding light on the path of the soul in the spiritual world. What will hinder the progress of the spirits is the lack of this, though it is not necessary that the soul who has been pessimistic here should remain pessimistic in the next world. It is possible that its journey onward will bring about a change once the soul becomes acquainted with the mysteries of hopefulness.

In what way will the spirits communicate with one another? All spirits will not necessarily communicate; only those spirits who wish to communicate will do so. In what language? In their own language. If spirits did not know one another's language in the spirit world there would be the same difficulty as on the earth; but there is one common language of that plane, a language which is the language of the spirit.

Section III - The Soul: Whence and Whither?

CONCLUSION

What is this journey taken by the soul from the source to manifestation, and from manifestation back to the same source which is the goal? Is it a journey, or is it not a journey? It is a journey in fact and not a journey in truth. It is a change of experience which makes it a journey, a story; and yet a whole journey produced in moving pictures is in one film which does not journey for miles and miles, as it appears to do on the screen.

Do many journey, or one? Many while still in illusion; and one when the spirit has disillusioned itself. Who journeys, is it man or God? Both and yet one the two ends of one line. What is the nature and character of this manifestation? It is an interesting dream. What is this illusion caused by? By cover upon cover; the soul is covered by a thousand veils. Do these covers give happiness to the soul? Not happiness, but intoxication. The farther the soul is removed from its source, the greater the intoxication. Does this intoxication help the purpose of the soul's journey towards its accomplishment? It does in a way, but the purpose of the soul is accomplished by its longing. And what does it long for? Sobriety. And how is that sobriety attained? By throwing away the veils which have covered the soul, and thus divided it from its real source and goal. What uncovers the soul from these veils of illusion? The change which is called death. This change can be forced upon the soul against its desire, and is then called death. This is a most disagreeable experience like snatching away the bottle of wine from a drunken man, which is most painful to him for a time. Or the change can be brought about at will, and the soul throws away the cover that surrounds it and attains the same experience of sobriety while on earth, even if it be but a glimpse of it. This is the same experience which the soul arrives at after millions and millions of years, drunk with illusion; and yet not exactly the same.

The experience of the former is *Fana*, annihilation, but the realization of the latter is *Baqa*, the resurrection. The soul, drawn by the magnetic power of the divine Spirit, falls into it with a joy inexpressible in words, as a loving heart lays itself down in the arms of its beloved. The increase of this joy is so great that nothing the soul has ever experienced has made it so unconscious of the self; but this unconsciousness of the self becomes in reality the true self-consciousness. It is then that the soul realizes fully that 'I exist'.

But the soul which arrives at this stage of realization consciously has a different experience. The difference is like that of one person having been pulled, with his back turned to the source, and another person having journeyed towards the goal, enjoying at every step each experience it has met with, and rejoicing at every moment of this journey in approaching nearer to the goal. What does this soul, conscious of its progress towards the goal, realize? It realizes with every veil it has thrown off a greater power, and increased inspiration, until it arrives at a stage, after having passed through the sphere of the jinns and the heaven of the angels, when it realizes that error which it had known, and yet not known fully; the error it made in identifying itself with its reflection, with its shadow falling on these different planes.

It is like the sun looking at the sunflower and thinking, 'I am the sunflower', forgetting at that moment that the sunflower is only its footprint. Neither on the earth-plane was man his own self, nor in the sphere of the jinns, nor in the heaven of the angels. He was only a captive of his own illusion, caught in a frame; and yet he was not inside it, it was only his reflection. But

he saw himself nowhere, so he could only identify himself with his various reflections, until his soul realized, 'It is *I* who was, if there were any. What I had thought to be myself was not myself, but was my experience. I am all that there is, and it is myself who will be, whoever there will be. It is I who am the source, the traveler, and the goal of this existence.

'Verily truth is all the religion there is; and it is truth which will save.'

Section IV - The Purpose of Life

Chapter I

The first thing that a seeker after truth must realize, is the purpose of life. No sooner does a soul begin to feel sober from the intoxication of life, than the first thing it asks itself is, 'What is the purpose of life?' Each soul has its own purpose, but in the end all purposes resolve into one purpose, and it is that purpose which is sought by the mystic. For all souls, by the right and the wrong path, either sooner or later, will arrive at that purpose, a purpose which must be accomplished, a purpose for which the whole creation has been intended; but the difference between the seeking soul and the soul who blindly works toward that purpose is like that between the material and the maker of it. The clay works toward the purpose of forming a vessel, and so does the potter. But it is the potter's joy and privilege to feel the happiness of the accomplishment of the purpose, not the clay's. And so it is with the beings who are unconsciously striving towards that purpose and the souls who are consciously striving towards it, both in the end coming towards the same accomplishment; the difference is in the consciousness.

The first step on the spiritual path is when a soul realizes its outer purpose in life. For it is not every soul in the world which even realizes its outer mission in life. And the soul who does not realize it, may go on, perhaps, for its whole life and may not realize it even to the end of its life, but the one who cares to realize it, must sooner or later realize it. For the answer to his question is continually being heard in his own heart. As Sadi says, 'Every soul is created for a certain purpose and the light of that purpose has been kindled in that soul.' If there is already a flame lit even before the person was born on Earth, it remains for the person to find out for himself the purpose of his life, although everything outside himself points to that purpose.

One may ask, 'What is the best way for a person to understand his life's purpose?' If one follows the bent of one's own mind, if one follows the track to which one is attracted, if one follows one's own inclination, which is not satisfied with anything else, one feels, 'There is something waiting for me (which one does not know at the time), which will bring me satisfaction.' Besides, if one is intuitive and mystical, it is easier still, because then one is continually told what is the purpose of one's life. For nature has such a perfection of wisdom. One sees that the insects are given the sense to make their little houses and to protect themselves and make a store of their food. The bees, who have the gift of making honey, are taught how to make honey. So nature has taught every soul to seek its purpose. It has made every soul for that purpose, and it is continually calling that soul to see that purpose. If the soul does not hear the call and sleeps, it is not the fault of nature, which is continually calling. Therefore, if I were to say in a few words, how to find one's purpose, I would say: by waking from sleep.

One might ask, 'Would the outer purpose lead to the inner purpose of life?' Certainly it would. Everything a person does, spiritual or material, is only a stepping-stone for him to arrive at the inner purpose, if he can only take it to be so. If he is mistaken, the mistake is in himself; he is working toward the inner purpose just the same. For all is created to work as one scheme, and therefore each individual is acting toward the accomplishment of the divine purpose. If there is a difference, the difference is of that particular individual.

There are five aspects which give one the tendency toward the accomplishment of the inner purpose: desire to live, desire to know, desire for power, desire for happiness and desire for peace. These five things work consciously or unconsciously in the profound depth of every soul. Working within one, they prompt one either to do right or to do wrong, and yet these five aspects belong to the one purpose in the accomplishment of which the purpose of the whole creation is fulfilled. When the desire to live brings one in touch with one's real life, a life which is not subject to death, then the purpose of that desire is accomplished. When one has been able to perceive fully the knowledge of one's own being, in which is to be found divine knowledge and the mystery of the whole manifestation, then the purpose of knowledge is attained. When one is able to get in touch with the Almighty Power, then the desire for power is achieved. When one has been able to find one's happiness in one's own heart, independent of all things outside, the purpose of the desire for happiness is fulfilled; when one is able to rise above all conditions and influences which disturb the peace of the soul and has found one's peace in the midst of the crowd and away from the world, in him the desire for peace is satisfied. It is not in one or the other of these five desires that there is the accomplishment of the purpose. It is in the fulfillment of these five desires that one purpose is accomplished, the purpose for which every soul was born on earth.

Section IV - The Purpose of Life

Chapter II

The desire to live is not only seen among human beings but it is also seen continually working through the most insignificant little creatures creeping on the earth and living in the ground. When one sees how even the smallest insect wishes to avoid any pursuit after it and how it seeks shelter against any attempt made to touch it, fearing that its life may be taken away from it, that shows that even the smallest creature in the world, in whom man cannot find a trace of mind, has a desire to live. It is this desire that, developing in the lower creation in many and varied aspects, shows in fear, in the tendency to seek shelter, in the intelligent way of looking around as the hare does in the field, and the deer that is continually careful to protect itself from other animals. This desire developed in man shows greater phenomena of intelligence. War and peace are brought about with the desire of living. The cause behind war is the desire to live. The cause of peace is also the desire to live. There is not one normal soul living on Earth who has not the desire to live. Yes, a person most distressed, in a mood of unhappiness, will say at the moment, 'I would rather not live; I seek death.' But it is not the normal condition. One may say, 'Why is death not a desirable thing since it is only a getting rid of the dense body?' But can we not turn the dense body into a light body? Even matter can turn into spirit. If the divine blood begins to circulate through the veins of a person, this body is no longer a heavy body; it becomes as light as vapor. It is heavy when the weight of the Earth has fallen upon it, but when the weight of the Earth is taken away from it, it is lighter than the air.

'But,' one may say, 'Is not death an increase of life?' It is another phase of life. The body is a complete instrument; why should we not make the best of it? Why must one hasten death, if one can be here and do something worthwhile? Sometimes one longs for death because one does not know what one is to do here. One is not yet acquainted with the purpose of life. It is that which makes one long for death. Every moment in life has its mission. Every moment in life is an opportunity. Why should this opportunity be lost? Why not use every moment of one's life towards the question of bestirring ourselves to make the best use of every moment of life. That itself will give such a happiness to the person that he will not wish to go. Even if the angels of death came and were dragging him towards death, he will say, 'let me stay here awhile longer; let me finish something which I would like to finish.'

That must be the attitude. When a person is in his normal condition of mind, his one desire, his innermost desire, is to live. What does this show? It shows that man has acquired all other desires after coming on earth, but this desire to live he has brought with him on earth. Only that, by not understanding the meaning of this desire, its nature and character, its secret, he submits to its being broken by what is called death, by mortality.

