

Living in Spirit

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**Dedicated to the
Being of Sri Sathya Sai
TAT Embodied**

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Preface

‘The religions of the world are not contradictory or antagonistic. They are but various phases of one eternal religion. That one eternal religion is applied to different planes of existence and is applied to the opinions of various minds and various races. There never was my religion or yours, my national religion or your national religion; there never existed many religions, there is only the One Infinite religion that existed all through eternity and will ever exist. And this religion is expressing itself in various countries in various ways....’ in the words of Swami Vivekananda.

This eternal religion is *Sanatana-dharma*, the Philosophy of Eternity and the Religion of Humanity. It is as old as God Himself; it is not confined to any time and place; and it is now everywhere. The word ‘religion’, in its original meaning, is something that binds, and it is literally true in respect of *Sanatana-dharma*.

Reduced to its elements, the Philosophy of Eternity and the Religion of Humanity consists of three propositions. First is that man’s real nature is divine. Second is that the aim of human life is to realize this divine nature. Third is that all religions, as they are differently called, are essentially in agreement with the first two elements.

The spiritual faith of humanity is that religious truth is not absolute, but relative, continuous and progressive. The founders and spiritual promoters of all religions, though different in the non-essential aspects of their teachings, abide in the principle of the organic unity of mankind as representing the consummation of the whole process of human evolution. All religious faiths recognize the unity of God, uphold the principle of an unfettered

search after truth, and condemn all forms of superstition and prejudice.

All religious traditions agree that bliss is an authentic sign of spiritual life. Bliss is an elusive thing; it cannot be sought after, and attained in itself. It is what results from a way of life that is centered on God, and sensitive to the whole of creation.

Bliss is, essentially, a matter of spirit. Spiritual bliss arises out of being right with God and our fellow human beings. Human nature is such that man cannot be happy in a state of self-centeredness. Man's felicity is to blossom in the social and spiritual space.

To live a spiritual life is to live in all its fullness. Fullness points to integration of the physical, the mental and the spiritual dimensions of human life. Spirituality involves the dynamic integration of all the three dimensions in living.

This book *Living in Spirit* makes an attempt to integrate the philosophical and practical dimensions as to the way of living in spirit.

1. Human Nature

Man is a three-in-one being, comprising body, mind and soul. The mind and the soul may also be called the psyche and the spirit. Human nature is thus tripartite consisting of spirit, mind and body. We live on the borderline between two worlds, the temporal and the divine, the physical – vital – human, and the divine. Though nothing in himself, man is, 'a no-thing surrounded by God, indigent of God, capable of God and filled with God, if he so desires'.

Mind affects its body in four ways. First, it affects subconsciously through subtle physiological intelligence; second, consciously, by deliberate acts of will; third, subconsciously, by the reaction upon the physical organism of emotional states having nothing to do with the organs or the processes reacted upon; and fourth, either consciously or subconsciously, in certain 'supernormal' manifestations.

Outside the body, matter can be influenced by mind in diverse ways. First, it is by means of the body, and second, by a 'supernormal' process described as the PK effect. Similarly, mind can establish relations with other minds either indirectly by willing its body to undertake symbolic activities, such as speech or writing; or 'super-normally', by the direct approach of mind-reading, telepathy, extra sensory perception, etc.

In some fields, the physiological intelligence works on its own initiative as when it directs the never-ceasing processes of breathing or assimilation. In others, it acts at the behest of the conscious mind. An example of the activity of the physiological intelligence is mimicry; so does a parrot make the imitation.

As for the second, working on its own level, the conscious mind finds itself completely baffled by any problem of serious complexity.

An example of the third way in which our minds affect matter is 'nervous indigestion'. In some persons, symptoms of ailment arise when the conscious mind is troubled by such negative emotions as fear, envy, anger or hatred. These emotions are directed towards events or persons in the outer environment.

But in some way or other, they adversely affect the physiological intelligence resulting in 'nervous indigestion'. Several physical ailments such as tuberculosis, gastric ulcer, heart disease, etc appear to be closely correlated with certain undesirable states of the conscious mind. On the other hand, every physician knows that a calm and cheerful patient is much more likely to recover from such ailments than one who is agitated and depressed.

As for the fourth, occurrences such as faith healing or levitation are known examples. Precisely how faith cures ailments, or levitation works against the laws of gravity we do not know. But they do happen.

In the same way, we are unable to form any idea of the manner of working of the PK effect demonstrated by Professor Rhine. Nevertheless, the fact that the fall of dice can be influenced by the mental states of certain individuals has been demonstrated beyond the possibility of doubt. If the PK effect can be demonstrated, the credibility of the direct influence of mind upon matter within and outside the body is further enhanced. The same is true of extra-sensory perception. The good or bad states of the mind affect the bodies of the human beings.

The body is always in time, and the spirit is always timeless. But the psyche (personal consciousness) is an

amphibious creature compelled by the laws of man's being to associate itself to some extent with its body, but capable, if it so desires, of experiencing and being identified with its spirit and, through its spirit, with the divine Ground. The spirit remains always what it eternally is. But man is so constituted that his psyche cannot always remain identified with the spirit. Thus the psyche passes from time to eternity when it is identified with the spirit, and passes again from eternity to time, either voluntarily or by involuntary necessity, when it chooses or is compelled to identify itself with the body.

Contemporary philosophers make an attempt to describe human nature in terms of a dichotomy of interacting psyche and physique. Selfness or personality is a product of these two elements. The third element, that is, the spirit or the soul, the true element that makes man a human *being* is akin to, or even identical with, the divine Spirit or the Ground of All That Exists.

Human will is free. We are at liberty to identify our being either exclusively with our selfness and its interests, or exclusively with the divine within us and without, or with self at one moment or in one context, and with spiritual not-self at other moments and in other contexts. The mind-body combine is capable of an enormous variety of experiences. It is open to us to identify ourselves with an almost infinite number of possible objects such as the pleasures of gluttony, intemperance, sensuality, money, power, fame, physical goods, hobbies, collections, professions, pains and illnesses, hopes, fears, schemes for the future, etc. We are free to identify ourselves with more than one of these things simultaneously or in succession. It is for this reason that human personality is made very complex with an astonishingly improbable combination of traits.

A person born with one kind of psychophysical constitution identifies himself with one set of interests and passions, while a

person with another kind of temperament will make a very different type of identification. But these temptations need not have been succumbed to. People can and do resist them. They can and do refuse to identify themselves with what would appear natural to them. This is generally possible, paradoxically, in times of crisis than it is when life is taking its normal course. When the going is easy, there is nothing to make us forget our petty selfness.

In a crisis, one is prone to give up selfness and work for common good. That is why a spiritually evolved individual considers that every moment of human life is a moment of crisis. For, at every moment, we are called upon to make an all-important decision as to choose between the way that leads to death and spiritual darkness, or the way that leads to light and life. The choice is between temporal interests and the eternal ones; the choice is between the personal will and the will of God.

In order to fit himself to deal with the emergencies or crises of his way of life, the saintly person undertakes appropriate training of mind and body to subordinate them to the voice of the soul, often called inner voice. Here the aim is primarily to bring him to a state in which he is able to be aware continuously of the divine Ground of his own and all other beings. As a means to this end, the aim is secondly to meet even the most trivial circumstances of daily living without malice, greed, self-assertion or voluntary ignorance, but consistently with love and understanding.

The aim of spiritual training is to make people become selfless in every circumstance of life. For the love of God, the objectives are not limited, and every moment is a moment of crisis. Therefore, spiritual training is more difficult and searching than military training. This possibly explains why there are many good soldiers, but very few saints.

Man's final end, the purpose of his existence, is to love, know and be united with the immanent and transcendent Godhead, the being of the Eternal Ground. And only 'dying to' selfness and living to spirit can achieve this identification of self with spiritual not-self.

The biographies of the saints pursuing man's final end testify to the fact that spiritual training leads to a transcendence of personality not only in times of crises, but in all circumstances and in relation to all creatures. A saint 'loves his enemies'; indeed, he does not recognize the existence of enemies. He treats all sentient beings with the same compassion and disinterested goodwill. The saints are never double-minded or half-hearted. However great their intellectual gifts are, they are profoundly simple. In all circumstances, they behave selflessly, patiently and with indefatigable charity. The biography of a saint is valuable and relevant only in so far as it throws light upon the means by which, in the circumstances of a particular human life, the 'I' was purged away - selfness was transcended - so as to make room for the divine 'not - I'.

A general definition of the perfect human being might describe him as 'a man who has fully realized his essential oneness with the Divine Being in whose likeness he is made'.

2. God and Godhead

What is God, communion with whom is the life's ideal? In the words of St. Bernard, 'God is all everywhere equally, in His simple substance. Nevertheless, in efficacy, He is in rational creatures in another way than in irrational, and in good rational creatures in another way than in the bad. He is in irrational creatures in such a way as not to be comprehended by them; by all rational ones, however, He can be comprehended through knowledge; but only by the good is He to be comprehended also through love'.

In the words of Ruysbroeck, 'the image of God is found essentially and personally in all mankind. Each possesses it whole, entire and undivided, and all together not more than one alone. In this way we are all one, intimately united in our eternal image, which is the image of God and the source in us of all our life. Our created essence and our life are attached to it without mediation as to their eternal cause.'

God does not signify a category of things, nor does It have any quality, nor any activity, nor any relationship. As such, It cannot be defined by any word or idea. It is, therefore, the One. It Is; He Is.

'God is in the hog-trough no less than in the conventionally sacred image'. 'Lift the stone, and you will find Me.' 'Cleave the wood, and I am there'. 'That art thou!' Those that have personally and immediately realized the truth of these sayings perceive God everywhere.

It is true that all perceivers cannot have such perceptions, as knowledge is a function of being. But the thing known is independent of the mode and nature of the knower.

God is the immanent - transcendent One, the essence and principle of all existence. God's nature is divine. It is other than and incommensurable with the nature of the creatures in whom God is immanent. That is why we can attain to the unitive knowledge of God only when we become in some measure God-like.

God created the world in Him through *Maya*. The Vedic meaning of *Maya* is not illusion. It is wisdom, knowledge, capacity and wide extension in consciousness - *prajna prasrta purani*. Omnipotent Wisdom creates the world. Omniscient Power manifests or conceals it in Itself, or for Its own delight.

The world is a movement (vibration) of God in His own being. We are the centers and knots of divine consciousness which sum up and support the processes of His movement. The world is His play for His own self-conscious delight. He alone exists, is infinite, free and perfect. We are the self-multiplications of that conscious delight, thrown out into being to be His playmates. The world is a formula, a rhythm, a symbol-system expressing God to Himself in His own consciousness; it exists only in His consciousness and self-expression.

God is the Absolute and Supreme Personality playing in the universe and as the universe. In the universe, He appears to be its soul and lord. As the universe, He appears to be the motion or process of the Will of the Lord and to become all the subjective and objective results of the motion. He is both the Existent and the state of existence. We call the state of existence the Impersonal Brahman, the Existent the Personal Brahman. There is no difference between them except the play of our consciousness. God descending into the world in various forms has consummated on this earth the mental and bodily form, which we call humanity

The divine Ground of all existence is a spiritual Absolute, ineffable in terms of discursive thought, but susceptible of being directly experienced and realized by the human being. This Absolute is the God-without-form. The ultimate end of man, the ultimate reason for human existence, is unitive knowledge of the divine Ground.

‘We, like God, are in our inward being *TAT*, which is expressed, but in our outward being, terms of that formula, notes of that rhythm, and symbols of that system. It will be our joy and our self-fulfillment if we lead forward God’s movement, play out His play, work out His formula, execute His harmony and express Him through ourselves in His system.’

This knowledge can come only to those who abandon self completely so as to make room, as it were, for God. In any generation, it may be that very few will achieve the final end of human existence. By its very nature, the opportunity is available to all sentient beings to come to unitive knowledge in one way or the other, as long as they seek to know who they are in relation to themselves, the universe and God.

The Absolute Ground of all existence has a personal aspect. The activity of the Brahman - the Absolute is *Isvara*. This personal God is manifested in Hinduism and Christianity as the Trinity of Gods and the Trinity of Persons respectively of whom it is possible to predicate such human attributes as goodness, wisdom, mercy, love, etc of the highest order.

The attribute-less Godhead is the Ground of all the qualities possessed by the personal God. The Godhead *is*; and His *is-ness* contains goodness, love, wisdom and all the rest in their essence and principle. The Godhead is never the mere Absolute of academic metaphysics, but something more purely perfect, more to be adored than even the personal God or His human Incarnation. The Godhead is, thus, a Being towards whom

it is possible to feel the most intense devotion and in relation to whom it is necessary to practise a discipline more arduous and unflinching than any imposed by a religion. The distinction between Godhead and God is as between rest and action. Godhead, the Being of God, is an eternal rest of God and of all created things.

‘Every individual being, from the subatomic particle up to the most highly organized of living bodies and the most exalted of finite minds, may be thought of as a point where a ray of the primordial Godhead meets one of the differentiated, creaturely emanations of the same Godhead’s creative energy’, in the words of Aldous Huxley.

The creature, as creature, may be very far from God in that it does not know the nature of the divine Ground of its being. But the creature in its eternal essence – as the meeting place of creatureliness and primordial Godhead – is one of the infinite number of points where divine Reality is wholly and eternally present. For this reason, rational beings can come to the unitive knowledge of the divine Ground, while non-rational and inanimate beings may reveal to rational beings the fullness of God’s presence in their material forms.

In the image or the sacramental object, the divine Ground is wholly present. Faith and devotion prepare the worshipper’s mind for perceiving the ray of Godhead at its point of intersection with the fragment of the matter before him. Incidentally, by being worshipped, such symbols become the centers of field of force. The longings and prayers of generations of worshippers including highly evolved souls create, as it were, an enduring vortex in the psychic medium, so that the image lives with a projected objectivity.

The religious experience of image worshippers may be perfectly genuine and objective. But it need not always necessarily be an experience of God or the Godhead. It is, in most cases, an experience of the field of force generated by the minds of generations of worshippers and projected on to the sacramental object where it sticks in a condition of what is called second-hand objectivity that can be perceived by minds suitably attuned to it.

To realize God exclusively within oneself is easier than realizing Him, not only there, but also in the outer world of minds and things and living creatures. The former is easier because the heights within reveal themselves to those who are ready to exclude from their purview all that lies without. But the process of inclusion of all that lies without enables one to scale the fullness as well as the heights of spiritual life.

Where there is exclusive concentration on the heights within, temptations and distractions are avoided and there is a general denial and suppression. But when the effort is to realize the divine Ground in the world outside as well as the soul within, temptations and distractions must not be avoided, but must be used as opportunities for advance. There must be no suppression of outward-turning activities, but their transformation into sacramental ones. Mortification becomes more searching and subtle, and there is need of unending awareness as to the levels of thought, feeling and conduct, which is the crux of spiritual life.

The world inhabited by ordinary people is mainly dull, sometimes briefly and intensely pleasurable, occasionally or often disagreeable and even agonizing. For those who make themselves fit to see God within the world as well as within their own souls, it wears a different aspect. Conformity to the will of God and docile submission to the leadings of the Spirit are the same as conformity to the Perfect Way. This is to refuse to have

preferences and cherish opinions, keeping the eyes open so that dreams may cease and Truth reveals itself.

The doctrine that God is in the world has an important practical corollary. It refers to the sacredness of Nature, and the sinfulness and folly of man's overweening efforts to be her master rather than her docile collaborator. Sub-human lives and insentient matter are to be treated with respect and understanding, not brutally oppressed to serve our human ends.

God may be worshipped and contemplated in any of His aspects. But to persist in worshipping only one aspect to the exclusion of all the others is to run into grave spiritual peril. If we approach God with the preconceived idea that He is personal, transcendental and all-powerful ruler of the universe, we get entangled in a religion of rites and sacrifices. Ritualistic religion, no doubt, improves character. But it does not alter character, nor does it modify consciousness.

When God is thought of as immanent as well as transcendent, supra personal as well as personal as the Perennial Philosophy affirms Him to be, is there complete transformation of consciousness including that of character. This transformation is in the nature of enlightenment, deliverance or salvation, by whatever name it is called. It is better that the religious practices are adapted to this conception.

The world is what, in our eyes, it is, because of the consciously or unconsciously and physiologically remembered habits formed by our ancestors or by ourselves, either in our present life or in previous existences. These remembered habits cause us to believe that multiplicity is the sole reality. The idea of 'I', 'me' and 'mine' represents the ultimate truth from this angle.

The unitive Godhead, on the other hand, consists in seeing into the abode of Reality as it is and not as it seems to us. Obviously, this cannot be achieved so long as there is an 'us', to which reality can only be relative. This is the reason why the masters of spirituality stress for mortification, for dying to self. This mortification is not only of the desires, the feelings and the will, but also of the reasoning powers, of consciousness itself and also of our personal memory and inherited habit energies that make our consciousness.

Omnipresent Reality, according to Sri Aurobindo, includes Matter at one end and Spirit at the opposite end. Matter is involved in Spirit. Conversely Spirit is evolved from Matter. The stages in the evolution are Matter, Life, Psyche, Mind, Supermind, Bliss, Consciousness-Force and Existence. The Supreme Reality is *Sachchidananda* – Pure Existence. It is *blissful* Existence. And yet it is this *Sachchidananda* that, in the process of its 'involution' or 'descent', causes the multiplicity, the disharmony, frustration and suffering that we notice in the phenomenal world.

Three things prevent man from knowing God. The first is time, the second is corporeality and the third is multiplicity. These things must go out that God may come in. As long as God is thought of as being wholly in time, there is a tendency to regard Him as a numinous Being rather than a moral Being. The tendency is to treat Him as mere unmitigated Power rather than the Being of power, wisdom and love. This leads to propitiating Him by sacrifices for temporal power rather than worshipping Him as Spirit in spirit.

The 'Isvara' form of God, which Arjuna witnesses in the Bhagavad-Gita, which Krishna makes him behold, is the terrible form of God of Time. God in time is normally worshipped by material means. The objective is to achieve temporal ends. God in time is manifestly the destroyer as well as the creator. Because

of this nature, it has seemed proper to man to worship God by methods, which are as terrible as the destructions he himself inflicts. This accounts for the offer of sacrifices in the worship of deities for temporal gains.

In all such cases, the divinity addressed is always a god in time or a personification of Nature. The deity is nothing but Time itself, the devourer of its own offspring. In all these cases, the purpose of the rite is to obtain a future benefit or to avoid an evil, which time and nature hold in store forever. History is replete with instances that where religions and philosophies take time too seriously are correlated with political theories that inculcate and justify the use of large-scale violence.

There is incarnation of God in human form that possesses the same qualities of character as the personal God. But the Incarnation exhibits them under the limitations imposed, being in a material body born into the world at a given moment of time. Contemplatives who follow the path of devotion conceive of and, indeed, directly perceive the Incarnation as a constantly renewed fact of experience.

But God exists timelessly as the Godhead, as the Brahman whose essence is Being, Awareness and Bliss. God who is Spirit can only be worshipped in spirit and for His own sake. The ultimate good is to be sought in an *eternal divine now*, which those who sufficiently desire this good can realize as a fact of immediate experience. The peace that passes all understanding is the fruit of liberation into eternity.

To achieve complete deliverance, conversion from sin is not enough. There is to be a conversion of the mind resulting in revulsion in the very depths of consciousness. As a result of this revulsion, the habit energies of accumulated memory are destroyed and, along with them, the sense of being a separate ego. Reality

is then perceived as It is in Itself. In the words of Blake, ‘if the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would be seen as it is, *infinite*.’ In the words of Aldous Huxley, ‘by those who are pure in heart and poor in spirit, *samsara* and *nirvana*, appearance and reality, time and eternity are experienced as one and the same’.

3. Religious Experience

Reflection on morality leads us to see the necessity of a religious point of view. It tells us that morality is not all perfect, and is in such way as implies a higher, that is religion. The word ‘religion’ is a derivative of *re-ligare*, meaning to *bind back* to the origin or the fountainhead. In other words, a true religion is to be a spiritual path to union with the Godhead.

The dictates of religion, in the context of the diversity of religions, are extremely variable. On the mention of religion, people’s first thoughts turn naturally to the religion they themselves profess. This is a source of miscalculation. The dictates of true religion coincide, in all cases, with those of felicity or utility.

Morality issues in religion. Everyone sees some kind of connection between true religion and morality. A man who is religious and does not act morally is an imposter. Religion is not the mere knowing or contemplating of an object, however high. Religion is essentially a doing, which is moral. It implies a realizing, and a realizing of the good self.

Morality is not religion. In morality, the ideal is always a ‘to be’. The reality in the world and us is partial and inadequate. No one will ever be able to say that it will answer to the ideal. ‘Morally considered, both the world and we are all we ought to be, and ought to be just what we are’. We have at best the belief in an ideal, which, in its pure completeness, is never possible of realization. All morality is, in one sense or another, touched by emotion.

Religion is more than morality. In the religious consciousness we find the belief in an object, a not-myself – an object, which is real. It may be vague and indistinct, but still an

object. An ideal that is not real cannot be the object of religion. Because it is unreal, the ideal of personal morality is not enough for religion.

Religion does not consist in doctrines or dogmas. What is important for religion is not what we read, or what dogmas we believe, but what we realize. 'Blessed are pure in heart, for they shall see God' in this life. And that is salvation. External forms are not necessary for salvation. The power of attaining it is within us. We live and move in God. Creeds and sects have their parts to play, but they are only to beginners. They last, but temporarily. Books never make religions; but religions make books. No book has ever created God; but God has inspired all the great books. No book has ever created the soul.

The end of all religions is the realizing of God in the soul. That is the one universal religion. The one universal truth in all religions is thus the realizing of God within oneself. Ideals and methods may differ, but that is the central point.

Religion is the natural expression of man's being. Man can no more get rid of it than he can do away with his very self. In his heart of hearts, there is an inevitable craving for the eternal, the immutable. He can never be contented with the ephemeral. The ephemeral can delude him for the time being, but it cannot suppress or subvert his inherent longing for the Truth. This instinctive desire for the Real sets man on the quest of religion.

Through religion alone, man can come in direct contact with the Reality and feel his kinship and become one with it. It penetrates all the layers of man's being and manifests itself in the whole range of life. He lives the truth. Man's eternal relation with the Divine and his union with It have been the key words of

all religions. In the storm and stress of life, these have been man's only hope, solace and inspiration.

This is why religion has been the strongest cementing force, the highest motive power, the greatest comforter and the supreme illuminator of life. For this reason alone, man has paid the greatest homage to religion in all ages and all countries. Saints and seers have commanded the highest veneration of mankind. Religion has proved to be the greatest cultural force. The best literature, architecture, music and poetry have grown out of religious fervor.

An urge towards perfection is the motive power behind all human aspirations and activities. Man is not contented to grasp the Reality through intellect or aesthetic imagination; he seeks to experience it in his self. This feeling of affinity with the real is the first blossoming of religious consciousness.

Man longs for the eternal and the infinite and, at the same time, feels his littleness, weakness and imperfection. This creates a sense of awe, not of fear. Like attracts like; fear repels and never attracts. The human self is eternally related to the Divine. Divinity is in its nature. The innate purity, eternity, luminosity and blissfulness of the self have been acknowledged directly and indirectly by all great religions of the world. But in no other religion has this fact been given such prominence as in the *Vedanta*.

To believe in the absolute purity of the self and to realize its divinity is the religion that demands acceptance by the world community. Human nature is never against religion; the religious spirit is ingrained in man's very being. What man gets disgusted with is the crystallized form, which, however appealing to the people of one age, fails to attract the men of a different age.

Our age requires a religion, which does not depend on outer sanctities, but holds life and spirit as essentially sacred. It should not be confined in certain rites, objects, ceremonies, doctrines or dogmas, but find adequate expression in thought and conduct. The reorientation of life is the need of the age. It is mankind's outlook on life that the world counts today, and not the particular act or belief however righteous it may be. The external distinction of the secular and the spiritual is fast fading away. The stress is laid on a higher conception of reality, which should shape the judgment of values and transform human relationships, in fact, the whole range of life.

Spiritual life, rightly understood, is not a life of isolation. It does not consist in mere disengagement of the spirit from the physical body. The spirit (soul) should realize its being separate from the physical and the mental being. At the same time, it is to guide and restrain the physical and the mental being according to its needs and ends.

The spiritual consciousness is to be infused into the whole system, and expressed in concrete forms. Belief without conduct has no value. Our thoughts and acts are but expressions of self-consciousness. It is the greatest creative factor of life. We are what we believe ourselves to be. He who thinks that he is pure by nature, that wickedness and vice are alien to him, pure he will be in no time. He, who considers himself weak, will bear that impression in his deeds and thoughts. Humanity progresses along the line of self-consciousness. Evolution of life means the evolution of consciousness. The higher is the self-consciousness, the greater is the life.

The more a man knows himself to be pure and perfect by nature, the more glorified he will be. There is greater manifestation of divinity in a man who realizes that weakness, ignorance and unhappiness are only accretions on his ideal-self.

His thoughts, views, aims and sentiments will be colored by that consciousness. The world appears to him in a new light.

As he feels goodness and greatness within, he perceives the same in others as well. His attitude to the fellow beings and the society at large will be filled with feelings of love, respect and service. He realizes that he is a part of the society, an organic whole, for the welfare of which he is to work.

With the knowledge of the self, man's vision of life will be broadened. He will feel that his self is no other than the totality of the selves of others. It is one Self that exists in all. It is the one Spirit that pervades the universe and shapes it from within.

The religion of today is to constitute faith in the self and its realization. This does not mean that the religious faiths that permeate the world society will be obsolete or redundant. It only means that faith in the self and its realization shall be the common denominator of all religious faiths. This is like harmonizing different faiths at the bottom level. The monism of the Vedanta, which declares the Atman as the Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, is the common denominator of all religious faiths. All faiths, morals and theories merge into the one truth, which the Vedanta propounds.

Religion must have an object. In that object is not an abstract idea in the mind, nor one particular thing or quality. It is not even a collection of such things or qualities. In short, it is nothing finite. It cannot be a thing or person in the world. It cannot exist in the world as a part of it, or as this or that course of events in time. It cannot be the *All* – the sum of things or persons, in the ordinary sense, since, if one is not divine, putting of ones together will beget no divinity.

Its positive character is that it is real. In the religious consciousness we find that it is the ideal self - considered as realized and real, while in morality it is 'to be'. The ideal self here is real and truly is. This is the nature of the religious object, though the manner of apprehending it may differ widely. It may be anything from a vague instinct to the most thoughtful reflection.

In the very essence of the religious consciousness, we find the relation of our will to the real ideal self. 'We find ourselves, as this or that will, against the object as the real ideal will, which is not ourselves, and which stands to us in such a way that, though real, it is to be realized, because it is all and the whole reality'.

The object of religion, which the self appropriates by faith, is the inseparable unity of human and divine. It is the ideal, which, as will, affirms itself in and by will. It is will, which is one with the ideal. It is known in its truth when it is apprehended as an organic human-divine totality, as one body with diverse members, as one self, which realizes, wills and loves itself in many selves.

The divine will of the religious consciousness has no content other than the moral ideal. Religion is practical. It means doing something, which is a duty. All moral duties are also religious; so all religious duties are also moral. In order to be, religion must do. Its practice is the realization of the ideal in one and the world. If the religion is separated from the real world, it has nothing left to do. It simply becomes a form.

The practical content which religion carries out comes from the state, society, art, science, etc. But the whole of this sphere is the sphere of morality. All duties there are moral. When it is so, then it is possible that one religious duty may collide with

another religious duty, just as moral duties may collide with one another. But, religion as such does not collide with morality.

Morality survives within religion, as the process of realization. As mere morality, it vanishes. As an element, it remains and is stimulated. Practical faith is the end in religion. Religion arises in the practical realization of reconciliation. Where there is no such realization, there is no faith, and no religion. In religion, morality is consummated in oneness with God.

Religious beliefs and practices are among the factors determining the behavior of a given society. To some extent, the collective conduct of a nation is a test of the religion prevailing within it. It provides a criterion by which we may legitimately judge the doctrinal validity of that religion and its practical efficiency in helping individuals to advance towards the goal of human existence.

Those who turn to God without turning from themselves are tempted to evil in several characteristic and easily recognizable ways. First, they are tempted to practise magical rites by means of which they hope to compel God to answer their petitions and, in general, to serve their private or collective ends. The ugly practice of sacrifice, incantation, etc is a product of this wish to treat God as a means to indefinite self-aggrandizement. Second, they are tempted to use the name of God to justify what they do in pursuit of fame, power and wealth. They believe themselves to have divine justification for their actions and perpetrate, may be with a good conscience, shameful abominations. Third, there are the temptations that arise when the falsely religious begin to acquire the powers, which are the fruit of their magical practices.

Viewed against this background, *Sanatanadharma*, the Philosophy of Eternity and the Religion of Humanity, provides an impetus to living in spirit. Though it is the basis of all the

religious and spiritual faiths blossomed in the Indian subcontinent in the ancient past, the principles of the Religion of Humanity as enunciated in the West are no different. The document containing some principles of the Religion of Humanity reads thus:

‘As the bounds of human love and duty extend from family to country, from country to all races and peoples, as science develops till it embraces the laws of the world and of life, of Man and Society, Humanity becomes recognized as an organic whole, which has existed through the ages and has continually grown in knowledge and unity. The old religions are seen to be worthy of honour so far as they foreshadowed this unity, as they inspired love and service, the pursuit of social aims, and the advance in righteousness and knowledge. The Religion of Humanity attains these ends more completely and more directly; for it has grown out of the whole past of Man; it is inspired by human love; it is based solely on human science; it has human service as its highest aim. It gives us a criterion of duty and a test of progress. In the presence of our duty to Humanity, all lesser duties find their true place and meaning. We can reconcile family affection and private friendship with public endeavor, devotion to country with love of all mankind.

The Religion of Humanity does not destroy the older religions; it fulfils their highest aims. It does not weaken family ties; it purifies and consecrates them. It does not repudiate the love of country; it honors each nation, however small or primitive, as a necessary element of a greater whole – an element more glorious as in its free development it brings its special gifts to the general service and the common task. It does not disregard physical and material well-being; but it subordinates it to the social and moral point of view, considering human happiness of greater importance than the accumulation of wealth, and the welfare of the great mass of the people than that of any section. This religion is based on the positive philosophy, which includes

in its scope the social organization, the historic filiations of the ages, and the conduct of man in society, and it involves full liberty of speech and teaching for all. Humanity and science, love and knowledge are alike necessary to right action. Inspired by the one, and enlightened by the other, we go forward in the great work of human service’. (Leaflet, p.1.f)

‘Religion is realization; not talk, not doctrine, nor theories, however beautiful they may be. It is being and becoming, not hearing or acknowledging; it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes...

Can religion really accomplish anything? It can. It brings to man eternal life. It has made man what he is, and will make of this human animal a god. What we really want is head and heart combined. The heart is great indeed; it is through the heart that come the great inspirations of life. I would a hundred times rather have a little heart and no brain, than am all brains and no heart. Life is possible, progress is possible for him who has heart, but he who has no heart and only brains dies of dryness’, in the words of Swami Vivekananda.

In the ultimate analysis, religion cannot stand on philosophy or theory alone, though they might be beautiful and logical. Religion must stand on the solid rock of actual living experience. What theory indicates is a static view of life; and what living experience promotes is a dynamic adjustment to living. The actual living experience alone enables one to grow, to sublimate, as it is the law of life. The ultimate role of religion is to enable the body, mind and spirit in one – the human being – to sublimate in spirit. Body is to mind, and mind is to spirit, as childhood is to adolescence and adolescence is to maturity. Childhood is no evil; it just has to be outgrown.

4. Human Living

Nature of Life

What is human life? Among several factors, it is our station in life, which most powerfully influences our idea of life. Our aspirations and ambitions, our past experiences and present circumstances, our successes and failures shape our understanding of our life. If one is blessed with kind, spiritual-minded parents endowed with a deep sense of values governing all their activities, one's basic notion about life will be different from that of one whose childhood is marred by quarrelsome, over-ambitious, materialistic parents. There are so many hues and colors to this portrait of life that is almost impossible to enumerate them in all their dimensions and contours.

Life is, thus, the unfolding and the fulfillment of a being under circumstances tending to press it down. It is bipolar by nature. It is not just a process of what happens to us in the form of various circumstances and events, but it is our response to it that makes life what it is. It is a continuous interaction between the two forces, inner and outer. One pole of life lies in the world outside. The other pole is situated inside man, his mind and his thoughts. Mind, of course, derives its vitality from a much subtler source, the divine centre within. Said in simple terms, life is a handy work of the inner and outer situations of man.

Even at the physical level, this holds true. Our bodies, for example, are not just left at the mercy of various bacteria, viruses and harmful microbes that are abundantly present in the air we breathe, or the food we eat. We are equipped with a highly complex, but effective immune system that resists any unwanted or uninvited invader. When the system fails, only then disease occurs. This is true at all levels of the existence.

We either receive or resist what is presented to us. The net result of this interplay of the inner and the outer is what we ultimately are.

If we are open ourselves to good, noble and healthy forces of life, we are blessed with the positive qualities of head and heart. But if we are open to narrow, unhealthy and unethical influences, we will be subject to degenerate life.

Life can also be visualized from the angle of being and becoming. Being is a state of 'is-ness', of what one really is. Becoming, on the other hand, is a state of change. It is our response to happenings and circumstances. Outward circumstances may change our way of life, but the state of inner being remains unaffected. Life, very often, swings between these two poles.

One is to live life to understand it fully. Life's lessons cannot be understood otherwise. There are three different dimensions of living. The first dimension is identifying the ideal. To live a fulfilling life, one must have a definite destination to one's life's journey. 'Unfortunately, in this life, the vast majority of persons is groping through the dark life without any ideal at all. If a man with an ideal makes a thousand mistakes, the man without an ideal makes fifty thousand. Therefore, it is better to have an ideal,' says Swami Vivekananda.

The true aim of life is to be found in the very nature of our being. Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature, internal and external. It is, therefore, necessary to have the goal to seek what we really are. Our nature itself will make us seek it. 'All search is in vain until we begin to perceive that knowledge is within ourselves, that no one can help us and that we must help ourselves. My ideal, indeed, can be put in a few words, and that is: to preach

unto mankind its divinity and how to make it manifest in every moment of life', in the words of Swamiji. Then the real goal of life is realization and manifestation of inherent divinity.

It is necessary to realize that the goal of life should have three important components to make it worthwhile. They are that the goal should be transcendental, ultimate in nature and self-fulfilling.

When the goal is to be transcendental, it is to be non-material. It is to transcend material needs and amenities. If one's ideal is matter, one shall be matter. It is necessary to realize that one's ideal shall be the spirit. As a logical corollary to the transcendental goal, the goal of life should be ultimate in nature. Life is a series of fights and disillusionments. The secret of life is not enjoyment, but education through experience. The long journey from one goal to another gives rise to the idea of the ultimate goal. Relative knowledge is to lead to absolute knowledge.

People seek fulfillment or freedom from want tirelessly. Still it keeps eluding. The universe itself can never be the limit of our satisfaction at the physical level. That is why the miser gathers more and more money, the robber robs, and the sinner sins. That is also the reason why some seekers are learning philosophy, too.

Having met all material wants, people find it confusing to know as to what their next destination should be. Mere acquisition of knowledge does not bring fulfillment. Knowledge is power. But it is a power for evil as much as for good. It, therefore, follows that, unless men increase in wisdom as in knowledge, increase of knowledge will only lead to increase of sorrow. And wisdom is generated by faithfully following a transcendental, ultimate goal of life.

Self-fulfillment, as a component of supremely acceptable ideal of life, plays a vital role in living a happy life. Only by having, and ultimately realizing, the spiritual ideal, a man gets fulfilled. The Bhagavad-Gita defines a man of fulfillment as one 'whose happiness is within, whose relaxation is within, whose light is within'. As such, identifying a supreme, transcendental and self-fulfilling ideal of life is the first step.

Preparing to live the ideal is the second dimension to the art of living. Most of us accost life with little or no preparation. Unprepared encounter is fraught with dangers and uncertainties. Instead of leaving this precious gift of life at the mercy of vagaries of circumstances, we must prepare ourselves with strength, skill and resourcefulness. Adequate preparation is a prerequisite for a meaningful, vibrant life.

All human life is entrenched in mind. It is our mind, our outlook and responses that make our life ugly or beautiful. We must, therefore, learn to take care of our mind. Taking care of the mind means preparing the mind to live the ideal.

The best way of preparing the mind is to training its various faculties consciously. The training has no set duration. It is a continuous process, a constant vigilance over the ways of the mind. Like breathing, mind training cannot be done by proxy.

The faculties of feeling, thinking and working in mind need to be trained. They are not independent entities, but constitute a composite whole, inter-dependent and connected with each other. Though inter-connected, quite often they do not work in unison. For this reason, there is no harmony in what one feels, thinks and acts. The bottom-line is that there is some kind of non-cooperation among the three faculties. The primary task is to create harmony consciously among these three faculties.