If the desire to live is his innermost desire, if it is a divine substance in him, then there is the answer to this desire also; there is a possibility of the fulfillment of this desire. But when one does not dive deep into the secrets of life, without knowledge of life and death, one becomes subject to disappointment. And that disappointment is death. One might say, 'If the desire to live is natural, would it not be better to live and prolong the youthfulness of the body. How can that be done? There are three aspects the Hindus have personified: as Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva (Mahesh): the Creator-God, the Sustainer God, and the Destroyer God. In retaining youth there comes the conflict between the two Gods, the Creator-God and the Destroyer-

God. Because the Destroyer-God is destroying, the Creator-God is creating. If the Creator-God in you is stronger, then he will win a victory over the Destroyer-God. Nevertheless, there is nothing which is void of beauty in this world. If the soul has received the divine blessing, it will enjoy every aspect of life. Infancy is interesting, childhood has a beauty, youth has its spirit, and age has its knowledge and dignity, its wisdom and beauty. There is no note on the piano which has not its particular action, which has not its particular part in the symphony of nature. Whether it is the seventh octave lower or the seventh octave higher, whether it is sharp or flat or natural. Whatever the key is, as soon as the harmonious hand has touched it, it creates harmony, it makes of it a symphony. And so we are all as notes before that divine Musician, and when His blessing hand touches, whatever be ones' life condition, whether child or youthful or young or old, the beauty will manifest and add to life's symphony.

The mistake is that man wishes to live through the mortal part of his being; that is what brings disappointment. For he knows only that part of his being which is mortal, and he identifies himself with his mortal being. Hardly one among thousands realizes that life lives and death dies. That which lives cannot die, what dies will not live. It is only a phenomenon of life that makes even that which is not living, for the moment, a kind of illusion of life. When we study the dead body, the greatest study we can make, we see that no sooner has life left it than the whole charm of the body has gone. Why is there not that attraction which has always been there? Why is the body void of all beauty, magnetism and attraction? Why do those who loved that person retire from his dead body? Why do they wish to remove it? What has gone from it, what is dead in it? The part which is subject to death, is dead; the life which lived in it, is still alive. This body was only a covering of life; now, that life has left. But the living being is not dead; it is that mortal cover which was covering that life that is dead. Is it not, then, the absence of this knowledge which gives a person the fear of death?

What is death after all? There is the saying of the Prophet that the illuminated souls never fear death. Death is the last thing they fear. And yet, one does not fear for anything more than for one's life. One could sacrifice anything in the world, wealth, rank, power or possession, if one could live. If living is an innate desire, then it is most necessary to find the process, the way how to get in touch with that real part of ourselves, which may be called our being, our self, and thus to become free from what is called mortality. It is the ignorant one who knows only the ground floor of his house. By going to the first floor of his house, he thinks that he is dead. He does not know that he has only left the ground floor and is going to the first floor. Why does this ignorance exist? Because he never tried to go to the first floor. The ground floor is quite enough for him. The first floor does not exist for him, though it is a floor in his own house.

Is immortality to be gained, to be acquired? No, it is to be discovered. One has only to make one's vision keener, in other words, to explore one's self. But that is the last thing one does. People are most pleased to explore the tomb of Tut-ankh-Amen in Egypt, in order to find mysteries, regardless of the mystery hidden in their own heart. Tell them about any mystery existing outside themselves: they are delighted to explore it. But when you tell them to see in themselves, they think it is too simple. They think: 'I know myself, I am a mortal being. I don't want to die, but death awaits me.' Difficulties they make, complexities they raise by their own complex intelligence. They do not like the straight way, they like the zigzag way. They enjoy puzzles. Even if there is a door before them, they say, 'No, I do not look for it.' If a door opens before them, they do not wish to go out by that door. They prefer to be in a puzzle. It is a greater joy not to be able to find the door for a long time. One who is thus enjoying the puzzle, is horrified when he sees the way out. The saying of the Prophet is, 'Die

before death.' What does it mean? It does not mean commit suicide. It only means: study the condition of death. One need not die, play it; one should play death and find out what it is. The whole mystical cult is that play, playing death. That play becomes the means by which to understand the mystery hidden in life.

Man constitutes in himself spirit and matter. What is matter? Crystallized spirit. What is spirit? The original substance. Spirit may be likened to running water; matter to ice. But if there is water and ice, the water will run, the ice will stay where it is. It does not mean that ice will not return to its original condition. It will. But its time has not yet come. Therefore, the water will proceed first, and the ice will stay where it is. The substance stays where it is, but the life, the spirit, passes away. What is necessary, before, for a person, is to make the spirit independent of the mortal covering, even if it be for a moment. By that the fear of death naturally vanishes, because then one begins to see the condition after death here on earth. It is this physical cover which has imprisoned, so to speak, the soul in it. And the soul finds itself in prison and it cannot see itself. What it can see is the cover. Rumi explains it most beautifully in a poem which he has written on sleep, because it is in sleep that the soul naturally becomes independent of this mortal garb. He says:

Every night Thou freest our spirits from the body
And its snare, making them pure as raised tablets.

Every night spirits are released from this cage,
And set free, neither lording it nor lorded over.

At night prisoners are unaware of their prison;
At night kings are unaware of their majesty.

Then there is no thought or care for loss or gain;
No regard to such a one or such a one.

And the continual longing of the soul is for freedom from this imprisonment. Rumi begins his book, the Masnavi, with this lamentation of the soul, to free itself. But is it to free the soul by actual death, by suicide? No! No mystics have done it; it is not meant. It is by playing death that one arrives at the knowledge of life and death, and it is the secret of life which will make the soul free. The different planes of existence, which are hidden behind the cover of this physical body, then begin to manifest to the person who plays death. All different ways of concentration, of meditation, which are prescribed by the teacher to the pupil, are all that process of playing. In themselves they are nothing; they are all a play. What is important, is what one finds out as an outcome of that play: what one discovers in the end. Of course, the play begins with self-negation. And a person who likes to say twenty times a day, 'I,' does not like to say, 'I am not, Thou art.' But he does not know that this claim of 'I' is the root of all his trouble. It is this claim that makes him feel hurt by every little insult, by every little disturbance. The amount of pain that this illusion gives him is so great that it is just as well he got rid of it. But that is the last thing he would do. He would give up his last penny, but not the thought of 'I'. He would hold it; it is the dearest thing. That is the whole difficulty and the only hindrance on the spiritual path.

Very often people ask, 'How long has one to go on the spiritual path?' There is no limit to the length of this path, and yet if one is ready, it does not need a long time. It is a moment and one is there. How true it is, what the wise of past ages said to their followers, 'Do not go

directly into the temple; first walk around it fifty times!' The meaning was, first get tired and then enter.' Then you value it. One values something for which one makes an effort. If it comes without effort, it is nothing to one. If a government should ask a tax for the air one breathes, people would protest against it. Yet they do not know that there is no comparison between the air and the money they possess. The value of the one is incomparably greater than the other. And yet the most valuable things are attained with the least effort. But one does not realize their importance. One would rather have something which is attained with a great effort and in the end may prove to be nothing.

It is very simple to think, 'Why should every being have that innate desire to live, if continual life is impossible?' For there is no desire in the world which has not its answer. The answer to every desire is somewhere. The fulfillment of every desire must come one day. Therefore, without doubt this desire of living must be fulfilled. And the fulfillment of this desire is in getting above the illusion which is caused by ignorance of the secret of life.

Section IV - The Purpose of Life

Chapter III

The desire for knowledge can be traced in all living beings, in the lower creation as well as in mankind. If one notices the movements of the birds and animals in the forest, one sees that besides seeking for their food, playing with their mates, protecting themselves from their enemy, they are also interested in every sensation that comes to them through their five senses. Sound, color, touch, scent, every sensation, has an effect upon them. One can trace in the animals the natural desire to know something, and it is this desire, which in human evolution can be recognized as curiosity. From childhood this tendency seems predominant, and the more a child shows this tendency, the more promising the child is, because that shows that the soul part of the child is so much more to the fore. Among grown up persons, what strikes us most in their personality is that brilliance of intelligence, apart from all their goodness and virtue. If this is such an important thing in life, it must achieve a most important result. And what is that achievement? It is the knowledge of the ultimate truth which fulfills the purpose of life.

A curious soul begins by trying to know everything that it sees, that it comes in contact with. What it wants to know first is the name of an object: what it is called, what it is for, what it is, what it is used for, how to use it, how it is made, how to make the best of a thing, how to profit by it to the utmost. This knowledge is what we call learning. The different divisions of learning, called by different names, are the classification of this knowledge, which one gains by study of the outside world. But life is so short and the field of this knowledge is so vast, that a person may go on and on studying. He may perhaps study one branch of knowledge, and he may find that even one life is not sufficient to be fully acquainted with that one particular branch of knowledge. And there is another person: he is not satisfied with only touching one branch of knowledge. He wants to touch many branches of knowledge. He may become acquainted, to a certain degree, with different aspects of knowledge. It may, perhaps make him, if he reaches somewhere, what may be called an all-round man. Yet that is not the thing which will fulfill the purpose of his life. Farabi, the great Arabian scientist in ancient times, claimed that he knew many sides of knowledge. But when it came to showing his equipment in the knowledge of music, he proved to be lacking in the essential part, which was not the theory of music but the practice of music.

But knowledge can be divided into two aspects: one aspect is the knowledge which we call learning. The other aspect is knowing. Learning comes from the reason: 'It is so, because of this or that,' that is knowledge. But there is a knowing which cannot be explained by 'because.' It can only be said that it is so. It cannot be anything else. The knowledge with its 'because' attached, is contradicted a thousand times over. One scientist, one inventor, one learned person has one argument. Another comes and he says, 'This is not what I think. I have found out the truth about it, which the one who looked before did not perceive rightly.' It has always been and will always be so with the outer knowledge. But with that knowing, which is the central knowledge there has never been a difference and there will never be. The saints, sages, seers, mystics, prophets of all ages, in whatever part of the world they were born, when they have touched this realm of knowing, have all agreed on this same one thing. It is, therefore, that they called it Truth.

It was not because this was the conception of one person, or the expression of another person, or the doctrine of a certain people, or the teaching of a certain religion. No, it was the knowledge of every knowing soul. And every soul whether in the past, present, or future, whenever it arrives at the stage when it knows, will realize the same thing. Therefore it is in that knowledge that there is to be found the fulfillment of the purpose of one's coming to the earth.