When this task is fulfilled, can one live an inner life of harmony!
If one lives inner life in harmony, one's outer life follows suit.

One must try to combine in one's life immense idealism with immense practicality. One must be prepared to go into deep meditation, and the next moment one must be prepared to do physical labor as one's station in life demands. One must be prepared to explain the intricacies of the scriptures, and the next moment one must be able to get along with one's work.

In the words of Swami Vivekananda, 'the true man is he who is strong as strength itself, and yet possesses a woman's heart. You must feel for the millions of beings around you, and yet you must be strong and inflexible...though it may seem a little paradoxical, you must possess these apparently conflicting virtues.'

In the development of these virtues lies the key to fortify our inner life. Development of these virtues is indeed formidable. In the present unregenerate state of our mind, unrestrained thoughts, gross impulses and weak resolutions rule the roost. Preparing the mind, thus, means keeping the mind pure from impure and harmful thoughts, and making it think to act in the way the spirit feels.

Practising the ideal is the third dimension of the art of living. Without practice, life is color-less. Practice is two-fold. One is to exercise or apply something in day-to-day life by the force of will and determination. The other is to live naturally and spontaneously without any internal or external pressure. Both these connotations of living are interlinked. What one aspires to do becomes one's second nature in due course.

Our nature is nothing but a set of aspirations crystallized into habits. We internalize what we gain from the exterior in the

form of thoughts, feelings and actions. We accumulate several impressions, but fail to remember their presence. Yet they continue to direct us. Paying attention to the means of work is practice. It is no use talking high of the ideal. It must be made real.

If we acknowledge God-realization or self-realization or attaining a sublime state of unitive knowledge as the only desirable goal of life, we must act upon our conviction. If we are convinced that God and religion are real, then life becomes explained, bearable and enjoyable. But no amount of reasoning can demonstrate religion; it can only make it probable. There the matter rests. Facts are based only on experience. We have to experience religion to demonstrate it to ourselves. We have to see God to be convinced that there is God. Nothing but our own realization can make religion real to us.

One must not dabble with one's ideal. Cultivating a strong conviction, in the ideal one seeks, alone strengthens one's total dedication to one's task. The Bhagavad-Gita says that a man is what his *shraddha* (conviction) is. In the course of practice of one's ideal, one may find it difficult to proceed. The Bhagavad-Gita again says that 'this *yoga* should be practised with perseverance, undisturbed by depression of heart'.

Swami Vivekananda exhorts the seeker thus: 'You must always remember that each word, thought and deed lays up a store for you, and that as the bad thoughts and bad works are ready to spring upon you like tigers, so also there is the inspiring hope that the good thoughts and good deeds are ready with the power of a hundred thousand angels to defend you always and forever. Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached.' Practice becomes firmly grounded when it has been cultivated for a long time without interruption and with earnest devotion.

Very often, we reel under the burden of troubles caused by none other than ourselves. The spiritual way of living demands that we voluntarily renounce all that comes in our way. Renunciation is the key to realization and leads to it.

To practise the ideal, one needs will and energy. Self-discipline and goal-orientation generate both will and energy in a large measure. Self-control conserves one's energy, and goal-orientation directs both will and energy into desirable channels of utilization. It is the law of nature that no force can be created, but can only be directed. One is, therefore, to learn to control the grand powers that are already in one's hands. By the power of one's will, one is to make them spiritual instead allowing them to remain animal.

One is not to make one's journey of being and becoming a self-conceited pursuit. One is to make it an ever-expanding process, opening up newer vistas of life at every stage of its evolution. The ideal of life constantly to be kept in view, in the words of Swami Vivekananda, is 'for the liberation of oneself and for the good of others'. While striving for one's own liberation, the Divine Spirit within, one must not forget one's fellow beings that are in similar need, though at different levels. The only way of getting one's divine nature manifested is by helping others to do the same.

Saint Kabir says, 'when you were born, you cried and the world rejoiced. Live your life in such a manner that when you die the world cries and you rejoice.'

Life is considered the interlude between the two events called birth and death. But the sages have always considered that the human birth is a bridge to eternity. Herein lies its significance. The river of life flows incessantly without getting stuck at the banks of pleasure and pain, for its ultimate goal is to

reach the ocean of immortal bliss. It is, therefore, essential that one does not trifle with one's life or fritter it away, but live it the right way.

The right way is the effortless simplicity of life devoid of all artificiality and pretentiousness. There is to be a delicate blend of contrasting shades of intense activity and utmost tranquility, attachment and detachment, tradition and progressiveness, humility and courage, and most important – a mother's heart and a child's nature.

Qualities like purity, modesty, compassion, serenity, forbearance, etc are to be overtly present. The bottom-line of all activity is to be the touch of spirituality. Uninterrupted communion with God in whatever one does makes one's life simple, natural and beautiful.

The sublime facet of one's life imbued with these qualities is the selfless, unsolicited love. It is out-pouring and knows only giving; it never seeks to possess; and it never expects anything in return. Such love enables one to make the whole world one's own. No one is a stranger anymore. A dacoit becomes a son or a brother. The transforming power of this love is such that even the stony hearts melt when they encounter one embodying it. The purpose of one's life is fulfilled only when one is able to give joy to another.

This love is expressed, in the only way it can be expressed, through selfless service. One embodying pure love serves everyone with rare devotion and utter humility. Such a one will be an example of what love in action is all about. This love transcends all limitations of caste, creed, color and all stations and conditions of life. Though it is ocean deep, it is devoid of any turbulence in the form of bondage or attachment. 'One is always to do one's duty to others, but one must give love to God

alone. Worldly love always brings in its wake untold misery.... The rich should serve God and His devotees with money, and the poor worship God by repeating His Name.'

Facets of Life

'Hear! O children of Immortality, even those who dwell in the celestial worlds, I have realized the great effulgent Spirit beyond the darkness of ignorance. Knowing Him alone does one overcome death and become immortal. There is no other way', declares a Vedic seer.

The lofty Upanisadic teaching of living a higher life of spiritual realization has been imparted in an esoteric manner through the chain of teachers and disciples. In the Vedic texts, we get detailed instructions about the way of life in the form of *karma* and *yajnas* to be performed, and *upasanas* or meditations to be undertaken.

The Cloud of Unknowing, a Christian classic, classifies the Christian life into four types, namely, the common, the special, the solitary or contemplative, and the perfect. The common life is of the baptized lay people of the society. The special ones are those who take up spiritual life in earnest by renouncing the world for God, but are active. The solitary are the contemplatives engaged solely in meditation on God. Finally, there are those rare few who attain perfection and get united with God. Thus, even a life of the spirit, as it involves from the men of God downwards, or from the secular life upwards, assumes so many hues and colors.

On deeper analysis, we find that there is no real difference between the spiritual (sacred) and the secular. The difference is only in attitude. Even an apparently secular life can be a deeply spiritual one, and *vice-versa*. The so-called secular life has its own charm, variety, beauty, its own science and the art of living. A house-wife performing her daily chores with love and affection for the members of her family, a student pursuing his studies

with love of God, a teacher engaged in teaching for the love of it, a doctor treating a patient with concern for him – all live their lives well. It is in their hands to convert their lives into a charming drama or an ugly sojourn. The attempt to live in spirit, to lead a sacred life makes all the difference.

An individual's life is intimately associated with that of the world around. He is a member of the family and the society in which he lives, and functions as a citizen of the nation. He acts and interacts with others. He influences the world and he is influenced by it. Human life, therefore, cannot be lived in isolation. The individual is first to fulfill his destiny as well as his social commitments. To accomplish both, he needs lot of skill. Such a life, lived in perfect harmony within and without, is, indeed, one of the most beautiful things to behold.

Buddhism advocates the five cardinal values, namely, non-injury, truthfulness, non-stealing, chastity and not taking intoxicants. The *yoga-sutras* of Patanjali recommend the five *yamas*, namely, *ahimsa*, truth, non-stealing, chastity and non-possessiveness. These are all universal values applicable at all times and in all circumstances to all human beings, if they want to live rightly.

Life is a realm of service and, in that service, one has to suffer at times a great deal; that is hard to bear, but more often to experience a great deal of joy. But that joy can only be real if people look upon life as service, and have a definite object in life, outside themselves and their personal affairs.

Purpose of Life

A question each of us has asked himself again and again is, 'what is the purpose of life? Or more precisely, what is the purpose of my life?' For what we had once thought was its purpose – the attainment of peace, the gaining of happiness and enjoyment – did not seem to materialize. These were replaced in large measure by anxieties and disappointment. What went wrong?

But suppose that the answer to the question 'what is the purpose of life?' is just the opposite. The purpose of my life is to give my life away, not to enjoy it – indeed to bring or to try to bring peace, happiness, and enjoyment for others instead of myself. If that were the definition of the purpose of life, perhaps existence would come up to our expectations. And if one could manage to conceive of life as a rite, a '*puja*', and the purpose of life to make oneself a sacrifice to God – an oblation, so to say – offered upon His altar, that would be the soundest definition of all.

It has long been understood that the offering, which is the most pleasing to God, is the offering of oneself. My goods or even my child – in the case of Abraham's proposed sacrifice of his only son Isaac – may be acceptable to the Lord; but I myself am the most pleasing present I can proffer. Jesus made himself the Lamb of God both in his life and at his death. Offering 'myself' represents the greatest gift to the Almighty, since it demonstrates perfect love, perfect trust, and perfect resignation.

But we will not do it. We prefer to remain our own master; hence our anxieties and disappointments.

When one uses the word ‘sacrifice’, one tends to think that making a sacrifice is a one-sided gesture. I give something away to the unilateral benefit of him to whom I give it. But this is a mistaken view. Reference to the dictionary will show how far it is an erroneous view. The word sacrifice comes from the Latin *sacrificare* meaning ‘to make holy’, ‘to render sacred’. What is sacrificed becomes, by the act of sacrifice, divinized. A flower, or a coconut, offered on the altar, is taken back sanctified; it has become spiritualized by the two-way intervention of my offer and God’s acceptance. It is said that it has been transformed and divinized.

When I offer myself, thus, I do nothing particular for God. He possesses everything already. It is only I who benefit. The sacrifice of ‘myself’ possibly pleases Him, because He likes to see me do actions, which make me holy. For, in that act, it is I who have become divinized; my action in offering myself has sanctified me; and I am the beneficiary. Seen from this point of view, sacrifice loses its negative aspect and becomes a positive, creative, and divinizing act.

Living is not mere existence in the biological sense. The proof of living is in the capacity for purposeful thinking. We are born, not just to be, but to become, to evolve into higher planes of thinking, being and doing, to spread sweetness and light. Real death is not when we breathe our last, but when we cease to think, when we fail to improve upon our mental and intellectual endowments, when we forget the imperatives of social conscience and commitment, when we lose our sense of wonder and excitement at the marvel of nature, at the singing of birds, at the flowering of trees, at the babbling of brooks, etc. We experience the full radiance and splendor of life and living only when we constantly renew, rediscover and reincarnate ourselves into ever scintillating personalities, making a wholesome difference to our neighborhood, community, society and the world.

A life well lived involves the cultivation of the ability to look within ourselves, so as to reinforce the positive attributes and counter the negative ones.

‘Live’ and ‘Let live’ are the obverse and reverse of the same coin. When one performs one’s duties and obligations in full measure, one automatically safeguards and respects the rights and entitlements of others. Letting others live is not mere suffering them in silence. On the contrary, we must joyously welcome every chance coming our way to seek fulfillment from working for the good of others. ‘For the large-hearted, the whole world is a family’ and ‘Let all people of the world be happy’ are scriptural prescriptions for promoting peace, goodwill and harmony in the world around.

All life is an expression of a single spiritual unity, and that the spiritual growth of the individual consists of advancement towards a full, conscious realization of this unity.

‘Conduct yourself in all matters, grand and public or small and domestic, in accordance with the laws of nature; harmonizing your will with nature should be your utmost ideal. Where do you practise this ideal? In the particulars of your own daily life with its uniquely personal tasks and duties! It is not so much what you are doing as how you are doing it. When we properly understand and live by this principle, while difficulties will arise – for they are part of the divine order, too – inner peace will still be possible’ in the words of Epictetus.

Man's Destiny

The challenge before every individual is how to lead a good life. Life is a gift of God; but good life is the gift of knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge is not merely information; but it is the skill and ability to transform that information into creative energy. Wisdom is the intelligent contemplation of life that confers on man the bliss of joy, happiness and peace of mind.

In a reflective mood, each one of us puts questions such as 'why and how do I live? Where have I come from? Where do I go? What is the purpose of life? How can I make it a happier one?' Answers to these questions form the essence of man's destiny.

Man's destiny is to become superman. The quality, the vitality, the utility and the nature of everything in the universe is preordained, known, fixed and determined. Everything in nature is subject to inexorable laws, though complex. The sweetness of honey, the fragrance of a rose, the fidelity of a dog, the utility of a land, the calmness of a duck, the patience of a donkey are all fixed in an unalterable framework of law. No fish can survive on land; no leopard can change its spots; no reptiles can fly in the air. But man's destiny is different.

Man can land on the moon; he can sweep the floor of the ocean; he can split an atom to release energy; and he can scan the sky to know the worlds beyond. Man defeats the rigid laws of nature, and it is here that he has the scope to become superman.

But his behavior is strange. He is not steady in progress. He may land on the moon, but does not live in harmony at home. He has passion; but has no compassion. He has speed; but has no direction. He knows production, but not equitable

distribution. He has goods, but not God. He has an eye on wealth and power, but not on wisdom and truth. He has more of machinery, but less of humanity. He thinks too much, but feels too little. He has more of cleverness, but less of kindness. Negative aspects overwhelm the positive ones.

Negative aspects sometimes exceed the limits. No tiger kills another tiger; no wolf kills another wolf; but one despot puts millions to holocaust. Throw a crumb to a dog and it is faithful all its life. It is not so for man. Lust, greed, jealousy, hatred, pride, prejudice and wickedness of man have no parallel in creation.

When man is good, he is better than an angel; when he is bad, he is worse than a devil. Man is a bundle of paradoxes, a mixer of contradictions, and a creature of conflicts that defies an analysis of his destiny.

Man's destiny is suffering. Suffering is life; and life is suffering. The suffering urges man to move forward. This march is not easy. It involves pain, and the degree of pain is in proportion to the importance of the object in view. For instance, if someone wants to achieve great results with smallness of means, no doubt he suffers more. But he earns greater credit. Everything has a price tag.

Those who wish to be remembered in history suffer more, paying the price for the perceived greatness. In other words, the urge for greatness is a part of human destiny. Everything in the world is moved by an urge to become something greater than what it is.

Man is always in a flux of change, in a melting pot of desires, emotions and ideas. If they are harmonized properly, he moves in the direction of his right destiny. If there is disharmony in his desires, emotions and ideas, his destiny is only chaos.

Either way he has to struggle and the direction of his struggle is the pointer to his destiny.

The struggle originates from several sources. Man is prompted instinctively, rationally, collectively or intuitively to labor for the things he desires most. For example, the mother labors hard instinctively to see her child happy; the father plans rationally to give a good life to the family; the leader motivates the society collectively to provide a satisfactory life for all free from want and disease. A saint exposes the ultimate Reality intuitively so as to teach the higher truth. All of them - mother, father, leader or saint - suffer in the discharge of their duties, which is their destiny. Here, the pain itself is a pleasure. They all suffer willingly to be the agents of a great social change.

One goal of human life may be the realizing of what is called 'excellence'. Though it is an amorphous word, it may only signify what the Hindu sages call *paripurnattva* – complete and total perfection. This involves integration of several dimensions of human consciousness in an inclusive way. The psychological, the physiological and the interior are to be properly nourished and, with the energy so realized, one has to actualize one's aspirations and goals.

Man's destiny is conditioned by the highest absolute values he has in view. Among them, four are considered the most essential. They are truth, beauty, justice and love. Truth is the reflection of reality unobstructed by any kind of prejudice. God is truth and truth is God. Truth is fact; falsehood is fiction. Truth is existence; falsehood is illusion. Truth is reality; falsehood is superstition. Man's destiny is thus search for Truth.

Beauty is perfection. It is correct proportion of its constituents in everything. It is fullness and completeness of a thing in all its aspects. A rose is beautiful as it is perfect in its

softness, its fragrance, its color, its shape and its freshness. Everything created by God in the universe is beautiful; and beauty is an attribute of divinity. It is God's beauty that is reflected in His creation. As man is reflection of God Himself, he should aim at things beautiful. If man contemplates more and more on a thing of beauty, he becomes a part of that beauty.

Justice is a harmony between reason and conscience. It is restoring to everybody what is due to him. It is compromise for the necessities of social life. It is the moral constituent of a state. It is to the state what heart is to the body. It is conciliation of two opposites of unity. It is the settlement of the unending feuds between right and wrong. Political injustice is worse than crime. Justice is order, beauty and balance of the universe. Man has to be just to others, as God is never unjust to anyone or anything.

Love is the manifestation of the Divine in the human heart. It is the moving energy of the whole world. It is the source of all life. It reveals the inner reality of all things. It is the hunger of the human soul for Divine Beauty. It resolves all conflicts between man and man. It is the divine spark-involving mind, feeling and will, that is strong, deep and enduring. One who loves is ever eager to find beauty, and to create, perpetuate, appreciate and adore beauty. Thus, love is not a passing sentiment or a feeble emotion, but an attitude of life, which is the essence of creativity.

Man's destiny is to march in the direction of higher objectives of life. The destiny of man is to reconcile the natural and the spiritual elements of the intellect. Intellect is the highest gift of God to man; it is a distant ray of Divinity. This intellect intuits man that God indwells him and that it is his conscience, which is to be kindled with learning. Then only man realizes the responsibility he owes to the society.

Man's destiny is not only the aristocracy of intellect, but also the sublimity of soul. Man's intellect reveals that the best life is that in which the creative impulse plays the largest part, and the possessive impulse the smallest part. History remembers the artists, the scientists, the inventors, the discoverers, the poets, the philosophers, etc who are all creative, and not those who possess and use. Man's destiny is to be creative and noble, and not possessive.

In essence, man's destiny is to develop within himself a moral personality. This makes him realize that nothing exists in the world for its own sake. The sun exists for heat and light for the globe. The hills, the dales, the mountains, the rivers, the minerals, the forests, the flora, the fauna, everything for that matter, are for the benefit of others and nothing for themselves. A candle burns to give light to others. Wood gets reduced to ashes to provide heat or cook food. A tree does not deny shade even to woodcutter. A cow gives milk only to others, and does not drink it. Man is an exception and says that everything is his, 'my house, my property, my money, my power'. His destiny is to learn from nature.

Man shall rise from the fleeting pleasures of life to an understanding that everything in the world is in the process of development, and that he is to be a part of the process and not an obstacle. A seed either becomes a plant, and bears fruits and flowers; or it gets extinct. It does not stagnate. Man, too, should grow in mind and spirit; otherwise he will decay.

Everything in the world is subject both to change and changelessness. Change is the law of nature. Times change; seasons change; the body changes; and everything is in the flow of change. But changelessness, too, is equally true. From a mango seed, one does not get a margosa fruit. From the egg of a

hen, one gets only a chick and not a duck. Man is supposed to be human. But, nevertheless, sometimes, he is very inhuman.

Man has to realize that only his body is mortal, and not his soul. The human being is the reflex of the Divine, and the Divine is Eternal. There is accountability for every human being at the end of his physical life. He is answerable for all his deeds. God will say that he gave man wealth and affluence to spend on the poor and the needy. If man spends all he has on himself, he is subject to punishment. We have yet a chance to discharge our duties to the society. Man's final destiny is linked to his righteous deeds.

Living the Life

To realize the spirit as Spirit is practical religion. Everything else is good so far as it leads to this one grand idea. That (realization) is to be attained by renunciation, by meditation. By renunciation is meant renunciation of all the senses, cutting the knots, the chains that bind us down to matter. 'I do not want to get material life, do not want the sense-life, but something higher' is true renunciation. Then, by the power of meditation, one is to undo the mischief that has been done.

He alone lives, whose life is in the whole universe. The more we concentrate our lives on limited things, the faster we go towards death. Those moments alone we live, when our lives are in the universe, in others; and living this little life is death, simply death, and that is why the fear of death comes. The fear of death can be conquered when man realizes that this is only one life in this universe he is living. When he can say, 'I am in everything, in everybody, I am in all lives, I am the universe,' then alone comes the state of fearlessness.

The problem of life is becoming deeper and broader every day as the world moves on. The Vedanta truth, preached in the days of yore, relates to the solidarity of all life. One atom in this universe cannot move without dragging the whole world along with it. There cannot be any progress without the whole world following in the wake. It is becoming everyday clearer that the solution of any problem can never be attained on racial, national or narrow grounds. Every idea has to become broad till it covers the whole of this world; every aspiration must go on increasing till it has engulfed the whole of humanity, nay, the whole of life (universe), within its scope.

The individual's life is in the life of the whole; the individual's happiness is in the happiness of the whole. Apart from the whole, the individual's existence is inconceivable. This is an eternal truth and is the bedrock on which the universe is built. To move slowly towards the infinite whole, bearing a constant feeling of intense sympathy and sameness with it, being happy with its happiness and being distressed in its affliction, is the individual's soul duty.

'What is life but growth, that is, expansion, that is, love?' Therefore all love is life, it is the only law of life; all selfishness is death, and this is true here or hereafter. It is life to do good, it is death not to do good to others. One is to feel for the poor, the ignorant, and the downtrodden; and one is then to pour the soul out at the feet of the Lord. Then will come to one power, help and indomitable energy.

All expansion is life; all contraction is death. All love is expansion; all selfishness is contraction. Love is, therefore, the only law of life. He who loves lives; he who is selfish is dying. Therefore, love for love's sake, because it is the only law of life, just as one breathes to live. This is the secret of selfless love, selfless action and the rest.

The first manifest effect of life is expansion. One must expand if one wants to live. The moment one has ceased to expand, death is upon one, and danger is ahead. This is the greatest of the signs of the revival of national life and, through this expansion, we contribute to the general mass of human knowledge and welfare.

We do meet with cases of friction every day in our lives. Duty is sweet only through love, and love shines in freedom alone. Freedom is never to be a slave to the senses such as anger, jealousies and a hundred other petty things that occur

every day in our lives. In all these little rough-nesses that we meet with in life, the highest expression of freedom is to forbear.

Of all the arts, living is the finest art. It is, therefore, futile to theorize. Its field is existence, which is volatile, fluid and unpredictable. Like music, it has rhythm. But it is cacophony that surrounds the harmony. Like painting, it glitters in color. But line drawings in black and white abound. Like sculpture, it is inert initially like formless rock or wood. Yet, with exquisite chiseling, it unfolds what is within. Thus, life is woven of varied strands. The random and the contingent interface with the predictable and the controlled. Perhaps, the art of living is balancing the outer and the inner, theory and practice.

One is to live for an ideal, and leave no place in the mind for anything else. Let one put forth all one's energies to acquire that which never fails – one's spiritual perfection.

Swami Vivekananda thunders, 'take up one idea. Make that one idea your life – think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, and every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success, and this is the way great spiritual giants are produced.' Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, the President of India repeats the same message day in and day out.

If the subject of thought is a good one, we shall feel friendly towards it; if the subject is miserable, we must be merciful towards it. If it is good, we must be glad; if it is evil, we must be indifferent. These attitudes of the mind towards the different subjects that come before it will make the mind peaceful. Most of our difficulties in our daily lives come from being unable to hold our minds in this way.

We are to take care of ourselves – that much we can do – and give up attending to others for a while. Let us perfect the means; the end will take care of itself. For, the world can be good and pure only if our lives are good and pure. It is an effect, and we are the means. Therefore, let us purify ourselves. Let us make ourselves perfect.

Our duty is to encourage everyone in his struggle to live up to his own highest idea, and strive at the same time to make the ideal as near as possible to the truth.

We cannot live together without bearing and forbearing. One cannot live with another without having some time or other to check one's impulses, to restrain oneself, to forbear from doing things, which one's mind would prompt one to do. Thus arises the idea of restraint. The whole social fabric is based upon the idea of restraint, and we all know that the man or woman who has not learnt the great lesson of bearing and forbearing leads the most miserable life.

If one has the desire to live a long life of helpfulness, of blissfulness and of activity on this earth, thus working, one will find the way out.

What counts most in spiritual life is character, and a way of life molded by inner experience. The divinity within must be brought to one's perception.

In the Vedanta there is no attempt at reconciling the present life – the hypnotized life, this false life, which we have assumed – with the ideals; but this false life must go, and the real life, which always exists, must manifest itself, must shine out.

The Vedanta also says that not only can this be realized in the depths of forests or caves, but by men in all possible

conditions of life. We have known that the people who discovered these truths were neither living in caves nor in forests, nor following the ordinary vocations of life, but men who, we have every reason to believe, led the busiest of lives, men who had to command armies, to sit on thrones, and look to the welfare of millions.

Balanced Spiritual Living

The world is described as an entity, which is the result of lost equilibrium. This is what gives the world its dynamic character, which is its unceasing flux, and the constant state of tension between the pairs of opposites. The history of the world is, therefore, the history of the ups and downs in the lives of individuals and, collectively, of nations, races and civilizations. That is why we have wars interrupted by peace, love juxtaposed with hatred, selfishness counterbalanced by unselfishness, and life always under the threat of destruction.

Three things are necessary to make every person great, every nation great - conviction in the powers of goodness, absence of jealousy and suspicion, and helping all who are trying to be and do good.

It is not enough to be good and do good. We must stick to goodness, no matter of what consequences. When people without morals thrive and prosper, we might want to change our perception to sticking to goodness in relation to them. Such vacillation does not lead us to our goal.

The Mundaka-Upanisad says, 'Truth alone triumphs, not untruth'. The triumph may not be immediate, but it is inevitable. It may not always be in the form of worldly prosperity; but it certainly does arise in the form of deep inner contentment, peace and joy. A good life produces a sense of fulfillment that nothing else can give. Of what value is prosperity or success in life if it is not accompanied by deep inner fulfillment? Where is happiness without fulfillment?

All men desire peace, but very few desire those things that make for peace. To attain peace, one is to restructure the

way one thinks and feels. Peace and truth are interrelated. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, 'the way of peace is the way of truth. Truthfulness is even more important than peacefulness. Indeed, lying is the mother of violence. A truthful man cannot long remain violent. He will perceive in the course of his search that he has no need to be violent and he will further discover that so long as there is the slightest trace of violence in him, he will fail to find the truth he is searching'.

Goodness is not a passive quality. It carries tremendous power though it functions subtly and invisibly. Many are not aware of the miracles a good life produces. The need of the day is of more and more people convinced of the powers of the goodness, people willing to live a life built on a strong moral foundation.

While goodness is imperative for us to possess for a good life, what we must not possess are jealousy and suspicion. Violence is tearing the world apart today. A gun or a knife may be the most visible symbol of violence the basis of which is jealousy. In the words of Swami Vivekananda, 'the test of non-violence is absence of jealousy. Any person may do a good deed or make a good gift on the spur of the moment or under the pressure of some superstition or priest-craft; but the real lover of humanity is the person who is jealous of none. The so called great people of the world may all be seen to become jealous of each other for a small name, for a little fame, and for a few bits of gold. So long as this jealousy exists in heart, it is far away from the perfection of non-violence.'

Like jealousy, suspicion is another form of weakness. It is inner insecurity that makes a person suspect everybody and everything around him or her. Such people project imaginary hostile forces around them, and spend their time and energy

fighting against them. The absence of jealousy and suspicion preserves our energy for positive and fruitful endeavors.

The next requirement of good life is to help all those who try to be and do good. We generally help one another. But the attitude of help is based on reciprocity, at least expression of gratitude. Real help is without any expectation of return of help in any form whatsoever. In the words of Sankara, 'one is to help others as does the spring, without any ulterior motive whatsoever'.

Such selfless giving is possible to a person who is totally free from ambition. Ambitious people usually try to convert every help they render into a steppingstone to achieve their goals. The 'help' is only secondary; it is a means to something else. Helping all who are trying to be and do good is possible only for those who are free from personal ambitions. Faith in the powers of goodness, absence of jealousy and suspicion, and selfless service – these three – help us to live a good life, no matter who and where we are.

While the world may not necessarily change its intrinsic character in an objective way, the world does change for the person who fulfills the requirements for good living. If we conquer ourselves, we can conquer the world. This is because the world is not 'out there'. The world is 'in here'. That is why the greatest among the human beings are not those who have conquered the world shedding blood, but those who have conquered themselves shedding the ego. Sri Ramakrishna teaches us to replace the 'unripe ego' with the 'ripe ego', the ego, which makes us feel that we are the children of God or the servants of God. If we change, the world changes for us.

The true measure of happiness in life is not what we have, but what we can do without.

‘The caste system (social divisions) can be removed by one means only; and that is the love of God. Lovers of God do not belong to any caste. The mind, body and soul of a man become purified through divine love.... Through *bhakti* an untouchable becomes pure and elevated.’ This is the way of elevating people, according to Sri Ramakrishna.

Sri Ramakrishna advises householders to overcome worldly problems by being God-centered. ‘If you enter the world without first cultivating love for God, you will be entangled more and more. You will be overwhelmed with its dangers, its grief and its sorrows. And the more you think of worldly things, the more you will be attached to them.’

Sri Ramakrishna has two suggestions to offer to overcome worldly problems. One is to remember death and the other is to surrender to God. ‘One should constantly remember death. Nothing will survive death. We are born in this world to perform certain duties, like the people who come from the countryside to Calcutta on business.... Be ready for death. Death has entered the house. You must fight him with the weapon of God’s holy name. God alone is the doer.... Give your power of attorney to God. One does not come to grief through letting a good man assume one’s responsibilities. Let His Will be done.’

Man in relation to him and the society in which he lives is what the art of right living is all about. The ways in which man can surrender to God while being active in life are that he is to do his duties but keep his mind on God; he is to go into solitude to attain divine love; he is to live in the company of holy men; he is to cultivate discrimination and renunciation; he is to direct the six passions towards God; he is to consider himself as God’s servant or His devotee; he is to surrender the result of works to God; and that he should not harm anybody though he may make a show of protection from evil minded people. The purpose of

right or spiritual living is to serve fellowmen in the spirit of worship of God.

Humankind has to embrace the art of balanced spiritual living, and it has to learn to get along as one global family. In the words of Paramahansa Yogananda, ‘the day is coming when the world will have to get back to simple living. We must simplify our lives to make time for God. We must live more with the consciousness of brotherhood, because, as civilization evolves into a higher age, we are going to find that the world becomes smaller. Prejudice and intolerance must go’.

Science and technology have made the world a small household, with each nation interlinked to and dependent on the others. Even for a small family, it is difficult to stay together in the face of conflicting interests, and absence of love and concern for others. This problem is certainly more intense for the comity of nations. But there is hope for individual families as well as the global family of nations if the humankind consciously nurtures goals that are conducive to real peace and progress. The key is spiritual understanding and conscious living in spirit.

Humankind is presently suffering from spiritual malnutrition. Science and technology have given the means to feed every person on this planet. But it is man’s non-spirituality that makes him cling to selfishness, prejudice and intolerance preventing him from eradicating hunger and other forms of deprivation.

Spiritual malnutrition is the direct consequence of our not nourishing the qualities of the soul. With all the material prosperity around, millions in the most advanced nations are discontented, unhappy and bewildered as to the meaning of their existence. Discontentment, in its own way, is the true impetus to progress, for dissatisfaction is the motivator for improvement. It is the

stresses and pressures of our present day life that should point the way to the next step in our development. The discontentment leads to the realization of what is wanting, our goal of life, what we are to do and in what way we are to proceed.

‘The goal of life is to know Truth,’ says Paramahansa Yogananda. ‘We may think we have other goals, and we may have lesser goals; but eventually, in one life or in another, man comes to the realization that he has but one goal to achieve, and that is to know himself in truth as the soul, the *atman*, made in the image of God; and to know Him who is Truth.’

When we speak of spiritual poverty, we are to remember that it is not our souls that are starved. The soul is infinite, inexhaustible bliss, life, love that sustains every faculty of our being. When we shut ourselves off the soul that our peace, understanding, kindness, courage, compassion – all the noble qualities of the spirit – remain undernourished, undeveloped and, in some people, look totally absent.

The divinity and eternity of the soul is not something that we have to acquire. We have it already; but we do not know it. As the scripture tells us, ‘Be still and know that I am God!’ When you are still and when your mind is transcended, into your consciousness flows the realization that you are immortal and blissful part of the Divine Spirit, an eternal being of infinite wisdom and love. That is the truth of our being, and it needs the right state of consciousness to realize it.

The life anchored in truth, in wisdom, and in God is the balanced life. It starts with meditation on the Divine. He who has no time for meditation has no way to have a balanced life. Not having time for meditation is not for lack of time; it is but an addiction to restlessness. To forget Him or have no time for Him is to deny our real self, our inmost nature leading to

disharmony and failure in all ways of life. It is the spiritually balanced individual who is truly successful. The success is not measured in the realm of wealth, authority or power. One’s success is not measured by what one has, but by what one is, and what one is able to give of oneself to others.

Addiction is a disease; and addiction to restlessness is an endemic spiritual disease. Spiritual disease manifests itself in lack of soul peace, want of poise, discontentment, restlessness, imbalance, disharmony, unkindness, unwillingness to meditate, and the habit of putting off meditation. Unless one acknowledges that one is dealing not with the scheduling conflict of time, but with a spiritual sickness that warrants attention, one’s efforts to live a spiritually balanced life will remain mostly vague and unrealized.

People feel empty within because of their unbalanced concentration on temporary satisfaction supplied by material acquisitions. They try desperately to assuage that empty restlessness by indulging in more restlessness. They occupy themselves with useless diversions to distract the mind from problems. It is in the nature of escaping from the problems of the day. But evading the problems does not solve them. As long as one does not face them squarely, one only postpones them, continuing with the restlessness in the process.

Many people want to live life over because they take pride in their past. It is not what man *was* that shows character; it is what he progressively *is*. Trying to obtain a present record on a dead past is like some present day mediocrity trying to live on its ancestry. We look for the fruit in the branches of the family tree, not in the roots. Showing how a family degenerated from a noble ancestor to the present day is not a boast; it is only an avoidable confession. Let man think less of the past and

more of the future, his posterity; less of his past virtue, more of his future way of life.

When one pleads for a chance to live life over, there is an implied plea of inexperience, a lack of knowledge. This is unworthy, even of a coward. We know the laws of health; yet we ignore them, rather defy them everyday. We know what the proper food for us is; yet we gratify our urges and trust to our cleverness to square up with nature. We know that success is a matter of simple, clearly defined laws of the development of mental essentials, of tireless energy and concentration, of constant payment of price. We know all this, and yet we do not live up to our knowledge. We constantly eclipse ourselves by ourselves and then blame fate.

Parents often counsel children against certain things; yet they do them themselves. They tell children to be truthful; but they tell lies to save a little amount in the presence of the children.

Man's only plea for a chance to live life again is that he has gained in wisdom and experience. If he is really earnest, he can live life over, life anew, the new life that comes to him moment by moment. He is to leave to the past all his mistakes, sin, sorrow, misery and folly, and start afresh.

What one needs is more day to day living, starting with fresh, clean ideas for the day, and seeking to live that day and each successive moment as if it were all time and all eternity. This has no element of disregard for the future. It is like the captain of a ship steering his vessel towards his port of destination. This view of living leaves behind regret for the past, and worry for the future.

In the life of an individual living in spirit, each day is the beginning of a new year if only he resolves to make it so. He is

only to promise himself that each day will be the new beginning of a new year, better and truer life for himself, for those around him and for the world.

No one attempts to cure a drug-addict with supply of more drugs. Similarly, one, suffering from restlessness, cannot be cured with more restless diversion. Only meditation immersing body, mind and the emotions, in the stillness of the soul and the divine contentment within, is the cure.

Meditation helps us to align our outer life with the inner values of the soul. It does not remove us from family or relationships with others. On the contrary, it makes us more loving, more understanding and more serviceable. Real spirituality begins when we include others in our prayer for their well-being.

Most people shun meditation, not because they have no time, but because they do not want to face themselves a definite result of the interiorization of meditation. There is too much they do not like in themselves; so they would rather keep the mind busy on externals. They are too afraid to think deeply about the self-improvements they need to make.

Patanjali says that mental sloth is one of the major obstacles that hinder our spiritual progress. It makes one say, 'well, tomorrow I think of You, God. Today I am too busy with the worries You have given me'. Millions of people have made the same weak, lame excuse through the ages. This is a delusive thought. That tomorrow will never come as long as one accepts excuses.

The tragedy of complacency is that most persons do not begin to do bettering their spiritual state until their hearts are wrung with torment, sadness, frustration and suffering. Only then do they turn towards the Divine. Why wait and go through

such anguish? It is so simple to feel God if only one makes a little effort in meditation.

Living in spirit makes all the difference. The balanced life in spirit is most fulfilling. Paramahansa Yoganand puts it, 'Divine Mother, teach me to live with delight. May I enjoy my earthly duties and the countless beauties of creation? Help me to train my senses to observe and appreciate Thy wondrous world of nature. Let me savor with Thy zest all innocent pleasures. Save me from negation and unwarranted kill-joy attitudes.'

A saint living in spirit is childlike who can enjoy the simplest pleasures, and lives with delight. Most people do not know how to enjoy simple things. They are so jaded in their tastes that nothing satisfies them. They appear over-stimulated outwardly, but starved and empty inward. They take to drinking or drugs to escape. The values we nourish today are unhealthy and unnatural. That is why we do not have balanced life individually, in the family and the society. The value-sickness is the root-cause of this malady.

People often ask, 'how can I find peace?' The answer is simple and straight. 'There is no other way except by going within into the presence of God.' Daily meditation is the way to restore spiritual balance in the lives of pressured individuals and fractured families.

5. Ways of Life

General

Life is infinite, one chapter of which is 'Thy Will be done'. Unless we realize all the chapters, we cannot realize the whole. 'If we go by a theory that the whole of this infinite life has to be determined by the few years' existence here and now, ...then it is very hopeless for us, ...and we have no time to look back upon those who are weak. But if these are not the conditions – if the world is only one of the many schools through which we have to pass, if the eternal life is to be molded and fashioned and guided by the eternal law, and eternal law, eternal chances await everyone – then we need not be in a hurry. We have time to sympathize, to look around, stretch out a helping hand to the weak and bring them up', in the words of Swami Vivekananda.

'This life in the five senses, life in the material world, is not all; it is only a small portion, and merely superficial. Behind and beyond is the infinite in which there is no more evil.

The senses are all delusion. People wish to retain them (in heaven) even after they are dead – a pair of eyes, a nose. Some imagine they will have more organs than they have now. They want to see God sitting on a throne through all eternity – the material body of God. ...Such men's desires are for the body, for food and drink and enjoyment. It is the materialistic life prolonged. Man cannot think of anything beyond this life. This life is all for the body.'

'Life on the plane of the spirit is the only life; life on any other plane is mere death; the whole of this life can be only described as a gymnasium. We must go beyond it to enjoy real life.'

‘Coming from abstractions to the common, everyday details of our lives, we find that our life is a contradiction, a mixture of existence and non-existence. There is this contradiction in knowledge. It seems that man can know everything, if he only wants to know; but before he has gone a few steps, he finds an adamant wall which he cannot pass.’

‘In this world we find that all happiness is followed by misery as its shadow. Life has its shadow, death. They must go together, because they are not contradictory, not two separate existences, but different manifestations of the same unit, life and death, sorrow and happiness, good and evil.’

‘A perfect life is a contradiction in terms. Life itself is a state of continuous struggle, between everything outside and us. Every moment we are fighting actually with external nature, and if we are defeated, our life has to go. It is, for instance, a continuous struggle for food and air. If food or air fails, we die. Life is not a simple and smoothly flowing thing, but it is a compound effect. This complex struggle between something inside and the external world is what we call life. So it is clear that when this struggle ceases, there will be an end of life.’

What is meant by ideal happiness is the cessation of this struggle. But then life will cease, for the struggle can only cease when life itself has ceased. We are aware that in helping the world we help ourselves. The main effect of work done for others is to purify ourselves. By means of the constant effort to do good to others, we are trying to forget ourselves; this forgetfulness of self is the one great lesson we have to learn in life.

Just as in one life we have so many various phases of expressing, the protoplasm developing into the fetus, the child, the young man, and the old man, so, from that protoplasm up to

the most perfect man, we get one continuous life, one chain. This is evolution, and each evolution presupposes an involution. The whole of this life, which slowly manifests itself evolves itself from the protoplasm to the perfected human being – the incarnation of God on earth.

The whole of this series is but one life, and the whole of this manifestation must have been involved in that very protoplasm. This whole life, this very God on earth, was involved in it and slowly came out, manifesting itself slowly, slowly, and slowly. The highest expression must have been there in the germ state in minute form; therefore this one force, this whole chain, is the involution of that cosmic life which is everywhere.

That which does not die cannot live. For life and death are the obverse and reverse of the same coin. Life is another name for death, and death for life. One particular mode of manifestation is what we call life; another particular mode of manifestation of the same thing is what we call death.

The difference between life and death is one of degree; all differences in this world are of degree, and not of kind, because oneness is the secret of everything.

The sign of life is strength and growth. The sign of death is weakness. Variation is the sign of life, and it must be there. Life is love, and when a man ceases to do good to others, he is dead spiritually.

This life is but momentary, whether one has the knowledge of an angel or the ignorance of an animal. Life is but momentary, whether one has the poverty of the poorest man in rags or the wealth of the richest living person. Life is but momentary, whether one is a downtrodden man living in one of the big streets of the big cities or the Head of a State ruling over millions. Life

is but momentary, whether one has the most poetic temperament, or the cruelest one. There is but one solution, which is what humankind calls God and religion. If these were true, this life becomes explained; it becomes bearable, becomes enjoyable. Otherwise, life is but a useless burden.

The Vedanta Way of Life

‘The religions of the world are not contradictory or antagonistic. They are but various phases of one eternal religion. That one eternal religion is applied to different planes of existence and is applied to the opinions of various minds and various races. There never was my religion or yours, my national religion or your national religion; there never existed many religions, there is only the One Infinite religion that existed all through eternity and will ever exist. And this religion is expressing itself in various countries in various ways. Now, by religion is meant the Vedanta; the applications must vary according to different needs, surroundings and other circumstances of different nations,’ in the words of Swami Vivekananda.

In other words, Vedanta is the essence of all religions. It is not a new religion. It is as old as God Himself; it is not confined to any time and place; and it is now everywhere. The word ‘religion’, in its original meaning, is something that binds, and it is literally true in respect of *Vedanta*.

Reduced to its elements, Vedanta philosophy consists of three propositions. First is that man’s real nature is divine. Second is that the aim of human life is to realize this divine nature. Third is that all religions are essentially in agreement with the first two elements.

Vedanta asserts that the universe, which is perceived by our senses, is only in appearance. It is not what it seems. It is other than its outward aspect, which is subject to perpetual change. The hills, says Tennyson, are only shadows.

Vedanta also asserts that, beneath this appearance, there is an essential, unchanging reality, which it calls the Brahman,

the Godhead. The Brahman is existence itself, consciousness itself. The Brahman is also that indefinable quality called *Ananda*. This corresponds to ‘the peace of God, which passeth all understanding’ of the Bible. *Ananda* is not only ‘peace’ but also ‘bliss’, which alone gives the permanent kind of happiness.

No one can explain the Brahman, as the Brahman is beyond all sense perception. IT is beyond scientific analysis as such analysis necessarily depends upon the evidence of the senses.

The Brahman, being an essential reality, is omnipresent. IT is, therefore, within each one of us, within every creature and object. In other words, the Brahman is our real, essential nature. The Brahman is God-transcendent. IT is same as the *Atman* – God-immanent.

According to Vedanta, the aim of human life is to realize the *atman*, our essential nature, and hence our identity with the one underlying reality. To seek to realize my essential nature is to admit that I am dissatisfied with my nature as it is at present. It is to admit that I am dissatisfied with the kind of life I am now leading.

The way to realize this essential nature is by ceasing to be oneself. If one introspects, one realizes that one is but a constellation of desires and impulses, reflecting one’s environment. One mimics the social behavior of one’s community. Those around condition one’s actions, and one is subject to suggestion, climate, disease, etc. One is changing all the time, and has no essential external reality.

One’s reality, the essential nature, is clouded and hidden from one because of one’s egotism, which is asserted and reinforced by hundreds of daily actions. One feels one is separate and a unique individual every time one desires, fears or hates;

every time one boasts or indulges in vanity; every time one struggles to get something for oneself. One is assertive in one’s daily actions only because of egotism.

In truth, one is not apart from anything else in this universe. The scientist agrees that every living creature and every object are interrelated biologically, psychologically and physically. They are all of one entity.

To believe that one is not apart from everything else in the universe is not easy. To overcome this possessive attitude towards one’s actions, one is to stop taking credit for one’s successes. One is to stop bemoaning one’s failures and making excuses for them. One is to stop worrying about one’s results. One is to work for the sake of the work. One is to think of one’s body as an instrument of action of the *Atman*, and no more. All work done in this spirit is symbolic, like ritual. Then it becomes a form of worship.

Vedanta is both specific and universal. It has its all-embracing universal aspect, and also its specific aspect. A Vedanta way of life applies to both the dimensions duly integrated. It is the distilled wisdom of the Hindu spiritual tradition.

The Vedanta way of life is a seamless whole, an unified endeavor that moves smoothly, resolutely and joyfully toward the goal of spiritual awakening. This goal is what keeps our lives anchored. It is what enables us to make daily decisions. It is what enables us to engage or not to engage in specific activity.

In this integrated Vedanta way of life, our actions are in tandem with our words and our words do not betray our heart. Our subconscious state of mind does not conflict with a conscious mind, and the conscious mind does not engage in internal conflict. This way of life, as it is lived in private and in public, reflects our

most deeply held, cherished beliefs about the ultimate Reality and our relation to It. As a necessary corollary, it is our relation built with all other beings around.

First and foremost, our very *life* is our gospel. What we say about religion or spirituality does not carry conviction unless we live by what we say. People judge what we say by what we are. If there is wide disparity between our philosophy and our action, we need to mend the fissures in our personality so that we can live as deeply integrated a spiritual life as we are capable of.

We see many persons talking wonderfully about charity, equality and the rights of other people; but it is only in theory. Rarely do we come across someone who is able to carry theory into practice. The one who has such faculty of carrying everything into practice which he thinks is right harmonizes thoughts, words and actions. The Vedanta way of life is not just in talking the talk, but in walking the walk. If there is any deficiency in this approach, we are only parrots, not genuine spiritual seekers.

The light of truth illumines the Vedanta path. One need have great love for truth, and that much reckless abandon in seeking it. Great sages like Sri Ramakrishna renounce everything except truth. 'Through truth everything is attained'. Truth is both the way and the goal; it is direction to the destination and the destination itself.

A true person alone can have true knowledge. A true person is one who, having attained oneness with the Divine, does not mind having little, does not boast of accomplishments, is not concerned with success or failure, or with his or her own life or death. Above all, a true person is one who is wholly detached and utterly free.

Detachment, an essential quality of Vedanta way of life, is not synonymous with indifference. Detachment is not the opposite of love and concern. On the other hand, it is detachment that produces true love and selfless concern. Detachment means identifying with our real nature. It means really *being* ourselves in the highest sense of the term. It is acknowledging and responding to our innate purity, joyfulness, freedom and wisdom.

Detachment is the cornerstone of a committed spiritual life. It is a state of deep calm, arising from the full and harmonious integration of the emotional life under the influence of love. It is not coldness or indifference.

Detachment and love of God are intertwined in the Vedanta way of life. Real detachment is freedom from the lower desires, which pull us away from realizing our true nature and from attaining oneness with the Divine. Unless checked, the desires will prevent us from giving ourselves wholeheartedly to spiritual life. It is said that 'a thread cannot pass through the eye of a needle if it has the smallest fiber sticking out'. The Vedanta way of life means having the determination to continue struggling in our spiritual quest so that our carefully threaded life can enter into the eye of the needle of divine Reality.

Another important attribute is the patience to persevere against what appear to be obstacles most of which are self-imposed. This patience is what we call steadfastness. It means that we have to keep our spiritual goal always in our mental foreground. Otherwise, we just get distracted. Once distracted, one gets disinterested. Anyone who does things lukewarmly is close to falling and failing.

As is said, the true person is one who has true knowledge. True knowledge is the integrated vision of wholeness, the experience of the One that is all existence. There is no place

where the One does not exist. The subjective experience is that I am one with all Existence. This experience is, indeed, the crown of the Vedanta way of life.

This is best illustrated in what Merton, a Trappist monk, writes of his *sudden experience* on a street corner: ‘...it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of (everyone’s) heart, the depths of their hearts... the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God’s eyes... It is like a pure diamond, blazing with the invisible light of heaven. It is in everybody, and if we could see it we would see these billions of points of light coming together in the face and blaze of a sun that would make all the darkness and cruelty of life vanish completely... I have not programmed for this seeing; it is only given. But the gate of heaven is everywhere.’

This realization (vision) only corroborates what Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad-Gita: ‘One who, established in unity, worships Me who dwells in all beings, abides in Me.’

If the highest expression of spirituality is seeing God dwelling in the hearts of all, then to worship God is nothing but offering service to humankind. As Swami Vivekananda says, ‘he who sees Shiva in the poor, in the weak, and in the diseased really worships Shiva; and if he sees Shiva only in the image, his worship is but preliminary.’

To sum up, the Vedanta way of life always means starting from where we are, and starting itself is a triumph. Second, it means that success is inevitable in the sense that we are only discovering our real nature. We attain what is ours by our very nature of our being human. In the end, all of us, every one of us shall attain to the goal of life.

Whether we attain to the goal quickly or we attain to it over a prolonged period of time depends on our own sincere efforts. The crucial issue is that when once we embark on our journey in the right direction, we find it difficult to halt. The way of leading a Vedanta life is too difficult to resist. We find that our tenacity pays off with happiness and meaning pouring over our entire life, from the smallest detail to its highest goal. We experience that the Vedanta way of life is the best and the most joyful a human being can ever have. We find our life truly blessed, and our life will be a blessing to others around us.

The Hindu Way of Life

Most religions with their course of conduct, scriptural injunctions and prohibitions exercise control over their adherents, and modify their life styles. So is the case with Hinduism. The subtle distinction between the Vedanta way and the Hindu way of life is that the Vedanta way is what concerns the philosophy of eternity while the Hindu way is what concerns the ritual religious tradition, also known as the *Mimamsa* way of life. Everything in the life of a Hindu, from the religious point of view, is dictated by the religion of Hinduism.

The *Agniveshya grihyasutra* records that starting from inception in mother's womb until one is cremated on physical death, one is to follow scriptural codes. The religious law books, which govern the life of a Hindu, are replete with instructions about every action in his or her life. According to the ancient lawgiver and sage Manu, it is the *Sruti* (Veda) and the *Smriti* (traditions) that shall govern the Hindu society. No violation of this dictate will be condoned. Manu says, 'every twice-born man (*dwija*) who, relying on the institutes of dialectics, treats with contempt those two sources (of the sacred law), must be cast out by the virtuous as an atheist and a scorner of the Veda'.

Every important event of Hindu life has to be sanctified through religious observance. This ritualistic sanctification is a sacrament called *samskara*. There are several *samskaras* relating to marriage, the fire-ceremony sanctifying marriage (*kushandika*), the consummation of marriage (*garbhadana*), the ritualistic prayer for the birth of a male child (*pungsavana*), the prayer ritual for the well-being of the pregnant woman (*simonthotsavam*), the birth of a child (*jata-karma*), the naming of a baby (*namakarana*), giving a baby its first morsel of food (*annaprasana*), a baby's first hair-cut (*chudakarana*), the ritualistic piercing of a baby's ear (*karnavedha*), introduction of a child to learning

(*vidyarambha*), investing a child with the sacred thread (*upanayana*), returning-home ceremony after a student completes education at the teacher's home, etc.

Apart from the above, there are rituals prescribed for the funeral, the post- funeral honoring of the departed, the ceremony connected with the foundation of a new building, entering a newly built-house, the attainment of puberty for girls, spiritual initiation from a teacher (*diksha*), etc.

Hinduism recognizes four goals of human life. They are *kama*, *artha*, *dharma* and *moksha*. Of them, *kama*, the gratification of the urge for sensual pleasure is considered the lowest as such urge is common to both *homo-sapien* and animal species. *Artha*, the urge to acquire and accumulate worldly possessions, is noticeable mainly in human beings, not so much in animals and other subhuman beings. *Dharma*, the observance of religious duties, is no other than training in self-sacrifice. *Kama* and *artha* are rooted in selfishness, while *dharma* is not. *Moksha*, deliverance or liberation, can be achieved only through the realization of God.

Hinduism, which believes in God's omnipresence, believes in the presence of divinity in every human being. Divinity is present equally in all human beings, though not manifest in everybody the same way. The purpose of spiritual practice is to manifest this inherent divinity. When this divinity becomes fully manifest in one, one becomes spiritually illumined or liberated; one is said to have attained *moksha*.

This divinity is the true self of man. It forms the very core of man's existence. One can give up whatever is extraneous, but not that which is the very core of one's being. Sooner or later, this true self, divinity, must manifest itself. All without any exception will have to attain to *moksha*. Conscious effort at

sincere spiritual practice, however, helps one to achieve the goal faster.

While delineating the laws that govern the Hindu society, the sages have considered *moksha* or liberation as the most important goal of human life. The *samskaras* or sanctifying rites have been so devised as to make the people aware of this spiritual goal by associating all their activities with God.

Self-sacrifice is the most important means to achieve the ultimate goal of *moksha* or liberation. All religious and social traditions are unanimous that the root-cause of all evil is selfishness. Conversely, unselfishness or self-sacrifice is the bottom-line of all that is good. That is why it is said that ‘unselfishness is God.’

According to the Hindu laws (*dharma*), all persons are expected to go through four stages of life, namely, *brahmacharya*, *garhasthya*, *vanaprastha* and *sannyasa*. The sages have devised the stages of life this way to lead people gradually from the life of enjoyment to ultimate renunciation. The derivative meaning of the word ‘*sannyasa*’ is ‘supreme renunciation’. The greatest renunciation is nothing but selfishness.

The parting advice of a teacher to his disciples on completion of their study, according to Hindu law, is to be truthful, self-sacrificing, generous, respectful to parents, teachers and guests, and to those who are noble and great.

The marriage ceremony in the Hindu tradition is an elaborate religious ritual for the bridegroom and the bride. The ritual mainly consists of fasting, prayer and worship. Their married life, they are informed in the ritual, is for the practice of *dharma*, the practice of self-sacrifice. The bride who turns into wife is called *sahadharmini* meaning ‘the partner in spiritual life’.

The bridegroom is informed that he is to be a good husband meaning that he is to make self-sacrifice willingly and lovingly to his wife. Similarly, a good wife is to make willing and loving self-sacrifice for her husband. The same is true for a good parent, good son, good daughter and a good friend.

The *Mahanirvana Tantra* records the duties of a householder thus. ‘The goal of a householder is to realize God. To achieve this goal, he should perform all his duties as enjoined by the scriptures. He should constantly work by surrendering the fruits of his actions to God. He should earn a living through honest means and remember that his life is for the service of God, the poor and the helpless. He should always try to please his parents looking upon them as tangible representatives of God.’

The scriptures list out the various ways in which a householder is to conduct himself mainly to ensure that he serves his family and the society at large in an enlightened way for harmonious living. The scriptures also record that a Hindu need not strictly observe the scriptural injunctions and prohibitions in a foreign land if the circumstances there are not conducive to such observance.

The Hindu laws such as *Apastamba Smriti*, *Manu Smriti*, and the scriptures such as *Narada Purana* strongly condemn the dowry system in society. *Manu* says that ‘no father who knows (the sacred law) must take even the smallest gratuity (dowry) for his daughter; for a man who, through avarice, takes a gratuity, is a seller of his offspring.’ This law has been followed more in breach than in practice, initially seeking dowry from the father of the bridegroom, later converted to seeking dowry from the father of the bride. Either way, it has been a social evil with no religious sanctity. It is hoped that this practice will be done away with greater spiritual realization.

The Yogic Way of Life

In the words of Swami Vivekananda, ‘each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature, internal and external. Do this by work or worship or psychic control or philosophy – by one or more or all of these – and be free.’

Using any one or more or all these paths, we are to return to our real state of pure existence, consciousness and bliss. In this pilgrimage, we have to transform ourselves within and without. This becomes possible by following a Yogic way of life – a lifestyle of peace and poise, health and happiness, and energy and efficiency. This lifestyle is far removed from lethargy and resistance to action, slavery to senses and comforts, and tensions and stresses.

Living the *yogic* way involves using the innate freedom within us at physical, *pranic*, mental, emotional and intellectual levels. Freedom is a choice. Intelligence manifests this freedom. Creativity springs from freedom within us. We can use this freedom to uplift or degrade ourselves. When we use it to uplift ourselves, we call it *yoga*; when we use it otherwise, it is *roga* (disease). This freedom built at the physical, mental, emotional, intellectual and super-conscious levels is the divinity within us. As we uplift ourselves in the *yogic* way, this freedom goes on increasing.

We have to exercise our freedom from the beginning. If we follow the path of *Jnana-yoga*, we are to exercise discrimination as to what is permanent and what is not, and choose the former (*nitya-anitya-vastu-viveka*). This is best explained in Katha-Upanisad. ‘Of the two, the preferable and the pleasurable approaches, the man of intelligence, having considered them, separates the two. The intelligent one selects the electable in

preference to the delectable; the non-intelligent one selects the delectable for the sake of growth and protection (of the body).’

If we choose the path of *Karma-yoga*, we shun *tamas* and *rajas*, and choose the way of *sattva*, the moral and the ethical way. After teaching scriptures, the *guru* imparts the benedictory instruction to his pupils to live the ethical way of life. Taittiriya-Upanisad explains it thus. ‘Speak the truth; practise righteousness. Make no mistake about study. Having offered proper gift to the teacher, do not cut off the line of progeny. There should be no deviation from righteous activity. There should be no mistake about protection of yourself. Do not be careless about learning and teaching.’

On the path of *Raja-yoga*, we follow *yama* – the don’ts, namely, non-injury, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence and non-possessiveness, and *niyama* – the dos, namely, contentment, austerity, study and surrender to God. To overcome difficulties on the path, the mind is to be steadied. Patanjali’s *Yogasutras* states thus. ‘The mind is made clear by meditation on friendliness towards the happy, compassion for the suffering, goodwill towards the virtuous and disinterest towards the sinful.’

Yoga-Vaasista explains the *yogic* way of life thus. ‘By the purity of food and dwelling, by the proper contemplation (or investigation) of the meaning of the scriptures, by the renunciation of enjoyments, by giving up anger, by serving virtuous people and by the intense, uninterrupted practice of *pranayama*, the vital energies become exceedingly obedient to one familiar with them, on account of his mastery of the techniques of controlling them, just as all the servants are controlled by the master.’

Bhakti-yoga directs us to shun our gross love, *kama*, and to choose the real love, *prema*, which is disinterested and without any expectation of return. According to *Narada Bhakti Sutras*,

true love is to direct all secular and religious activities towards the Lord. In the gross form of love, self-interest overwhelms. It only leads to sensual experience, which can never be blissful.

As a *karma-yogi*, one is to practise the art of attunement to the deeper and subtler layers of mind characterized by calmness, peace and tranquility. One is to learn to work in relaxation, and act in blissful awareness. As a *raja-yogi*, one is to act as if one were meditating on a single thought in a state of effortlessness, expansiveness and awareness. As a *bhakti-yogi* (devotee), one is to surrender one's mind and intellect to one's beloved Lord. As a *jnana-yogi*, one is to act as a witness considering that everything happens according to the Divine Will.

The *yogic* way of life involves setting up a spiritual goal, and efforts to realize it. The efforts are two-fold – *abhyasa* and *vairagya*. *Abhyasa* is constant, uninterrupted and dedicated practice for an indefinite length of time. It is to end only on attainment. This practice is to be rendered in *vairagya*, a spirit of total renunciation and detachment. Renunciation does not mean renouncing the world of which one is part; but it means that the spirit within has no attachment to the physical objects or action.

The Islamic Way of Life

Al-Quran is the holy book of Muslims. It is the very foundation of the life of Muslims and the source of their energy. It is the fountainhead of inspiration resulting in fulfillment in this life and the lives hereafter.

The Quran is the book of principles of truths, which, if implemented, will enable people to be free of the cycle of history. It guides mankind towards right conduct, distinguishing the right from the wrong.

The foundation of Islam rests on five pillars, namely, *Namaaz*, *Roza*, *Zakat*, *Tauhid* and *Haj*. *Namaaz* relates to prayer, which is to be performed five times a day. Each prayer is associated with a particular time of the day. *Roza*, meaning fasting, purifies the body and the soul. The holy month of Ramzan signifies the month of fasting. It is compulsory to fast in this month. It is the faith of the Muslims that Allah forgives all the sins in this holy month. *Zakat* relates to charity. It instructs the Muslims to part with a portion of their worldly wealth to help those in need, and further the cause of truth. *Haj* is an obligation of Islam. *Haj* brings Muslims from all parts of the world to Allah's sacred house or the *Holy Kaba* to create a form of social and spiritual unity.

According to Quran, Allah has distinguished man from the rest of his creation endowing him with humanism and intellect. This endowment enables man to differentiate the good from the bad. Islam does not preach violence or terrorism; it teaches one to protect the innocents. *Jehad* or the religious wars are to protect and propagate Islam. These wars are to be fought not in the field, but in the minds of the people.

Love, tolerance, unity, faith and charity are the essence of Islam. A true Muslim is one who sincerely follows these principles, and who treads on the path of virtue and righteousness aspiring for proximity to Allah, the omnipotent and the omniscient.

The Christian Way of Life

The Christian Way of Life is mainly based on the Holy Bible containing both the Old and the New Testaments. The orthodox Christian accepts the Bible as the inspired Word of God, and as God's progressive revelation of Himself to mankind.

The Christian's God is a personal God, eternal, self-existent, infinite, infallible, and independent. The Christian tradition believes, 'God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them (Genesis 1:27).' This means that the image of God in man lies in his mental and moral makeup. The tradition believes that men are saved through faith; men are brought into union with God not through their own efforts, but through faith in Jesus Christ alone. Though Christianity is an exclusive religion from this point of view, it aims at making people like Christ, or godlike in character or disposition.

The Christian way of life is mainly based on morality with fair play and harmony among individuals, harmonizing inner life of each individual and the general purpose of human life as a whole. The Christian morality rests on the four cardinal (pivotal) virtues, namely, prudence, temperance, justice and fortitude.

Prudence motivates people to be simple, single minded, affectionate and teachable. This virtue leads one to find one's intelligence being sharpened. Temperance is, in regard to pleasures, going to the right length and no further and certainly not total abstinence. Justice includes honesty, give and take, truthfulness, keeping promises and all that what we call fairness. Fortitude includes both kinds of courage – the kind that faces danger as well as the kind that 'sticks it' under pain. One can practise these virtues only when one is so determined. The

Christian tradition reminds its adherents to follow and practise these virtues.

The Christian tradition emphasizes on avoidance of pride and inculcation of humility as an essential attribute of character, for pride is what leads to every vice and is a complete anti-god state of mind.

The Christian way of life expects each person to work, and every one's work is to produce something good. It follows that every one must work in order that he may have something to give to those in need. Thus, charity – sharing with the needy – is an essential part of Christian morality. The Christian tradition underlines the fact that human beings judge one another by their external actions while God judges them by their moral choices.

One cardinal rule the Christian faith promotes is, 'thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself'. In Christian morals 'thy neighbor' includes 'thy enemy'. This rule is a continuation of its spiritual prayer: 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those that sin against us'. The suggestion is that God forgives our sins subject to the only condition that we forgive those that sin against us. This makes us realize that God loves us, not for any nice or attractive qualities we think we have, but just because we are the things called 'selves'. For really there is nothing else in us to love, creatures like us who actually find hatred such a pleasure that to give it up is like giving up a hardened habit.

The Sikh Way of Life

The word Sikh is derived from the Sanskrit word *shishya* meaning a disciple or a learner. Thus, those that followed Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion, came to be known as Sikhs. In the Sikh faith, reverence for the *guru* (preceptor) is the cardinal quality, and devotion to the teachings a sacred duty. In the Sikh way of life, great emphasis is laid upon practising moral and spiritual values.

The Sikh way of life is based broadly on the life and teachings of Guru Nanak. He says, 'truth is high, but higher still is truthful living... This world is the abode of God and the True One lives therein.'

Guru Nanak believed that it is possible to live pure among the impurities of life. 'As the lotus liveth unstained in water, as the duck floateth carefree on the stream, so doth one cross the sea of existence, one's mind attuned to the Word. One liveth detached, enshrining the One Lord in the mind, shorn of hope, living in the midst of hope.'

The Sikh way of life is based on three essential teachings of Guru Nanak. The first is to remember God; the second is to earn one's livelihood through honest means; and the third is to share the fruits of one's labor with others. To ensure equality, the Sikh way of life has promoted the institutions of *sangat* and *pangat*. *Sangat* means that all sit in a congregation; and *pangat* means that all partake food from the community kitchen, sitting in one row with no distinction of high or low.

The Sikh tradition advocates worship of the *Akal* (Timeless God). The Sikh temple, called Gurdwara, is not only a place of worship, but also serves as a shelter for those without shelter,

and a refuge for the destitute and the helpless. It is a place where all the visitors irrespective of their religious affiliation are served free food, and provided shelter and protection.

The Sikh tradition expects its followers to rise early in the morning and, after bath, meditate on the name of God so that the mind and the body become pure. Each Sikh prays to God at different times, importantly in the morning and in the night before going to bed. An important dictum of the tradition is, 'of all the religions, the best religion is to repeat God's name and to do pious deeds'. The daily prayer of the Sikhs ends on this noble thought: 'Thy Name, Thy Glory, be forever triumphant, Nanak, and, in Thy Will, may peace and prosperity come to one and all.'

The Buddhist Way of Life

The basic truths of Buddhism are the Four Noble Truths enunciated by the Buddha. They are the *dukkha* - the existence of suffering, *dukkhasamudaya* – the origin of suffering which is nothing but craving, *dukkhanirodha* – the removal of this suffering and *dukkhanirodhamagga* – the way to the removal of this suffering. These Four Noble Truths constitute the Buddhist way of life.

Buddha says. 'One thing only I teach - suffering and the destruction of suffering. Now this is the Noble Truth of Suffering. Birth is suffering; disease is suffering; death is suffering; sorrow, grief, pain and lamentation are suffering; union with unpleasant things is suffering; separation from the beloved objects is suffering; unsatisfied desires are suffering. In short, the five groups of clinging are suffering.'

If there was no suffering or disharmony, and if all were well with the world, there would be no reason for us to follow any religious faith whatsoever.

Now what is the cause of the daily struggle among human beings? Buddha says that *tanha* (in Pali or *trishna* in Sanskrit or craving or greed), which is within us all, is at the bottom of all the troubles of the world. It is the root-cause of avarice, anger, hatred, malice, rivalry, jealousy, envy, hypocrisy, deceit, arrogance and ignorance. When we realize that the cause of the suffering is within us, it is within our power to remove this cause and attain to happiness.

If one sincerely and honestly looks within one's heart for the cause of one's unhappiness, one will realize that it is due to craving for this or that thing which is present in one's mind. No amount of prayer will remove it. No belief in any doctrine will

eradicate it. No outward agency can eliminate it. One can remove it only by self-effort at purification. One can only consciously overcome it.

To clear the mind of the craving is the process of self-purification enunciated by the Buddha as the Noble Eightfold-path. The Eightfold-path consists of right views, right aspirations, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. Buddhism declares, so does the Hindu tradition, that it is not impossible to achieve this self-purification, though it may sound impossible.

All human beings have the capacity to overcome 'craving' if they train themselves in a particular way. If there is no end to craving, to selfishness, there is no end to suffering. The end to selfishness or craving is the beacon-light to a better existence, not after death, but here in this life itself on the earth. Such life is free from strife; in the absence of greed, there is no suffering. Whether we achieve it or not depends entirely on us.

'Right views' implies positive thinking and understanding. 'Right aspirations' implies having proper goals to reach. 'Right speech' implies telling the truth and avoiding slander. 'Right action' implies refraining from causing injury to any other being in thought, word or deed. 'Right livelihood' implies earning one's living by fair means. 'Right effort' implies bearing good thoughts, and avoiding bad thoughts. 'Right mindfulness' implies developing awareness consciously. 'Right concentration' implies awakening the latent spiritual energy to attain complete knowledge. When the Eightfold-path is traversed, one overcomes greed, anger, hatred, ignorance and other evils whence arises enlightenment, which brings in serenity, peace, contentment and perfect happiness.

What is right or what is wrong, according to the Buddhist tradition, begs of an answer. As the removal of suffering is the main purpose of the Buddhist way of life, every thought, word or action that would go to increase the suffering is wrong. Conversely, every thought, word or action that would help in removing the suffering is right.

Buddhism does not predicate truth or falsehood of any way of life. One is to determine the course based on what one chooses. Buddha says succinctly thus: 'Do not believe anything on mere hearsay. Do not believe traditions because they are old, and have been handed down through many generations. Do not believe anything on account of rumors, or because people talk a great deal about them. Do not believe simply because the written testimony of some ancient sage is shown to be there. Never believe anything because presumption is in its favor, or because the custom of many years inclines you to take it as true. Do not believe anything on the mere authority of your teachers or priests. Whatsoever, according to your own experience, and after thorough investigation, agrees with your reason, and is conducive to your own weal and welfare as well as to those of other living beings, that accept as true and shape your life in accordance therewith.'

No doctrine, which cannot stand the test of scrutiny and reasoning, shall be accepted. This freedom to accept what is considered true and beneficial, and reject what is considered false and non-beneficial is one of the greatest gifts of the Buddha to the world. There can be no better freedom of human choice in any religious tradition.

Emperor Ashoka, the follower of the Buddhist way of life, went into history not because of his conquests of the neighboring kingdoms, but because of his deliberately abandoning warfare as an instrument of state policy, even where expansion

was assured. Instead of conducting warfare, he sent messengers of peace to teach morality, kindness and goodwill to the neighboring kingdoms. He followed the principles of truth, *dharma*, peace, love and *ahimsa* or non-violence in the conduct of public affairs in his empire, the five cardinal human values that constitute the cornerstone of the Indian psyche.

If our dealings with our fellow beings are dishonest, treacherous, arrogant, cruel or un-sympathetic, our prayers or worship or repetition of sacred hymns will be of no avail. It is in our dealings with our fellow beings, in the small acts of kindness or help, that we reflect the level of our spiritual growth. The growth is gradual from small acts of kindness to the level of total detachment resulting finally in enlightenment.

What the Buddha says is quite revealing to a spiritual seeker: 'Be a light unto yourself; be a refuge unto yourself; there is no external refuge. All component things are impermanent. Work out your salvation in earnestness.'

The Jain Way of Life

The Jain way of life prescribes thirty-five virtues for a *marganusari* – one who follows the path shown by *Jinas*. One is to cultivate these virtues to develop the right attitude of living and not to stray from the spiritual path. These virtues are listed as obligatory duties, derogations that are to be discarded, virtues to be cultivated and endeavors to be carried out with diligence.

The obligatory duties include a householder pursuing some kind of business, trade or profession, not of an ignoble or degrading nature. He is to act in a just and honest way, and in proportion to his capital. If he is to serve under another, he is to act in proportion to his strength. The business he does shall not harm other men, animals, fish, birds or insects. The business, therefore, excludes that of a butcher, brewer, wine merchant, arms dealer or anything that involves destruction of life. When he earns money honestly, he remains peaceful and can enjoy his wealth without any disturbance.

The layman is not to marry from his lineage. One is to marry from a different *gotra*, but with similar character, taste, culture, language, etc. This is to result in harmonious relationship without any discord and misunderstanding. He is to respect parents and elders. He is to serve the ascetics who come to him for *bhiksha* as well as guests with due respect. He is to help the needy and destitute. He is to maintain his dependents and make them work for the wellbeing of the whole family. He is to live in a house not accessible to thieves, and cannot be entered by undesirable people. He is to dress according to his means in a decent way. He is to incur expenses in proportion to his income. He is to drink and eat at the proper time suitable to his constitution. He is to eat food only at home and fast when he suffers from indigestion.

The derogations include giving up calumny, betraying trust, deceiving and cheating; giving up anger, pride, deceit, greed, attachment and aversion; avoiding places of danger to life such as battlefields, places of epidemics and famine; and giving up meat eating, intoxicants and crimes that might lead to imprisonment. He is to perform his household duties properly, and shall not neglect his religious duties.

The virtues to be cultivated include acquiring the habit of discretion between the right and the wrong act, and to keep away from sinful acts. He is to be farsighted and is to plan for the future needs of his family. While taking up any responsibility, he is to consider his strengths and weaknesses. He is always to keep his temperament, voice and appearance gentle and serene.

The endeavors to be carried out include keeping the company of noble people and admiring their virtues. One is to have compassionate attitude towards all, and help everyone without selfishness. One is to express gratitude to all who help one, and be humble.

A layman should do *svadhyaya*, study of holy texts, everyday. He is to listen to the discourses of monks. He is to try to understand *tattvas*, essential truths, the meaning of *dharmasastras*, etc to know the path of right faith, right knowledge and right conduct.