And now one may ask, 'What is that knowledge? How can one attain it?' The first condition is to separate this outer knowledge from the inner knowing. False and true, the two things cannot go together. It is in separating the real from the unreal. The knowledge gained from the outer world is the knowledge of the cover of all things, not of the spirit of all things. Therefore, that knowledge cannot be essential knowledge. It is not the knowledge of the spirit of all things. It is the knowledge of the cover of all things, which we study and call learning, and to it we give the greatest importance. One may say, 'What is one to do when the call of the intellectual reason for knowledge and learning is such that it threatens one's faith in the possibility of knowledge by the self?' The answer is to go on, in that case, with the intellectual knowledge till one feels satisfied with it or tired of it. For one must not seek after food if one is not hungry. The food which is sought in absence of hunger will prove to be a poison. Great as it is, the knowledge of self, if there is not that natural desire raging like fire does not manifest.

One might ask, 'Then why should we not try to get to the bottom of all outside things. Shall we not by this way reach the same knowledge?' That is not possible. The easiest way and the possible way is to attain to the knowledge of the self. It is the after-effect of this attainment that will give one keen sight into outside things, into the spirit of outward things. The question is about oneself, the knowledge of oneself, what that knowledge is. Do we know ourselves? None of us, for one moment, will think that we do not know ourselves. That is the difficulty. Everyone says, 'I know myself better than I know anybody else. What is there to be learned in myself? Is it the anatomy of the body?' Yes, the first thing is to understand the construction of the body. That is the first lesson.

By the study of this one will find that there are five different aspects which constitute our physical body. The mystics, for convenience, call them earth, water, fire, air, and ether. But these must not be compared with the scientific terms; it is only for the convenience of the mystic. Then one will see the different senses the organs of the senses. Each sense represents one of these elements. And coming to the natural tendencies and needs of life, every action one does has a relation to one of these five elements. This study of the mechanism will make a person understand that something, which he always called *himself*, is nothing but a mechanism; a mechanism made of the five elements, the elements which are borrowed from the outer world. And he will find that his mind, which experiences through all organs of the senses, still remains aloof as a spectator who conceives and perceives the outside world through the mediumship of this mechanism which he calls his body. This knowledge will waken a deep thinker to the fact that he is not his body. Although, consciously or unconsciously, there is perhaps one among a million persons, who clearly realizes, 'My body is my instrument. I am not my body.' The one, who has come to realize, 'My body is my instrument,' is the controller of this prison. He is the engineer of this machinery.

And then there comes the next stage of knowing oneself, and that is to explore what one calls the mind. By a minute study of the mind, one will find that the different qualities such as reason, memory, thought, feeling, and the ego, all these five things constitute the mind. One

will find that there is a surface to this and there is a depth to it. Its depth is the heart. Its surface is the mind. Each quality of mind represents one of these five elements. This again takes us to the thought that even the mind, which is above the physical body, is a mechanism. And the more one is acquainted with the mechanism, the more one is able to manage it to its best advantage. It is the ignorance of the secret of this mechanism that keeps man unaware of his own domain. This knowledge makes one think, 'I am neither my body nor am I my mind; I am the engineer who has these two possessions, these two machineries, to work with to the best advantage of life.' Then one begins to ask, 'What am I?' For to a certain degree, even the mind is a mechanism which is borrowed from the outer sphere, as the body is a mechanism, which has been borrowed from the physical plane, which has been gathered together and constructed. Therefore, neither mind nor body is the self. One thinks, 'It is myself,' only because one cannot see oneself. And so one says of everything one sees, 'This is myself.' The self becomes acquainted with everything but itself. So that mind, which the self has used, has become a kind of cover upon the light which fulfills the purpose of life.

When this is intellectually realized, although it does not fulfill the purpose, it begins one's journey in the search of truth. This must be realized by the process of meditation, the process by which the self can separate itself from the body and afterwards from mind. For the self, deluded all through life, is not ready to understand, is not prepared to understand truth. It rejects truth. It fights truth. It is like the story, told in my Divan, that a lion once saw a lion cub wandering through the wilderness with the sheep. The lion was very surprised. Instead of running after the sheep, he ran after this lion cub. And the little lion was trembling and very frightened. The father lion said, 'Come, my son, with me. You are a lion.' 'No,' said the cub. 'I tremble, I tremble, I am afraid of you. You are different from my playmates. I want to run with them, play with them. I want to be with them.' 'Come, my son, with me,' said the lion, 'you are a little lion.' 'No,' said the cub, 'no, I am not a lion. You are a lion. I am afraid of you.' The lion said, 'I will not let you go. You must come with me.' The lion took him to the shore of the lake and said; 'Now look in it and see with your own eyes if you are a lion or if you are a sheep.' This explains what initiation means and what the initiator teaches to his disciple as meditation. Once the image is reflected in the lake of the heart, self-knowledge comes by itself.

Section IV - The Purpose of Life

Chapter IV

It is the desire for all one wishes to achieve that gives one the desire for power. One desires power in order to hold something, to make something, to attain something, to work out something, to attract something, to use something, to rule something, to assimilate something. If it is a natural desire, there is an answer to this. For there cannot be a desire to which there is no answer. The answer to the desire is in knowing that desire fully. Whatever power is gained by outside efforts in life, however great it may seem for the moment, it proves fatal when it comes to be examined. Even such great powers as the nations which existed just before the war, took no time to fall to pieces. There was an army, there was a navy, there was property, and a state. An empire such as the Empire of Russia, how long it took to build it! But it did not take one moment for it to break up. If the outer power, in spite of its great appearance for the moment, proves fatal in the end, then there must be some power hidden somewhere, a power that may be called worthwhile. And that power is hidden in man.

A person in the intoxication of outer power that he possesses overlooks the cultivation or the development of inner power, and, depending upon the power that does not belong to him, one day becomes the victim of the very power that he holds. Because, when the outer power becomes greater, and the inner power smaller, the greater power eats up the inner power. So it is that the heroes, the kings, the emperors, the persons with great power of arms, wealth or outer influence, have become victims to the very power upon which they always depended. So one thinks, 'If the outer power is not to be depended upon, then where is that power to be found upon which one can depend?' And that power is to be found in oneself. What power is it? In the terms of the Sufis, that power is called, *Iman*, conviction. And how is that power built? That power is built by what the Sufis call *Yaqin*, which means belief. It is belief that culminates in conviction. The one who has no inclination to believe, will never arrive at a conviction.

But now there is a question. Is even a power developed in one's personality not a limited power? True, it is a limited power. But by following that teaching which Christ has given in the words, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all things shall be added unto you,' that power is gained which is unlimited power. If not, there is no meaning in calling God 'Almighty.' The benefit of this word, 'Almighty' is in its realization. This teaches us in the first place that all might is one might. Although outwardly we see different powers, one greater than the other, either in harmony or in conflict, limited powers working for or against one another, yet by inward realization one finds that there is but one power. In support of this the Quran says, that nothing is powerful except it shows the same one power, the power of the All-powerful. In other words, in the limited aspect which we see, and in its absolute being, there is only one power. It is, therefore, that there is no might to stand against that power we call Almighty Power, that there is no power to work against it; that all aspects of strength and power are from it, and in it, and will be assimilated by it in the end.

As long as man is striving for power, as everyone is striving in some way or other, without the knowledge of that all-sufficient power, there will always be disappointment. For he will always find limitation. His ideal will always go forward and he will find himself short of power. It is only by getting in touch with the Almighty Power that he will begin to realize the All-powerful and the phenomena of the Almighty.

Now the question is, 'How can one get in touch with that Almighty Power?' As long as one's little personality stands before one, as long as one cannot get rid of it, as long as one's own person and all that is connected with it interests one, one will always find limitations. That Power is touched only by one way, and that is the way of self-effacement, which in the Bible is called self-denial. People interpret it otherwise. Self-denial, they say, means to deny oneself all the happiness and pleasures of this earth. If it were to deny the happiness and pleasures of this earth, then why was this earth made? Only to deny? If it was made to deny, it was very cruel. For the continual seeking of man is for happiness. Self-denying is to deny this little personality that creeps into everything, to efface this false ego, which prompts one to feel one's little power in this thing or that thing. To deny the idea of one's own being, the being which one knows to be oneself, and to affirm God in that place, to deny self and affirm God. That is the perfect humility. When a person shows politeness by saying, 'I am only a humble little creature,' perhaps he is hiding in his words. It is his vanity, and therefore, that humility is of no use. When one completely denies oneself, there are no words to speak. What can one say? Praise and blame are the same to one; there is nothing to be said. And how is this to be attained? It is to be attained, not only by prayer or by worship or by believing in God. It is to be attained by forgetting oneself in God. The belief in God is the first step. By the belief in God, is attained the losing oneself in God. If one is able to do it, one has attained a power which is beyond human comprehension. The process of attaining this is called *Fana* by the Sufis. Fana is not necessarily a destruction in God. Fana results in what may be called a resurrection in God, which is symbolized by the picture of Christ. The Christ on the cross is narrative of Fana; it means 'I am not.' And the idea of resurrection explains the next stage, which is *Baqa*, which means 'Thou art.' and this means rising towards All-might. The divine spirit is to be recognized in that rising towards All-might. Fana is not attained by torturing oneself, by tormenting oneself, by giving oneself a great many troubles, as many ascetics do. For even after torturing themselves, they will not come to that realization if they were not meant to. It is by denying one's little self, the false self, which covers one's real self, in which the essence of divine Being is to be found.

Section IV - The Purpose of Life

Chapter V

Happiness, which is sought after by every soul, has its secret in the knowledge of the self. Man seeks for happiness, not because happiness is his sustenance, but because happiness is his own being. Therefore, in seeking for happiness, man is seeking for himself. What gives man inclination to seek for happiness is the feeling of having lost something which he had always owned, which belonged to him, which was his own self. The absence of happiness, which a soul has experienced from the day it has come on earth and which has increased every day more and more, makes man forget that his own being is happiness. He thinks happiness is something, which is acquired. As man thinks that happiness is something which is acquired, he continually strives in every direction to attain to it. In the end, after all his striving, he finds that the real happiness does not lie in what he calls pleasures. Pleasures may be a shadow of happiness. There is an illusion of happiness, because all the illusion which stands beside reality is more interesting for the average man than reality itself.