The Jain way of life prescribes the above code of conduct for its adherents so that they gain material prosperity while they advance spiritually. This shows that the *Jain Acharyas* have given very deep thought to practical day-to-day life of the laity. All these qualities make a layman spiritually conscious, while making his life peaceful and harmonious.

According to the Jain tradition, those who desire to rise in spiritual line must follow five *anuvratas* (primary vows) prescribed for a householder. They consist of observance of non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, chastity and non-possession. A householder shall also practise *dana* (charity), *sheela* (virtuous conduct), *tapas* (austerity) and *bhavana* (pure thoughts).

Non-violence is the attitude of equality towards all living creatures, leading to compassion and kindness to all living beings. Non-violence in Jainism embraces not only human beings, but also animals, birds, plants, creatures on earth, in air and in water, vegetables, etc. It is the holy law of compassion extended to body, mind and word of a living being. Lord Mahavira says: 'All living beings desire to live. They detest sorrow and death, and desire a long and happy life. Hence, one should not inflict pain on any creature, nor have any feeling of antipathy or enmity. One should be friendly towards all creatures.'

All the other vows of Jainism flow from the vow of non-violence. Truthfulness is essential to keep order and harmony in society. One is to practise it constantly and consistently to maintain integrity in the society. One is to observe the vow of non-stealing to earn one's living by honest means. One violates the vow of *aparigraha*, non-possession by accepting and holding what one does not need. One needs to practise the vow of chastity to maintain social morality.

As for spiritual advancement, the Jain way of life stresses on six essential practices. They are *samaikya*, *chaturvinshati stava*, *vandana*, *pratikramana*, *kayotsarga* and *pratyakhyana*.

Samaikya means to be devoid of attachment and aversion, to be indifferent to life or death, gain or loss, fortune or misfortune, friend or foe, joy or sorrow, etc. It means *samatva* or equanimity. The Jain way of life requires a householder to

practise this principle for at least 48 minutes every day. It means that, during this spell, he is to remain aloof from his domestic and business activity and spend it in contemplation, meditation or spiritual study.

Chaturvinshati stava means worship of the twenty-four *Tirthankaras* by reciting their *stotras* and *bhajans*. *Tirthankaras* are beings free from attachment and aversion. By their worship, people may cultivate virtues to some extent in their lives.

Vandana is to offer one's reverential salutations to the *sadhus* (sages) and *sadhvis* (nuns). Association with such holy people results in development of virtues.

Pratikramana is a process of contemplation and introspection to be done in the morning and in the evening. A Jain is supposed to introspect in the morning and in the evening whether he is developing good qualities. If he has committed any mistake, he is to repent for it and ensure its avoidance thereafter.

Kayotsarga means literally abandonment of body in one steady posture. It is to be done in a posture suitable to the seeker, sitting or standing, for meditation. This helps in keeping the mind under control.

Pratyakhyana enjoins on a seeker to take vows everyday to purify his life. He is ever to keep the distinction in view between the body and the soul. As the body perishes, the soul has no death and lasts forever. The seeker is ever to seek self-fulfillment and self-realization.

The Jain way of life focuses on a combination of right faith, right knowledge and right conduct to tread the path of salvation. These constitute the three jewels of Jainism. Lord Mahavira says: 'By knowledge one understands the nature of

substances; by faith one believes in them; by conduct one puts an end to the flow of *karma*; and by austerity one attains purity.' The Jain way of life stresses on simplicity and nobility in human conduct.

The principles of Jainism are universal in character and applicable to all societies in all times.

The Jewish Way of Life

According to the Jewish tradition, the art of living is the art of being holy. The *Book of Leviticus* records the holy saying thus: 'Be holy, as I, the Unconditioned One, am holy'.

What does it mean to be holy? Judaism offers two answers. The first focuses on the virtues seekers are to cultivate. The second focuses on the behaviors we need to master if we are to live holy lives.

The virtues are the thirteen attributes of God experienced by Moses; he hears a divine voice calling out the nature of God – Yod, Hay, Vav, Hay, Compassion, Tenderness, Patience, Kindness, Awareness, Love, Freedom, Forbearance and Forgiveness. The first four attributes are stated to be the letters of God's Divine Name. They are virtues that cannot be translated into any human language. They are to be cultivated in the deepest mystical union with God as the 'I AM'.

The other nine attributes are known virtues, clear and achievable. If we are to live holy lives, we are to live with compassion, tenderness, patience, kindness, awareness, love, freedom, forbearance and forgiveness.

The Jewish way of life includes both a virtuous mindset and an active engagement with physical reality. These virtues have to come alive in specific behaviors. This becomes possible when we conduct ourselves with justice and kindness, and walk in spiritual union with God. The way of holiness is the specific way we walk through life as God's partners, the holy caretakers and caregivers of life on this planet, and of the planet itself.

This way of life focuses on three categories of behavior that God's partners have to honour. The first category is 'doing

justly'. Doing justly obligates us to three spiritual practices. One is ethical consumption. It means that one is obligated to care for oneself, for others, for animals, and for nature. The second is 'just use' of finances. One is to take care to earn wealth ethically and use it wisely. One is to donate a percentage of one's income to help those in need. This is not a matter of charity, but of justice. The third is perfecting the world. One is obligated to support those organizations and efforts one believes will make the world a more just, kind, sustainable and holy place.

The second category is loving-kindness. Loving-kindness obligates us to four spiritual practices. One relates to acts of kindness. Acts of kindness put other people before us. When we put other people before us, we awaken to the fact that other people are part of us, and that all life is part of the Greater Self that is God. Kindness is a spiritual discipline that helps the ego see beyond itself. The second is avoidance of hateful talk. Words have power, both creative and destructive. We are to use our words to heal rather than to hurt. The third is embracing the stranger. Loving your neighbor and welcoming the stranger require an opening of self. We have to cultivate openness and friendship for others, freeing us from the shadow of 'otherness'. The fourth is making households peaceful. We are to celebrate family, and improve our ability to love, befriend and look after other members of the family. We are to condemn violence in whatever form it occurs, learn to live in peace with others, and help those who suffer from abuse.

The third category is walking humbly with God, cultivating spiritual intimacy by engaging in practices that free the self from the illusion of self. Spiritual intimacy obligates us to five spiritual practices.

One is to set a day of mindfulness. This is to set aside generally the seventh day for rest and mindfulness. This is for

remembering and giving thanks for all that you have and are. This is in the nature of a refuge from the cravings of self and a delight for the soul. The second is learning sacred scriptures and ethical teachings that remind us of our obligation to be holy. This study is ordained once a week to reclaim deep insight into eternal virtues. The third is meditation and contemplative prayer. Meditation is the practice of moving from self to selflessness, from focusing on the physical being to awakening to the Ground of Being. One is to meditate and pray every day. The fourth is perfecting oneself. Each night the seeker is to review what has happened during the day and account for the degree of holiness he has lived. He is to note the errors and make a vow to correct them, and not to repeat. Similarly, he recalls the people that have helped him, and vows to thank them. The fifth is the way of blessing. A blessing is a statement of thanks that cultivates the deep sense of gratitude that is a vital part of the holy way of living. The recitation of blessings requires one to know what is happening, and in that way, to notice not only what is being done, but also what more can be done to do the bidding of the Divine.

The Scientific Way of Life

A scientist is to find his bearing in this world of ideas, experiments and analyses. He is to be dedicated to the search for deeper and deeper connections between observed phenomena. But the key words are ‘search’ and ‘experiment’. Science is ultimately experimental in that refined experiments would decide whether an elaborate theory is valid and relevant. Theory and experiment are complementary tasks. There is no theory that does not originate an experiment, and no refined experiment is possible without adequate theory.

In any new research, the outcome is not predetermined. There are always surprises. When these surprises come, they take time to assimilate. Each research project puts the entire body of knowledge to test. This naturally means that all existing knowledge is only tentative. Yesterday’s speculation may be today’s canon; or it may disappear totally. There seems to be no limitation to the domain of scientific study. The boundaries, of what is known and of what is knowable, ever expand.

What a scientist does is continuous study coupled with contemplation. He is disciplined in life keeping his skills in continuous practice. The depth, breadth and familiarity with existing knowledge contribute to the quality and versatility of a research scientist.

Being a scientist is to participate in a magnificent adventure. Science is a cooperative undertaking, and no single person’s creation. A scientist learns from others’ discoveries, and in turn contributes his. The scientist continues to be a student forever and, at the same time, be a teacher. The greatest satisfaction for a scientist is recognition that his work has advanced science, and opened pathways for others as well as himself.

A scientist thus functions in a universal family of scientists extended all over the globe and all times. He is a heir to the riches of science. Yet, the dominating principle is direct personal experience. This is as true of a laboratory experience as an abstract theorist.

The reward of such a dedicated life is true immortality. When a particular scientist is no more, his contribution to science is remembered and worked upon. He is also immortal in the sense that his students continue his work.

The great benefit a scientist derives when alive is the life of dedication and contemplation. For him, life is a continuous meditation in a realm far removed from the irritations of the day-to-day life. Scientific work is, no doubt, absorbing, but it is also quite strenuous. In spite of the serious strain, the joy of a genuine discovery or contribution is overwhelming and indescribable.

The true joy of a successful scientist is at the moment of discovery, which is also the moment of his insight – inner sight. The scientist is only aware of the discovery, without being aware from where the discovery has arisen. He is a seer, and in the discovery he loses himself. This is a joy unrelated to others. The accounts of several great scientists attest to this experience.

The way of life of a great scientist is in the nature of spiritual advancement. It is not accidental. In spiritual search, as in scientific research, all testimony and tradition remain grand hypotheses until they become part of one's personal experience. There is no conflict for a true scientist with religion. He treats the religious doctrine as a strong suggestion for consideration, but decides himself whether it agrees with his chosen discipline.

We need to have opportunities of dialogues and discussions on belief systems just as we have in various scientific disciplines.

To discuss is neither to elevate nor to denigrate a body of knowledge without proper examination. Just as we tentatively accept some scientific doctrines as tentative hypotheses, it is only natural to accept spiritual doctrines also as tentative hypotheses. But every hypothesis deserves confrontation with experiment. It is this tentative acceptance and never ending confrontation with direct experience that befits a scientific way of life. Anything less would be betraying it.

So is the case with a spiritual seeker. If and when he practises the austere way of life, he is no longer a lay man, but a scientist, as far as his inner life is concerned. The seeker is to examine his personal experience with the same rigor and precision as a scientist does in his scientific work. While the scientific experience is 'public' in that the same experiment should give the same results irrespective of which competent scientist does the work, personal experience is not necessarily accessible to others. Being a scientist does not take away spiritual experience if he critically evaluates it within his inner-self.

Ultimately the value of a belief system lies in its critical examination; and the value of a theory lies in its direct application to knowledge.

6. Spiritual Experience

Non-rational creatures do not look before or after, but live in the animal eternity of a perpetual present. Instinct is their animal grace and constant inspiration. They are never tempted to live otherwise than in accord with their own animal *dharma*.

Reason, on the other hand, is a very important instrument in the life of man. Thanks to the power of reason and language, man lives nostalgically, apprehensively and hopefully in the past, the future as well as the present. He has no instincts to tell him what to do. He must rely on personal cleverness rather than inspiration from the divine nature of things. He finds himself in a condition of chronic civil war between passion and prudence. On a higher level of awareness and ethical sensibility, he finds himself in conflict between egotism and dawning spirituality.

This 'wearisome condition of humanity' is the indispensable prerequisite of spiritual enlightenment. Man must live in time to be able to advance into eternity. He is to live on the spiritual level, not on the animal level. He must be conscious himself as a separate ego in order to be able consciously to transcend separate selfhood. He must battle with the lower self in order to identify himself with the higher self within him. He must make use of his cleverness in order to pass beyond cleverness to the intellectual vision of Truth, the immediate, unitive knowledge of the divine Ground.

Reason and its works are not and cannot be a proximate means of union with God. The proximate means is intellect or spirit. In the ultimate analysis, the use and purpose of reason is to create the internal and external conditions favorable to its own transfiguration by and into spirit. Intellect and reason are two powers, but distinct as the perfect and the imperfect. The intellect

means an intimate penetration of truth. The reason means only an enquiry and discourse.

Some thinkers question the very basis of the eternal Ground being unitively known by human minds at all. One is to realize that man is not only a body and a psyche, but also a spirit. He can, at will, live on the merely human plane. Or he can live in harmony and even in union with the divine Ground of his being. The body is always in time; the spirit is always timeless. The spirit is within and beyond the man's psyche, 'uncreated and uncreatable'. This is the *atman* akin to or even identical with the Brahman. The spirit remains always what it eternally is.

But man is so constituted that his psyche cannot always remain identified with the spirit. In the statement 'At one time I am eternal, at another time I am in time', the word 'I' stands for the psyche, which passes from time to eternity when it is identified with the spirit, and passes again from eternity to time when it identifies itself with the body either voluntarily or under compulsion.

Good men spiritualize their mind-bodies. Bad men incarnate and mentalize their spirits. The completely spiritualized mind-body does not go anywhere when the person dies for he is already, actually and consciously where everyone has always potentially been without knowing. The person, who has not, in this life, gone into the eternal principle of all states of being, goes at death into some particular state, which is a matter of conjecture.

According to Buddhism and *Vedanta*, that which survives death is not the personality. It may be the joint product of a persistent consciousness and a modification of the psychic medium. If this conjecture is true, it is possible for a given human being to survive in more than one posthumous form. His 'soul' – the non-personal ground and the principle of past and future

personalities - may go marching on in one mode of being, while the traces of the psychic medium may become the origin of the new individualized existences, having quite other modes of being.

‘Experience’ as emotion about God is incompatible with ‘experience’ as immediate awareness of God by a pure heart which has mortified even its most exalted emotions.

Self-reproach is painful. But the very pain is a reassuring proof that the self is still intact. So long as attention is fixed on the delinquent ego, it cannot be fixed upon God. The ego, which lives upon attention and dies only when it is withheld, cannot be dissolved in the divine Ground.

Without repentance or ‘change of mind’, there can be no beginning of the spiritual life. This change of mind is normally accompanied by sorrow and self-loathing. But these emotions are not to be allowed to become a settled habit of remorse. Faults will turn to good provided we use them to our own humiliation, without slackening in the effort to correct ourselves. Discouragement serves no useful purpose.

The real way of profiting by the humiliation of one’s own faults is to face them in their true hideousness, without ceasing to hope in God, while hoping nothing from the self. Though emotion is to be the source of spiritual life, it is not to drown spirituality in its own canard.

There are four kinds of spiritual discipline (*dhyana*). First, it is the discipline practised by the ignorant; second, it is devoted to the examination of meaning; third, it is contemplation of the Absolute; and fourth, it is oneness with the Absolute.

The discipline practised by the ignorant is the one of contemplatives who, considering that the body is transient, impure

and full of suffering, and starting from that stage, advance by stages until they reach the cessation of all thought, the stage where there are no thoughts.

The discipline devoted to the examination of meaning is the one practised by those who, having gone beyond the egolessness of things, beyond individuality and generality, proceed to examine and follow up the meaning of the various aspects of the Absolute.

The discipline related to the contemplation of the Absolute leads the aspirant to recognize that the discrimination of the two forms of egolessness – individuality and generality is only imagination and that the aspirant establishes himself in the reality of the Absolute.

The discipline related to oneness with the Absolute enables the aspirant to be in bliss characterizing self-realization attained by noble wisdom. It is perfect Enlightenment; it is neither bondage nor deliverance. The aspirant is so intoxicated with the bliss of mental tranquility that he realizes that the visible world is only the manifestation of Divine Mind Itself.

One is to be aware of the peculiar spiritual dangers by which every kind of predominantly emotional religion is always menaced. Religions that promote revivalism to stimulate remorse, a savior cult that stirs up fleshly love of the personal God, a ritualistic mystery – a religion that generates feelings of awe, reverence and aesthetic ecstasy in its ceremonials, each in its own way, run the risk of becoming a form of psychological idolatry.

In these systems, God is identified with the ego’s affective attitude towards God and the emotion becomes an end in itself to be sought after and worshipped, as the addicts of a drug spend

life in the pursuit of their artificial paradise. It is also true that religions that make no appeal to emotions have very few adherents while pseudo-religions win millions of enthusiastic devotees. Such devotees of pseudo-religions do not possibly go into the way of genuine spirituality. It, therefore, happens that those who follow the way to its end in the unitive knowledge of the divine Ground constitute a very small minority of the total. Many are called. But as a few choose to be chosen, only a few are chosen. The rest earn themselves another chance in their later lives in circumstances propitious to their desert. The cycle goes on.

7. Spiritual Practices

General

Spiritual practices constitute a special class of ascetic practices. Their purpose is mainly to prepare the intellect and emotions for those higher forms of prayer in which the soul is essentially receptive to divine Reality. It is also to modify character by means of this self-exposure to divine Reality and increased self-knowledge. In the words of Ansari, the Sufi saint, 'know that, when you learn to lose yourself, you will reach the Beloved! There is no other secret to be learnt.'

The purpose of spiritual practices is to free the mind from its desires for separateness and independent selfhood. It is to make it capable of realizing the identity of its own essence with the universal Essence of Mind. The expedient means that promote spiritual exercises are, among others, the Way of Tranquility and the Way of Wisdom.

The purpose of the Way of Tranquility is to bring to a standstill all disturbing thoughts and to quiet all engrossing moods and emotions, to make it possible to concentrate the mind for the purpose of meditation and realization. Secondly, when the mind is tranquilized, the objective is to practise reflection or meditation in the more intellectual way by realizing the meaning and significance of one's thoughts and experiences. The idea is that the mind being perfectly tranquil will be most active in realization.

As for the Way of Wisdom, the purpose is to bring a man into the habit of applying the insight that has come to him as a result of the Way of Tranquility. Whatever a man is doing, he is constantly to concentrate his mind on the act and the doing of it, not on his relation to the act or its character or value. If he

follows the practice in faith and with willingness, the bondage of old habits disappears and, in its place, appears confidence, satisfaction, awareness and tranquility. The Way of Wisdom is designed ultimately to accomplish the identity of the essence of one's own mind with the Universal Essence of Mind, the Highest Perfect Wisdom.

As for progress in spiritual life, one is to be patient with all, more so with oneself. One is not to be disheartened by one's imperfections, but is always to rise up with fresh courage. There is no better means of attaining to the spiritual life than by continually beginning again, and never thinking that one has done enough. How can we be patient in bearing with our neighbor's faults, if we are impatient in bearing with our own? One who is fretted by one's own failings cannot correct them. All profitable correction comes from a calm, peaceful mind.

'He who interrupts the course of his spiritual exercises and prayer is a like a man who allows a bird to escape from his hand; he can hardly catch it again.'

'If one says 'it is enough, I have reached perfection', all is lost. For it is the function of perfection to make one know one's imperfection.'

As for spiritual practices in daily life, the problem is how to keep oneself reminded, during the hours of work and recreation, of the Godhead. Some kinds of work and recreation are simple and permit continuous repetition of sacred name or mantra, unbroken thought about divine Reality or uninterrupted mental silence and alert passivity.

But there are other tasks too complex to admit of constant remembrance of the Divinity. One, who is at serious work, if one is over-intent on recollection, is liable to make serious

mistakes. The best way is to try to concentrate the mind before and afterwards, but while at work, to do it straightforwardly. Undivided attention to any specific work is seldom demanded and is, with difficulty, sustained for long periods at a stretch. There are always intervals of relaxation. Everyone is free to choose whether these intervals shall be filled with daydreaming or with contemplation of the Divine or a spiritual practice chosen.

The most common spiritual practices are elucidated hereafter.

Meditation

The simplest and most widely practised form of spiritual practices is repetition of the divine name, or of some phrase affirming God's existence and the soul's dependence upon Him. In India the repetition of the divine name or the mantra is called *japam* and is a favorite spiritual practice among all the sects of Hinduism and Buddhism. The shortest mantra is AUM – a spoken symbol that concentrates within itself the whole *Vedanta* philosophy.

To this and other mantras Hindus attribute a kind of magical power. The repetition of these mantras is a sacramental act, conferring grace. The constant repetition of the mantras may, in favorable circumstances, have a profound effect upon the subconscious mind leading to the unitive knowledge of God. Further, it may happen that, if the word is simply repeated 'all whole, and not broken up or undone' by discursive analysis, the Fact for which the word stands will end by presenting itself to the soul in the form of an integral intuition.

When this happens, in the language of the Sufis, 'the doors of the letters of this word are opened' and the soul passes through into Reality. Though all this *may* happen, it need not necessarily happen. There is no spiritual patent medicine for souls suffering from separateness and the depravation of God. It is possible that a mere mechanical repetition of the mantra may have a negative effect.

Meditation impacts on a seeker when his mind is wholeheartedly and continuously absorbed in the thought of God. In the depth of meditation, the mind and the senses will be stilled resulting in the sweetness of union with God. The aspirant will then feel the very presence of the Divine Being in his soul resulting

in inexplicable bliss. In the height of this spiritual experience does the seeker realize that 'from joy all beings are born; once born, by joy they are sustained; and into joy they enter after death'.

Intense concentration on an image or idea may be very helpful for certain persons in certain circumstances. It is helpful when the concentration results in mental stillness, a silence of intellect, will and feeling wherein the divine Word can be uttered within the soul.

But it is harmful when the image concentrated upon becomes so hallucinating reality that it is taken for objective Reality, and worshipped idolatrously. It is also harmful when the exercise of concentration produces unusual psychophysical results in which the person experiencing them takes a personal pride, as being special graces and divine communications. Of these unusual psychophysical occurrences, the most ordinary are visions, auditions, foreknowledge, telepathy and other psychic powers.

A curious bodily phenomenon arising out of this practice is intense heat. Many persons who practise concentration exercises experience this heat occasionally. Some mystics have developed techniques whereby the accession of such heat can be regulated, controlled and put to useful work such as keeping the contemplative warm in freezing weather. This explains several saints in the heights and passes of the Himalayas doing their penance in freezing environment with minimum of clothing.

Intense concentration on any image or idea is always concentration on something produced by one's own mind. Sometimes, in mortified and recollected persons, the art of concentration merges into the state of openness and alert passivity, in which true contemplation becomes possible.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead gives an account as to the manner of concentration on image, leading to imageless contemplation in a graphic way: ‘Whosoever thy tutelary deity may be, meditate upon the form for much time – as being apparent, yet non-existent in reality, like a form produced by a magician... Then let the visualization of the tutelary deity melt away from the extremities, till nothing at all remaineth visible of it; and put thyself in the state of the Clearness and the Voidness – which thou canst not conceive as something – and abide in that state for a little while. Again meditate upon the tutelary deity; again meditate upon the Clear Light; do this alternately. Afterwards allow thine own intellect to melt away gradually, beginning from the extremities.’

If practices in concentration, repetition of the divine name, or meditation on God’s attributes, etc help those who make use of them to come to selflessness, openness and that ‘love of the pure divinity’ making possible the soul’s union with the Godhead, then such spiritual exercises are wholly good and desirable. If they have other results, they are better avoided.

The impediments in the way of the practice of the mental prayer are ignorance of the Nature of Things and the absorption in self-interest resulting in distractions. It is true that even the most saintly persons suffer, to some extent, from distractions. It is also true that a person who, in the intervals of mental prayer, leads a self-centered life will have more and worse distractions than one who lives never forgetting who one is and how one is related to the universe and the divine Ground. Yet, some of the spiritual practices actually make use of distractions in such a way that the impediments to selflessness and mental silence are transformed into means of progress.

One cardinal principle employed by spiritual teachers is not to use violent efforts of the surface will against the distractions, which arise in the mind during periods of recollection. It is said,

‘the more you resist, and the more it persists.’ Any violent reaction of the surface will against distractions automatically enhances the separate, personal self and, therefore, reduces the individual’s chances of coming to the knowledge and love of God.

As the distractions appear in the foreground of consciousness, one may take notice of their presence, then, lightly and gently, without any straining of the will, one shifts the focus of attention to Reality which one glimpses or merely knows about in the back-ground. In many cases, this effortless shift of attention will cause the distractions to lose their obsessive ‘there-ness’ and, for a time at least, to disappear.

Another way to circumvent distractions is to examine them dispassionately as they arise, and in tracing them back, through the memory of particular thoughts, feelings and actions, to their origins in temperament and character, constitution and acquired habit. This procedure reveals to the soul the true reasons for its separation from the divine Ground of its being. The soul discovers, specifically, the point where the eclipsing selfhood causes the distractions. Resolving to overcome the impediments in the way, the soul quietly puts aside the thoughts of them and, purged, empty and silent, passively exposes itself to whatever it may be that lies beyond and within.

Every soul that approaches God must be aware of who and what it is. To practise a form of mental or vocal prayer above one’s moral station is to act a lie. The consequences of such lying are wrong notions about God resulting in idolatrous worship and spiritual pride. Self-knowledge leading to self-hatred and humility is the condition of the love and knowledge of God. Spiritual exercises that make use of distractions increase self-knowledge. But one danger of employing distractions for increase of self-knowledge is a temptation to forget the end, and to become

absorbed in a remorseful personal way to the exclusion of the pure Divinity.

Contemplation

Contemplation is the highest form of prayer. All are called to contemplation, because all are called to achieve deliverance, which is nothing but the knowledge that unites the knower with the Divine. The life of mystical contemplation is the proper and normal development of the 'interior life' of devotion to God. There is no contradiction or irrationality in this concept. The principle of the two lives – the mystical contemplative life and the interior life – is one. It is in the life of mystical contemplation that the interior life is consummated. The end of both the lives is the same, being the eternal life. Further, the life of mystical contemplation in fact prepares one perfectly for the eternal life.

Al-Ghazzali regards that the mystics are not only the ultimate source of our knowledge of the soul and its capacities and defects, but, like the salt, preserve human societies from decay. These fervent mystics exist in all times. God does not deprive the world of them, for they are its sustainers. It is they who, with total self-abandonment, become capable of perpetual inspiration and so are made the instruments through which divine grace is mediated to the rest of the human society, which is impervious to the delicate touches of the spirit.

But there are few contemplatives, because few souls are perfectly humble. Many aspirants shrink from the labor and refuge to bear with the dryness and mortification, instead of submitting, as they must, with perfect patience. The assertion that all are called to contemplation does not conflict with the doctrine that there are at least three principal ways to liberation - the ways of works, devotion and knowledge. If the ways of works and devotion lead to liberation, it is because they lead into the way of knowledge. A soul, which does not go on from the ways of devotion and works into the way of knowledge, is not totally

delivered, for total deliverance comes only through unitive knowledge.

Based on temperament, the aspirants may be naturally drawn to one way of liberation. Though there may be born devotees, born workers, born contemplatives, it is nevertheless true that even those at the extreme limits of temperamental eccentricity are capable of making use of other ways than that to which they are naturally drawn. In view of the inner urge to reach the great end, the born contemplative can learn to purify his heart by work and direct his mind to devotion. Similarly the born worker and the born devotee can learn to 'be still and know that I am God.'

As for contemplation, God is not the only possible object. There have been and are still many philosophic, aesthetic and scientific contemplatives. But one-pointed concentration on that which is not the highest may become a dangerous form of idolatry. It is an evil in the sense that such one-pointedness may result in the atrophy of all but one side of the mind.

In cases where the one-pointed contemplation is exclusively of God, there is a risk that the mind's unemployed capacities may atrophy. But this risk is offset if the one-pointedness of exclusion is a preparation for the one-pointedness of inclusion – the realization of God in the fullness of Cosmic Being as well as in the interior depth of the individual soul. No spiritual master has ever said that total absorption in God is a cursed evil.

Salvation, the ideal of life for each individual human being, is regarded as deliverance out of folly, evil and misery into happiness, goodness and wisdom. As to the means of salvation, they are ethical, intellectual and spiritual simultaneously. Buddha's Eightfold Path sums up the means to salvation, the eighth and the most important one being the Right-contemplation, the unitive

knowledge of the Divine Ground. Personal effort is what counts for realization.

There is one material difference between spiritual bliss arising from realization and corporal pleasures of the body-mind combine. The corporal pleasures beget a desire before we obtain them and, after we have obtained them, disgust. But spiritual pleasures are not, on the other hand, cared for or known when we do not have them. But they are desired when once we have them.

The bliss into which the enlightened soul is delivered is something quite different from pleasure associated with the body. Blessedness depends on non-attachment and selflessness. It can, therefore, be enjoyed without satiety and revulsion. It is a participation in eternity and, therefore, remains itself without diminution or fluctuation. The liberated soul attains to bliss eternal and immeasurable, and abides in the Brahman.

There are as many conceptions of salvation as there are degrees of spiritual knowledge. The kind of liberation actually achieved by the individual soul depends upon the extent to which the soul chooses to overcome its essentially voluntary ignorance.

Chandogya Upanisad states that the human body is mortal, forever in the clutch of death. Within it resides the self, immortal and without form. This self, when associated in consciousness with the body, is subject to pleasure and pain. So long as this association continues, man cannot find freedom from pain and pleasure. When the association comes to an end, there is an end also of pain and pleasure. Rising above physical consciousness, knowing the self as distinct from the sense organs and the mind, knowing Him in true light, one rejoices and one is free. One has true bliss.

Maitrayana Upanisad states that having realized his own self as the Self, a man becomes selfless. In virtue of selflessness, he is to be conceived as unconditioned. This is the highest mystery, betokening emancipation. Through selflessness, he partakes of no pleasure or pain, but attains absoluteness. All manner of virtue and goodness can never make man blissful so long as it is outside the soul, that is, so long as man works through his senses and reason, and does not withdraw into his self and learn who and what he is.

Sankara says, 'talk as much philosophy as you please, worship as many gods as you like, observe all ceremonies, sing devoted praises to any number of divine beings – liberation never comes, even at the end of a hundred aeons, without realization of the self. This realization of the self is within and yet transcendently other than the individual ego. The realization of the self is enlightenment of the ignorance, and deliverance from the mortal consequences of that ignorance'.

Buddhism echoes the same concept: '*Nirvana* (liberation) is where there is no birth, no extinction; it is seeing into the state of Suchness, absolutely transcending all the categories constructed by mind; for it is the *Tathagata*'s inner consciousness.'

Immortality is participation in the eternal now of the divine Ground. Survival is persistence in one of the forms of Time. Immortality is the result of total deliverance. Goodness and virtue make men know, love, believe and delight in their immortality.

Silence

The spiritual life is nothing else but the working of the spirit of God within us. Therefore, our own silence must be a great part of our preparation for it. Much speaking or delight in it is often a great hindrance of that good which we can have from hearing what the Spirit or the voice of God, also called Inner-voice, speaks within us.

Unrestrained and indiscriminate talk is morally evil and spiritually dangerous. Most of the words we speak may be classified under three main heads. First is the category of words inspired by malice and un-charitableness towards our neighbors. Second is the category of words inspired by greed, sensuality and self-love. Third is the category of words merely for the sake of making noise without rhyme or reason. All these are idle words and they outnumber the words dictated by reason, charity or necessity.

If we take into account the endless monologue of the mind, the idle words account overwhelmingly large. All these idle words are impediments in the way of the unitive knowledge of the divine Ground. The guard of the tongue, which is also a guard of the mind, is the difficult but necessary and fruitful mortification on the path of spiritual life.

Silence is distinguished into three categories – silence of the mouth, silence of the mind and silence of the will. To refrain from idle talk is difficult. More difficult is to quieten memory and imagination. Most difficult is to still the voices of craving and aversion within the will. While speaking distracts, silence and work collect the thoughts and strengthen the spirit.

Silence is of four types – silence of speech, silence of the senses, violent restraint and the silence of deep sleep. The first three types involve rigid *mouna* while the fourth one is conducive to liberation. In it, the *prana* or life force is neither restrained nor promoted; the senses are neither fed nor starved; the perception of diversity is neither expressed nor suppressed; and the mind is neither mind nor no-mind. One who is established in it may or may not meditate. There is knowledge of ‘What Is’ in that state and there is freedom from doubt. It is utter emptiness. It is without support. It is of the nature of supreme peace.

There are two types of *muni* – a sage who observes *mouna* or silence. One is the rigid ascetic and the other is the liberated sage. The rigid ascetic forcibly restrains his senses and engages himself in dry activities, devoid of wisdom, and with fanaticism. The liberated sage, on the other hand, knows the truth as truth, and the unreal as unreal. He is endowed with self-knowledge and yet behaves like any other ordinary person. What is regarded as *mouna* or silence is based on the nature and behavior of the sage concerned.

The last hundred years constitute, among other things, the Age of Noise – physical noise, mental noise and noise of desire. The resources of our miraculous technology have been an assault against silence. The radio, the television and the internet are conduits for flow of prefabricated din into our homes, work places, transport, etc in the name of amusement. This din goes farther than the eardrums. It penetrates the mind, filling it with distractions. As advertising constitutes the main source of income for these channels of noise, the noise is carried from the ears, through the realms of phantasy, knowledge and feeling to the central core of wish and desire of the ego. All advertising, spoken, printed or visual, has one purpose – to prevent the will from ever achieving silence.

Desirelessness is the condition of deliverance and illumination. The role of advertising is to promote universal craving. To extend and intensify the workings of that craving is the principal cause of suffering and wrongdoing. It is the greatest obstacle between the human soul and its divine Ground.

Prayer

Prayer is the most important medium of spiritual practices. It is applied to at least four distinct procedures – petition, intercession, adoration and contemplation. Petition is the asking of something for us, and intercession for others. Adoration is the use of intellect, feeling, will and imagination in making acts of devotion directed towards God in His personal aspect or as incarnated in human form. Contemplation is that condition of the soul that opens itself to the Absolute Divine, the immanent and the transcendent Godhead.

To acquire his petition answered, a man need not have to know or to love God or even His image. All that he requires is a burning sense of fulfillment of his desires with a firm conviction that there exists, out in the universe, something not himself, which can be dragooned into satisfying these desires. With the necessary degree of faith and persistence, the chances are that, sooner or later, somehow or other, he gets what he wants.

It is the experience of human beings through ages that whatever is sought with firm faith and conviction that God delivers. Whether what man gets, in response to his petition, is morally or materially good or not, only time can say. The trouble is that he never knows, until he gets it, what it actually is that he has asked for. Whatever people get by way of fulfillment of material desires, according to the folklore around the world, has always led to catastrophic consequences. It may, however, be legitimate for us to pray for anything, which is legitimate for us to desire. For instance, we can desire our well-being, but cannot desire the fruits of crime or wrongdoing.

As for intercession, it is at once the means to, and the expression of, the love of one's neighbor. In the same way, adoration is the means to, and the expression of, the love of God

– a love that finds its consummation in the unitive knowledge of the Godhead, which is the fruit of contemplation.

Intercession is the best arbitrator of all differences with neighbors and others in the society, the best promoter of true friendship, the best cure and preservative against all unkind tempers, all angry and haughty passions. One cannot possibly have any ill temper or show any unkind behavior to a man for whose welfare one is so much concerned as to be his advocate with God in private. One cannot possibly despise and ridicule that man for whom one prays privately to God.

Adoration is an activity of the loving of the personal God or the God incarnated. But God is still considered separate individuality. Contemplation, on the other hand, is the state of union with the Absolute or the Divine Ground, in whatever way it is called.

The highest prayer is the most passive. The less there is of self, the more there is of God. That is why the path to passive or infused contemplation is very hard and, for many, disheartening because of elusive fruitfulness. The aspirant must die to the life of sense, as an end in itself, and to the life of the separate and individualized will. He is to still the mind to elevate the soul to the realm of the One All.

To pretend to devotion without great humility and renunciation of all worldly tempers is to pretend to impossibilities. He who is devout must first be humble. Then only his soul will be full of desire after God. A proud, vain or worldly-minded man may recite prayers day in and day out. But he cannot be devout as devotion is application of a humble soul to God, beyond the realm of mind, as its only happiness.

Spiritually, prayer is an offering and giving to God whatsoever He may justly require of us. It is an elevation of the mind, through soul, to God. It is an actuation of the soul towards God expressing, or at least implying, an entire dependence on Him as the fountain of all good. This is to lead finally to a desire to aspire to union with Him in spirit. Prayer is thus the most perfect and the most divine action that a rational soul is capable of. Of all actions and duties, it is the most indispensable necessity.

Simplicity

Real simplicity is almost sublime. All good men like and admire it, are conscious of sinning against it, observe it in others, and know what it involves. By simplicity is meant an uprightness of soul, which prevents self-consciousness. It is not the same as sincerity, which is a much humbler virtue.

Many people may be sincere, but not simple. Sincere people say what they believe to be true and appear strictly as they are. But they are forever thinking about themselves only and are not at ease with others, nor others with them. There is nothing easy, frank, unrestrained or natural about them.