A happiness which is momentary, a happiness which depends upon something outside of oneself, is called pleasure. Very often we confuse, in our everyday language, the distinction between pleasure and happiness. A pastime, an amusement, merriment, gaiety that take one's thoughts away from the responsibilities and worries and limitations of life and give one a moment's consolation – one begins by thinking that these are the ways of happiness. But as one cannot hold them, and as one often finds that, seeking for what may be called a pleasure, the loss is greater than the gain, then one begins to look for something that will really be the means of happiness. It is this, very often, that wakens a soul to look for the mystery of religion, for the sense in philosophy, for the secret of mysticism, in case he can find some happiness there. But even all these things only help one to find happiness. They are not happiness themselves. It is the soul which is happiness itself, not all outer things which man seeks after, and which he thinks will give him happiness. The very fact that man is continually craving for happiness shows that the real element, which may be called man's real being, is not what has formed his body and what has composed his mind, but what he is in himself.

The mind and body are vehicles. Through the mind and body man experiences life more fully, more clearly; but they are not happiness in themselves, nor does what is experienced through them give the real happiness. What he experiences through them is just pleasure, an illusion of happiness for a time. It is not only that the pleasures cost more than they are worth, but very often in the path of pleasure, when a person is seeking after happiness, as he goes further, he creates more and more unhappiness for himself. Very often it happens. Every way he turns, everything he does, every plan he carries out, thinking that this will give him happiness, only produces a greater trouble, because he is seeking after happiness in a wrong direction.

A person might ask, 'Is, then, the secret of happiness in the way of the ascetics, in tormenting and torturing oneself as they have done for ages?' Even that does not give happiness. It is only a distraction from the worldly pleasures which produce illusion. The ascetic shuts himself up in order to have an opportunity of taking another direction. But very often it so happens that the one who lives an ascetic life is himself unaware of what he is doing and what it is intended for. And therefore, even if he lives his whole life as an ascetic, he cannot

derive a full benefit from it. His loss is then greater than his gain. For even asceticism is not a happiness. It is only a means of self-discipline. It is a drill in order to fight against temptations which draw one continually in life and which hinder one's path to happiness. Not understanding this, a person may go on living an ascetic life but can never be benefited by it, like a soldier who has drilled all his life and never fought. Many have understood self-denial as the way to happiness, and they interpret self-denial in the form of asceticism, to deny oneself all pleasures which are momentary. There is another point from which to look at it: the creation is not intended to be renounced. We read in the Quran that God has made all that is in the heavens and on the earth subservient to man. Wherefore, all that is beautiful and pleasing, all that gives joy and pleasure, is not to be renounced. The secret of all this is that what is made for man, man may hold but he must not be held by it.

When man renounces the path of happiness, real happiness, in order to pursue pleasures, it is then that he does wrong. If in the pursuit of happiness, which is the ultimate happiness, he goes on through life, then for him to be an ascetic and deny himself all pleasures is not necessary. There is a story told of Solomon, that he had a vision that God revealed Himself to him and said, 'Ask what I shall give thee.' Solomon said, 'Give me an understanding heart, wisdom and knowledge.' And God said to him, 'Because thou hast asked this thing and hast not asked long life for thyself, neither hast thou asked riches for thyself, but hast asked for thyself understanding, behold, I have done according to thy word. I have given thee a wise and understanding heart. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honor, and I will lengthen thy days.' This shows that the true way is not the renouncing of things, but it is making the best use of them, making the right use of them. It is not going away from life, but being among the crowd, being in the midst of life, and yet not being attached to it. One might say, that it would be a cruel thing to be detached from anybody who wants our love and kindness and sympathy. You can attach yourself to the whole world if you will not be of the world. If one keeps one's thoughts centered upon the idea of the real happiness which is attained by the realization of the self, and if one does not allow anything to hinder that, then in the end one arrives at that happiness which is the purpose of the coming on earth of every soul.

Section IV - The Purpose of Life

Chapter VI

The secret behind the whole manifestation is vibration; vibration which may be termed movement. It is the differences of vibration, which when divided by lines, form planes of existence, each plane being different in the rhythm of these vibrations. When we take life as a whole we can draw one line, the beginning and the end, or spirit and matter, or God and man. And we shall find that the rhythm which begins the line is fine and without disturbance, and the rhythm which is felt at the end of this line is gross and disturbing. And these two rhythms may be named the life of sensation and the life of peace.

These are two opposite things. The life of sensation gives a momentary joy. The life which is the first aspect of life gives peace and culminates in the everlasting peace. The joy, however great, is rising and falling. It must have its reaction. Besides, it depends upon sensation. And what does sensation depend upon? Sensation depends upon the outer life. There must be something besides you to cause the sensation. But peace is independently felt within oneself. It is not dependent upon the outer sensation. It is something that belongs to one, something that is one's own self. If one were to ask someone who lives continually in a kind of excitement of worldly pleasures, whom Providence has granted all pleasures imaginable, if that person were asked, 'What do you wish besides all this that you experience?' He will say, 'To be left alone.' When madness comes, when he is out of balance, he will crave for sensation, but when that passion has gone, what he is longing for in reality is peace. Therefore, there is no pleasure in the world, however great, no experience, however interesting, that can give one that satisfaction which peace alone can give. A sovereign may be happy sitting on the throne with his crown, with many attendants before him, but he is only satisfied when he is alone by himself. All else seems to him nothing. It has no value. The most precious thing for him is that moment when he is by himself.

I have once seen the Nizam, a great ruler, in all his grandeur, enjoying the royal splendor all around him, and then again I saw the same sovereign sitting alone on a little carpet. It was at that time that he was himself. It is the same thing with everyone. Delicious dishes, sweet fragrance, music, all other pleasures of line and color, beauty in all its aspects, which seem to answer one's life's demands, fail in the end when compared with that satisfaction which a soul experiences in itself, which it feels its own property, its own belonging. Something that one need not seek outside oneself, that one can find within oneself, and something which is incomparably greater and more valuable than anything else in the world. Something which cannot be bought or sold, something which cannot be robbed by anyone, and something which is more sacred and holy than religion or prayer. For all prayer and devotion is to attain to this peace.

A man good and kind, a person most learned and qualified, strong and powerful, with all these attributes, cannot be spiritual if his soul has not attained that rhythm, which is a natural rhythm of its being, a rhythm in which alone exists life's satisfaction. Peace is not a knowledge, peace is not a power, peace is not a happiness, but peace is all these. And besides, peace is productive of happiness. Peace inspires one with knowledge of the seen and unseen, and in peace is to be found the divine Presence. It is not the excited one who conquers in this continual battle of life. It is the peaceful one who tolerates all, who forgives all, who understands all, who assimilates all things. The one who lacks peace, with all his possessions,

the property of this earth or quality of mind, is poor even with both. He has not got that wealth which may be called divine and without which man's life is useless. For true life is in peace, a life which will not be robbed by death. The secret of mysticism, the mystery of philosophy, all is to be attained after the attainment of peace. You cannot refuse to recognize the divine in a person who is a person of peace. It is not the talkative, it is not the argumentative one, who proves to be wise. He may have intellect, worldly wisdom, and yet may not have pure intelligence, which is real wisdom. True wisdom is to be found in the peaceful, for peacefulness is the sign of wisdom. It is the peaceful one who is observant. It is peace that gives him the power to observe keenly. It is the peaceful one, therefore, who can conceive, for peace helps him to conceive. It is the peaceful who can contemplate; one who has no peace cannot contemplate properly. Therefore, all things pertaining to spiritual progress in life depend upon peace.

And now the question is what makes one lack peace? The answer is, love of sensation. A person who is always seeking to experience life in movement, in activity, in whatever form, wants more and more of that experience. In the end he becomes dependent upon the life which is outside, and so he loses in the end his peace, the peace which is his real self. When a person says about someone, 'That person has lost his soul,' the soul is not lost; the soul has lost its peace. Absorption in the outer life, every moment of the day and night, thinking and worrying and working and fighting, struggling along, in the end robs one of one's soul. Even if one gains as the price of that fighting something which is outside oneself, someone who is a greater fighter still will snatch it from our grasp one day.

One might ask if it is not our necessity in life that keeps us absorbed in the outer life and does not give us a moment to experience peace. In answer to this I must say: suppose the outer life has taken ten hours of the day, you still have two hours. If sleep has taken ten hours of the day, you still have two hours to spare. To attain peace, what one has to do is to seek that rhythm which is in the depth of our being. It is just like the sea: the surface of the sea is ever moving; the depth of the sea is still. And so it is with our life. If our life is thrown into the sea of activity, it is on the surface. We still live in the profound depths, in that peace. But the thing is to become conscious of that peace which can be found within ourselves. It is this which can bring us the answer to all our problems. If not, when we want to solve one problem, there is another difficult problem coming. There is no end to our problems. There is no end to the difficulties of the outer life. And if we get excited over them, we shall never be able to solve them. Some think, 'We might wait. Perhaps the conditions will become better. We shall see then what to do.' But when will the conditions become better? They will become still worse! Whether the conditions become better or worse, the first thing is to seek the kingdom of God within ourselves, in which there is our peace. As soon as we have found that, we have found our support, we have found our self. And in spite of all the activity and movement on the surface, we shall be able to keep that peace undisturbed if only we hold it fast by becoming conscious of it.

Section IV - The Purpose of Life

Chapter VII

In the language of the Hindus duty is called *Dharma*, which means religion. The more one studies the nature and character of what we call duty, the more one begins to see that it is in the spirit of duty that the soul of religion is to be found. If duty was not so sacred as to play such an important part in one's life; a form of religion would be nothing to a thoughtful soul. It was, therefore, wise on the part of the ancient people who called religion duty, or duty religion. For religion is not in performing a ceremony or ritual. The true religion is the feeling or the sense of duty. Duty is not necessarily the purpose of life, but it is as the lighthouse in the port, which shows one, 'Here is the landing place, here you arrive, here is your destination.' It may not be the final destination, but still in duty one finds a road which leads one to the purpose of life.

It seems that, though the knowledge of duty is acquired after a child has come into the world, yet the child has also brought with him into the world, the sense of duty. And according to the sense of duty which the child shows, he gives promise of a good future. A person may be most learned, capable, qualified, powerful, influential, and yet if he has no sense of duty, you cannot rely upon him. As soon as you find out that there is a living sense of duty in a person, you at once feel confidence. You feel you can depend upon that person. And this feeling that you get is greater than any other impression a person can make upon you. In this is all virtue and strength and power and blessing. You value a friend whom you can trust. You value a relation in whom you can have confidence. Therefore, all the qualifications that man possesses seem to be on the surface, but beneath them there is one spirit which keeps them alive and makes them really valuable, and that spirit is the sense of duty. Those who have won the confidence of the whole nation, and there have been few in the history of the world who have won the trust of a multitude, those have proved to be really great; and it was accomplished by developing a sense of duty.

Now there are five different aspects in considering the question of duty. One aspect is to think of our duty towards the generation, towards the children, our own children and those of others. To those who are younger in years we have a certain duty. To our friends, our acquaintances who have not yet evolved enough to see things as we do, there is also our duty. And if once one were conscious of this, one would find many things in life which require one's attention, and if they are overlooked, one has really neglected one's duty. Whatever be our position in life, rich or poor, we still have a kingdom, and that kingdom is our self. We can help and serve in thought and deed, in word or in action needed at a certain moment. By every attention given to this question, by everything done in this respect, however material it might seem outwardly, a religious action is performed.

Another aspect of duty is the duty to our fellow creatures: to one's co-workers, to the friends and acquaintances with whom one comes in contact in everyday life, with whom one does not have the feeling of older or younger, or any difference. We have a duty towards them. In the first place, to study the psychology of their nature, if we have to teach them, not to teach them as a teacher, if we help them, not to help them as a benefactor. Whatever help we give to them, to do it in such a way that even we ourselves do not know about it. That is the best way of serving. For even to do good is most difficult if we do not know how to do it. If we

were able to win the affection of our fellow men and to do some little service unassumingly, without the thought of appreciation or return, we have certainly performed a religious action.

The third aspect of duty is towards those advanced in years. To have sympathy for them, to have respect for their age, for the experience they have gained; even if they have not that qualification or learning which we have, it does not matter. Perhaps they know something more, which we do not know. We cannot learn all things. We cannot know all things. There are things that experience teaches. There are things that age brings to them. If in a person, however intelligent and capable, that sentiment for age, that respect for his elder brother, that consideration for those who are advanced in years, his mother, father, sister, brother, teacher, or friend, has not yet been born; he has not yet known religion. For in this is the foundation of religion.

It is said that a child of the Prophet one day called a slave by his name and the Prophet heard it. The first thing he said was, 'My child, call him Uncle; he is advanced in age.' Besides, there is a psychological action and reaction. Those who have reached the ripened condition of life have arrived at a stage when their goodwill for the younger ones comes as a treasure, a living treasure. Sometimes the intoxication of life, one's absorption in worldly activities, that ever growing energy which one experiences in youth, one's power and position and knowledge and capability, make one overlook this. But if an opportunity is lost, it is lost; it will never come again. We are all in this world travelers, and those near to us or those whom we see, they are the ones we meet on our journey. And therefore, it is an opportunity of thinking of our duty towards them. Neither shall we be with them always, nor will they be with us. Life is a dream in which we are thrown, a dream which is ever changing. Therefore an opportunity lost of considering our little obligations in our everyday life, which form part of our duty, is like forgetting our religion.

The fourth aspect of duty is our duty to the state, to the nation, and to all those personalities whom we find therein, above or below; a king, a president, a commander, an officer, a secretary, a clerk, a porter, or servant; a spiritual source of upliftment, such as a church, a spiritual center and personalities connected with it, priest or clergyman, one's counselor or teacher. Towards all these we have a duty, and in observing this alone we accomplish Dharma, our duty.

And the fifth aspect of our duty is to God, our Creator, Sustainer, and the Forgiver of our shortcomings. One might say, 'We have not desired to come here. Why were we sent here?' But it is said in a moment of disturbance of mind. If the mind is still, if a person shows good sense he will say, 'Even if there were nothing else given to me in life, to be allowed to live under the sun is the greatest privilege.' One says, 'I toil and I earn money, and that is my living which I make. Who is to be given credit for it?' But it is not the money we eat; what we eat is not made in the bank. It is made by the sun and the moon and the stars and the earth and the water, by nature, which is living before us. If we had not air to breathe, we should die in a moment. These gifts of nature, which are before us, how can we be thankful enough for them? Besides, as a person develops spiritually he will see that it is not only his body that needs food, but also his mind, his heart, his soul; a food that this mechanical world cannot provide. It is the food that God alone can give, and it is therefore that we call God the Sustainer. Furthermore, at a time when there was neither strength in us nor sense enough to earn our livelihood, at that time our food was created. When one thinks of this, and when one realizes that every little creature, a germ or worm that no one ever notices, also receives its

sustenance, then one begins to see that there is a Sustainer; and that Sustainer we find in God, and towards Him we have a duty.

In spite of the justice and injustice we see on the surface of this world, a keen insight into one's own life will teach that there is no comparison between our faults and our good actions. The good actions, in comparison with our faults, are so few that if we were judged we should not have one mark to our credit. It does not mean that justice is absent there. It only means, what is behind law? Love. And what is Love? God. And how do we see God's love, in what form? In many forms; but the most beautiful form of love of God is His compassion, His divine forgiveness. Considering these things, we realize that we have a duty towards God.

It is these five different aspects of duty, that, when we consider them and when we begin to live them, they begin to give us the sense of a religious life. Religious life does not mean living in a religious place or in a cemetery or in a church, or in a religion that is all outward. The true religion is living and being conscious of the sense of duty that we have towards man and towards God. Someone may say, 'How is it that a person who lives a life of duty, is often void of love, beauty, and poetry?' I do not think that duty has anything to do with depriving a person of love, harmony, and beauty. On the other hand, when the real spirit of duty awakens in a person, it is that which begins poetry. If there is a beautiful poem to be found, if there is anyone who has experienced love, harmony and beauty, it is that person who understands the sense of duty. For instance a newborn child. He has come from heaven, he is happy as the angels, he is beautiful in infancy, he is an expression of harmony, and he is love himself. And yet he does not know love, harmony, and beauty. Why? Because he does not yet know duty. But the moment the spirit of duty is awakened in a person, poetry begins. And when poetry is begun, then love, harmony and beauty manifest to his view fully.

But one might ask, 'Duty is responsibility; how can we be delivered from this great load of responsibility?' In two ways: he is already delivered of this load of responsibility, who has no sense of responsibility. He does not want to take it up as his responsibility. He is quite happy. He does not mind what anybody thinks of him. He does not mind whom he hurts nor whom he harms. He minds his own business quite happily. He is delivered already. And if there is another deliverance, it is attained by living the life of duty. It is by going through it. For going through it will raise a person higher and higher, till he rises above it. And he will be most thankful that he has gone through the path of duty, the sacred path of Dharma, for by this finally, he has been able to arrive at a stage of realization in which alone is to be found the purpose of life.

Section IV - The Purpose of Life

Chapter VIII

Man has not been born on the earth only to eat and drink and sleep as all the lower creatures do, rather he has been born on earth to learn how to use this fertile earth to its best advantage, how to appreciate the treasures this earth holds, and how to use them rightly. And it is thus that man becomes connected with the earth.

The soul comes from heaven and its connection with the earth has in it a secret which leads towards the purpose of life. It is easy for a person to say, 'We come from heaven and we are bound for heaven, and while dwelling for some days on this earth, what is there that belongs to us? Besides, is it not all sinful, all that belongs to the earth? It is better to escape from it and leave all this which in the end is worthless.' This is true, but it is not natural. The natural thing is to be able to appreciate all that is created on the earth. We appreciate it by valuing it. The beauty of the mineral kingdom, which one sees in the jewels and gems, each one better than the other, is not something to be overlooked. To see that through a stone the divine light shines, making that stone incomparably greater than the pebbles on the road, to see what a wonderful phenomenon it is that even in a stone, God shows His beauty.

The perfection of flowers, the sweetness of fruits, the delicate flavors of different objects of the earth do not seem to have been created for no purpose. In gold, in silver, in metal, in all objects we see in the world, there seems to be a certain purpose to be accomplished here. And the one who is afraid of it, afraid that it will take hold of him, runs away. And what does he do? He loses both, heaven and earth. He has left heaven already; he is leaving the earth. The one who holds it is buried under it. It grows on him and swallows him. That is another aspect of the earth and its law. But the one who understands the purpose of the earth and of its treasures uses them to the best advantage not only for himself but for his fellow men. That is the person who lives in this world fulfilling the purpose of his life.

Do we only see spiritual persons among those who are sitting in the caves of the Himalayas? Do we not see wonderful personalities in the midst of the world? Very often people say that a person who has struggled along all through his life with business and industry and worldly things has become hardened. But I think that the one who has really gained victory over the earth, who has really made a success which can be called a success, has learned something from it. It is not everyone who becomes successful in earthly affairs. It is one among many. And the one who comes to the top has had his difficulties, has had his problems. His endurance, his patience have been tested. He has gone through a sacrifice. He has understood human nature, standing in the midst of the crowd. If he has not read one book of philosophy, if he has not meditated one day, still he has arrived at a plane, at an understanding, where he knows something worth knowing. I considered myself most privileged at times when I had conversations with businessmen, with people who were always busy with the things of the earth and who had really reached the top. I have simply marveled to think that instead of hardening them it has softened their nature to some extent. It has given them a sense which can only come by spiritual understanding, which is a religious sense. It has developed a fairness in them. By having gone through this world of injustice and having seen what one sees in the business world, they have come to a point of honesty where one begins to see life from a different point of view. And besides that, if anyone ever comes forward and says, 'For a philanthropic purpose, for the good of humanity, I give so many millions for education, for

the hospitals', it is they who do it. And I would very much wonder if a recluse who has always kept himself away from money, if he had the charge of many millions, would like to part with any. The point is, whether a purpose is earthly or heavenly, to be true to the purpose of life is the first moral we have to learn. For even an earthly purpose, however material it may seem, will prove in the end to be a stepping stone even if one had nothing but that ideal before one.

No doubt all things pertaining to the earth have their influence upon a person. It hardens one, it makes one's heart cold and takes away that tender sentiment that one has towards one's dear ones, towards those whom one loves and on whom one depends, towards one's fellow men. It makes one more and more greedy, and greed makes one unjust. Man becomes covetous, and his cup of desire is never filled; he is never satisfied. The more that comes, the less there seems to be there. Nevertheless, if one does not go through this experience, which is man's test, and one travels by another way, then one has given up a great experience, an experience which really makes the soul noble. A person whom you would otherwise not have understood for ten years, you can understand in one day as soon as there is a question of money. It at once brings out what is hidden in that person.