To be absorbed in the world and never turn a thought within is one extreme as opposed to simplicity. To be self-absorbed in all matters is the other extreme, which makes a man wise in his own conceit. Both are the states of intoxication, one of outward-ness and the other of inwardness, and unrelated to simplicity. Real simplicity lies in 'being equally free from thoughtlessness and affectation, in which the soul is not overwhelmed by externals, so as to be unable to reflect, nor yet given up to the endless refinements, which self-consciousness induces', in the words of Fenelon.

Simplicity is the most characteristic fruit of perfect mortification.

Such simplicity is a great treasure. One need take at least three steps to seek to realize it. The first is for the soul to put away outward things and look within so as to know its own real interest. The second is for the soul to add the contemplation of God, whom it fears, to that of self. This is a faint approach to the real wisdom, but still the soul is greatly self-absorbed. It is not

satisfied with fearing God, and yet it wants to fear Him, thus going round in a perpetual circle of self-consciousness. This restless dwelling on self is far away from the peace and freedom of real love. Yet the soul needs to go through this state of trial, for, were it suddenly plunged into a state of rest, it would not know how to use it. The third step is that the soul begins to dwell upon God instead, ceasing from a restless self-contemplation, and by degrees forgets it in Him. It becomes full of Him. Such a soul is aware of its own faults and errors. It is more conscious of them than ever and sees them in plainer form. But this self-knowledge comes from God and, therefore, the soul is not restless and uneasy.

Simplicity is the same thing as virtue. Personal sins and social maladjustments are all due to the fact that men have separated themselves from their divine source and live according to their own will and notions, not according to Divine Will or Pure Reason. The simplicity and spontaneity of the perfect sage are the fruits of mortification of the will and, by recollectedness and meditation, of the mind. Nothing is more difficult than being simple.

Simple living is one of the important steps to inner peace. Persistent simplification creates an inner and outer well-being, bringing harmony to one's life. If one secures possessions up to the actual immediate needs, one feels a wonderful harmony in one's life between inner and outer well-being, between spiritual and material well-being.

Some people consider that a life dedicated to simplicity and service is austere and joyless. But they are not aware of the freedom of simplicity. As long as one's life is not overcrowded with unnecessary possessions than actually required, one's life is full and blissful.

A vow of simplicity is this: 'I shall not accept more than I need while others in the world have less than they need.' One feels free if one's motive is of giving. Then it is for sure that one will be given whatever one needs.

In simple life, what one wants and what one needs are exactly the same. Anything in excess of needs is burdensome. If one is not a slave to comfort and convenience, one will be in the nature of a pilgrim, and free. Most people do not wish to be free. They would rather prefer to moan about how impossible it is to give up their various enslavements to possessions, food, drink and so on. It is not that they cannot give them up; they really do not want to do so.

The art of spiritual living lies in one word – simplicity. We associate generally greatness with grandeur. To us a great person should have a halo and be able to perform miracles. This is not true. All great things of life are very simple. Great literature is very simple. When ornate style comes up, literature fails to achieve its noble purpose of creativity. It becomes stagnant like a river that has ceased to flow.

Our physical needs rather depend on the climate in which we live, the state of our health, etc. In general, we need a shelter to protect us from elements, pure air and water, sufficient food, and normal medical aid for sustenance. Some people feel the need for possessions beyond the physical. These often involve little or no expenditure, though it is not always so. Some people feel that their living is incomplete in the absence of aesthetic pursuits such as music, art, poetry, etc. In what way one can simplify one's life is one's individual concern.

It is true that if one doesn't have enough, one won't be happy. Neither is one happy if one has too much. It is those who have enough but not too much are the happiest. Unnecessary

possessions are unnecessary burdens. If one has more of them, one has to take care of them. Because of our preoccupation with materialism, we often miss the best things in life that are free.

How good it is to earn one's livelihood helping plants to grow to provide people with food! In other words, how good it is to earn one's livelihood by contributing constructively to the society in which one lives.

'The simplified life is a sanctified life.
Much more calm, much less strife!
Oh! What wondrous truths are unveiled!
Projects succeed which have previously failed.
Oh! How beautiful life can be!
Beautiful simplicity!'

Faith

The word *Faith* has a variety of meanings. In some contexts, it is used as a synonym for 'trust'. Analogous to this is our 'faith' in authority. It is the belief that what certain persons say about certain subjects is likely, because of their special qualifications, to be true. On other occasions, 'faith' stands for belief in propositions which we have not had occasion to verify for ourselves, but which we know that we can verify their veracity, should there be need. There is also the 'faith', which is a belief in propositions, which we know we cannot verify, but believe them to be true. This is an act of the intellect moved to assent by the will.

Faith in the first three senses of the word plays an important part in the moral sphere in day-to-day life. It is a precondition of all systematic knowing, all purposive doing and all decent living. Societies are held together by a wide spread faith in the other fellows' decency. Such a faith tends to create its own object of trust. In the intellectual sphere, faith lies at the root of all organized thinking. Science and technology could not exist if we had no faith in the reliability of the universe.

The fourth kind of faith is what is commonly called 'religious faith'. This is because the willed assent to propositions known to be unverifiable occurs only in religion. The core and spiritual heart of all the higher religions is the Perennial Philosophy.

There must, of course, be faith as trust. This is in the nature of confidence in one's fellow beings as the beginning of charity towards men, and confidence in the moral and spiritual reliability of the universe as the beginning of charity or love-knowledge in relation to God. There must be faith in the authority of those whose selflessness has qualified them to know the spiritual

Ground of all being by direct perception as well as by report. There must also be faith in such propositions about Reality as are enunciated by philosophers in the light of genuine revelation. The propositions are such that the believer knows that he can verify them for himself, if only he fulfills the necessary conditions.

So long as the Perennial Philosophy is accepted in its essential simplicity, there is no need of willed assent to propositions known in advance to be unverifiable. However, such unverifiable propositions may become verifiable to the extent that intense faith affects the psychic substratum and so creates an existence, whose derived objectivity can actually be discovered. This is possible for a person whose mind is in the state of selflessness and alert passivity, which is the necessary condition of the unitive knowledge of the divine Ground.

Faith in the existence and power of any supernatural entity, which is less than ultimate spiritual Reality, and in any form of worship that falls short of self-naughting, will no doubt result in improvement of character, if the object of faith is intrinsically good. But this improvement is still within the temporal order and does not relate to the eternal life of timeless union with the Spirit. This eternal life stands in the knowledge of and faith in the Godhead.

According to Sankara, the immortality attained through the acquisition of any objective condition merited through good works inspired by love of, and faith in, something less than the supreme Godhead is liable to end, as *karma* can never be the cause of emancipation. The ultimate Ground simply 'Is'. Only when the individual also simply 'is', by reason of his union through love-knowledge with the Ground, can there be complete and eternal liberation.

In other words, the causal process takes place in time and cannot possibly result in deliverance from Time. Such deliverance can only be achieved as a consequence of the intervention of Eternity in the temporal domain. Eternity cannot, however, intervene unless the individual will makes a creative act of self-denial, thus producing, as it were, a vacuum into which Eternity can flow. To suppose that the causal process in time can, of itself, result in deliverance from Time is like supposing that water will rise into a space from which the air has not been previously exhausted.

Grace

The nature of a man's being determines the nature of his actions; and the nature of his being comes to manifestation first of all in the mind. What he craves and thinks, and what he believes and feels is the Logos – so to say. It is by this agency that an individual's fundamental character performs its creative acts. These acts will be morally good if the being is God-centered, bad and ugly if it is centered in the personal self.

A man's being is his potential energy directed towards or away from God. It is by this potential energy that he may be judged as good or bad. The difference between a good man and a bad man does not lie in that a good man wills what is good, and a bad man wills what is bad. The difference lies solely in that the good man concurs with the living inspiring spirit of God within him, and the bad man resists it. The bad man is charged with evil only because he resists the inspiring spirit of God.

Covetousness, envy, pride and wrath are the four elements of self, all of them inseparable from it. Covetousness, envy and pride are not three different things, but only three different names for the restless workings of the one and the same 'will' or 'desire'. Wrath arises from any of the three emotions if one or all are contradicted.

These four properties generate their own torment. They have no outward cause, nor any inward power of altering themselves. All self remains in this state until some supernatural good comes to it. Pain and evil are inseparable from individual existence in a world of time. For human beings, the inevitable pain and evil are intensified when the desire is turned towards the self and the many, rather than the Divine.

Philosophically, good is the separate self's conformity to, and finally annihilation in, the Absolute or the divine Ground, which gives it being. On the other hand, evil is the intensification of separateness, the refusal to know that the Absolute Being exists. This formulation is in terms of social utility. The crimes, which are forbidden everywhere, proceed from states of mind that are condemned as wrong. Those very wrong states of mind are incompatible with the unitive knowledge of the Absolute, which, ontologically, is the supreme good.

Men have been endowed with *free will* in order that they may will their self-will out of existence and so come to live continuously in a *state of grace*. All our actions, in the last analysis, must be directed to making ourselves passive in relation to the activity and the being of divine Reality.

Defined in psychological terms, grace is something other than our self-conscious personal self, by which we are helped. We have experience of three kinds of such help – animal grace, human grace and spiritual grace.

Animal grace comes when we are living in accord with our own nature on the biological level, not abusing our bodies by excess, but living wholesomely in a natural way. The result of being thus in harmony with the Logos in its physical and physiological aspects is a sense of well-being, an awareness of life as good, just because it is life. Life, in this state, like virtue, is its own reward. But, of course, the fullness of animal grace is reserved for animals. Man's nature is such that he must live a sub-conscious life in time, not in a blissful sub-rational eternity on the higher side of good and evil. As such, animal grace is something that man knows only occasionally when he does not feel self-consciousness.

Human grace comes to us either from persons, or from social groups, or from our own wishes, hopes and imaginings projected outside ourselves and persisting somehow in the psychic medium in a state of relative objectivity. We have all had experience of the different types of human grace. For example, during childhood the grace comes from mother, father and other members of the family. At a later stage, it comes from friends and from men and women morally better and wiser than us. There is the grace of the *guru* or the spiritual teacher, the grace, which one's ideals present, etc.

Spiritual grace comes continuously or in its fullness only to those who have willed away their self-will to the point of being able truthfully to say, 'not I, but God in me'. Spiritual grace originates from the divine Ground of all Being to helping man achieve his final end, which is to return out of time and selfhood, to that Ground.

The artistic or creative inspiration in any field of activity is either a human or a spiritual grace, or a mixture of both. High artistic achievement is impossible without those forms of intellectual, emotional and physical mortification appropriate to the kind of art, which is being practised. Over and above this course of professional mortification, some artists have practised the kind of self-naughting, which is the indispensable pre-condition of the unitive knowledge of the Divine. The greatest of the artists, philosophers and men of science have mostly prepared themselves for their work by means of prayer and meditation, thereby inspired.

It may be of interest to note that mechanization is incompatible with inspiration. The advantage of automatic machinery is that it is foolproof. Because it is foolproof, it is also grace-proof. The man who tends such a machine is impervious

to every form of aesthetic inspiration, either of human or of spiritual origin.

Love - Charity

‘Love is infallible. It has no errors, for all errors are the want of love’. We can only love what we know. We can never know completely what we do not love. Love is a mode of knowledge. When it is disinterested and very intense, the knowledge becomes the knowledge of the Divine and so takes the quality of infallibility. Where there is no disinterested love, there is only biased self-love. Consequently there is only a partial and distorted knowledge of the self, and the world of things, lives, minds and spirit outside the life.

Charity is disinterested love. Unfortunately, charity has come to be synonymous with alms giving in modern English. In its original sense, it signifies the highest and most divine form of love. The principal characteristics of charity are that it is disinterested; it seeks no reward; nor does it allow itself to be diminished by any return of evil for its good. As charity is disinterested, it must of necessity be universal. As it seeks no reward, persons and things are to be loved for their own sake.

Divine-love is *nirgunam* (without attributes), *niranjanam* (pure), *sanatana nikanam* (the final abode), *nitya* (eternal), *suddha* (unsullied), *buddha* (enlightened), *mukta* (free) and *nirmala swarupinam* (the embodiment of sacredness). Divine-love is all-pervasive. It is the Supreme Self.

Love seeks no cause beyond itself and no fruit. It is its own fruit, its own enjoyment. Unlike the lower forms of love, charity is not any emotion. It begins as an act of the will and is consummated as a purely spiritual awareness.

The highest form of love is the love of God. It is an immediate spiritual intuition, by which ‘knower, known and

knowledge’ are made one. The means to, and earlier stages of, this supreme love-knowledge of Spirit by spirit consist in acts of a will directed towards the denial of selfness in thought, feeling and action, towards desirelessness and non-attachment. It is in the nature of ‘holy indifference’, a cheerful acceptance of affliction, without self-pity and without thought of returning evil for evil.

Peace from distractions and emotional agitations is the way to charity. Charity or unitive love-knowledge is the way to the higher peace of God. The same is true of humility, which is one of the characteristics of charity. Humility is a necessary condition of the highest form of love, and the highest form of love makes possible the consummation of humility in a total self-naughting. In the words of Ansari, the Sufi saint, ‘would you become a pilgrim on the road of Love? The first condition is that you make yourself humble as dust and ashes’.

Feelings may be of service as motives of charity. But charity, as charity, has its beginning in the will – will to peace and humility in oneself, will to patience and kindness towards one’s fellow creatures, and will to that disinterested love of God which ‘asks nothing and refuses nothing’. But the will can be strengthened by exercise and confirmed by perseverance.

All feelings get translated into charity when it is sublime love-knowledge of the Divine. Temperance is love surrendering itself wholly to Him who is its object. Courage is love bearing all things gladly for the sake of Him who is its object. Justice is love only serving Him who is its object, and, therefore, rightly ruling. Prudence is love making wise distinctions between what hinders and what helps itself.

The distinguishing marks of charity are disinterestedness, tranquility and humility. Where there is disinterestedness, there

is no greed for personal advantage, or fear for personal loss or punishment. Where there is tranquility, there is neither craving nor aversion, but a steady will to conform to the Divine Will. Where there is humility, there is no glorification of the ego or any projected alter ego at the expense of others. Charity is essentially spiritual. It is purely of spiritual essence.

It, therefore, follows that charity is the root and substance of morality, and that where there is little charity, there will be much avoidable evil. It also follows that where there is charity, there can be no coercion, for love cannot compel, and God's service is, therefore, a thing of perfect freedom. But as it cannot compel, charity is a kind of authority, a non-coercive power, by means of which it defends itself and gets its beneficent will generally done in the world.

The guiding principle of all social organization is to be, 'lead us not into temptation'. The temptations to be guarded against are the temptations against charity, that is, against the disinterested love of God, Nature and man. Charity is to preserve men and women from the temptation to idolatrous worship of things in time such as fanatical religiousness, state worship, revolutionary and regulated future worship, humanistic self-worship all of which are essentially opposed to charity.

Suffering to Salvation

Life in a body provides uniquely good opportunities for achieving salvation or deliverance. Man, being a spiritual creature, has need of a body without which he cannot attain the unitive knowledge of the divine Ground, which is the ultimate end of his life. Having achieved human birth, a rare and blessed incarnation, the wise man should strive to know God, and Him only, before life passes into death.

The Godhead is impassible. Where there is perfection and unity, there can be no suffering. The capacity to suffer arises where there is imperfection, disunity and separation from an embracing totality. This capacity is actualized to the extent that imperfection, disunity and separateness are accompanied by an urge towards the intensification of these creaturely conditions. The secret to end the suffering of an individual is to achieve unity within his own organism and union with the divine Ground.

The Four Noble Truths of Buddhism elucidate the concept thus: 'The elements which make up man produce a capacity for pain. The cause of pain is the craving for individual life. Deliverance from craving does away with pain. The way of deliverance is the Eightfold Path'.

The craving for independent and individualized existence, in other words, the urge to separateness can manifest itself on all the levels of life from the physiological through the instinctive to the fully conscious. It can be the craving of the whole organism for its separateness from the environment and the divine Ground. Or it can be the craving of a part of the organism for separateness.

In the first case, it is the impulse, the passion, the desire, the self-will or the sin that is at work. In the second case it is

illness, injury, functional or organic disorder that is at work. In either case, the craving for separateness results in suffering both for the craver and his sentient environment – other organisms in the external world, or other organs within the same organism.

In one way, suffering is private and in another way, it is contagious. While the being experiences suffering, the other sentient beings in the environment partake of such suffering, being conscious of the suffering by the sufferer. Suffering and moral evil have the same source – a craving for intensification of the separateness that is the primary datum of all creatureliness.

Man's capacity to crave more violently than any animal for the intensification of his separateness results in moral evil with the contingent suffering and in certain derangements of the human body. This arises mainly owing to the fact that civilized human beings do not, on any level of their being, live in harmony with the Logos or the divine Nature of Things.

They intensify their selfhood through gluttony, eating the wrong food and too much of it. They submit to chronic anxiety over money and chronic over-stimulation as they crave excitement. They suffer at work from the chronic boredom and frustration, as they take up odd jobs in odd hours to satisfy the artificially stimulated demand for the goods of the so-called civilization.

The consequences of the wrong uses of the psychophysical organism are degenerative changes in particular organs such as the heart, kidneys, intestines, etc. The degenerating organs cause suffering to themselves and their physiological environment. In a similar way, the human individual asserts his own separateness from his neighbors, from Nature and God, with disastrous consequences to himself, his family and the society in general. Reversely, a disordered society, professional group or

family influences its members to assert their individual selfhood and separateness with the same disastrous consequences to themselves as well as their constituents.

The effects of suffering may be morally and spiritually bad, neutral or good, according to the way in which the suffering is endured or reacted to. It is bad if it stimulates in the sufferer a conscious or unconscious craving for the intensification of his separateness. It is neutral if the craving remains as it was before the suffering. It is good if the suffering becomes a means for advance towards self-abandonment and the love and knowledge of God. It is the choice of the sufferer that ultimately determines one of the alternatives. This seems to be true even on the sub-human level. For embodied human selves, the choice is unquestionable.

The choice of self-abandonment in suffering makes possible the reception of grace on the spiritual level in the form of an accession of the love and knowledge of God, and grace in the mental and physiological levels in the form of a diminution of fear, self-concern and even of pain.

When an individual conceives the love of suffering, he loses the sensibility of the senses and so does the sense of pain. In the words of Eckhart, 'he who suffers for love does not suffer, for all suffering is forgotten (then)'. This is the secret of highly spiritually evolved individuals undergoing even major surgeries without any anesthesia as they choose self-abandonment in suffering.

Many sufferings are the immediate consequences of moral evil. These cannot have any good effects upon the sufferer as long as the causes of his distress are not eradicated. Each sin begets a special spiritual suffering. The more a sinner suffers through his sins, the more wicked he becomes. He continues to

commit more and more sins in order to get free from their suffering.

Selfless and God-filled persons, who have been ready to accept suffering in order to help their fellow beings, relieve the suffering of sinners imprisoned in their selfhood. The selfless and God-filled person can and does act as a channel through which grace is able to pass into the unfortunate being who has made himself impervious to the Divine by the habitual craving for intensification of his own separateness and selfhood. It is because of this that the saints are able to exercise authority over their fellow beings. Their authority is all the greater because of its being entirely non-compulsive. They transfer 'merit' to those who are in need of it. It is rather the divine charge they carry, the eternal Reality for which they have become the conduit that transfers merit to those in need to relieve of their suffering.

All men are organically related to God, to Nature and to fellow men. If every human being is constantly and consciously in a proper relationship with his divine, natural and social environment, there will only be so much suffering as Nature makes it inevitable. But actually most human beings are chronically in an improper relation to God, Nature and at least some of their fellow men.

The wrong relationships manifest on the social level as exploitation, disorder, revolutions, wars, etc. On the natural level, they manifest as waste and exhaustion of irreplaceable resources. On the biological level, they manifest as degenerative diseases and the deterioration of racial stocks. On the moral level, they manifest as an overweening bumptiousness. On the spiritual level, they manifest as blindness to divine Reality and complete ignorance of the reason and purpose of human existence.

In such circumstances it is only natural that the righteous and the innocent also suffer, as the heart and the kidneys of an individual suffer if he is gluttonous in his habit. The righteous man can escape suffering only by accepting it and passing beyond it. He can accomplish this by being converted from righteousness to total selflessness and God-centeredness. The difficulties in the way of such transfiguration are obviously enormous. But the road to deliverance is never easy to pass by.

From the ultimate point of view, where there is no 'ought', there is no ethics. Disciplines for salvation consist of different forms of worship such as *yoga*. Nobody is morally obliged to practise them. Most of the Indian philosophers such as Vidyananda do not regard such practices as an 'ought' or *vidhi*. But moral law is an 'ought', if it is to be treated as law.

There is a distinction between values which are an 'ought' and values which are only recommended to be good. Obtaining salvation, like obtaining wealth, is not an 'ought'. It may not be, therefore, justifiable to equate ethics and the theory of salvation. Ethics covers man's life aiming for the best in this world, his relation to other human beings and his duties in the society of which he is a member. The theory of salvation, according to the Indian thought, is that of the crowning phase of life beyond ethics, which is the ideal of life for each individual.

Mortification

Mortification or deliberate dying to self is never regarded as an end in itself. It possesses merely an instrumental value, as the means to something else. It has nothing of goodness or holiness. Its worth consists in removing the impediments to holiness, to help it realize holiness or spiritual life. In mortification, the passions are routed and destroyed, leading to the discovery of wisdom, which is the surpassing good. In the words of Plato, 'the virtue of wisdom, more than anything else, contains a divine element, which always remains'.

The practice of mortification does not necessarily lead to a virtuous life. The mortified may practise all the cardinal virtues such as prudence, fortitude, temperance and chastity, and yet remain a thoroughly bad man. This is for the reason that his virtues are accompanied by, and connected with, the sins of pride, envy, chronic anger and un-charitableness assuming the proportion of active cruelty. Mistaking the means for the end, the puritan fancies himself holy because he is austere. But austerity is just the exaltation of the ego of the individual. Holiness, on the other hand, is the total denial of the separate self and abandonment of the will to God. To the extent that there is attachment to 'I', 'me' and 'mine', there is no attachment to God, and only affirmation of self.

Mortification, to be a virtue, has to be carried to the level of *non-attachment or holy indifference*. Otherwise, it transfers self-will from one channel to another. The difference between the mortified, and yet proud and self-centered stoic, and the un-mortified hedonist is that while the latter harms his own body, mind and spirit as he lacks the energy and motive to do harm to others, the former, being equipped with secondary virtues, looks

down upon others not like himself, and does not hesitate to do harm to them with a perfectly untroubled conscience.

Mortification is not a matter, primarily, of severe physical austerities. It is possible for some persons, in certain circumstances, that the practice of severe physical austerities may prove helpful to advance towards man's final spiritual end. But, in most cases, what is gained by such practices is not liberation or realization of the Divine, but the achievement of 'psychic' powers. The psychic powers are such as the petitioner's prayer answered, the power to heal, the power to work miracles, to read the minds of others and into the future, etc.

To think that such *Siddhis* or *Riddhis* have anything to do with liberation is an illusion. In fact, they are obstacles in the way of spiritual advance. Carried to extremes, they may be dangerous to health. Without good health, the persistence of effort for spiritual advancement is difficult of achievement. Being difficult, painful and generally conspicuous, physical austerities only provide a ground to vanity, and cause the downslide of the aspirant.

Mortification is the best when it results in the elimination of self-will, self-interest, self-centered thinking, wishing and imagining. Extreme physical austerities are not likely to achieve this kind of mortification. The acceptance of what happens to us in the course of daily living is likely to produce this result. An essential spiritual teaching is a joyous acceptance of all that is. This is not only a spiritual precept, but also an existential truth. It is not doing whatever comes our way. It is the conscious acceptance that whatever comes our way is sent by Him and is, therefore, to be accepted gratefully. If specific exercises in self-denial are to be undertaken, they are to be inconspicuous, non-competitive and non-injurious to health. One is to enjoy melodies in maladies.

For instance, in social relations, non-denial may take the form of the control of the tongue and the moods, no showy acts of over-humility; the form of refraining from saying anything uncharitable or merely frivolous; the form of behaving calmly and with quiet cheerfulness in spite of the external circumstances, or the states of our bodies pre-disposing us to anxiety, gloom or an excessive elation.

The most difficult of all mortifications is *non-attachment* to self-interest. This is, in essence, what the Bhagavad-Gita says when Lord Krishna tells Arjuna to do his divinely ordained duty without personal craving for, or fear of, the fruits of his actions. Its objective is to achieve a *holy indifference* to the temporal success or failure of the cause to which one has devoted one's best energies. If it succeeds, it is well and good. If it meets with defeat, even then it is well and good.

Spiritually, the fitting disposition for union with God is that the soul should remain in that pureness and love which is perfect resignation and complete detachment from all things for God alone. As long as the bonds of human affections, however slight they may be, hold the soul, it cannot, while they last, make its way to God.

In the practice of mortification is rather an active resignation. Self-will is renounced so that the Divine Will may use the mortified mind and body as its instrument for good. In the words of Kabir, 'the devout seeker is he who mingles in his heart the double currents of love and detachment, like the mingling of the streams of Ganga and Jumna.'

Until we put an end to particular attachments, there can be no love of God with the whole heart, mind and strength, and no universal charity towards all creatures for God's sake. Non-attachment is emptying one's mind and heart of all desires and

affections. This enables the goods of God, which are beyond all measure, to be contained in the emptied heart. If the aspirant passes through life empty, who will be able to injure him?

Mortification is painful. But that pain is one of the pre-conditions of blessedness. Some degree of mortification is an indispensable prerequisite for the creation and enjoyment even of merely intellectual and aesthetic goods.

Those who choose the profession of artist, philosopher or man of science, choose, in many cases, a life of poverty and unrewarded hard work. By no means are they the only mortifications they have to undertake. Besides, the artist denies his ordinary human tendency to think of things in utilitarian terms; the critical philosopher mortifies his common sense; the man of science resists the temptation to over-simplify and think conventionally, and each must make himself docile to the leadings of mysterious Fact. Socrates, Galileo, etc are examples of the embodiment of mortification in a state of consciousness that corresponds to spiritual beatitude. The artist, the philosopher and the man of science know the bliss of aesthetic contemplation, discovery and non-attached possession.

It is by long obedience and hard work that the artist, the philosopher or the man of science comes to unforced spontaneity and consummate mastery. Every one of them knows that he never creates anything out of his personal consciousness. He submits obediently to the workings of 'inspiration'. He is aware that the medium in which he works has its own self-nature. He does not ignore it, nor does he override it. He makes himself its patient servant. In the process, he achieves perfect freedom of expression of his vocation. Similarly, life is an art. The man who is to be a consummate artist in living must follow, on all the levels of his being, the same procedure as that by which the

artist, the philosopher or the man of science comes to his own state of perfection.

The goods of the intellect, the emotions and the imagination are real goods. But they are not the final good. Mortification of will, desire and action is not enough. There must be mortification in the fields of knowing, thinking, feeling and fancying. The total abstention from judgment upon one's fellows is another requisite of inward purity.

Rites, Sacraments and Ceremonials

Rites, sacraments and ceremonials are valuable in so far as they remind those who take part in them, of the true Nature of Things and of what ought to be their own relation to the world and its divine Ground. Any ritual or sacrament is good provided that the object symbolized is, in fact, some aspect of divine Reality and that the relation between symbol and Fact is clearly defined and constant. But the problem arises for those who have been brought up to think of God by means of one set of symbols, when it becomes very hard to think of Him in terms of other sets of symbols, words, ceremonies and images.

Idol worship helps devotees to concentrate on the Divine. Though the Divine is immanent everywhere, an idol becomes the centre of concentration of Divinity based on the true faith of the devotees worshipping it. A cow delivers milk only through its udder when the cowboy properly and affectionately approaches it, even though milk is present everywhere in the cow.

But most men worship the gods because they want success in their worldly undertakings. This kind of material success can be gained very quickly by such worship. Men, whose discrimination has been blunted by worldly desires, establish this or that ritual or cult and resort to various deities, according to the impulse of their inborn nature.

But no matter what deity a devotee chooses to worship, if he has faith, his faith is made unwavering. Endowed with the faith that God gives him, he worships the deity and gets from it everything he prays for. But this man of small understanding, because of discrimination blunted, prays only for what is transient and perishable. The worshippers of the lower gods go to them

for personal ends. Those who worship the supreme Godhead realize Him.

If sacramental rites are constantly repeated in a spirit of faith and devotion, an enduring effect is produced in the psychic medium, crystallizing personalities, according to the more or less perfect development of the bodies with which they are associated. Within this psychic medium or non-personal substratum of individual minds, something persists as an independent existence with its own derived objectivity.

Those who perform the rites with faith and devotion actually discover something distinct from the subjectivity of their own imagination. As long as this projected psychic entity is nourished by the faith and love of its worshippers, it will possess, not merely objectivity, but powers to get people's prayers answered. However, all this happens in accordance with the divine laws governing the universe in its psychic, spiritual and material aspects.

There is profound truth in the notion that the gods (lower forms of the Godhead) feed on the sacrifices made to them. When their worship falls off, when faith and devotion lose their intensity, the gods sicken and finally die. There are several temples, mosques and churches around the world where even the most irreligious and un-psychic visitors cannot fail to be aware of some intensely numinous presence. It is rather the psychic presence of men's thoughts and feelings projected into objectivity and haunting the sacred place, in the same way as thoughts and feelings haunt the scenes of some past suffering or crime. The presence in these consecrated shrines, the presence evoked by the performance of traditional rites, the presence inherent in a sacramental object, name, etc are all real presences. But, they are not of God, but of something which, though it may reflect the divine Reality, is yet less and other than It.

The relation subsisting between ritual and real presence depends upon the character of the worshipper's reaction to each. Systematically cultivated ritual contributes to the evocation, then results, for certain souls, in the immediate apprehension of the *presence* which brings with it joys of a totally different and higher kind. The *presence* is always that of the divine being – the god form that has been previously remembered. The projected objectivity of the *presence* is occasionally so complete as to be apprehensible not only by the devout worshipper, but by even indefinite outsiders.

Similar is the experience of ardent devotees. Whoever recites the name of the divine form he or she worships in heart and soul will surely apprehend the form and does not get separated from it. By reason of that association, just as one associating with a maker of perfumes becomes permeated with the same perfumes, he or she will become perfumed by the divine form's compassion, and will become enlightened without resort to any other expedient means. Kabir, Mira and Tyagaiah are well known examples.

The intense faith and devotion, coupled with perseverance, by devotees in the same forms of worship or spiritual practices, have a tendency to objectify the idea or memory, which is their content, and so to create, in some sort, a numinous real presence which the worshippers and even their associates actually apprehend. In so far as this is the case, the ritualist is perfectly justified in attributing to his hallowed acts and words a power, which, in another context, would be called magical. The *mantra* works; the sacrifice does something; and the sacrament confers grace. These are all matters of direct experience, facts that anyone who chooses to fulfill the necessary conditions, can verify empirically.

But the grace conferred is not always spiritual grace and the resulting powers need not necessarily be from God. Worshippers can, and very often do, get grace and power from one another and from the faith and devotion of their predecessors projected into independent psychic existences that are hauntingly associated with certain places, words and acts. Therefore, a great deal of ritualistic religion is not spirituality, but occultism, may be a refined and well-meaning kind of white magic.

There is no harm in this kind of white magic as long as it is treated that it is not true religion, but a certain kind of psycho-physical make up to remind people that there is God in the knowledge of Whom stands their eternal life. If the real presences the ritualistic white magic evokes are taken to be God in Himself and not the projections of human thoughts and feelings about God, then there is idolatry. This idolatry is, at its best, a very lofty and beneficent kind of religion. But the consequences of worshipping God as anything but Spirit, and in anyway except in spirit and in truth, are necessarily undesirable in the sense that they lead to delay the soul's ultimate reunion with the eternal Ground.

Though spiritual masters of all major religions are opposed to ritualism, the history of religion clearly demonstrates that very large numbers of men and women in all religions have an ineradicable desire for rites and ceremonies. It may be that most people do not want spirituality or deliverance, but rather a religion that gives them emotional satisfactions, answers to prayers, supernatural powers, etc.

Further, some of those who do desire spirituality find that, for them, the most effective means to those ends are rites, ceremonies, incantations, repetition of name or mantra, etc. It is by participating in these acts and repeating these mantras that they are most powerfully reminded of the eternal Ground of all

Being. Everything, event or thought can be made the doorway through which a soul may pass out of time into eternity. That is why ritualistic and sacramental religion can lead to deliverance. But, at the same time, every hallowed ceremony, mantra or sacramental rite is a channel through which power can flow out of the fascinating psychic universe into the universe of embodied selves. As every human being ordinarily loves power and self-enhancement, the power flowing into the embodied selves can lead away the worshippers from deliverance if they have not abandoned their self in the process.

All the masters of spiritual life are agreed that without self-knowledge there cannot be adequate knowledge of God and that without a constant recollectedness there can be no complete deliverance. It is desirable if man transforms the whole of workaday life into a kind of continuous ritual that every object in the world around him is regarded as a symbol of the world's eternal Ground and that all his actions are performed sacramentally. The man who has learnt to regard things as symbols, persons as temples of the divine Ground and actions as sacraments is a man who has learned constantly to remind himself of what he is in relation to the universe and God.

'That the Logos is in things, lives and conscious minds and they in the Logos' is the emphatic teaching of the *Vedanta*. Because of the indwelling of the Logos, all things have reality. But a vast majority of human beings believe that their own selfness and the objects around them possess a reality in them, wholly independent of the Logos. This belief leads them to identify their being with their sensations, cravings and private notions. In its turn, this self-identification with 'what they are not' keeps them off divine influence and the very possibility of deliverance. To most of us, on most occasions, things are not symbols and actions are not sacramental. And we have to remind consciously and deliberately ourselves that they are.

This process of conscious sacramentalization can be applied only to such actions as are not intrinsically evil. It is not possible to sacramentalize actions whose psychological byproducts are completely God eclipsing.

Rites, sacraments, ceremonies, liturgies, etc belong to public worship. They are devices by means of which the individual members of a group or congregation are reminded of the true Nature of Things and of their proper relations to one another, the universe and God. What ritual is to public worship, spiritual exercises are to private devotion. They are devices to be used by the solitary individual when he prays to God in his privacy.

8. Moral Insight

The relationship between moral action and spiritual knowledge is reciprocal. Selfless behavior makes possible an accession of knowledge, and the accession of knowledge makes possible the performance of further and more genuinely selfless actions, which in their turn enhance the capacity of the agent for knowing. This goes on without limit, if there is perfect docility and obedience.

The amount and kind of knowledge we acquire depends upon the will and also upon our psychophysical constitution, and the modifications imposed upon it by environment and our own choice. It is said that where technological discovery is concerned, man's desire has been the important factor. Once something is definitely wanted, it has been produced again and again in a very short time.

The same is true in regard to ethical and spiritual discoveries. 'You are as holy as you wish to be' and 'you can know as much reality as you wish to know' are the mottos of the saints. This is for the reason that knowledge is in the knower according to the mode of the knower. The mode of the knower is, in all important respects, within the knower's control. 'Liberating knowledge of God comes to the pure in heart and poor in spirit'. Though such state of purity and poverty is enormously difficult of achievement, it is nevertheless possible to one that attempts it in all simplicity.

To learn to discriminate between the different kinds of rhetoric is an essential part of intellectual morality. Intellectual morality is as necessary a pre-condition of the spiritual life as are the control of the will and the guard of heart and tongue.

When we say that a man has a penetrating moral insight, we mean that his judgment of value-claims is sound; that he knows enough to be able to say what is good in the long run. When we say that a man has a strong moral character, we mean that he is ready to act upon the findings of his insight, even when these findings are unpleasant or even at variance with his first evaluations.

In this context, attitude of the individual is everything. One's attitude determines the state of the world one lives in. It is the foundation for every success and every failure one has had and will have. One's attitude will make one, or break. Attitude creates the way one feels about people and situations. One's actions are a result of one's attitude, which, in turn, creates a reaction from others. So, basically, what one thinks, one gets. It is one's attitude toward others and the universe that determines the resultant attitude toward one. If one incorporates a positive, joyful attitude, one will have positive, joyful results. If one has a bad, negative attitude, one will have failed even before one begins.

One's attitude is one's own personal filter for everything that happens to one, around one, or within one. What takes place in this world is not as important as how one views it. One cannot choose what will happen to one. One cannot guarantee success and happiness to oneself. These things are out of one's control. One can, however, choose how one feels about these things, about how one responds to these situations.

With a positive attitude, one will have the ability to be happier each and every day, make others around happier, and live a good life. The stress and frustration one has is not really worth it and can easily be avoided. When one looks at the bigger picture of life, it looks quite insignificant. There is no better way to forget about one's worries than to help someone else with theirs. When one takes the focus off oneself, and gives one's

attention to helping people, one's attitude will change dramatically. This includes not only helping friends and family, but also volunteering to help those in need that one may not know. When one gives of oneself, one will receive tenfold in return.