This shows that it is a great test, a test through which one should go, and one should experience a path which is a part of one's destiny. Therefore the religious or spiritual man, even if he looks with contempt at a person engaged in the things of the earth, should know that it is his path, and a path which is his religion. If he proves to be honest in his business dealings, if he keeps his heart open to those dear and near to him, those to whom he has his obligations, if he keeps the flame of his love of mankind lit in his heart through it all, in the end he will arrive at a stage where he is greater than a saint, because he has kept alive the flame of saintliness through a continually blowing wind.

We must not always try to get away from difficulties, for in the end we shall not manage to get away from them. Life on earth is difficult, and with the evolution of the earth, it will be even more difficult. Every day it will become more difficult. We can picture the world as a human being, a human being making his life from infancy to age. In infancy, however dependent the infant is, yet he is a sovereign, quite happy in the arms of the mother, in the care of the father; nothing to worry him, nothing to trouble him. There is no attachment, no enmity. He is as happy as the angels in heaven. And so was the beginning of the world, the beginning of the human race especially. The Hindus have called it the Golden Age. And then comes youth. Youth with its spring and delicacy and with its responsibility. Youth has its own trials, its own experiences, and its own fears. This unsettled condition of the earth was called by the Hindus, the Silver Age, which means the age with all the treasures, the springtime of youth. But then as life goes forward, the world comes to the stage of what may be called middle age. The age of cares, of worries, of anxieties, of responsibilities. The Hindus have named it the Copper Age. As life advances, so it has much to bear. A fruitful tree, with the weight of fruits, becomes bent, and so it is with progress. With every step forward, there are obligations and responsibilities.

Nevertheless, we must not look forward to difficulties. There is one thing that saves us, and that is hopefulness. All this about which I have spoken is the metaphysical part. What I am speaking about now is the psychological attitude we ought to have. Always hope for the best, and we certainly shall have the best. What we can do is to make ourselves strong enough to go through life on earth. It is only by this strength of conviction that by whatever path we journey, we shall arrive at the spiritual goal. Whatever be our life, professional, industrial,

commercial, it does not matter, we shall live religion, Nature's religion, turning our life into a religion, making of our life a religion. And so even with every earthly success, we shall be taking steps towards spiritual attainment.

Section IV - The Purpose of Life

Chapter IX

There are two different temperaments that we generally see in the world. One says, 'I will not hear music on Sunday, it is a religious day. The liking for colors is emotional. Do not look at pictures, it excites.' To enjoy any perfume, to like fragrance, he thinks is sensual. And then there is another temperament that feels the vibrations of the colors, that enjoys delicious food, that admires the straight line and the curve, that is touched and moved by music, that feels exalted by the beauty of nature. And what difference do we find in these two temperaments? The difference is that one is living and the other lacks life. One is living because he is responsive to all aspects of beauty, whether the beauty appeals to his eyes or ears, or to his sense of taste or touch. The other one is incapable of enjoying it.

Man in his innermost is seeking for happiness, for beauty, for harmony. And yet, by not responding to the beauty and harmony which is before him, he wastes his life which is an opportunity for him to experience and to enjoy. What self-denial is it to deny the divine beauty which is before us? If we deny ourselves the divine beauty which surrounds us, then the beauty which is within will not unfold itself. Because the condition is that the soul is born with its eyes open outwardly; it does not see the life within. The only way of wakening to the life within, which is the most beautiful, is first to respond to the beauty outside. This world with all its unlimited beauty, nature with its sublimity, personalities with divine immanence, if we ignore all this then why have we come? What have we accomplished here? The person who ignores it turns his back on something which he is continually seeking for. He is his own enemy. By this way he cannot be spiritual, he cannot be religious. By denying himself all that is beautiful around him, he cannot be exalted. For if beauty within was the only purpose of life, God would not have created man and sent him on earth.

Besides this, it is the vision of the beauty on the earth which awakens the vision of the beauty which is in the spirit. Some say that it is sensuous and that it deprives one of spiritual illumination. It would, if a person were to be totally absorbed in it and were to live only in it, and did not think that there was something else besides. Because the beauty which is outside no doubt has a transitory character; it is passing and therefore is not dependable. For the one who depends upon this beauty and has become absorbed in it and by doing so, has turned his back on that beauty which is everlasting. For that person, this is certainly wrong. But at the same time, no soul has ever arrived at beholding the vision of the spiritual beauty which is to be found within, without being awakened to the beauty which is external.

One might think that a child who dies very young cannot come to that spirituality through the beauty of life. I will say that the child is sometimes more responsive to beauty than a grown up person, because a grown up person has developed in himself a pessimistic attitude, a prejudice. And by that prejudice, he is incapable of seeing that beauty, which a little child can see and appreciate. For instance, when we look at a person we make a barrier of our preconceived idea before we look at him. A child, an angel on earth, looks at him as it would look at its best friend. It has no enmity, no preconceived idea about anyone, and therefore the child is open to beauty. A child does not know that the fire burns. The child only knows that the fire is beautiful. And therefore the child is so blessed that every moment of its life it lives in a complete vision of beauty. And so long as that state lasts, a soul is in the Garden of Eden. It is exiled from that day when the soul has touched the earthly human nature. Someone may

say, 'If within the soul there was not the capability of appreciating beauty, how would it be able to perceive the external beauty first?' The soul has, born in itself, a natural craving for beauty. It is a lack in the person if he does not seek it rightly. Is there any person who is not a lover of beauty, who is not capable of appreciating it? He denies himself that beauty which he could have admired freely.

One may ask, 'Is the quality of appreciating beauty more spiritual than the craving for knowledge?' I would say, in answer, where does knowledge come from? Knowledge comes by observation; observation comes by love of beauty. The first thing is that the flower attracts one's attention, and then one begins to find out where the flower comes from, what is its nature and character, what benefit it is, how to rear this plant. The first thing is that one is attracted by its beauty. The next thing is, one wants to find out its nature. From this comes all knowledge.

There is a kind of artificial learning, not a natural learning, which may be called time saving. Someone says, 'Now people have learned in their lives and they have discovered things for us and written about them in books. I must learn that by reading the book.' But he does not know that he has not learned what the person who has written the book has learned. For instance, someone, who has read the books of Luther Burbank, if he has read fifty books on horticulture, has not learned what Luther Burbank has learned. For he had made experiments for himself. He had been in the garden; his joy was such that he could not explain. No doubt another person will benefit by what he has given, but another person cannot enjoy what he has enjoyed, unless he pursues the same course.

In my explanation, spiritual means living. A spiritual person who is awakened to the beauty of poetry, who is quick to admire the subtlety of the poetry, who is appreciative of the beauty of melody, of harmony, who can enjoy art and be exalted by the beauty of nature, who lives as a living being, not as one dead, it is that person who may be called spiritual. And you will always find the tendency of spiritual personalities is to be interested in every person in their lives. That is the sign that they are living. A person who is shut up in himself, closes himself; he has made four walls around himself. That can be his grave; he is buried in it. The person who is living, naturally sees all; and, as he sees all, he sympathizes with all, he responds to all, he appreciates all in everybody; and in this way he awakens in himself the sublime vision of the immanence of God.

Section IV - The Purpose of Life

Chapter X

There is a continual desire working in every soul to see things perfect according to one's own conception of perfection. As one goes on with this desire, observing, analyzing and examining things and beings, one becomes disappointed and disheartened, and besides one becomes impressed with the lack one sees in conditions, in persons, in beings. No doubt there is one thing that keeps one alive, and that is hope. If it is not right today, tomorrow it will become right. If it is not perfect just now, after some time it will be perfect. And so on this hope one lives, and if one has given up this hope then life ends. If one is disappointed in one person, one thinks that in another person one can find all that one expects. If under one condition one is disappointed, one hopes for another condition which will bring about the fruitfulness of one's expectations. The teachers and the prophets have pointed upward. That symbolically teaches us that it is in looking forward to something more hopeful that one lives, and that is the secret of happiness and peace. But once a person develops one idea that there is nothing to look forward to in life, he has finished living.

You will see around you that those who live and those who help others to live, are the ones who look forward in life with hope and courage. It is they whom one can call living beings. But there are others who do not live, for they do not look forward to the life before them. They have lost hope. In order to be saved, they will cling to the hopeful, but if the hopeful also had a limited hope, then they would sink with them. Such souls are as dead. Those who lack hope and courage in life lack a sort of energy of spirit. The standard of health as the physician understands it today, is an energetic, robust body. But the standard of real health is the health of the spirit. Not only the body is living, but also the spirit is living. The one who is open to appreciate all, to feel encouraged to do all that comes his way, who feels joyful, hopeful, ready to accomplish his duty, ready to suffer pain that comes to him, ready to take up responsibility, ready to answer the demands as a soldier on the battlefield, this one shows the spirit hidden within the body. If that condition is lacking, then a person is lacking perfect health and must be helped to gain that energy.

Hopelessness can be overcome by faith. In the first place by faith in God; at the same time knowing that the soul draws its power from the divine source. Every thought, every impulse, every wish, every desire comes from there, and in its accomplishment there is the law of perfection. And in that way a person feels hopeful. But when one thinks, 'What shall I do? What am I to do now? How am I to do it? I have not got the means. I have not got the resources. I have not got the inspiration to do it. When one is pessimistic about things, one destroys the roots of one's desires; because, by denying one casts away that which could otherwise have been attained. For in recognizing the divine Father in God, one becomes conscious of one's divine heritage, and that there is no lack in the divine Spirit, and therefore, there is no lack in life. It is only a matter of time. If one builds one's hope in God, there is an assured fulfillment of it.

It is very interesting to study the lives of the great in the world. We find that some great people have almost arrived at the fulfillment of their undertakings and just before they had reached the goal they have lost it. And there have been some great people who have attained the ultimate success in whatever they have undertaken. You will always find that the souls of the former kind are the ones who were gifted with great power and yet lacked faith, while the

others were gifted with the same power, and that power was supported by faith. A person may have all the power there is, all the wisdom and inspiration, but if there is one thing lacking, which is faith, he may attain to all ninety-nine degrees of success and yet may miss that very one whose loss in the end takes away all that was gained previously. There is a saying in English, 'all's well that ends well,' as the Eastern people say in their prayers, 'make our end good;' for if there be a difficulty just now we do not mind, because there will be success, the real success, in its completion.