There are times when the only solution is to get away from the given situation. If one knows that one is in a negative mood, or has been in low spirits for some time, one is to take a break. It could be just what one needs. Such a break works wonders for one's mood and attitude.

One thing always to remember is that life is short. The worst thing would be to look back on one's days wishing one could have been happier. 'Now' is the time to take a good look at one's attitude and make the necessary improvements.

Days, weeks, months and years have a way of rushing by. One shall not let them pass while one is in a negative mood about life. A positive attitude is worth the work, effort and change that it takes to create it. One shall not look back with regrets, but only to happy memories.

A common cause for a poor attitude is the feeling that one is in a situation that is just too hard to deal with. Perhaps one doesn't have the job one wants, or one may have a boss that drives one crazy. It may even be more serious than that. One may be too young, too old, too tired, too unlucky, etc. But one can see in the world that people have done more with less.

Many people in all parts of the world have overcome obstacles, solved problems, and maintained a positive attitude through the most trying of times. If they have done, so can anyone. The power of a positive attitude is always within one's reach. One simply has to extend one's hand and grab it. One can always gain a great attitude, and make one's life happier, healthier, and wealthier. Creating a positive attitude for oneself is a challenging

goal itself, but it becomes even more so, when others around have negative attitudes.

It is true that one becomes somewhat like the company one keeps. If that company is negative, one is to follow ways to minimize their effect. The most difficult choice is also the most effective one. Talking with one's friends about their negativity can help them make change, if it is handled with care. Before one's friends can create a negative situation, one can bring up good news and positive things to talk about. They may begin to follow one's lead and add their own positive thoughts.

This will help to accomplish two things. First, it will help to ensure that one's conversation is not negative. Second, one may help one's friends gain a positive attitude about life.

There are times when talking doesn't work. For these situations, one is simply to walk away. If the negative talk of others is too much for one to take, one is politely to exit and spend one's time elsewhere.

A positive attitude can do much more for one than simply put one in a good mood. With the right attitude, opportunities will replace problems; challenges will replace obstacles; and the impossible situations become possible.

The people around have a great impact on one's attitude. It is hard not to fall into the trap as one hears negative comment after negative comment. They may not intend to put one in a negative mood, but that does not mean it won't happen.

A person has three choices when confronted with a negative individual. One is to improve the situation with positive comments; the second is to maintain an indifferent attitude and the third is to join in the negative conversation. The latter, unfortunately, is the easiest path to follow. If one knows ahead

of time that a certain group or individual is giving out negative energy, one had better avoid the company.

It is important to know when one is not in a good mood, and this is a very important part of improving upon the situation.

When one comes into contact with others while in a bad mood, it may serve to perpetuate one's negative feelings. Sometimes, the best thing to do is to give oneself some time alone. Let one's mood cool down, and relax. If one re-enters the company after mental relaxation, one will have a much better outlook on things. At the end of the day, it is good to give oneself a reward. When one has something pleasant to look forward to, it may help to keep one's attitude positive even in the face of unending frustration.

Being in a good mood is not difficult. It does take a little effort and no responsibility. Because it is better to be happy than being upset, putting oneself in a good mood is definitely worth it. It is worth remembering that even the happiest of people find themselves in a bad mood now and then.

All too often people take life, and all of the great things that it offers, for granted. People realize how much something means to them only after it is taken away.

Where do one's negative attitudes come from, in the first place?

Negative attitudes come from thinking negative thoughts over and over until they have become a part of one's subconscious – they become habitual, a part of one's personality. One may not even realize one has a negative attitude because it has been with one for so long. Once one has a negative attitude, one expects failure and disaster. This expectation turns one into a strong magnet for failure and disaster. Then it becomes a vicious circle. One

expects the worst - one gets the worst – one’s negative beliefs are reinforced – one expects the worst – one gets... and so on.

So, how do we shift our thoughts to create a positive attitude?

It takes effort, but creating anything of value takes effort. In order to have a new attitude, we have to change our subconscious thinking. How do we do this? It is by analyzing every thought we have until positive thinking becomes a habit. One is merely replacing an old habit with a healthy habit, much like substituting exercise for smoking.

One cannot just stop being negative; one has to replace those negative thoughts with positive ones.

Some people would say, ‘but negative situations are a reality. They just show up in everyday life.’

This is absolutely not true. Situations are a reality; it is true. They do show up. It is one’s *Attitude* that makes a situation positive or negative. It is time for one to realize, every moment, that one is in control of how one thinks and feels. No one else on earth has this power unless one gives it away. One is to take control of one’s attitude and, surely, one can control one’s results. ‘Your state of mind creates the state of your results’ is a famous dictum.

When we are positive, we find that our interactions with the world and ourselves become brighter, more productive and perpetuate the ‘feel good’ factor. This, in turn, makes us healthier and more peaceful.

But how do we develop this positive attitude?

The path to positive attitude can be found in three ways, namely, awareness, acceptance and affirmation.

One is to be aware of what and how one is thinking. One must train oneself to be aware at all times of how one’s mind is working - the thoughts, thinking patterns and tendencies. One is to make this a habit. The meditation techniques of *antar mouna* and *yoga nidra* help one do this. These techniques help in withdrawing one’s senses, to introspect. This is in the nature of awareness.

Awareness, however, brings about a heightened sensitivity to the issues. We tend to become judgmental and critical of ourselves or of others. This has the danger of sending us into a vicious cycle of negativity unless we learn to accept what we see and understand.

This brings us to the need of an attitude that ‘it is ok’ to think how and what we are. One is to be just a witness to this fact and believe that God likes one for what one is. One is to consider wholeheartedly that whatever happens to one is the will of God. This positive acceptance leads one to a genuine love and compassion, which forms the bedrock of positive thinking. With practice, one will find that this helps in surmounting negativity to a large extent.

As for affirmation as a tool to positive attitude, what Astavakra says is very relevant. ‘If you think you are free, then free you will become. If you think that you are bound, then bound you will remain. This famous saying is true: As a person thinks, so does he become.’ By affirmation is meant a clear, definite statement of fact. To affirm anything is to assert positively that it is so. One will do well to identify some moral or spiritual statements and seek their affirmation to go down into one’s psyche.

The affirmation is like a reminder of something forgotten. Its importance is the meaning. It is to sink into the unconscious of the individual by its contemplation. *Avadhuta-Gita* records that the essence of the Vedanta is the supreme knowledge that 'I am by nature the formless, absolute Self'. There can be no greater affirmation for contemplation for a spiritual aspirant.

Once we are aware of what lies within our thoughts, we can actually start working upon how we 'want' to look at a particular person, situation or thing. This is in the nature of a resolve for positive thinking and attitude.

Positive thinking affects the body vibrations in a positive manner. This, in turn, affects the vibrations around us, which, in turn, affect the situations around us. This helps in relieving our suffering, and in leading a harmonious life. The power of positive thinking and a positive attitude to life, and our own amazing potential, can lead us on to achieve great things. Conversely, negative thoughts and feelings can prevent us from living the life we really want.

9. Ethics

While *dharma* primarily relates to the intrinsic law of man's being, righteousness, charity and piety ultimately leading to the enlightenment of the soul for communion with God – the ultimate goal of a human being, *ethics*, though part of *dharma*, relates to human conduct in society.

The term ethics or ethic means a pattern or norm or code of conduct adopted by a group of people. The term also applies not merely to the various codes of conduct approved but also to the activity of appraising, evaluating and revising these codes. This involves consistent and critical enquiry into the ethical beliefs, and subjects them to close scrutiny.

Ethical deliberation begins with specific problems of individuals facing a choice and being uncertain about what to do. These problems can be big or small, great or low, physical or spiritual, personal or family, social or political and the like. Every human being faces one or the other of these problems and deliberates to some extent in search of a satisfactory solution.

In an individual's ethical deliberation, public opinion plays a very important role both directly and indirectly in view of the fact that an individual is an integral part of the society.

After ascertaining the facts, after sorting and weighing the principles at stake and after applying partially principles – written and unwritten, it is necessary to make a decision. Much of ethical deliberation consists in coming to know one's own mind. This stage precedes the final step to make up one's mind and act thereon. It is generally understood that a moral problem, as it arises, consists in bringing oneself to do what one considers being right. However, most ethical philosophers consider that

ethics is not primarily concerned with getting people to do what they believe to be right, but rather with helping them to decide what is right.

Moral virtues such as liberality, temperance, benevolence, charity come about as a result of habit. That is why its name *ethike* – *ethics* is derived from the word *ethos* (habit). It, therefore, follows that none of the moral virtues arises in us by nature. For nothing that exists by nature can form a habit contrary to its nature. Nor can anything else that by nature behaves in one way be trained to behave in another way. In a way, we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit.

Man has rights because he is ‘a *person* – a spiritual being, a whole unto himself, a being that exists for itself or itself that wills its own proper perfection. Therefore, and for *that very reason*, something *is* due to man in the fullest sense, *for that reason* he does inalienably have a *suum*, a ‘right’ which he can plead against everyone else, a right which imposes upon every one of his partners the obligation at least not to violate it... Man has inalienable rights because he is created a person by the act of God’, in the words of Pieper.

‘Rights of man’ denote what is right for man to strive for. Unfortunately, ‘rights’ are usually employed to mean a mysterious prescriptive right to claim. A person is defined as a self-conscious, self-objectifying, rational being, in a sense of rational which sees ‘reason’ as a constructive, organizing principle of thought, not simply as an abstracting instrument of analysis in the service of the passions.

Ethics is, therefore, ‘the discipline dealing with what is good and bad, or right and wrong, or moral duty and obligation... a group of moral principles or set of values and the principles of conduct governing an individual or a profession, or standards of

behavior’, consistent with the inalienable rights that inhere in him. The word ‘conduct’ implies only persons in as much as only persons *conduct* themselves, while animals behave, machines function and stars move.

10. Right Action

General

According to *Mimamsa*, actions are primarily of three kinds. First, obligatory actions are those that have to be performed by every man only because he is a man. Their performance supports man, society and the universe and does not bring any special kind of merit for man. But their non-performance produces demerit. Second, prohibited actions are those that produce demerit, but their non-performance does not produce any merit. The non-performance of prohibited actions is also obligatory. Third, actions are whose performance is optional. The injunctions regarding the actions that are optional are concerned with particular aims of the agent. If one wants to have a special status in this life or hereafter, one has to perform a certain sacrifice. But the particular desire is not an obligation.

Mimamsa recognizes, though discourages, another kind of actions, that is, the activities associated with black magic. If one wants one's enemy to die or suffer grievously, one performs certain sacrifices associated with black magic. Man may choose to perform them, though the sacrificer, too, suffers in the process. *Mimamsa* lays down rules for performing such rites, though it does not lay down rules for performing prohibited actions that produce demerit such as murder, causing grievous physical injury or theft.

The Bhagavad-Gita adds the ideal of salvation to *Mimamsa* philosophy of life and action. Krishna says that those attached to actions, their fruit and their enjoyment cannot obtain salvation. He teaches people to realize that actions are performed by the body, a product of *Prakrti* and its attributes, but not by

the *atman*. But as the *atman* is different from *Prakrti*, it should overcome its self-identification with it.

Yet so long as the *atman* is within the realm of *Prakrti*, it should continue to perform dutiful actions. So non-egoistic action is possible and natural, has its basis in the very nature of reality. Man has to transcend the realm of *Prakrti* as the nature of the *atman* points to such transcendence. Krishna's criticism of *Mimamsa* philosophy of life and action is only a criticism of the religion of sacrifices and gods without the ideal of salvation. It is not rejection of the *Veda* itself. Otherwise, he would not have said that he is the *Samaveda* among the *Vedas*.

The Bhagavad-Gita elucidates the role of right action. One is to understand what right action is, what wrong action is and what non-action is. Wrong action is the prohibited action. The wise man sees non-action in action and action in non-action. Non-action does not mean non-movement of limbs. In such a case, life becomes impossible. Ethical non-action is action without any egoity. Merit and demerit, the results of action, do not accrue to the agent of such an action. For such agent knows that he is doing the action for the sake of *dharma*, not for his own sake. He also knows that it is not he, as the *atman*, but as the body that does the action. Man should perform all actions as skillfully as he can and surrender the fruit to God.

In this world, except a corpse, everything is active and activity yields its appropriate result. For example, if an astrologer predicts that a young man would become a great scholar, does that young man become a scholar without study? No. There is no place for fatalism in life. One shall apply oneself to self-effort to promote one's ultimate good.

Self-effort is of two categories. One is that of the past lives and the other is that of the current life. The latter can

effectively counteract the former if it is so willed. Fate is none other than self-effort of past life or lives. There is a continuing conflict between these two in the present life. That which is more powerful ultimately triumphs.

Self-effort, which is not in accord with the scriptures, is motivated by delusion. When the desired result of self-effort is not there, one should examine if there is such deluded action. If so, it needs to be corrected. There is no power greater than right action in the present. One is, therefore, to take recourse to self-effort to overcome evil by good and fate by present effort.

One should never yield to laziness, but strive to attain liberation, realizing that life is ebbing away every moment. One should not revel in the filth known as sense-pleasure, as a worm revels in pus. One is to acquire wisdom by self-effort and then realize that the end of self-effort is the direct realization of Truth. As is the effort, so is the fruit.

One is to free oneself from likes and dislikes and to engage oneself in righteous self-effort to reach the supreme Truth. Self-effort is that which springs from right understanding of the scriptures and the teachings of holy persons.

Self-effort has a three-fold root and, therefore, three-fold fruit. It is an inner awakening in the intelligence, a decision in the mind and physical action. It is based on the knowledge of scriptures, instructions of the preceptor (*guru*) and one's own effort. Fate or divine dispensation does not enter here. The essence of all scriptures is that he who desires salvation should divert the impure mind to pure endeavor by persistent effort.

Even as an error of the past can be rectified and turned into good action by self-effort today, the habits of the past and the corresponding impressions (*samskaras*) can be overcome by

appropriate self-effort. However, the notion of the *jiva*-hood can be overcome only by the attainment of liberation.

The *samskaras* (tendencies, impressions) brought forward from the previous lives are of two kinds. The pure ones lead one to liberation and the impure ones keep one in bondage. One is pure consciousness oneself, not inert physical matter. One is not impelled to action by anything other than oneself. It is open to one to strengthen the pure latent tendencies in preference to the impure ones. That is the reason why the holy men advise that one shall tread consciously the path that leads to the eternal good. The wise seeker knows that the fruit of his endeavor is always commensurate with the intensity of his self-effort. Fate or destiny or God does not ordain it otherwise. The seeker is, therefore, to endeavor for his true good – his salvation by a keen and intelligent study of the scriptures, by having the company of the holy ones and by right self-effort.

Renunciation, a facet of right action, is of three types – sacrifice, charity and penance. All the three are actions. They purify the soul. They are obligations to every man who has to perform them without any attachment to the fruits that may result. One who gives up actions through ignorance is under the influence of the Attribute of Darkness (*tamas*). One who gives them up because of the trouble they involve is under the influence of the Attribute of the Active (*rajas*). Neither is right. The one who performs them without desire for their fruit is under the influence of the Attribute of the Transparent (*sattva*). He is the true renouncer of action, the true knower and the truly wise (*jnani*).

The three initiators of action are the knower, the known and the knowledge. The three factors of action are the agent, action and the instruments of action. Of these, the agent, action and knowledge are of three kinds, according as they are determined by the three Attributes. The knowledge that sees unity

in multiplicity, the un-manifest Brahman in the manifested difference is determined by the Transparent. This leads man to act with the idea of the welfare of the whole universe in view. The agent here is untouched by the results of action. That which sees the differences as separate from one another is determined by the Active. This leads man to act with the idea of the immediate result and its relevance to the agent in view. That which leads man to action without any thought is determined by the Dark. This leads man to act without any idea of the result as in the case of animals.

In another context, the Bhagavad-Gita classifies actions into five kinds, according to the kinds of causes that produce action. It may be produced by the body, the agent (*atman*), different types of instruments, different kinds of bio-motor and vital functions, and even fate as the unknown factor. The will of the agent alone cannot produce what is aimed at. All have to cooperate in the right way and in the right mix. All have to be favorable.

Action is also classified into three categories – bodily action, speech and thought (mental action). All the three have to be pure and under the guidance of the Transparent.

The Bhagavad-Gita is interested in the *dharma* of man and society, and not in the metaphysical problem of the ultimate *Dharma*. Both Arjuna and Krishna are eager that the law of society is preserved in any case. For the purpose, Arjuna is prepared to give up fighting and retire to the forest as an ascetic. For if the rulers are killed, who will maintain the social order? The castes will then mix up; men and women become licentious; and the foolish, the incompetent and the vicious will become the lawmakers. The caste and tribal laws will go to the winds.

But Krishna points out that Arjuna is indulging in psychological rationalization. In the name of preserving social order, he is going to violate that very order, by refusing to perform the duties of a warrior and defender of justice. Every man should perform the duties incumbent on his station in society. Even Krishna, the Absolute, has His duties. He performs them, though He has nothing to gain by them. If He does not perform His duties, men will imitate Him and the world will go to naught. He will then be responsible for disorder, promiscuity and ultimate destruction of the world. It is only for maintaining and defending order, that is, *dharma* that He, as the Brahman, takes on incarnations to punish the wicked and destroy disorder.

The *Avatar* (Divine Incarnation) becomes incarnate in order to assist human beings to achieve the union of man with timeless Spirit. This He does in three ways – by teaching the true doctrine in a world blinded by voluntary ignorance, by inviting souls to a ‘carnal love’ of His humanity, not indeed as an end in itself, but as the means to spiritual love – knowledge of Spirit, and finally by serving as a channel of grace. Here the Bhagavad-Gita shows the intimate involvement of the Divine with, and His interest in, the world.

The Bhagavad-Gita gives a new meaning to the concept of sacrifice (*yajna*), which is a part of *dharma* according to *Mimamsa*. Arjuna has to perform the duties of his station in society, even if they involve the killing of his kinsmen. When he does the actions to fulfill his obligations, with no personal interest, the demerit that results will not accrue to him. It goes to, and dissolves itself, in the Cosmic Person.

Such action is surrender to the Cosmic Person and to the Absolute. This surrender to God is itself ‘sacrifice’ in which the oblation is man and his actions.

The sacrifice of surrender is performed in different ways. All those that make this surrender are called *yogis*. Some *yogis* surrender everything feeling that they and their actions go to the Brahman and are the Brahman. This is oneness or *samadhi* with the Brahman's activities, the placement of one's self in the Brahman. Others offer sacrifices differently, depending upon their level of enlightenment.

For example, some worship sacrifice as God Himself. Some offer the senses as oblations to self-control. Some offer the activities of senses and of life as oblations. Some offer sacrifices with substances like food, some with the practice of yoga, some with study, some with breath control, etc. All such *yogis* are performing sacrifice that purifies their soul. The purpose of sacrifice according to the Gita is the purification of mind and soul, not enjoyment and pleasure as given by *Mimamsa*.

Right action is the means by which the mind is prepared for contemplation. Those who constantly practise the four virtuous acts, in which all other virtues are included, namely, the requital of hatred by love, resignation, desirelessness and obedience to the *dharma* or Nature of Things can hope to achieve the liberating realization that the soul and all other things have as their living principle the divine Godhead. In Buddhism, too, the first seven branches of the Eightfold Path are the active, ethical preparation for unitive knowledge of Suchness. Those who practise the path can hope to achieve the liberating realization that *samsara* and *Nirvana* are one.

Relations - Duties

Relations universally measure duties. One is to maintain one's own position towards others. One need not examine what the other is doing, but what one must do is that one's *will* shall be conformable to nature. Another's will not damage one unless one chooses. One will be damaged when one thinks that one is damaged. In this way one will discover one's duty from the relation of a neighbor, a member of the family, a member of the society, etc.

As to piety towards the gods, one must know that the chief thing is to have right opinions about them, to think that they exist, and that they administer the All well and justly. One is to fix oneself in this duty to obey them and yield to them in everything, as being accomplished by the wisest intelligence. If one does so, one will never blame the gods, nor accuse them of neglecting one. It is not possible for this to be done in any other way than by withdrawing from the things, which are not in one's power, and by placing the good and the evil only in those things, which are in one's power.

Every man is formed by nature to turn away from the things, which appear harmful and the things, which are the cause of harm. He will follow and admire the things, which are useful and the causes of the useful. It is impossible then for a person who thinks that he is harmed to be delighted with that, which he thinks to be the cause of the harm. It is also impossible to be pleased with the harm itself.

Thus where one's interest is, there piety is. Consequently he who takes care to desire, as he ought, and to avoid, as he ought, at the same time, also cares after piety. To sacrifice, and to offer first fruits according to custom and tradition, purely, not

meanly, nor carelessly, nor scantily, nor above ability is a thing which each is to do.

One is to prescribe some form to oneself, which one shall observe both when one is alone and when one meets with men. Silence is the general rule, or what alone is necessary is said, and in a few words. Rarely and only when the occasion demands, shall one say something.

One is not to laugh much, nor on many occasions, nor excessive.

One is to refuse to take an oath, if possible. If it is not, one is to refuse as far as one is able to refuse it.

One is to be careful of one's company. One must know that if one's companion is impure, he who keeps company with him also becomes impure, though he should happen to be pure.

One is to apply the things that relate to the body as far as the bare use such as food, drink, clothing, house, etc is necessary. One is to exclude everything, which is for show or luxury.

As to sexual pleasure, one is to act in the way conformable to custom.

If somebody reports to one that a certain person speaks ill of one, one does not make any comment on what has been told him. Instead, one may say that, 'the man did not know the rest of my faults, for he would not have mentioned only these'.

One shall not go to the felicitations of others, nor visit them readily. But if one attends such occasions, one is to observe gravity and sedateness, and also avoid making oneself disagreeable.

When one is to go to any of those who are in great power, one is to place before oneself that one will not find the man at home or that one will be excluded or that the door will not be opened to one or that the man will not care about one. And if, with all this, it is one's duty to visit him, one must bear what happens and never say to oneself that it was not worth the trouble. For, this is silly and marks the character of a man who is offended by externals.

While one is in company with others, one is to take care not to speak much and excessive about one's own acts and dangers. It may be pleasant to one to make mention of one's dangers, but it is not so pleasant to others to hear of what has happened to one. One is to take care not to provoke laughter, as this is a slippery way toward vulgar habits. This will diminish the respect of one's neighbors. One is not to indulge in obscene talk, or permit it in the company in which one is. If anything of this kind happens, if there is a good opportunity, one is to rebuke the man who indulges in such talk. If there is no such opportunity, one is to show plainly that one is displeased at such talk by one's silence or expression of dissatisfaction by one's countenance or blushing.

If one receives the impression of any pleasure, one is to guard oneself against being carried away by it. One must let the thing wait and allow oneself a certain delay on one's part. Then one is to think of both times, of the time when one will enjoy the pleasure and of the time after the enjoyment of the pleasure when one will repent and reproach oneself. One is to set against these things how one will rejoice if one has abstained from the pleasure and how one will commend oneself. But if it seems reasonable to do the thing, one is to take care that the charm of it, and the pleasure and the attraction of it shall not conquer one. On the other hand, one is to consider how much better it is to be

conscious, by its avoidance, that one has gained this victory over the sensuous pleasure.

When one has decided that a thing ought to be done and is doing it, one shall never avoid being seen doing it, though several people shall form an unfavorable opinion about it. If it is not right to do it, one is to avoid doing it. If it is right, why should one be afraid of those who shall find fault?

If one has assumed a character above one's strength, one has acted in this manner in an unbecoming way, and one has neglected that which one might have fulfilled.

In walking about, one takes care not to step on a nail or to sprain one's foot. Similarly one is to take care not to damage one's ruling faculty. If one observes this rule in every act, one will undertake the act with more security.

The measure of possession to every man is the body, as the foot is of the shoe. If one stands on the demands of the body, one will maintain the measure. But if one passes beyond it, one must then of necessity be hurried, as it were, down a precipice. As also for the shoe, if one goes beyond the necessities of the foot, the shoe is gilded and will be an obstruction. There is no limit to that which has once passed the true measure.

It is a mark of mean capacity to spend much time on the things, which concern the body such as eating, drinking, exercise. These things need be done as subordinate things. One's care is to be directed to the mind and the soul.

When any person treats or speaks ill of one, one is to remember that he does or says this because he thinks it is his duty. It is not possible for him to follow that which seems right to one, but that which seems right to him. Accordingly if he is wrong

in his opinion, he is the person who is hurt for he is the person who has been deceived. If a man supposes the true conjunction to be false, it is not the conjunction, which is hindered, but the man who has been deceived about it. If one proceeds from these opinions, one will be mild in his reaction to him who reviles one.

Someone says, 'I am richer than you; therefore, my possessions are greater than yours. I am more eloquent than you; therefore my speech is superior to yours'. But one is neither possession, nor speech.

One is not to vomit one's knowledge before uninstructed people. Even sheep do not vomit up the grass to show to the shepherd how much they have eaten. When they have internally digested the pasture, they produce externally wool and milk. One is to speak aloud through one's acts rather than through one's words.

The condition and characteristic of an uninstructed person is that he never expects from himself either advantage or harm, but from externals. The condition and characteristic of a philosopher is that he expects all advantage and harm from himself. The marks of someone who is making progress in character are that he censures no man, praises no man, blames no man, accuses no man and says nothing about himself as if he were somebody or knew something. If he is impeded or hindered, he blames himself. If a man praises him, he ridicules the praiser to himself. If a man censures him, he makes no defence. He removes all desires from himself. He transfers aversion to those things, only of the things within his power that are contrary to nature. He employs a moderate movement toward everything. He does not care whether he is considered foolish or ignorant. In short, he watches himself as if he were an enemy and lying in an ambush.

Whatever rules are proposed to one for the conduct of life, one is to abide by them as if they were laws, as if one would be guilty of impiety if one transgressed any of them. Whatever appears to one to be the best shall be the law, which must not be transgressed. One is to live continually improving oneself, attending to nothing except reason.

The important principles of ethical philosophy are first that we must not lie, the second that of demonstration and the third that which is confirmatory of the first two and explanatory. The third is necessary on account of the second, and the second on account of the first. The most necessary and that on which we ought to rest is the first. But all our earnestness is about the third. As a result, we entirely neglect the first. Therefore we lie; but the demonstration that we ought not to lie, we have ready to hand.

Desire - Aversion

Of desires, some are natural, others vain. Of the natural desires, some are necessary and others merely natural. Of the necessary, some are necessary for happiness, some for the repose of the body and others for very life. The right understanding of these facts enables us to refer all choice and avoidance to the health of the body and the soul's freedom from disturbance, for this is the aim of life of blessedness. It is only to obtain this end that we always act to avoid pain and fear. When this is secured, the soul is at peace.

We need pleasure, when we feel pain in the absence of pleasure. When we do not feel pain, we no longer need pleasure. For this reason, we call pleasure the beginning and end of the blessed life. We, therefore, recognize that pleasure is the first good innate to us. From pleasure we begin every act of choice and avoidance. We return to pleasure time and again, using the feeling as the standard by which we judge every good. The limit of quantity in pleasure is the removal of all that is painful. Wherever pleasure is present, as long it is there, there is neither pain of body, nor of mind, at once.

Though pleasure is the first good and also natural to us, we do not choose every pleasure. Sometimes we pass over many pleasures when greater discomfort accrues to us as a result of them. Similarly, we may think many pains better than pleasures because a greater pleasure comes to us when we have endured pains for a long time. Thus every pleasure is good because of its natural kinship to us, and yet we may not choose every pleasure. Similarly, though every pain is an evil, yet not all are to be avoided. By way of consideration of advantages and disadvantages, we are to form our judgment on all these matters. For, the good on

certain occasions we treat as bad, and conversely the bad as good.

No pleasure is a bad thing in itself. But the means, which produce some pleasures, bring with them disturbances many times greater than the pleasures.

Independence of desire is another great good. We may not at all times enjoy but a few things. If we do not possess many, we may enjoy the few in the genuine belief that all that is natural is easy to be obtained, but that which is superfluous is hard. Plain food brings us a pleasure equal to a luxurious diet, when all the pain due to want is removed. Even a morsel of food produces the highest pleasure, when one that needs it puts it to one's mouth.

To grow accustomed to simple and not luxurious ways of life gives us health to the full. Such a course makes a man alert for the needful employments of life. When, after long intervals, he has access to luxuries, he is not attracted towards them, and becomes fearless of fortune.

Of desires, all that do not lead to a sense of pain, if they are not satisfied, are not necessary. They only involve a craving, which is easily dispelled when the objects are hard to procure, or they seem likely to produce harm.

He who has learnt the limits of life knows that, that which removes the pain due to want and makes the whole of life complete, is easy to obtain. He realizes that there is no need of actions that involve competition.

When we consider that pleasures are the end, we do not mean the pleasures of profligates and those that consist in sensuality. This pleasure is freedom from pain in the body and

trouble in the mind. What produces a pleasant life is sober reasoning, searching out the motives for all choices, and avoidance and banishing mere opinions.

There are two sorts of motions in human beings – one is called vital, the other voluntary. The vital motions are begun in generation and continued without interruption through their whole life such as the course of the blood, the pulse, the breathing, the concoction, nutrition, excretion, etc. The voluntary motions are such as to go, to speak, to move any of our limbs as is fancied in mind, etc. These motions depend upon a precedent thought of *whither, which way, what*, etc. Imagination is, therefore, the first internal beginning of all voluntary motion. It causes small beginnings of the motion within the body of man, before they appear in walking, speaking, striking and other visible actions. These are called Endeavor. Emotion is indeed e-motion, that is, energy in motion.

The endeavor, when it is toward something, which causes it, is called Appetite or Desire. The endeavor, when it is from-ward something, it is generally called Aversion. Both of them signify the motions – one of approaching and the other of retiring.

That which men desire, they are also said to 'love'; and to 'hate' those things for which they have aversion. Desire and love are the same thing except that by desire we signify the absence of the object and by love the presence of the same. Similarly, by aversion we signify the absence and by hate the presence of the object.

Of appetites and aversions, some are born with men, as appetite of food, appetite of excretion and of exoneration, which may properly be called aversions. Some appetites of particular things proceed from experience and trial of their effects upon themselves or other men. But we have aversion for things which,

we know, have hurt us and also those that we do not know whether they will hurt us or not.

Those things, which we neither desire nor hate, we are said to contemn. Contempt is an immobility or contumacy of the mind in resisting the action of certain things, and proceeding from that, the mind is already moved otherwise by other more potent objects, or from want of experience of them.

Human body is always in mutation. It is, therefore, impossible that the same things should always cause in a human being the same appetite and aversion. It is much less that all men can consent in the desire of any one and the same object.

Whatsoever is the object of any man's appetite or desire is what he, for his part, calls good. He calls the object of his hate and aversion, evil, and of his contempt, vile, or contemptible or inconsiderable. These words of good, evil, vile or contemptible are used with relation to the person that uses them. There is nothing, nor any common rule of good, evil or contemptible, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves.

The sense in a human organism is only motion caused by the action of the external objects. It is in the nature of appearance to the sight, light and color; to the ear, sound; to the nostril, odor, etc. When the action of the same object is continued from the eyes, ears and other organs to the mind, the real effect there is nothing but motion or endeavor. This consists in appetite to or aversion from the object moving. The sense of that motion is what is called either delight or trouble of mind.

This motion, which is called appetite and for the appearance of it *delight* and *pleasure*, seems to be corroboration of the vital motion and help thereunto.

Pleasure or delight is, therefore, the appearance or sense of good; and *molestation* or *displeasure* the appearance or sense of evil. Consequently all appetite, desire or love is accompanied with some delight, and all hatred or aversion is accompanied with displeasure and offence.

Of pleasures or delights, some arise from the sense of an object present. They may be called pleasures of sense – sensual. Of this kind are all that is pleasant to the sight, hearing, smell, taste or touch. Others arise from the expectation that proceeds from foresight of the end or consequence of things, whether those things in the sense please or displease. These are pleasures of the mind and are generally called *joy*. Similarly, displeasures are some in the sense, and are called *pain*. Others in the sense, in the expectation of consequences, are called *grief*.

These simple passions called appetite, desire, love, aversion, hate, joy and grief have their names for diverse consideration. They are diversely called from the opinion men have of the likelihood of attaining what they desire, secondly from the object loved or hated, thirdly from the consideration of many of them together, and fourthly from the alteration or succession itself.

Vice may be defined as a course of behavior consented to by the will and having results, which are bad, primarily because they are God-eclipsing and, secondarily because they are physically or psychologically harmful to the agent or his fellows. Ignorance of self is something that corresponds to this description.

If most of us remain ignorant of ourselves, it is because self-knowledge is painful and we prefer the pleasures of illusion. As for the consequences of such ignorance, they are bad by every criterion, from the utilitarian to the transcendental. It is bad because self-ignorance leads to unrealistic behavior and so

causes all kinds of troubles to all concerned. It is also bad because, without self-knowledge, there can be no true humility, which is a virtue in one's relations with others. In the absence of self-knowledge, there can be no effective self-naughting and, therefore, no unitive knowledge of God.

Fear, worry, anxiety, etc form the central core of individualized selfhood. Fear cannot be got rid of by personal effort, but only by the ego's absorption in a cause greater than its own interests. Absorption in any cause will rid the mind of some of its fears. But absorption in the loving and knowing of the Divine can rid it of all fear. When the cause is less than the highest, the sense of fear and anxiety is transferred from the self to the cause. But if the sacrifice is made for God and for others for God's sake, there can be no fear or abiding anxiety. It is for the reason that nothing can be a menace to the divine Ground. Even failure and disaster are to be accepted as being in accord with the divine Will. If the love of God is intense enough, it casts out this projected fear and anxiety for cherished persons and institutions. The love of God arises because of humility on realization of their personal nothingness.

Ends - Means

'The end justifies the means' is an age-old maxim. The conception involved in the maxim is basically the same as that in the notion of ends-in-themselves. The conception that certain things are ends-in-themselves may justify the belief that the relation of ends and means is unilateral proceeding from end to means.

It leads to two views. One is that only the specially selected 'end' in view will actually be brought into existence by the means used, with some intervening unseen force preventing the means employed from having their other effects. The second view is that other consequences flowing from the means, apart from the end, may be completely ignored and brushed aside, however obnoxious they are. This arbitrary selection of some part of the consequences as the end and hence as the justification of the means used is the result of holding that it, as the end, is an end-in-itself, and hence possessed of value irrespective of all its existential relations. This notion is inherent in every view that assumes that ends can be valued apart from appraisal of the means used in attaining the said ends. This is a fallacy.

It is now well established that 'effects' are also 'causes'. In other words, it means that nothing is final in the sense that it is not part of an ongoing stream of events. It follows that the distinction between ends and means is only temporal and relational. Every condition that is to be brought into existence in order to serve as means is, in that connection, an object of desire and an end-in-view, while the end actually reached is a means to further ends as well as a test of valuations earlier made. Since the end attained is a condition of further existential occurrences, it can be appraised as a potential obstacle and a potential resource. If we are able to abandon the notion of some objects as being ends-in-

themselves, it is possible for us to frame ends-in-view and form desires on the basis of practical propositions of the temporal relations of events to one another.

Generalized ideas of ends and values exist as expressions of habit and as uncritical and probably invalid ideas. They also exist in the same way as valid general ideas arise in any subject. Desires and interests are carried over from one situation to another, which recur. They get consolidated. General ends ensue.

These general ideas are used as intellectual instrumentalities in judgment of particular cases as they arise. They are tools that direct and facilitate examination of things in specific cases while they are also developed and tested by the results of their application in these cases. This leads to the situation that general ideas of value function as rules for evaluation of particular desires, and that the desires, by the mere fact of their occurrence, confer value upon objects as ends, entirely independent of their contexts in the continuity of activities.

This leads to the enquiry into the conditions under which desires take shape and foreseen consequences are projected as ends to be reached. These conditions are those of need, deficit and conflict. In addition, the tension between a person and his environment is another condition. There is no other occasion for evoking desire for something else. There is nothing to induce the formation of an end, much less the formation of a particular end out of the indefinite ends theoretically possible. Transformation of active tendencies into a desire in which a particular end-in-view is incorporated is organized by the needs of an actual situation.

For example, a physician has to determine the value of various courses of action and their results in the case of a particular patient. He forms ends-in-view having the value that justifies

their adoption, on the ground of what his examination discloses what requires to be done for the patient. He estimates the worth of what he undertakes on the ground of its capacity to produce a condition in which the health of the patient is restored. He does not have an idea of health as an absolute end-in-itself, an absolute good by which to determine what to do. On the other hand, he forms his general idea of health as an end and a value for the patient on the ground of what he considers the best course to relieve the patient of his ailment, which ultimately leads to good health thereafter. It is true that he has a general and abstract conception of health of the patient as the ultimate end. But it is the outcome of a number of definite, empirical enquiries, not a preconditioning standard for carrying on enquiries.