It is in this outlook that we can find the secret of the idea of Paradise, the paradise which has been spoken of by the elevated souls of all times, and in all scriptures you will find a reference to paradise is a hope in the hereafter, a hope in the future. When someone finds that there is no justice to be found in life or beauty is lacking, or wisdom is not to be found anywhere, and goodness is rare, then he begins to think that justice must exist somewhere. All beauty, wisdom, goodness must be found somewhere, and that is in paradise. He thinks, 'It exists somewhere. I shall find it one day. If not in this life, I shall find it in the hereafter. But there is a day when the fulfillment of my hope, my desire, will come.' This person lives, and this person lives to see his desire fulfilled. For in reality the lack that one finds in a person, in a thing, in an affair, in a condition, will not always remain. For all will be perfect, all must be perfect. It is a matter of time. And it is towards that perfection that we are all striving, and the whole universe is working towards the same goal. It is in that perfection that the thinkers and the great ones of all times have seen their paradise, because through man it is God who desires. Therefore it is not the desire of man, it is the desire of God, and has its fulfillment.

Life on the physical plane is limited. But the power of desire is unlimited. If desire finds a difficulty in fulfillment on the physical plane, yet it retains its power just the same. And the desire is powerful enough to accomplish its work, rising above or freed from this physical plane of limitations. It is therefore, that a hope in paradise has been given by the great ones. In the Bible, it is said in the Lord's prayer, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven,' which means that there is a difficulty even for the will of God to be done on earth, because of limitations. Therefore there is a difficulty for the fulfillment of every person's wish, even though in the wish of every person there is the wish of God. Though there is a difficulty in the physical world, because this is the world of limitations, yet the desire knows no limitations. But desire becomes beaten up, enfeebled, worn out, by continually facing the limitations of this physical plane. If hope sustains and faith cherishes it, there is no desire, either smaller or greater, which will not be fulfilled one day, if not on earth, in heaven. It is that fulfillment of desire which may be called paradise.

'Heaven is the vision of fulfilled desire, and hell the shadow of a soul on fire.' Someone went to Ali and asked him, 'you tell us about the hereafter and the granting of desire there. What if it be not true? Then all our efforts on this earth would be wasted.' 'Nothing will be wasted,' said Ali. 'If it were not fulfilled, then you and I would have the same experience. But if it be true that there is a paradise, then you will be the loser and I shall gain, for I have prepared for it and you have scoffed at the idea.'

But those who wait for a paradise in the hereafter, or for all things to come true in the hereafter, may look at it differently: that the power of desire is so great that one must not allow it to wait for the hereafter. If there is something that can be accomplished today, we need not wait for it to be accomplished tomorrow. For life is an opportunity, and desire has the greatest power, and perfection is the promise of the soul. We seek perfection, because

perfection is the ultimate aim and the goal of creation. The source of all things is perfect. Our source is perfect, our goal is perfect. And therefore every atom of the universe is working towards perfection, and sooner or later it must arrive at perfection consciously. If it were not so, you would not have read in the Bible, 'Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.'

Section IV - The Purpose of Life

Chapter XI

A person who is conscientious in his duty, who attaches great importance to his ideal, is apt to say to the person who is engaged in money making, '*You* are striving for earth's treasures, *I* am performing what I consider my duty.' The person who is making his way to heaven, who is holding paradise in his expectations, is inclined to say to the pleasure seeker, '*You* are absorbed in life's momentary pleasures, *I* am working for the life to come.' But the person who is busy money making can also say to the one who is conscientious of duty and the one possessing the high ideal, 'If you had to go through the experience which I have to, you would see in this too something worthwhile.' And the seeker after paradise may also be answered by the pleasure seeking soul, as Omar Khayyam said:

Oh 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'nty thousand years!

This shows that all these seekers after different things, seekers after wealth, seekers after ideal, seekers after pleasure, and seekers after paradise, must have their own ways. They will at the same time have their own reasons. One may contradict another, although they are all making their way to the goal. Sooner or later, with more or less difficulty, they must arrive at the purpose of life.

One may ask, 'Which of these four ways is the best way of arriving at the purpose of life?' That way is best which suits you best. The way of one person is not for another person, although man is always inclined to accuse another person of doing wrong, believing that he himself is doing right. In reality, the purpose is beyond all these four things. Neither in paradise nor in the ideal, neither in pleasures nor in the wealth of this earth is that purpose accomplished. That purpose is accomplished when a person has risen above all these things. It is that person then, who will tolerate all, who will understand all, who will assimilate all things, who will not feel disturbed by things which are not in accordance with his own nature or the way which is not his way. He will not look at them with contempt, but he will see that in the depth of every being there is a divine spark which is trying to raise its flame toward the purpose.

When a person has arrived at this stage, he has risen above the limitations of the world. Then he has become entitled to experience the joy of coming near to the real purpose of life. It is then that in everything that he says or does, he will be accomplishing that purpose. Whether outwardly, to the world, it would seem the right thing or the wrong thing, he is accomplishing his purpose just the same. For instance, I have seen holy souls taking part in a religious procession which was made perhaps by the ordinary people. Thousands of people making a kind of fete-day, playing music and dancing before the procession, singing and enjoying themselves. And among them, most highly developed souls, who might be called saints, doing the same thing, all following the procession. One might wonder if they needed it. Is it good for their evolution, or by this do they gain any satisfaction? No. And yet it does not hinder their progress. They are what they are. They know what they know. A grown up

person by playing with the children does not become a child. He only adapts himself for the time being to the party or children.

Did not Solomon sit on a throne and wear a crown? Did it make him less wise, or did it rob him of spirituality? No, for he was above it. For him the throne or crown was nothing but acting in a play for the time being. It was a pastime. We read that Krishna took part in the battle described in the Mahabharata. A self-righteous man would look upon it as a cruel thing and would be ready to condemn Krishna for this. But behind that outward appearance, what was there? There was the highest realization of love, of wisdom, of justice, of goodness. The soul had reached its culmination. An ordinary person, even today, will judge it. He would ask how it could be a great Master who led the army of Arjuna.

We come to understand by this that the further we go the more tolerant we become. Outward things matter little. It is the inward realization which counts. However sacred duty may be, however high may be the hope of paradise, however great the happiness one may experience in the pleasures of the earth, however much satisfaction one may find in earthly treasures, the purpose of life is in rising above all these things. It is then that the soul will have no discord, no disagreement with others. It is then that the natural attitude of the soul will become tolerant and forgiving. The purpose of life is fulfilled in rising to the greatest heights and in diving to the deepest depths of life: in widening one's horizon, in penetrating life in all its spheres, in losing oneself, and in finding oneself in the end. In the accomplishment of the purpose of life the purpose of creation is fulfilled. Therefore, in this fulfillment it is not that man attained, but that God Himself has fulfilled His purpose.

Section IV - The Purpose of Life

Chapter XII

If a Sufi is asked what was the purpose of this creation, he will say that the Knower, the only knower, wanted to know Himself, and there was only one condition of knowing Himself, and that was to make Himself intelligible to His own Being. For Intelligence itself is a Being, but Intelligence is not known to itself. Intelligence becomes known to itself when there is something intelligible. Therefore, the Knower had to manifest Himself, thus becoming an object to be known. And by this knowledge the Knower arrives at perfection. It does not mean that the Knower lacked perfection, for all perfection belonged to the Knower; only He became conscious of His perfection. Therefore it is in the consciousness of perfection that lies the purpose of this whole manifestation.

The Sufis say, 'God is Love.' That is true, but the Love was not sufficient. The Love had to make an object to love in order to see its own nature, to experience its own character, to fathom its own mystery, to find its own joy. For instance, the seed has in it the leaf and the flower and the fruit. But the fulfillment of the purpose of that seed is that it is put in the ground, that it is watered, that a seedling springs up and is reared by the sun; it brings forth its flowers and fruits. This is the fulfillment of that seed which already contained in itself the fruit and the flower. A person who does not see the reason of all this is in the seed state. His mind is in the state of a seed which has not yet germinated, which has not yet produced its seedling, which has not yet experienced the springing of the plant.

No sooner does the soul begin to unfold and experience in life the purpose which is hidden within itself, than it begins to feel the joy of it. It begins to value the privilege of living. It begins to appreciate everything. It begins to marvel at everything. For in the every experience, good or bad, it finds a certain joy, and that joy is in the fulfillment of life's purpose. That joy is not only experienced in pleasure, but even in pain, not only in success, but also in failures, not only in the cheerfulness of the heart, but even in the breaking of the heart there is a certain joy hidden. For there is no experience that is worthless; and especially for that soul who is beginning to realize this purpose, there is no moment wasted in life. For under all circumstances and in all experiences that soul is experiencing the purpose of life.

This may be understood by a little example. A jinn wanted to amuse himself, but when about to do so, he brought upon himself a problem. For the jinn was powerful, and he said to himself, 'Be thou a rock;' and the jinn turned into a rock. But by becoming a rock, he began to feel solitary, left in the wilderness; he felt the loss of action, loss of movement, lack of freedom and lack of experience. This was a terrible captivity for the jinn. For many years, this jinn had to have patience, to change into something else. It did not mean that through the rock he did not realize life. For even the rock is living, even the rock is changing, and yet a rock is a rock. A rock is not a jinn. It was through the patience of thousands of years that the rock began to wear out and crumble into earth. And when, out of that earth, the jinn came out as a plant, he was delighted that he had grown out as a tree. The jinn was so pleased to find that out of a rock he could become a plant, that he could enjoy the air more fully, that he could swing in the wind. He smiled at the sun and bathed happily in the rain. He was pleased to bring forth fruits, to bring forth flowers.

But at the same time his innate desire was not satisfied. It kept him hoping some day to break through this captivity of being rooted in a particular place and of this limitation of movement. For a long, long time the jinn was waiting to come out of this limitation. This was better, yet it was not the experience the jinn desired. But at last the fruit became decayed and part of that fruit turned into a little worm. The jinn was even more delighted to feel that he could move about. Now he was no longer rooted to one place and unable to move. As this worm breathed and was in the sun, it grew wings and began to fly. The jinn was still more delighted to see that he could do this. From one experience to another he flew through the air and experienced the life of a bird, now sitting upon the trees, now walking on the earth. And as he enjoyed life on the earth more and more, he became a heavy bird. He could not fly, he walked. And this heaviness made him coarse, and he turned into an animal. He was most happy, for then he could oppose all the other animals that wanted to kill birds, because he was no longer a bird.

Through a process of gradual change, the jinn arrived at becoming man. And when a man, the jinn looked around and thought, 'This is something that I was destined to be. Because, how, as a jinn, could I see all these different bodies that I have taken? In order to become more free, in order to become perceptive, sensitive, in order to know things, in order to enjoy things more fully, there could not have been any vehicle more fitting than this.' And yet, he thought, 'Even this is not a fitting vehicle, because when I want to fly, I have no wings, and I feel like flying also. I walk on the earth, but I have not the strength of the lion. And now, I feel that I belong to heaven, and where it is I don't know.' This made the jinn search for what was missing, until in the end, he realized, 'I was a jinn, just the same, in the rock, in the plant, in the bird, in the animal. But, I was captive and my eyes were veiled from my own being. It is by becoming man that I am now beginning to see that I was a jinn. And yet I find in this life of man also a great limitation, for I have not that freedom of expression, that freedom of movement, that life which is dependable, that knowledge which is reality.' And then this thought itself took him to his real domain, which was the jinn life. And there he arrived with the air of a conqueror, with the grandeur of the sovereign, with the splendor of a king, with the honor of an emperor, and realizing, 'After all, I have enjoyed myself, I have experienced though I have suffered, and I have known Being, and I have become what I am.'

The Knower manifested as man in order that He might become known to Himself. And now, what may man do, in order to help the Knower to fulfill this purpose? Seek continually an answer to every question that arises in his heart. Of course, there are different types of minds. There is one mind that will puzzle and puzzle over a question, and trouble himself for something which is nothing, and will go out by the same door which he has come in. That person will trouble himself and will wreck his own spirit, and will never find satisfaction. There is no question which has not its answer somewhere. The answer is nothing but an echo of the question, a full echo. And therefore one must rise above this confused state of mind which prevents one from getting the answer from within or from without to every question that arises in one's heart. In order to become spiritual, one need not perform miracles. The moment one's heart is able to answer every question that rises in one's heart, one is already on the path. Besides, the thing that must be first known, one puts off to the last, and that which must be known at the last moment, one wants to know first. It is this which causes confusion in the lives of many souls.

The words of Christ support this argument: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added unto you.' This is the very thing one does not want to seek. One wishes to find anything else but this. And where is it to be found? Not in the knowledge of another person. In the knowing of the self. If a person goes through his whole life most cleverly

judging others, he may go on, but he will find himself to be more foolish at every step. At the end, he reaches the fullness of stupidity. But the one who tries, tests, studies and observes himself, his own attitude in life, his own outlook on life, his thought, speech, and action, who weighs and measures and teaches himself self discipline, it is that person who is able to understand another better. How rarely one sees a soul who concerns himself with himself through life, in order to know! Mostly, every soul seems to be busily occupied with the lives of others. And what do they know in the end? Nothing. If there is a kingdom of God to be found anywhere, it is within oneself.

And it is, therefore, in the knowledge of self that there lies the fulfillment of life. The knowledge of self means the knowledge of one's body, the knowledge of one's mind, the knowledge of one's spirit; the knowledge of the spirit's relation to the body and the relation of the body to the spirit; the knowledge of one's wants and needs, the knowledge of one's virtues and faults; knowing what we desire and how to attain it, what to pursue and what to renounce. And when one dives deep into this, one finds before one a world of knowledge which never ends. And it is that knowledge which gives one insight into human nature and brings one to the knowledge of the whole of creation. And in the end one attains to the knowledge of the divine Being.

Section IV - The Purpose of Life

Chapter XIII

The purpose of life, in short, is that the only Being makes His oneness intelligible to Himself. He goes through different planes of evolution, or planes through which he arrives at different changes, in order to make clear to Himself, His oneness. And as long as this purpose is not accomplished, the one and only Being has not reached His ultimate satisfaction, in which lies His divine perfection. One may ask, 'Is man the only organ through which God realizes His oneness?' God realizes His oneness through His own nature. Since God is one, He realizes His oneness through all things. Through man He realizes His oneness in its fullness. For instance, in the tree there are many leaves. Although each leaf is different from the other leaf, yet the difference is not great. Then, coming to worms and germs and birds and animals, they are different one from another, and yet the difference is not so distinct as in man. And when one thinks of the great variety of the numberless human forms, and it seems that there is not one form exactly like another, this by itself, gives us living proof of the oneness of God. In order to show this, Asaf Nizam made a very beautiful verse:

'You look at me with contempt.

Yes, granted; I am contemptible.

But will you show me such another contemptible creature?'

Which means: even the worst person is incomparable; there is none like him. It is a great phenomenon, the proof of oneness, the proof of unity, that in the creation of God, there is no competition, no one competes with the Creator. In other words, it would be unworthy if the only Being felt, 'There is another like Me, even in the world of variety.' He retains His pride even in the world of variety: 'No one is like Me.' Even in the worst guise He stands alone without comparison. One may ask, 'Before man appeared on earth, did God realize His oneness?' But who can say how many times man appeared on the earth and disappeared from the earth? What we know is only one history of the planet. But how many planets exist? In how many millions of years have how many creations been created and how many withdrawn? All one can say is this: one cannot speak of God's past, present and future. One can only give an idea, which is the central idea of all aspects of truth; that is the only Being who existed, who exists and who will exist; and all that we see are His phenomena.

There is a story that can explain the mystery of life's purpose. A fairy had a great desire to amuse herself, and she descended on the earth. And there, children had made a little doll's-house. She wanted to enter this doll's-house, but it was difficult for her to enter into the space where only a doll can go. 'Very well,' she said, 'I am going to try a different way. I will send one finger by this way, and another finger by another way, and each part by different ways.' And she separated into different bits, and each bit of herself went through the different parts of the doll's-house. And when one part met the other part, they rubbed against one another and that was very unpleasant. And there was a fight among different parts: 'Why are you coming my way? This was my way; why do you come my way?' Each part of the fairy's being interested itself in something, in some part of that doll's-house. When that moment of interest passed, a certain part of her being wanted to go out of the doll's-house. But then there were other parts of the being, which were not willing to let it go. They were holding it: 'You

stay here; you cannot go out.' Some parts of her being wanted to push out another part, but there was no way of putting it out. So, it was a kind of chaos all through, one part not knowing that the other part belonged to the same fairy, and yet one part being attracted unconsciously to another part because they were all parts of the same body. In the end the heart of the fairy moved about also. This heart soothed every other part, saying, 'You have come from me. I wish to console you, I wish to serve you. If you are troubled, I wish to take away your trouble. If you are in need of service, I wish to render it to you. If you lack anything, I wish to bring it for you. I know how much you are troubled in the doll's-house.' But some said, 'We are not troubled at all. We are enjoying ourselves. If we are troubled, it is by the wish to remain here. Those who are troubled are others, not we.' The heart said, 'Well, I shall look at you, and I shall enjoy myself too. I shall sympathize with those who are troubled, I shall help those who are enjoying themselves.' This was the one part of the fairy's being which was conscious of its atoms scattered all around. But the atoms were hardly conscious of it, although, since they belonged to the same body, they were attracted to the heart, knowingly, or unknowingly, consciously or unconsciously. Such was the power of the heart. It was just like the power of the sun that turns the responsive flower into a sunflower. And so the power of the heart of the fairy turned every part of its being that responded, into a heart. And as the heart was light and life itself, the doll's-house could no longer hold the heart. The heart was experiencing the joy of the doll's-house, but was at the same time able to fly away. The heart was delighted to find all its atoms belonging to its body, and it worked through all and through every part of its organs. So, in time, it turned every part of its organs into a heart also, by which this phenomenon was fulfilled.

God is love. If God is love, love is most sacred. To utter this word without meaning, is a vain repetition. The lips of a person to whom it means something, are closed. He can say little. For love is a revelation in itself. No study is necessary, no meditation is needed, and no piety is required. If love is pure, if the spark of love has begun to glow, then there is no need to go somewhere to gain spirituality. Then spirituality is within. One must keep blowing the spark till it turns into a perpetual fire. The fire worshippers of old did not worship a fire which went out; they worshipped a perpetual fire. Where is that perpetual fire to be found? In one's own heart. The spark that one finds glowing for a moment and that then becomes dim, does not belong to heaven, for in heaven all things are lasting; it must belong to some other place. Love has become a word from the dictionary, a word which is used a thousand times a day, which means nothing. To the one who knows what it means, love means patience, love means endurance, love means tolerance, love means sacrifice, love means service. All things such as gentleness, humility, modesty, graciousness, kindness, all are the different manifestations of love. It is the same to say, 'God is all and all is God,' as to say, 'Love is all and all is love.' And it is to find it, to feel it, to experience its warmth, and to see in the world, the light of love, and to keep its glow, and to hold love's flame high, as the sacred torch, to guide one in life's journey. It is in this that the purpose of life is fulfilled. According to the common standard of life, a man with common sense is counted to be a right and a fit person. But, by a mystical standard, that person alone can begin to be right, who is beginning to feel sympathy with his fellow man. For by the study of philosophy and mysticism, by the practices of concentration and meditation, to what do we attain? To a capability that enables us to serve our fellow men better.

Truth is simple. But for the very reason that it is simple, people will not take it; because our life on earth is such that for everything we value, we have to pay a great price and one wonders, if truth is the most precious of all things, then how can truth be attained simply? It is this illusion that makes everyone deny simple truth and seek for complexity. Tell people

about something that makes their heads whirl round and round and round. Even if they do not understand it, they are most pleased to think, 'It is something substantial. It is something solid. For, it is an idea we cannot understand, it must be something lofty.' But something which every soul knows, proving what is divine in every soul, and which it cannot help but know, that appears to be too cheap, for the soul already knows it. There are two things: knowing and being. It is easy to *know* truth, but most difficult to *be* truth. It is not in *knowing* truth that life's purpose is accomplished; life's purpose is accomplished in *being* truth.