Ends-in-view are thus appraised or valued as good or bad on the basis of their serviceability in the direction of their behavior dealing with states of affairs with inherent conflict. They are appraised as fit or unfit, proper or improper, right or wrong on the ground of their required-ness in accomplishing this end.

Living in spirit is based not only on the purity of heart and suffering, but also on the purity of means. There is no wall of separation between means and ends. God has given us control, though very limited, over means, but none over the ends. There is no justification for any exception to the purity of means for achievement of the ends however desirable and expedient they may be.

Reason - Conscience

Philosophy is commonly divided into speculative and practical categories. Morality is comprehended under the practical category. It is supposed to influence our passions and actions. It is to go beyond the calm and indolent judgments of the understanding. It is our experience that men are often governed by their duties and are deterred from some actions by the opinion of their being unjust, and impelled to others by that of obligation.

Some ethical philosophers hold, as morals have an influence on the actions and affections, that they cannot be derived from reason. Morals excite passions and produce or prevent actions. Reason is utterly impotent in this regard. The rules of morality cannot, therefore, be conclusions of our reason. As long as it is allowed that reason has no influence on our passions and actions, it cannot be true that morality is discovered by a deduction of reason.

Reason is the discovery of truth or falsehood. Truth or falsehood consists in an agreement or disagreement either to the real relations of ideas, or to real existence and matter of fact. Whatever is not susceptible of this agreement or disagreement is incapable of being true or false, and cannot be an object of our reason.

Our passions, volitions, actions, etc are not susceptible of such agreement or disagreement. They are original facts and realities, complete in themselves. Nor do they imply any reference to other passions, volitions and actions. Based on this approach, they cannot be said to conform to reason. Moral distinctions, therefore, cannot be said to be the offspring of reason.

Reason is wholly inactive, and can never be the source of an active principle like conscience, or a sense of morals. Reason

or science is nothing but the comparing of ideas, and the discovery of their relations. If the same relations have different characters, it must evidently follow that those characters are not discovered by reason.

It is observed that reason can have an influence on our conduct in two ways. One is when it excites a passion by informing us of the existence of something, which is a proper object of it. The other is when it discovers the connection of causes and effects so as to afford us means of exerting any passion. These are the only kinds of judgment that can accompany our actions. It is very likely that these judgments may be false and erroneous. When they turn out to be false, they are rendered unreasonable and cannot be said to conform to any rational reason.

On the whole, the distinction between the moral good and evil cannot be made by reason as that distinction has an influence upon our actions of which reason alone is incapable. Reason and judgment may prompt and direct a passion. They may be the mediate cause of action. But it cannot be that a judgment of this kind, either in its truth or falsehood, is attended with virtue or vice. As to the judgments caused by other judgments, they can still less bestow moral qualities on the actions that are their causes.

Thus, according to them, morality is not an object of reason. Virtue and vice are not matters of fact whose existence can be inferred by reason. In any action there are only certain passions, motives, volitions, thoughts. There is no other matter of fact in any action. As long as we consider the object, the vice entirely escapes us. We find it only if we reflect on the action and find a sentiment of disapprobation that arises in us towards the action. Here is a matter of fact. It is the object of feeling, not of reason. It lies in us, not in the object.

When we pronounce any action or character to be vicious, we mean nothing except that from the constitution of our nature we have a feeling or sentiment of blame from the contemplation of the action or event. Virtue and vice can be compared to sounds, colors, heat, cold, etc which are not qualities in objects, but perceptions in the mind. Nothing is more real, or concerns us more, than our own sentiments of pleasure, pain or unease. If these are favorable to virtue and unfavorable to vice, they help in the regulation of our conduct and behavior.

Virtue and vice are discoverable, if not merely by reason or the comparison of ideas but by means of some impression or sentiment they occasion. Our decisions concerning morality are evidently perceptions in the category of impressions. Morality, therefore, is more properly felt than judged of.

Impressions arise in experience, every moment. These impressions give rise to a feeling of pleasure or sense of unease in varying measure. An action or sentiment or character is virtuous or vicious because its view causes a pleasure or unease of a particular kind. In giving a reason for the said pleasure or unease, we explain sufficiently the virtue or vice that attends on it. To have a sense of virtue is nothing but to feel a satisfaction of a particular kind from the contemplation of a character. The very feeling constitutes our praise or admiration. We go no further; nor do we enquire into the cause of the satisfaction.

We do not infer a character to be virtuous because it just pleases. In feeling that it pleases after such a particular manner, we feel, in effect, that it is virtuous. We make a similar kind of judgment in all matters concerning aesthetics, tastes, sensations, etc. Our approbation is implied in the immediate pleasure they convey to us.

Moral good and evil are thus distinguished by our sentiments, not by reason. These sentiments may arise either from the mere species or appearance of characters and passions, or from reflections on their tendency to happiness of mankind, and of particular persons. Both these causes are intertwined in our judgments of morals.

Reflections on the tendencies of actions have by far the greatest influence, and determine the contours of our duty. In some instances, sentiment produces approbation. Wit and a certain easy and disengaged behavior are qualities immediately agreeable to others, generating sympathy. As such they command their love and esteem. Some of these qualities produce satisfaction in others by particular *original* principles of human nature, which cannot be accounted for. Others may be resolved into principles that are more general in nature.

On the other hand, conscience is the faculty within human beings that decides on the moral quality of their thoughts, words and deeds. It makes us conscious of the worth of our thoughts, words and actions and gives rise to a feeling of pleasure if they are good, and of pain if they are evil.

The moral sense of an individual identifies the consciousness of right and wrong with the inner voice – the voice of an inner moral law. Inner voice or feelings are considered as edicts of one's conscience. Conscience has thus become a faculty of the mind that judges immediately and finally on moral matters. Human reason and conscience are thus considered the final arbiter of right and wrong.

All socio-religious traditions have notions of moral law and moral judgment. All encourage reflectivity and offer conceptual tools and practical techniques for self-evaluation.

Conscience makes us potentially morally liable. It also makes us aware of potential moral support.

When conscience is alive, it evaluates the action of the self as part of a continuing moral action and interaction with others. The healthy conscience lives in the present. In the moment of conscience, consciousness becomes conscious of its past social unconsciousness and moves on. By its very nature, it lives in the presence of another human being or beings. It forges an intention, takes an initiative, faces others with a proposal and issues forth in a public act. Healthy consciences are not closed, but open. They share their feelings and experiences and thereby form, or enjoy forming action.

Virtue

Virtue, generally, in all sorts of subjects, is something that is valued for eminence, and consists in comparison. For, if all things are equal in men, nothing will be praised.

The beginning and the greatest good is prudence. From prudence are sprung all other virtues. It teaches us that it is not possible to live pleasantly without living prudently, honorably and justly. Reverse, it is not possible to live a life of prudence, honour and justice without living pleasantly.

The virtues are by nature bound up with the pleasant life, and the pleasant life is inseparable from them. The blessed and pleasant nature knows no trouble itself. Nor does it cause trouble to another. It is never constrained by anger or favor. Such emotions exist only in the weak.

There is a sharp distinction between virtue and morality as coordinate and independent forms of goodness. Moral philosophy rightly concentrates its attention on the fact of obligation. On the other hand, in the lives of those whom we admire most, the sense of obligation, though important, is not a dominating factor. It is virtue that makes them great. Virtue is thus no indispensable basis of morality.

Of the states of mind that merit praise are called virtues. Virtues are distinguished into intellectual and moral categories. Philosophical wisdom, understanding, practical wisdom, etc are called intellectual virtues. Liberality, temperance, benevolence, charity, etc are called moral virtues. Intellectual virtue owes its birth and growth to teaching. For this reason, it requires experience and time. On the other hand, moral virtue comes about as a result of habit.

We get virtues by first exercising them. We become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts, etc. By abstaining from pleasures, we become temperate. When we have become temperate, we shall be most able to abstain from pleasures. So is the case in regard to courage. By being habituated to despise things that are terrible and to stand our ground against them, we become brave. When we have become brave, we shall be most able to stand our ground against them. It makes all the difference whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our early childhood through youth.

We must take as a sign of states of character the pleasure or pain that ensues on acts. The man who abstains from bodily pleasures and delights is temperate, while the man who is annoyed at it is self-indulgent. The man, who stands his ground against things that are terrible, and delights in this or at least is not pained, is brave, while the man who is pained is a coward.

Moral excellence is concerned with pleasures and pains. It is on account of the pleasure that we do bad things; and on account of the pain, we abstain from noble things. Hence we ought to have been brought up in a particular way from our early youth both to delight in and to be pained by the things that we ought. This is the right education.

If the virtues are concerned with actions and passions, and every passion and every action is accompanied by pleasure or pain, virtue will be concerned with pleasure or pain, too. We measure even our actions, some of us more and others less, by the rule of pleasure and pain. Because of this position, the whole concern of virtue is with pains and pleasures. The man who uses them well will be good, he who uses them badly bad.

A question arises as to what is meant by saying that we become just by doing just acts, and temperate by doing temperate

acts, etc. If the acts that are in accordance with the virtues have themselves a certain character, it does not mean that they are done justly or temperately. The agent also must be in a certain condition when he does them. In the first place, he must have knowledge. Second, he must choose the acts and for their own sake. Third, his action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character. While knowledge has little or no weight, the other conditions, which result from doing just and temperate acts, are very important and count for everything.

Actions, then, are called just and temperate when they are such as the just or the temperate man will do, as all other just and temperate men would do in similar circumstances. It is, therefore, said that it is by doing just acts that the just man is produced. It is by doing temperate acts that the temperate man is produced. Without doing these acts, no one will have the prospect of becoming good.

What is actually virtue? In the soul are found three kinds of things – passions, faculties and states of character. By passions are meant appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, friendly feeling, hatred, longing, emulation, pity and the feelings that are accompanied generally by pleasure or pain. By faculties are meant the things in virtue of which we are said to be capable of feeling these passions, that is, of becoming angry, being pained, feeling pity, etc. By states of character are meant the things in virtue of which we stand well or badly with reference to the passions. For example, with reference to anger, we stand badly if we feel it violently. Or we stand well if we feel it only moderately. So is the case with other passions.

Neither the virtues nor the vices are passions. We are not called good or bad on the ground of our passions, but only on the ground of our virtues and vices. Similarly we are neither praised nor blamed for our passions, but only for our virtues and vices.

We feel anger and fear without choice. But the virtues are modes of choice, or involve choice. Further, in respect of the passions, it is said that we are moved. But in respect of the virtues and the vices, we are said to be disposed in a particular way, not moved. For these reasons, they are not faculties, too. We have the faculties by nature, but we are not made good or bad by nature.

If the virtues are neither passions nor faculties, all that remains is that they should be states of character. Every virtue or excellence brings into good condition the thing of which it is excellence and makes the work of that thing be done well. For example, the excellence of the eye makes both the eye and its work good. It is by the excellence of the eye that we see well. Similarly the virtue of man will be the state of character which makes a man good and which makes him do his own work well.

This will be more evident if the specific nature of virtue is considered. In everything that is continuous and divisible, it is possible to take more, less or an equal amount, and that either in terms of the thing itself or relatively to us. The equal is an intermediate between excess and short or defect. By the intermediate is meant the mean between the two extremes.

Following this principle, the moral virtue that is associated with passions and actions aims at the mean of the passion concerned. For example, fear, confidence, appetite, anger, pity, and, in general, pleasure and pain may be felt both too much and too little. Either way, any of these passions is not felt well. But to feel them at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way is what is both intermediate and the best. This is characteristic of virtue.

Similarly, with regard to actions also there is excess, deficit or short, and the intermediate. Thus virtue is concerned with passions and actions in which either excess or deficit is a form of failure while the intermediate or the mean is a form of success, being praised. Being praised and being successful are both characteristics of virtue. Therefore virtue is a kind of mean.

Also, it is possible to fail in many ways, while to succeed is possible only in one way. For this reason too, excess and deficit are characteristic of vice, and the mean of virtue. In the words of Aristotle, 'virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, that is, the mean relative to us, this being determined by rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it'.

Neither every action, nor every passion admits of mean. Some passions and actions are bad in themselves. For example, spite, shamelessness, envy, etc are bad passions. Adultery, theft, murder, etc are bad actions. It is not possible to be right ever with such passions and actions. In such cases there cannot be a mean, excess or a deficiency. In whatever way it is done, it is bad and, therefore, evil.

These statements of conduct are general in nature and, therefore, apply more widely. But statements that are particular concerning individual cases are more genuine. The statements have to harmonize with the facts in individual cases.

In individual cases, it may be said that courage is the mean in regard to feelings of fear and confidence. The man who exceeds in confidence is considered rash; he who exceeds in fear and falls short in confidence is a coward. Similarly, temperance is the mean in regard to pleasures and pains – not all of them, and not so much in regard to pains. Self-indulgence is the excess

of pleasures. Persons, deficient of them, may be called 'insensible'.

Liberality is the mean in regard to giving and taking of money; the excess is prodigality and the deficiency meanness. Proper pride is the mean in regard to honor and dishonor; the excess is a kind of empty vanity and the deficiency undue humility. Good temper is the mean in regard to anger where there is no excess or deficiency. Truthfulness is the mean in regard to truth; the excess is boastfulness and the deficiency mock modesty. Ready-witted is the mean in regard to pleasantness in the giving of amusement, and the disposition ready-wit; the excess is buffoonery and the deficiency is the state of boorishness. Friendliness is the mean in regard to general pleasantness exhibited in life; the excess is a flatterer or an obsequious person subserving his ends, the deficiency an unpleasant, quarrelsome or surly sort of person.

There are also means in the passions, and concerned with the passions. Since shame is not a virtue, praise is extended to the modest man. Thus, modesty is the mean in regard to shame; the excess is bashfulness and the deficiency shamelessness. Righteous indignation is the mean between envy and spite, and these states are concerned with the pain and pleasure that are felt at the fortunes of neighbors, friends, etc. For example, the man characterized by righteous indignation is pained at undeserved good fortune of his neighbor. But the envious man is pained at all good fortune, while the spiteful man rejoices at the misfortune of another.

The one at the extreme of a passion may be called *irascible* and the one falling short of the same passion may be called *in-irascible*. The virtue, being mean, may generally be called irascibility and the vice *in-irascibility*.

The moral virtue is thus a mean between two vices, the one involving excess, the other deficiency, and that it is such that its character is to aim at what is intermediate in passions and in actions. It is no easy task to be good, for the reason that it is no easy task to find the right middle way. Anyone can get angry, give or spend money. But to do this to the right man, to the right extent, at the right time, with the right motive, in the right way, etc. is not for everyone, nor is it easy. Therefore, true goodness is rare, laudable and noble. The intermediate stage in all things is to be praised. But it becomes necessary on occasions that we must incline towards the excess, some other times towards the deficiency so that we shall most easily hit the mean and what is right.

As virtue is concerned with passions and actions, praise and blame are bestowed on voluntary passions and actions. On involuntary passions and actions is bestowed pardon, and sometimes pity. Involuntary passions and actions are those that take place under compulsion, or owing to ignorance. That of which the moving principle is outside the agent is compulsory. Compulsory actions are, therefore, those when the cause is in the external circumstances and the agent contributes nothing.

Choice is most closely bound up with virtue to discriminate characters better than actions do. Choice seems to be voluntary, but not the same thing as the voluntary. The difference between the two concepts is clear. For example, infants and the lower animals share in voluntary action, but not in choice. Acts done on the spur of the moment may be voluntary, but not as chosen. Choice involves a rational principle and thought. Its very name suggests that it is what is chosen among alternatives.

Thus, in brief, the virtues are means and states of character. The virtues tend, by their own nature, to the doing of

the acts by which they are produced. They are in our power, voluntary and act as the right rule prescribes.

But actions and states of character are not voluntary in the same way. We are masters of our actions from the beginning right to the end if only we know the particular facts. Though we control the beginning of our states of character, the gradual progress is not obvious, any more than it is in illness. The states of character are voluntary in the sense that it is in our power to act in a particular way or not to act.

As for the virtues of the soul, they are of two kinds – virtues of character and virtues of intellect. As for the soul itself, it may be conceived that it has two parts – that which grasps a rule or rational principle, and the other irrational. The former part has again two divisions – one by which we contemplate the kind of things whose originative causes are invariable, and the other by which we contemplate variable things. Where objects differ in kind, the part of the soul answering to different objects is different in kind. This is in virtue of a certain kinship between that part of the soul and the objects. These two divisions may be called the scientific and the calculative. To deliberate and to calculate are the same thing. No one deliberates about the invariable. Therefore, the calculative is one part of the faculty, which grasps a rational principle. The best state of each of these two divisions is the virtue of each.

The virtue of a thing is relative to its proper work. There are three things in the soul which control action and truth – sensation, reason and desire.

Of these, sensation originates no action. This is evident from the fact that the lower animals have sensation, but no share in action. What affirmation and negation are to thinking, pursuit and avoidance are to desire. As moral virtue is a state of character

concerned with choice and choice is deliberate desire, both the reasoning must be true, and the desire right. The choice must pursue just what the right desire asserts.

This kind of intellect and of truth is practical. Of the intellect, which is contemplative, the good and the bad states are truth and falsity respectively. Indeed this is the work of everything intellectual. The good state is truth in agreement with right desire in respect of that part which is practical and intellectual.

The efficient cause of action – the origin of action – is choice, and that of choice is desire and reasoning with a view to an end. This is why choice cannot exist either without reason and intellect, or without a moral state. Good action and its opposite cannot exist without a combination of intellect and character. Intellect, however, moves nothing. The intellect that aims at an end is alone practical. This is so with the productive intellect as well. For, good action is an end and desire aims at this. Hence choice is either desiderative reason or ratiocinative desire. Such an origin of action is man.

It is, however, to be noted that nothing that is past can ever be an object of choice. No one deliberates about the past. What is past is not capable of not having taken place. As the saying goes, to make undone things that have once been done is lacking even to God.

The work of both the intellectual parts – the practical and the productive, then, is truth. Therefore, the states that each of these parts reaches truth are the virtues of the two parts.

The states by virtue of which the soul possesses truth by way of affirmation or denial are five in number. They are art, scientific knowledge, practical wisdom, philosophic wisdom and

intuitive knowledge. Judgment and opinion are not included in these states as there is a possibility of being mistaken in them.

All art is concerned 'with contriving and considering how something may come into being which is capable of either being or not being, and whose origin is in the maker and not in the thing made'. Art is concerned neither with things that are, or come into being, by necessity, nor with things that do so in accordance with nature. They have their origin in themselves. Making and acting being different, art must be a matter of making, not of acting.

The object of scientific knowledge is of necessity. We all suppose that what we know is not even capable of being otherwise. Of things capable of being otherwise, we do not know, when they have passed outside our observation, whether they exist or not. That is why the object of scientific knowledge is of necessity. It is eternal as things that are of necessity in the unqualified sense are all eternal. Things that are eternal are imperishable. Thus scientific knowledge is judgment about things that are universal and necessary. The conclusions of demonstration and all scientific knowledge follow from first principles as scientific knowledge involves apprehension of a rational ground.

As for practical wisdom, it is thought to be the mark of a man to be able to deliberate well about what is good and expedient for himself generally, not in some particular respect. Practical wisdom is neither scientific knowledge, nor art.

It is a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for man. Good action itself is its end. We say that people have practical wisdom when they can see what is good for them and what is good for men in

general. It is, therefore, a state of capacity to act with regard to human goods.

Practical wisdom is a virtue and not an art. As the soul has two parts that can follow a course of reasoning, practical wisdom must be the virtue of that part which forms opinions. Opinion itself is about the variable and so is practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is concerned not only with universals, but also with the particulars. It is practical, and practice is concerned with particulars. This is why some who do not know but have experience are more practical than others who know. As practical wisdom is concerned with action, one is to have both wisdom and action.

As for philosophic wisdom, it is not merely the state in accordance with the right rule, but the state that implies the presence of the right rule, that is virtue.

The first principles from which what is scientifically known follows cannot be an object of scientific knowledge, art or practical wisdom. It is intuitive reason that grasps the first principles. Wisdom is the most finished of the forms of knowledge. The wise man must not only know what follows from the first principles, but must also possess truth about the first principles. Therefore, wisdom must be intuitive reason combined with the scientific knowledge of the highest objects.

We do just, brave and other virtuous acts in relation to each other, while observing our respective duties in regard to contracts and services and also passions. All these actions are typically human. Some of them even arise from the body, and virtue of character is bound up in many ways with the passions. Practical wisdom is also linked to virtue of character and vice-versa. This is for the reason that the principles of practical wisdom

are in accordance with the moral virtues and rightness in morals is in accordance with practical wisdom.

The moral virtues are connected with the passions. As such they belong to our composite nature. The virtues of our composite nature are human; so are the life and the happiness that correspond to these. The excellence of the reason is a thing apart.

It is often debated whether the will or the deed is more essential to *virtue*, which is assumed to involve both. It is true that its perfection involves both. But, for deeds, many things are needed, the more, the greater and nobler the deeds are.

But the man contemplating the Truth needs no such thing in the exercise of his activity. Such things may, indeed, be hindrance to his activity, that is, contemplation. But so far as he is a man and lives in a society with other people, he chooses to do virtuous acts. He, therefore, needs such aids to living a human life.

Being a man, one will also need external prosperity. Our nature is not sufficient for the purpose of contemplation alone. Our body is to be healthy and be provided with food and other attention. This does not mean that a man to be happy needs many or great things, merely because he cannot be supremely happy without external goods. For, self-sufficiency and action do not involve excess. Even with moderate advantages one can act virtuously. It is enough that man has just sufficient goods to be active in life in accordance with virtue, to be happy.

It is often debated whether virtue and vice are natural or unnatural. Consideration of this issue depends on how 'nature' is understood. If nature is understood as opposed to miracles, both virtue and vice are natural. If it is understood as opposed to what

is unusual, perhaps virtue or vice may be regarded as unnatural as in the case of heroic virtue or brutal barbarity. If it is understood as opposed to being artificial, both virtue and vice are equally artificial, and out of nature.

Every quality in others or us that gives pleasure causes pride or love. Similarly every quality that produces uneasiness excites humility or hatred. It follows that these two particulars – virtue and the power of producing love or pride, and vice and the power of producing humility or hatred – are to be considered as equivalent. We have, therefore, to judge the one by the other. We may pronounce any quality of the mind virtuous that causes love or pride, and any one vicious that causes humility or hatred.

If any action is either virtuous or vicious, it is only as a sign of some quality or character. It must extend upon durable principles of the mind. The principles extend over the whole conduct and enter into the personal character. Actions themselves do not proceed from any constant principle. Therefore, they have no influence on love or hatred, or pride or humility. Consequently they are never considered in morality.

In this background, we do not consider any single action or actions in our enquiry concerning the origin of morals. It is only the quality or character from which the action proceeds, that matters. These alone are durable enough to affect our sentiments concerning the person. It is true that actions are better indicators of a character than words, wishes or sentiments. But it is only in so far as they are such indicators that they are attended with love or hatred.

Thus, every quality of mind is denominated virtuous that gives pleasure; while every quality of mind is denominated vicious that produces pain.

The virtue of non-violence has led to the concepts of different moral duties. To tell someone a lie, for example, is regarded as inflicting a mental injury on that person. Stealing, of course, is another form of injury. As there is not much distinction between acts and omissions, even the possession of wealth is seen as depriving the poor and hungry of the means to satisfy their wants. Thus the principle of non-possession of property beyond what satisfies the minimum needs of the family of the individual is an offshoot of the principle of non-violence as a virtue.

The virtue of compassion for all promoted by Buddha is an ethic against withdrawal from the world, and for universal brotherhood. The ultimate goal resulting from the universal compassion is *Nirvana*, a state in which all living beings are free from pain and sorrow. This ethics is without bounds.

The 'middle path' between self-indulgence and self-renunciation, also promoted by him, is not so much a path between these two extremes. It is the one that draws together the benefits of both. Through living a life of compassion and love for all, a person achieves the liberation from selfish cravings sought by an ascetic, and a serenity and satisfaction that are more fulfilling than anything obtained by indulgence in carnal pleasure.

It is sometimes thought that, as a state of freedom from pain and sorrow can be reached by meditation, Buddhism teaches withdrawal from the real world. *Nirvana*, however, is not to be sought for oneself alone. It is regarded as a unity of the individual self with the universal Self in which all things take part. In the *Mahayana* school of Buddhism, the aspirant for Enlightenment even takes a vow not to accept final release until everything that exists in the universe has attained *Nirvana*.

One may have spent all one's life in the belief that one is wholly devoted to others, and never self-seeking. Nothing so feeds self-conceit as this sort of internal testimony that one is free from self-love, and always generously devoted to one's neighbors. But all this devotion that seems to be for others is really for oneself. It is the 'I' who makes one so keen and sensitive. One wants God as well as man to be always satisfied with one, and one wants to be satisfied with oneself in all one's dealings with God.

The aim and purpose of human life is only the unitive knowledge of God. Among the indispensable means to that end is right conduct. By the degree and kind of virtue achieved, the degree of liberating knowledge may be assessed and its quality evaluated.

The virtue, which is accompanied and perfected by the love and knowledge of God, is quite different from the byproducts of self-improvement by means of personal effort. The self-improvement, either unassisted or, if assisted, seconded by the pseudo-graces which arise when the individual devotes himself, not to the goal of God, but to a projection of his own favorite ideas or moral excellences, results in hardness, fanaticism, uncharitableness and spiritual pride. These are the worst of moral evils.

Where the grace is genuinely supernatural, amelioration in one aspect of the total personality is not accompanied by deterioration elsewhere. To distinguish the true grace from the false one is generally difficult. But as time and circumstances reveal the full extent of their consequences on the soul, discrimination becomes possible even to observers with no special gifts of insight. True grace and inspiration are given when, and to the extent to which, a human being gives up self-will and abandons

himself, moment by moment, through constant recollectedness and non-attachment, to the will of God.

Justice

Plato explains the nature and the origin of justice in The Republic thus:

‘What people say is that to do wrong is, in itself, a desirable thing; on the other hand, it is not at all desirable to suffer wrong for the harm to the sufferer outweighs the advantage to the doer. Consequently, when men have had a taste of both, those who have not the power to seize the advantage and escape the harm, decide that they would be better off if they made a compact neither to do wrong, nor to suffer it. So they began to make laws and covenants with one another; and whatever the law prescribed they called lawful and right. That is what right or justice is and how it came into existence. So justice is accepted as a compromise, and valued, not as good in itself, but for lack of power to do wrong.

The justice, which arises from nature, is a pledge of mutual advantage to restrain men from harming one another and save them from being harmed. For all living things, which have not been able to make compacts not to harm one another or be harmed, nothing ever is either just or unjust. Justice is never anything in itself. But in the dealings of men with one another, it is a kind of compact not to harm or be harmed. Injustice is not an evil in itself, but only in consequence of the fear, which attaches to the apprehension of being unable to escape those appointed to punish such actions. In its general aspect, justice is the same for all as it is a kind of mutual advantage in the dealings of men with one another. But in the context of individual peculiarities of a country or any other circumstances, the same thing does not turn out to be just for all. It also happens that what was once considered just, may turn out to be unjust later, in the face of changed circumstances in spite of the fact that it has the sanction of law.

Men practise justice against their grain and instincts, for lack of power to do wrong. Men do right only under compulsion’.

Justice is a quality that may exist in a whole community as well as an individual. As the community is the bigger of the two, it is, therefore, to be in a larger measure there than in an individual. So if one man gives another what he has to give in exchange for what he can get, in the community or the state, it is because each finds that to do so is for his own advantage.

No two people are born exactly alike. There are innate differences, which fit them for different occupations. So more things will be produced and the work is better done when everyman is set free from all other occupations to do, at the right time, the one thing for which he is naturally fitted.

According to Plato, the state is to have four virtues or qualities of which justice is the fourth and important. Justice is that universal principle that everyone ought to perform the one function in the community for which his nature has best suited him.

Justice also means minding one’s own business, in a certain form, and not meddling with other men’s concerns. When each order such as the Guardian, the Auxiliary, the tradesman, the craftsman keeps to its own proper business in the community and does its own work, that is justice and it makes a just society. No harm is, however, done if there is a general interchange of most forms of work with the people exchanging their positions and tools and taking on each other’s jobs, as long as the people perform the functions for which their natures have best suited them.

An individual is ‘just’ in the same way that the state or community is just. An individual is just fulfilling his proper

function, only if the several parts of his nature fulfill theirs. It is the business of reason to guide the individual’s action with wisdom and forethought on behalf of the soul while the spirited element is to act as its subordinate and ally. The two will be brought into harmony by that combination of mentally and bodily training.

When both are thus nurtured and trained to know their functions, they must be set in command over the appetites, which are by nature covetous insatiably. The two must keep watch on the bodily pleasures to be in limits so that the body keeps to its own work. The individual is considered just for the reason that each part of his nature is exercising its proper function, of ruling or of being ruled.

In reality, justice is not a matter of external behavior, but of the inward self. In other words, it is a matter of attending to all that is, in the fullest sense, a man’s proper concern. The just man does not allow the several elements in his soul to usurp one another’s functions. He is the one who sets his house in order by self-mastery and discipline. Bringing the three parts – the body, mind and soul into perfect harmony and making himself one man instead of many, he goes about his temporal work.

In relation to his activity, when he speaks of just and honorable conduct, he means the behavior that helps to produce and to preserve this habit of mind. When he speaks of wisdom, he means the knowledge, which presides over such conduct. Any action, which tends to break down this habit, will be for him unjust; and the notions governing it will be ignorance and folly for him. The just man is most free from trouble, the unjust full of trouble. To do the greatest of wrongs to one’s own community is injustice.

The concept of justice has two principles. First, each person participating in a practice, or affected by it, has an equal right to

the most extensive liberty compatible with a like liberty for all. Second, inequalities are arbitrary unless it is reasonable to expect that they will work out for every one's advantage, and provided the positions and offices to which they attach, or from which they may be gained are open to all.

These principles express justice as a complex of three ideas – liberty, equality and reward for services contributing to the common good. The term *person* is to be construed variously depending on the circumstances. It means human individuals and also includes nations, states, business firms, religious institutions, identifiable interest groups, etc.

But fundamental to justice is the concept of fairness, which relates to right dealing between persons who are cooperating with or competing against one another. This bears resemblance to fair competition, fair games and fair bargains.

A practice is considered fair if no one, participating in it, feels that he or any of the others is taken advantage of, or they are forced to give in to claims which they do not regard as legitimate. This implies that each has a conception of legitimate claims, which he thinks it reasonable for himself as well as the others to acknowledge. If one thinks of the principles of justice as arising in the manner described, then they do define this sort of conception. A practice is just or fair when it satisfies the principles, which those who participate in it could propose to one another for mutual acceptance in the said circumstances.

It is this notion of the possibility of mutual acknowledgment of principles by free persons with no authority over one another that makes the concept of fairness fundamental to justice. When such acknowledgment is possible, there can be true community among people in their common practices. To

judge practices by the principles so arrived at is to apply the standards of fairness to them.

When the participants in a practice accept its rules as fair, there arises a *prima facie* duty of the parties to each other to act in accordance with the practice, when it befalls them to comply. Performance of duty by one leads to one's acquiring a corresponding right in similar acquiescence on the part of those benefited by the performance of one's duty. The rights and the duties so arising are special rights and duties in that they depend on the parties having engaged in a common practice and knowingly accepted its benefits. This duty is called fair-play.

The duty of fair-play stands apart from other *prima facie* duties such as fidelity and gratitude, as a basic moral notion. These duties are all clearly distinct. The duty of fair-play implies a constraint on self-interest in particular cases. The acceptance of the duty of fair-play by participants in a common practice is a reflection in each person of the recognition of the aspirations and interests of the others to be realized by their joint activity. To acknowledge these duties in some measure is to having the elements of morality. It is not a matter of choice, or of intuiting moral qualities, or a matter of the expression of attitudes. It is simply the possession of one of the forms of conduct in which the recognition of others as persons is manifested.

One consequence of this conception is that, where it applies, there is no moral value in the satisfaction of a claim incompatible with it. This conception assimilates justice to benevolence, which, in turn, promotes general welfare. Justice is a kind of efficiency.

Justice is useful to society. The public utility is the sole origin of justice. The reflections on the beneficial consequences of this virtue are the sole foundation of its merit. This virtue

derives its existence entirely from its necessary use to the intercourse and social state of mankind. The use and tendency of this virtue is to procure happiness and security by preserving order in society. The rules of equity and justice depend entirely on the particular state and condition in which men are placed, and owe their origin and existence to that unity which results to the people from their strict and regular observance. This virtue implants perfect moderation and humanism in the human mind.

‘Justice is sometimes taken to be synonymous with or equivalent to law, sometimes to be distinct from law and superior to it. Justice in one of its aspects is held to consist in *conformity with law*, but it is also asserted that *law must conform to justice*. What at one moment is taken as the standard whereby to judge what is just and unjust can in turn, in its manifestation as empirical fact, be itself judged in the same way; this happens when we appeal, in the name of justice, to a higher ideal criterion which transcends all rules of positive law and must, therefore, rest on some other foundation’, in the words of Prof. Del Vecchio. The good of mankind is the only object of all the laws and regulations that constitute the basis of justice.

Values

We regard our direct and original experience of things liked and enjoyed as only possibilities of values to be achieved. This enjoyment becomes a value when we discover the relations upon which its presence depends. Such an operational explanation gives a conception of a value, not the value itself. The utilization of the conception in action results in an object having secure and intelligent value.

Pointing to the difference between the enjoyed and the enjoyable, the desired and the desirable, etc can explain this concept. To say that something is enjoyed is to make a statement about a fact, something already happened or in existence. It is not to judge the value of that fact, and it is the end of the matter.

The fact that something is enjoyable only raises the issue of its enjoyability. It does not settle it. To say that something is enjoyable is to define it in its connections and interactions. The fact that it is enjoyable poses a problem to judgment. How shall the enjoyment be rated? Is it a value or not? Is it to be cherished or not?

Therefore, to declare something enjoyable is to assert that it needs specifiable conditions. In effect, it is a judgment that the enjoyment is welcome. It involves a prediction. It contemplates a future in which something will happen in a certain way. That it is enjoyable is the content of a proposition of fact. It is a judgment, an appraisal and an estimate that has to do with the direction of action. It is a value.

‘Taste’ is an appreciation at once cultivated, and active in the expression of the nature of judgments of value. The formation of taste is the chief matter wherever values enter in, whether intellectual, aesthetic or moral. Expertise in taste is at once the

result as well as the reward of constant exercise of thinking. Taste is the outcome of experience brought cumulatively to bear on the intelligent appreciation of the real worth of likings and enjoyments.

Intuitions or relatively immediate judgments do not precede reflective enquiry, but are the cumulative products of much thoughtful experience.

In so far as the conditions and consequences of the things liked are thought about, propositions of likes are of instrumental value in reaching judgments of value. If one likes a thing, one likes it; there can be no dispute about it. A judgment about what is to be liked or desired is, on the other hand, a claim on future action.

Values may, thus, be connected inherently with liking, and yet not with every liking but only with those that judgment has approved, after examination of the relation upon which the object liked depends. A casual liking is one that happens without knowledge of how it occurs, or to what effect. The difference between a casual liking and the one based on a judgment that is worth having, and striven for, makes all the difference between enjoyments which are causal and enjoyments that have value and hence a claim upon our attitude and conduct.

John Dewey articulates that 'judgments about values are judgments about the conditions and the results of experienced objects, judgments about that which should regulate the formation of our desires, affections and enjoyments. For whatever decides their formation will determine the main course of our conduct, personal and social'.

Enjoyments that issue from conduct directed from within into relations have a meaning and validity owing to the way in

which they are experienced. Such enjoyments do not leave any bitterness. Even in the midst of direct enjoyment, there is a sense of validity that intensifies the enjoyment. There is solicitude for perpetuation of the object having value that is radically different from mere anxiety to perpetuate the feeling of enjoyment.

This establishes that there are no values apart from things actually enjoyed as good. In the same way, judgment of the value of an object to be experienced is instrumental to its appreciation when realized. There is no value except where there is satisfaction. But, there have to be certain conditions fulfilled to transform a satisfaction into a value. There is a notion that values are already well known and that all which is lacking is the will to cultivating them in the order of their worth. In fact, what is lacking is not the will to act upon goods already known, but the will to know what they are.

The value or worth of a man is his price, so much as would be given for the use of his power. It is, therefore, not absolute but dependent on the need and judgment of another. One rates oneself, as most men do, at the highest value. Yet one's true value is no more than others esteem it.

The manifestation of the value we set on one another is that which is commonly called honoring and dishonoring. To value a man at a high rate is to honour him, at a low rate to dishonor him. The comparison of high and low is to the rate of value that each man sets on himself.

The public worth of a man, which is the value set on him in a society, is that which men commonly call Dignity. Offices of command, public employment, etc generally understand this value held by the man.

To pray to another for aid of any kind is to *honour* as it is a sign we have an opinion he has power to help. The more difficult the aid is, the more is the honour. To obey is to honour as no man obeys another who he thinks has no power to help or hurt him. Consequently, to disobey is to dishonor.

Worthiness is a thing different from the worth or value of a man and also from his merit or desert, and consists in a particular power or ability for that whereof he is said to be worthy. This particular ability is called Fitness or Aptitude.

By manners, one means generally decency of behavior in company of fellow beings. They are small morals. By manners, in a larger measure, are meant those qualities of mankind that concern their living together in peace and unity. We have to consider that the felicity of this life consists not in the repose of a mind satisfied. Felicity is a continual progress of the desire from one object to another. The object of man's desire is not to enjoy only once for one instant of time. But it is to assure forever the way of his future desire. Therefore, the voluntary actions and inclinations of all men tend not only to the procuring but also to the assuring of a contended life.

The revolt in morals begins by rancor turning creative and giving birth to values. When the individuals are deprived of the direct outlets of action, there arise rancor in them, and it compensates by an imaginary vengeance. All truly noble morality grows out of triumphant self-affirmation.

Slave ethics - ethics of the oppressed and the impotent, on the other hand, begins by saying *no* to a non-self or 'other'. This *no* is its creative act. This looking outward instead of inward is a fundamental feature of rancor. Slave ethics requires for its inception a sphere different from and hostile to its own.

Physiologically, it requires an outside stimulus even to act at all. All its action is only reaction.

The opposite is the case with aristocratic valuations. Such values grow and act spontaneously. They seek out their contraries only in order to affirm themselves more gratefully and delightedly.

The happiness of the impotent and the oppressed is purely passive and takes the form of drugged tranquility and emotional slackness. The rancorous person is neither truthful, nor ingenuous, nor honest, nor forthright with himself. His soul squints. His mind loves hideouts, secret paths and side-ways. Everything hidden seems to him his own world, his security and his comfort. He is expert in silence, in waiting, in long memory, in self-depreciation and in self-humiliation. A race of such men will, in the end, be cleverer than a race of aristocrats. It will honour sharp-wittedness as a condition vital to its existence.

Among the noble, mental acuteness is less important than the unconscious instincts. That race or class shows signs of temerity to follow sudden impulses, to court danger or indulge in spurts of emotions such as rage, love, worship, gratitude or vengeance. In a noble man, resentment is absorbed in his instantaneous reaction. In most cases, it may not even arise. But for the weak and impotent people, it occurs without fail.

It is a sign of strong and rich temperaments that they do not for long take seriously their enemies, their misfortunes, or their misdeeds. They have in them a kind of plastic curative power and also a power of oblivion. The noble person respects his enemy. The adage 'loving one's own enemy' is possible only with him.

On the other hand, the rancorous man creates enemies around. He conceives the enemy an evil one, as a fundamental

idea. Simultaneously he conceives of himself as good, in juxtaposition to the enemy conceived. The noble minded, on the other hand, spontaneously creates the notion good, and later derives from it the conception of the bad.

Of all the things which wisdom acquires to produce the blessedness of complete life, the greatest is the possession of friendship. The same conviction that gives us confidence that there is nothing terrible that lasts forever or for long also enables the protection of friendship most fully completed in the limited evils of life.

Every healthy morality is dominated by an instinct of life. Some commandment of life is fulfilled by a determinate moral principle. Some inhibition or hostile element in the path of life is removed. Anti-natural morality, that is, almost every morality that has been imposed, turns against the instincts of life.

When we speak of values, we speak with the inspiration, with the way of looking at things, which is part of life. Life itself forces us to posit values. Life itself values through us, when we posit values.

The ideal of love transcends all law. It is impossible to construct a social ethic out of the ideal of love in its pure form because the ideal presupposes the resolution of the conflict of life with life, which it is the concern of law to mitigate and restrain. Nonetheless, the ideal of love is the only foundation 'for an ethic which enables men to give themselves to values actually embodied in persons and existence, but also transcending every activity'. The law of love is involved in all approximations of justice, not only as the source of the norms of justice, but also as an ultimate perspective by which their limitations are discovered. The ideal of equality is a fact of the natural law, which transcends existence.

Things in our Power

Prudence is the bottom-line of ethical action. It teaches us how to live pleasantly, honorably and justly. One is to meditate prudently on the things one handles in one's acts.

Of things, some are in our power and others are not. Whatever are our own acts such as opinion, desire, aversion, movement toward a thing, etc are in our power. Not in our power are not our own acts such as the body, property, reputation, and offices. The things in our power are by nature free and not subject to restraint or hindrance. The things not in our power are by nature weak, subject to restraint, in the power of others. If someone thinks that things in his power alone are his and things in the power of another the other's, no man will ever compel him or hinder. He will not blame any other, nor will another harm him, for he will have no enemy and will not suffer any harm.

If anyone desires great things, he must not lay hold of them with a small effort. He must not attempt to have many things at a time. He must leave some things entirely and postpone others for the present. If he aims at power and wealth besides great things, he will fail in those things through which alone happiness and freedom are secured. One is to practise to see every harsh appearance as an appearance only and examine whether it is in one's power or not, to act upon. If it relates to anything which is not in one's power, one must be ready to say that it does not concern one.

Desire contains in it the hope of obtaining that which one desires. The hope in aversion is that one will not fall into that which one attempts to avoid. One who fails in one's desire is unfortunate. One who falls into that which one wants to avoid is unhappy. Then if one attempts to avoid only the things contrary

to nature, which are within one's power, one will not be involved in any of the things which one wants to avoid. But if one attempts to avoid death or disease, one will be unhappy. One is, therefore, to take away aversion from all things, which are not in one's power, and transfer it to the things contrary to nature, which are in one's power. One is to destroy desire completely for the present. It is wise only sparingly to move towards the things in our power and which it will be good to desire.

In everything, which pleases the soul or supplies a want or is loved, one is 'to act the nature of the thing to his want'. If one loves an earthen vessel, one is to remember that it is an earthen vessel which one loves. Supposing it gets broken, one will not be disturbed.

When one takes up any act, one is to remind oneself of what kind of an act it is. One is to say to oneself that one is about to do the act intended, and also to maintain one's will in a manner conformable to nature.

Men are disturbed not by the things that happen, but by the opinions about the things. For example, there is nothing terrible about death, but the opinion about death is that it is terrible. If a person grieves over the death of a family member or loss of property, one is to understand clearly that it is not that which has happened that afflicts the grieving person, but it is the opinion about the occurrence which afflicts the person. One can show sympathy to the grieving person in words, but take care to see that one does not lament internally.

When we are impeded or disturbed or grieved, we shall not blame others, but ourselves, that is, our opinions. It is the act of an ill-instructed man to blame others for his own bad condition. It is the act of one who has begun to be instructed to lay the

blame on oneself. If one's instruction is complete, one will blame neither another nor oneself.

One is not to be elated at any advantage or excellence that belongs to another. When in the use of appearances one is conformable to nature, it is good for one to get elated, for then one will be elated at something good which is one's own.

One is to remember that it is not another that reviles, strikes or insults one, but it is one's opinion about these things as being insulting. When a man irritates one, one must know that it is one's own opinion that has irritated one. One is, therefore, to try especially not to be carried away by the appearance. If one takes time before reacting, one will easily master oneself.

One shall not desire that the things, which happen, should happen as one wishes. One should wish the things, which happen to be, as they are. Then one will have a tranquil flow of life.

Disease is an impediment to the body, but not to the will, unless the will itself chooses. Lameness is an impediment to the leg, but not to the will. If one adds this kind of reflection on the occasion of everything that happens, one will find it an impediment to something else, but not to oneself.

On the occasion of an event that befalls one, one is to turn oneself and enquire what power one has for turning it to use. If one sees a beautiful person of opposite sex, one will find that the power to resist is continence. If one is to suffer pain, one will find that the power to resist is endurance. If another abuses one, one finds the power to resist is patience. If one has been habituated to this way of life, the appearances will not carry one along with them.

One is never to say about anything, 'I have lost it', but say 'I have restored it'. May be another who has taken away something belonging to one is a bad man. But what is it to one, by whose hands the Giver demanded it back? So long as He allows one, one is to take care of it as a thing that belongs to another. When it is taken away from one, one is no more concerned with it.

If one seems to another to be a person of importance, one is to distrust oneself. One is to know that it is not easy both to keep one's will in a condition conformable to nature and to secure external things. If one is careful about one thing, it is an absolute necessity that one will neglect the other or others.

If one desires to have one's children, wife and friends to live forever, one is silly. This amounts to having the things, which are not in one's power, to be in one's power, and the things, which belong to others, to be one's. But if one wishes not to fail in one's desires, one is able to do that. If one wishes to be free, one shall neither wish for anything nor avoid anything, which depends on others.

One is to behave in life as at a banquet. When something is carried round and opposite, one is to stretch one's hand and take a portion with decency. If it passes by, one shall not detain it. If it does not come, one shall not desire it until it is opposite to one. One is to act this way with respect to spouse, children, offices, wealth etc. If one takes none of the things, which are set before one and even despises them, then one will be divine.

One can be invincible if one enters into no contest in which it is not in one's power to win. When one observes a man honored before others, possessed of great power or highly esteemed for any reason, one is not to suppose him happy and be not carried away by the appearance. If the nature of the good

is in our power, neither envy nor jealousy will have a place in us. One shall not wish to hold a high office, and yet to be a free man. This is possible only if one does not care the things, which are not in one's power.

If one keeps death before one's own eyes daily, one will never think of anything mean, nor desire anything extravagantly.

If it should ever happen to one to be turned to externals in order to please some person, one must know that one has lost one's purpose in life. One is to be satisfied in everything with being a philosopher, appearing so to oneself.

Let not one be afflicted by such thoughts as 'I shall live un-honored and be nobody nowhere'. If want of honour is an evil, one cannot be in evil through the fault of another any more than one can be involved in anything base. How will one be nobody nowhere, when one ought to be somebody in those things only which are in one's power, in which indeed it is permitted to one to be a man of the greatest worth? In whatever way one acts, one is to maintain one's fidelity and modesty. As a mark is not set up for the purpose of missing the aim, so neither does the nature of evil exist in the world.

If another is preferred to one in social events, one is to rejoice that the other has obtained them if they are good. If they are bad, one need not be grieved that one has not obtained them. How can one obtain an equal share with another when one does not pay the price of flattery, personal attention or the like? If one wishes both not to pay the price and to obtain the things, one is insatiable and silly.

We may learn the will of Nature from the things in which we do not differ from one another. If another man's child or wife is dead, everyone will say that this is an event incident to man.

But when one's own wife or child is dead, one laments. One ought to remember how one feels when one hears that a similar thing has happened to another.

When one has recourse to divination, one is to remember that one does not know how it will turn out, but one is to enquire from the diviner. If any of the things is not within one's power, it is absolutely necessary that it must be neither good nor bad. One does not, therefore, bring to the diviner desire or aversion. If one does so, one will approach him with fear.

But having determined in mind that everything, which shall result, is indifferent and does not concern one, whatever it may be, for it will be in one's power to use it well, one is to approach the gods as one's advisers with full confidence. One is then to go to divination about those matters in which the entire enquiry has reference to the result and in which means are not given either by reason or by any other art for knowing the thing, which is the subject of the enquiry. On the other hand, when one is to share a friend's danger or that of one's country, one must not consult the diviner whether one must share it. Here reason prevails that even with any risk to one, one should share the dangers of one's friends and of one's country.

The relation of will to necessity is a matter of controversy. By necessity is meant one that is in no way in our power, but which has its way even when our will is opposed to it. Our choices of living well or ill obviously are not subject to this kind of necessity. The fact is that we do many things, which we would most certainly not do if we did not choose to do them. The most obvious case is our willing itself. If we will, there is an act of willing. There is none if we do not want one. We would certainly not make a choice if we did not have to choose it.

When we say we must choose freely, when we choose at all, we do not subject free choice to any necessity, which destroys our liberty. Even when a person suffers against his will from the will of others, there is a voluntary act – not, of course, of the person who suffers. Therefore, a human will prevails. The conclusion is that we are by no means under compulsion to abandon free choice.

Good for All

The most fundamental question in all ethics is how to define the term 'good'. That which is meant by good is, in fact, except its converse bad, the only simple object of thought peculiar to ethics. A mistake with regard to it leads to a far larger number of erroneous ethical judgments than any other. Unless the concept of good is clearly understood and recognized, the rest of ethics is as good as useless from the point of view of systematic knowledge.

The main object of ethics, as a systematic science, is to give correct reasons for thinking that this or that is good. Unless the concept of good is properly understood and recognized, such reasons cannot be given. The direct object of ethics is knowledge, and not practice. It is its business not only to obtain true results, but also to find valid reasons for them.

Philosophically it may be said that the propositions about the good are all synthetic and never analytic. 'Good' is a simple notion, as 'yellow' is a simple notion. One cannot explain by any manner of means to another who does not know yellow, what yellow is. So is the case with good. It is simply something which one is to think of or perceive. If one cannot think of or perceive it, another can never, by any definition, make its nature of it known to one.

It is possible, for instance, to make a man understand what a tiger is. One can explain its features and characteristics and make it known. A complex object composed of parts can be explained. Even the parts, when brought to the simplest elements, can no longer be defined. Good and yellow are notions of such simple kind that do not permit of definition.

It may be true that all things, which are good, are also something else. It is also true that ethics aims at discovering what

are those other properties belonging to all things that are good. To equate the other properties belonging to things that are good, to goodness itself, is a fallacy called 'naturalistic fallacy'.

What we want to know is simply what is good. We may indeed agree that what most people think 'good' is actually so. We shall at all events be glad to know their opinions about what is good. We want to know exactly what it is that they so call.

Every art and every enquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit is thought to aim at some good. For this reason, the good has been declared to be that at which all things aim.

As for ends, there is certain difference among the activities and others that produce them. Where there are ends apart from the actions, it is the nature of the products to be better than the activities. As there are many actions, arts and sciences, their ends also are many.

If there is some end of the things we do, which we desire for its own sake, and if we do not choose everything for the sake of something else, then this must be the good and the chief good. If the end is the same for a single man and the state, the end of the state seems at all events something greater and more complete either to attain or to preserve than the end merely of one man, though it is also worthwhile to attain.

All knowledge and every pursuit aim at some good. Political science aims at what is the highest of all goods achievable by action. It is happiness, identified with living well and doing well, being happy. As to what constitutes happiness, there are differences of opinion. Some consider that happiness is simple pleasure, wealth or honour. Even among them, they differ from one another. One identifies it with health, when one is ill; one with wealth when one is poor, etc. Others consider, apart from

these many goods, there is another that is self-subsistent causing the goodness of all these as well.

Judging from the lives that men lead, most men including men of the most vulgar type seem to identify the good or happiness with pleasure. That is the reason why they love the life of enjoyment.

There are three prominent types of life – pleasurable, political and contemplative. The mass of mankind is quite slavish in its tastes, preferring a life of physical pleasure. Some people of superior refinement and active disposition identify happiness with honour, which is, roughly speaking, the end of the political life. These men seem to pursue honour in order that they may be assured of their goodness. Further they seek to be honored by men of practical wisdom on the ground of their virtue. For them, at any rate, virtue is better. It may be that virtue is the end of the political life, rather than honor. Even this is incomplete, for possession of virtue seems actually compatible with being asleep, or with life-long inactivity, and, further, with the greatest sufferings and misfortunes.

The life of money making is one undertaken under compulsion. Wealth is evidently not the good; it is merely useful and for the sake of something else. One might rather take the above objects to be ends; for they are loved for themselves. But it is evident that they are not ends.

The term good is used in the category of substance, both in that of quality and in that of relation. Good has many senses as 'being'. For example, it is predicated in the category of substance as of God and reason; in the quality as of the virtues; in quantity as of that which is moderate; in relation as that of the useful; in time as that of the right opportunity; in place as that of the right locality, and the like. Clearly it cannot be something

universally present in all cases and still be single. If so, it could not have been predicated in all the categories but one only.

Goods are to be spoken of in two ways – some good in themselves and the other by reason of their being useful. A question arises as to what sort of goods one would call 'good' in themselves. The goods such as intelligence, sight, honour and certain pleasures may be placed among things good in themselves, if one pursues them for the sake of something else. But they do not satisfy the primary criterion that the account of the 'good' will have to appear as something identical in them all to be good in themselves, as that of whiteness is identical in snow and in white lead. But of honour, wisdom and pleasure, the accounts are distinct and diverse in respect of their goodness.

The good we are seeking seems different in different actions, arts and sciences. The good of each is surely that for whose sake everything else is done. In medicine, this is health; in strategy, victory; in architecture, a building; etc.

In every action and pursuit, the good is the end. It is only for the sake of this that all men do whatever else they do. Therefore, if there is an end for all that we do, this will be the good achievable by action, and if there is more than one, these will be the goods achievable by action.

That, which is called evil, the opposite of good, when it is regulated and put in its own place, only enhances our admiration of the good. It is human nature to enjoy and value the good more when we compare it with the evil.

In the order of nature, pleasure depends on operation, not the converse. So, if the operations are not the ultimate end, the resulting pleasures are also not the ultimate end. Nor are they concomitant with the ultimate end.

The pleasures of food and sex are not the ultimate end, nor are they concomitant to the ultimate end. So, felicity cannot be located in these pleasures. Further, these pleasures are not agreeable to man by virtue of what is the noblest in him, but only by virtue of his sense capacity. For this reason, too, felicity cannot be located in pleasures of this kind.

Similarly, worldly power cannot be man's highest good. In its attainment, fortune plays an important part. It is also unstable. It is not subject to man's will. Oftentimes it comes to bad men. These characteristics are incompatible with the highest good. Also man is deemed good mainly in terms of his attainment of the highest good. He is not called good or bad only because he has power or not. Everyone that can do good things need not be a good man, nor is a man bad because he is able to do evil things. Therefore, the highest good does not consist in the fact of being powerful.

Man's highest good does not lie in goods of the body such as health, beauty, strength, etc. Both good and bad men possess these things. They are unstable; they are not subject to the will. In between the soul and the body, the soul is better than the body. The body is alive and possesses the above goods by means of the soul. So, a good of the soul like understanding or contemplation is better than a good of the body. Therefore, the good of the body is not man's highest good. Further many animals are better endowed than man in bodily goods. If man's highest good is in bodily goods, the animals must have more felicity, which is obviously not the case. Therefore, human felicity does not consist in goods of the body.

The ultimate felicity of man does not consist in moral actions, too. All moral operations can be ordered to something else. For instance, the operations of justice are ordered to the preservation of peace among men. But human felicity is incapable

of being ordered to a further end. Therefore, man's ultimate felicity does not lie in moral operations.

As for moral virtues, the mean is preserved in the internal passions and in regard to external things. But such a measuring is not possible to be the ultimate end of human life as these passions and external things are capable of being ordered to something else. Therefore, it is not possible for man's ultimate felicity to lie in acts of the moral virtues.

The terms 'good' and 'evil' indicate nothing positive in things. They are nothing else than modes of thought or notions, which we form from the comparison of one thing with another. One and the same thing may be good, evil or indifferent. For example, music is good to a serene person, bad to a man mourning, and indifferent to a deaf man.

Though things are that way, we must retain these words as they help us form an opinion of human conduct. By 'good' is meant a means by which we may approach nearer to the model of human nature we set before us. By 'evil' is meant everything, which we are certain, hinders us from reaching that model. In the context of men being perfect or imperfect, the same yardstick may apply.

The desires that are related to the mind in so far as it is conceived to consist of adequate ideas are properly called actions. The other desires not related to the mind, but determined by the power of objects which are without us, are called the passive states. The actions indicate our power, while the passive states indicate our impotence and imperfect knowledge. Actions determined by man's power or reasons are always good. The others may be good as well as evil.

It is very profitable in life to make intellect or reason perfect as far as possible. In this one thing lies the highest happiness or blessedness of man. Blessedness is nothing but the peace of mind, which springs from the intuitive knowledge of God. To perfect the intellect is nothing but to understand God, together with His attributes, actions and nature. Therefore, the chief desire by which man strives to govern all his other desires is that by which he is led adequately to conceive himself and all things by his intelligence.

There is no rational life without intelligence. Things are good only in so far as they assist man to enjoy that life of the mind determined by intelligence. We call such things evil as hinder man from perfecting his reason and enjoying a rational life.

All those ends of which man is the efficient cause are necessarily good. It, therefore, follows that no evil can happen to man except from external causes. Being guided by reason is the most profitable course for a man for the preservation of his being and the enjoyment of a rational life.

As there is evidently more than one and we choose one or some of them for the sake of something else, clearly not all ends are final ends. But the chief good is something evidently final. Therefore, if there is only one final end, this will be what we are seeking. If there is more than one, the most final of these will be what we are seeking. We consider final, without any reservation, that which is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else.

We choose happiness as the end always for itself and never for the sake of something else. As regards the virtues such as honour, pleasure, reason, etc, we choose them for themselves and also for the sake of happiness, judging that by means of them we shall be happy. On the other hand, no one chooses

happiness for the sake of these virtues, or rather for anything other than itself.

From the point of self-sufficiency, the final good is thought to be self-sufficient. By being self-sufficient is meant what is sufficient not only for a man by himself but also for his family, and in general his friends and fellow citizens, as man is born into a society. The 'self-sufficient' can be defined as that which, when isolated, makes life desirable and lacking in nothing. Happiness is to be such and it is what we think it most desirable of all things. It is not to be counted as one good thing among others as it leads to comparison and, therefore, cannot be final. Happiness, thus, is something final, self-sufficient and the end of action.

A question is often asked whether happiness can be acquired by learning, habituation or some other sort of training, or comes in virtue of divine providence or chance. If there is any gift of God to human beings, happiness is most surely God-given of all human things in as much as it is the best. Even if it is not God-given, but comes as a result of virtue and some process of learning or training, it is still among the most God-like things and blessed, as it is the end of virtue. As for those who have virtue, they may win happiness by a certain kind of effort, study and care. It is better to be happy thus than by chance. This is for the reason that to entrust to chance what is the greatest and the most noble would be a very defective arrangement.

Happiness as the chief or final good is related to the function of man. The function of man is related to body and mind, and to the soul. In so far as it is the activity of the soul that implies a rational principle, human good turns out to be the activity of the soul in accordance with virtue in a complete life. If there is more than one virtue, it is in accordance with the best and the most complete virtue.

As for the external goods related to the body and mind, we use friends, riches, political power, etc as instruments. There are certain other things such as good birth, good children, beauty, social status, etc. Happiness seems to need this kind of prosperity, too. For this reason, some identify happiness with good fortune, while others identify it only with virtue.

Happiness is the proper good of an intellectual nature, by reason of what is proper to that nature. Appetite is not peculiar to intellectual nature as it is present in all things, though differently in different things. This diversity arises from the fact that things are differently related to knowledge. Things lacking in knowledge have only natural appetite. Things with sensory knowledge have sense appetite. Things of intellectual knowledge have an appetite proportionate to this knowledge that is will.

So the will is not peculiar to intellectual nature by virtue of being an appetite, but only in so far as it depends on intellect. However, the intellect, in itself, is peculiar to an intellectual nature. Therefore, happiness or felicity consists substantially and principally in an act of the intellect rather than in an act of the will. It is evident that it is impossible for human felicity to consist in bodily pleasures, the chief of which are those of food and sex.

Happiness is thus an activity of soul in accordance with perfect virtue. If we consider the nature of human virtue, it enables us to see the nature of happiness. By human virtue is meant not that of the body, but of the soul. Happiness then is an activity of the soul.

It is apparent that all things are ordered to one good, as to their ultimate end. If nothing tends toward a thing as an end, unless this thing is a good, it is necessary that the good, as good, be the end. Therefore, that which is the highest good is, from the highest point of view, the end of all things. But there is only one

highest good with nothing beyond, and this is the Divine Will. So all things are ordered to their highest good as their ultimate end, and this is the Divine Will.

In view of the foregoing, the conclusion is that the ultimate felicity of man lies in the contemplation of Truth. Indeed, it is the only operation proper to man, and in it he shares nothing in common with other sentient beings. This is ordered to nothing else as an end, as contemplation of Truth is sought for its own sake. For this operation, man is self-sufficient, for he needs no help from external things. In fact, all other human operations seem to be ordered to this one, as to an end. All human functions and virtues sub-serve the contemplation of Truth as the ultimate end. So the conclusion remains that man's ultimate felicity consists in the contemplation of wisdom and Truth, based on the considering of spiritual, eternal and divine matters.

11. Living in Spirit

Spiritual Guide

Since ancient times, the figure of the spiritual guide to the seeker of enlightenment has been at the centre of contemplative and esoteric traditions. It would appear that all such traditions stress the necessity of a spiritual preceptor. He is supposed to have immediate knowledge of the laws of spiritual development. He is the one considered capable of assessing the stage at which the seeker is on the spiritual path as well as the impediments that lie ahead.

Furthermore, the guide is responsible for preserving and advancing the precise understanding of the teaching and spiritual discipline to which he is heir. It includes both a written tradition and an oral tradition 'outside the scriptures,' which, at its highest level, is passed on from master to succeeding master and to certain disciples, according to their level of insight. The precarious nature of this transfer has been recognized by all traditions.

Hinduism is not alone in its insistence that the spiritual bond (*vidyasambandha*) that exists between the spiritual preceptor (*guru*) and his disciple (*sisya*) is no less real than a blood relationship. Taking Socrates as the model preceptor, Kierkegaard maintains that the meiotic relationship between teacher and disciple is the highest possible relationship between man and man. Socrates, writes Kierkegaard, entered into the role of midwife, not because his thought lacked 'positive content,' but because he 'perceived that this relationship is the highest that one human being can sustain to another'.

Whether he is regarded as a midwife, *guru*, *daimon*, or *bodhisattva*, the paradigmatic feature of the spiritual guide is always his intermediate status. In a hierarchically ordered cosmos,

the guide is situated in an intermediary world of subtle possibilities, between the realms of pure matter and pure spirit, between earth and heaven, or, one might say, between the exoteric and esoteric.

The legitimacy of the unearthly, inner guide has also been vouched by all traditions. But the 'master-less master' who has been initiated and guided by the inner spiritual guide without first having been counselled by an outer, human guide is especially rare.

It is said that if a man cannot gain awakening on his own, he must obtain a good teacher to show him how to see into his own self-nature. But if he awakens by himself, he need not rely on teachers outside. If he tries to seek a teacher outside without the urge for awakening, and hope to obtain deliverance, he will find it impossible. If he has recognized that good teacher within his own soul, he will have already obtained deliverance.

Pythagoras and Socrates remind us that the worthy figure of the spiritual guide is not confined to the strict forms of religion, but can also be identified in various fraternities, orders, and academies whose primary concern is the self-transformation and spiritual enlightenment of their members.

According to Aristotle, the Pythagoreans taught that, among rational beings, there is that which is God, that which is man, and 'that which is like Pythagoras', meaning the spiritual guide. The spiritual guide, as in the case of Pythagoras, stands between the human and the supra-human worlds, between the mundane and the sacred; the guide is the intermediate par excellence, mediating energies from above and attracting disciples from below.

The foundation for guidance and discipleship in the Christian tradition is naturally found in the reported actions of

Christ. 'He called his disciples to him; they lived with him and were taught by his actions, words, and gestures'.

For Christianity in general, Christ has remained the unequalled teacher, a transcendent inner guide through whom man seeks salvation. But many of the writings in the Christianity tradition indicate the difficulty of accepting the vocation of spiritual guidance, and attempt to discourage seeking spiritual guidance because of the pitfall of following the pseudo-guide.

In the Islamic tradition, the Sufi master remains, as in the case with various Buddhist guides, a robust and vigorous man, full of life, paradox, and humour.

The *Shari'ah*, or divine law, is meant for all Muslims, but beyond that lies the *tariqah*, or spiritual path, for the *murid* (literally 'he who has made up his will', that is, to enter the path). In order to enter the path, it is essential that the seeker finds, and is accepted by, a spiritual master, a *shaykh* or *pir*. The tradition says. 'when someone has no *shaykh*, *Satan* becomes his *shaykh*.'

The *shaykh* will teach him how to behave in each mental state and prescribe periods of seclusion, if deemed necessary. It is well known that the methods will not be alike for everybody. The genuine mystical guide has to have a great deal of psychological understanding in order to recognize the different talents and characters of his *murids*, and train them accordingly. 'Not every *shaykh* is a master for every disciple. The disciple must seek and find the master who conquers his soul and dominates him as an eagle or falcon pounces upon a sparrow in the air'.

The absolute necessity of a spiritual guide is so central to the credo of Sufism that at least one biography of the Sufi Master

Abu sa'id idn Abi al-Khayr reports the maxim that 'if any one by means of asceticism and self-mortification shall have risen to an exalted degree of mystical experience, without having a *pir* to whose authority and example he submits himself, the Sufis do not regard him as belonging to their community'.

Although the *shaykh* has certainly undergone the ascetic and meditative training through which he guides his pupils in *dhikr* - 'remembrance' (of God), fasting, deprivation of sleep, intense physical labors, and so on, he abides in the fullness of life, active and yet detached from his actions. 'The true saint,' states Abu Said, 'goes in and out amongst the people and eats and sleeps with them, and buys and sells in the market, and marries and takes part in social intercourse, and yet never forgets God for a single moment'.

Unlike some Indian traditions that tend to view the *guru* as an incarnation of divinity or as an intermediary to the sacred, early Buddhism emphasized the virtuosity of the guide and his own attainment of spiritual knowledge. The term designated by the texts for the guide or teacher is 'good or virtuous friend'. The *Kalyanamitra* (spiritual guide) provides guidance based entirely on the insight he has gained from personal experience. The Buddhist texts relate an episode in which the Buddha describes himself as the 'virtuous friend' par excellence, as the spiritual guide who leads sentient beings to freedom from birth, old age, suffering and death.

Accounts of the Buddha's early life indicate that he retired to the forest in order to receive the teaching and guidance of various celebrated hermits and teachers. However, after practising a series of austere *yogic* exercises for several years, the Buddha determined that their guidance was insufficient, and set out on his own to attain enlightenment. Once the Buddha attained his enlightenment, he remained in a blissful state of meditation for

several days and contemplated the trouble he would cause himself, should he attempt to share his vision and offer guidance to a deeply deluded and ignorant mankind. He overcame this final temptation of remaining secluded and private, in his vision, resolving to share his knowledge with other seekers and to guide them towards a similar transformation. It is upon this fundamental attitude that the Buddhist tradition of spiritual guidance takes its precedence.

At the core of the development of Mahayana Buddhism was the role to be performed by the *Bodhisattva* (enlightened being). The *Bodhisattva* relinquishes his personal enlightenment and vows to work for the enlightenment of all sentient beings. After attaining the requisite insight (*prajna*), the final stage of the *Bodhisattva's* career is devoted to the welfare of others via skillful means (*upaya*). The doctrine maintains that *prajna* without *upaya* leads to the incomplete quietest enlightenment, while possession of *upaya* without *prajna* results in continued bondage to *samsara*. Therefore, the skillful guidance of others toward enlightenment, as an expression of compassion, becomes paramount to the spiritual progress of the *Bodhisattva*; through this process of guidance something 'more' is gained by him.

The employment of skillful means or technique is essentially intended for use by those spiritual guides or masters who possess a complete and perfect knowledge of the teachings and the methods of practice, and who are themselves free from the delusions of the mind and emotions. The *Bodhisattva* perceives through spiritual insight (*prajna*) the inner barriers and the potentialities of the pupil and can respond to each accordingly.

The Buddhist tradition emphasizes the role of *guru* dramatically:

Before any *guru* existed
Even the name of Buddha was not heard.
All the Buddhas of a thousand kalpas
Only came about because of the *guru*.
(Nalanda Translation Committee 1982, p. 92)

It has been observed that every tradition emphasizes the importance of an oral tradition of instruction for the guidance of spiritual seekers. The foundation of Zen Buddhism is based squarely upon this premise, as is indicated in the following verse attributed to the 'Founder' and the first Ch'an patriarch in China, *Bodhidharma*:

A special tradition outside the scriptures;
No dependence upon words or letters;
Direct pointing at the soul of man,
Seeing into one's own nature,
And the attainment of Buddha-hood.

The golden age of Ch'an in China (the period from Hui-neng's death until the persecution of Buddhism in the ninth century AD) was a time in which Ch'an masters of the most remarkable originality won the day. These were vigorous and effusive men who sought to bring their disciples to new levels of insight by demonstrating their own inexpressible experiences of enlightenment by shocking and often violent methods.

One such figure was Ma-tsu (d. 786). A robust and unflinching presence, Ma-tsu is described in a Ch'an chronicle of the period as a man of remarkable appearance. 'He strode along like a bull and glared about him like a tiger.' He was the first to use shouting (especially the famous cry 'ho!') as a means to shock the disciple out of his habitually duality-conscious mind. In one famous story, it is related that, after a typically paradoxical dialogue with one of his disciples, Ma-tsu grabbed him by the

nose, and twisted it so violently that the pupil cried out in pain, and attained enlightenment.

Lin-chi, another master, led his numerous disciples toward enlightenment by continuing and enlarging the use of shouting, adding to that his own favourite method of beating disciples. The 'shouting and beating' Ch'an of Lin-chi was not intended as punishment or random mischief. Experience had taught Lin-chi that harsh and unexpected encounters with 'Reality' could lead more quickly and certainly to enlightenment than endless lectures and discourses.

An unrelenting giant among Japanese Zen masters was Hakuin. He writes: 'How sad it is that the teaching in this degenerate age gives indications of the time when the Dharma will be completely destroyed. Monks and teachers of eminent virtue, surrounded by hosts of disciples and eminent worthies, foolishly take the dead teachings of 'no thought' and no-mind, where the mind is like dead ashes with wisdom obliterated, and make these into the essential doctrines of Zen. They practice silent, dead sitting as though they were incense burners in some old mausoleum and rake this to be the treasure place of the true practice of the patriarchs. They make rigid emptiness, indifference, and black stupidity the ultimate essence for accomplishing the Great Matter.'

It has been argued that the ultimate purpose of the Zen master is one thing alone - to produce a disciple who can carry on the teaching and preserve the transmission of the Dharma. The lineages of many famous monks became extinct after a generation or two because they had no worthy disciples to hand down their teachings.

The idea of a spiritual preceptor to guide one's study of religion and philosophy has been a constant influence on the

religions of India since the most ancient times. In Rigveda, we see him referred to as the *rsi* (seer) or *muni*, a sage or silent one. As such, he is the possessor of deep spiritual insights (often resulting from performing austerities) and is considered to be the repository of the sacred Vedic hymns. In later times, we find him referred to as *Acharya*, *Braahmana*, and *Svami* (*Swami*), now popularly known as *Guru*.

Chandogya-Upanisad records that only knowledge that is gained from a *guru* is capable of successfully leading one to one's aim. It is also said therein that the spiritual guide is necessary in order to cut through and dispense mundane, empirical knowledge, and to become conscious of true spiritual knowledge.

There is also the prevalent concern for secret transmission of esoteric knowledge. *Chandogya-Upanisad* states that a father can teach the esoteric doctrine to 'his eldest son or to a worthy pupil, and to no one else, even if one should offer him the whole earth'. *Aitareya Aranyaka* states that 'let no one tell these *Samhitas* (Vedic hymns) to one who is not a resident pupil, who has not been with the teacher for at least a year, and who is not himself to become a teacher.' That the pupil was often tested by the guru and admitted only after motivation or probation is attested to in different ways.

It would seem that the word *guru* is used in the sense of 'teacher' or 'spiritual guide' for the first time in *Chandogya-Upanisad*. But it is also relevant to note that its original adjectival sense (heavy or weighty) is illustrative of the widespread belief that holy persons are characterized by uncommon weight, not necessarily in the outer, physical sense.

The Indian tradition is replete with innumerable instances that it is the inner *guru* who leads the disciple to the outer *guru*, and it is the outer *guru* who reveals the inner *guru*.

Although the tendency to deify the *guru* seems to have only gradually gained a doctrinal position, the idea can already be seen in the *Svetasvatara-Upanisad*, which speaks of a man who has the highest love and devotion for God, and for his *guru* as for God. In later times, this distinction is erased so that the *guru* is identified with the gods. The great poet and mystic Kabir teaches that the *guru* should be recognized as the Lord Himself, a view echoed by Chaitanya and his followers.

This process of deification (no doubt aided by the conception of *Avatars*) went to such extremes that the *guru* might be said to have usurped and displaced the gods in importance. Thus, the *Saiva* texts teach that if Siva becomes angry, 'then the *guru* can pacify Him, but if the *guru* becomes angry, no one can pacify him.'

It is in relation to this theme that the idea of the '*guru's* grace' arose, a concept of particular force even today. Many Indian seekers feel that the mere presence of the *guru* (as in *satsang*, or keeping spiritual company) can somehow lead the pupil to liberation. This view, however, is not held universally. One can easily find numerous exceptions that suggest that the intensity of the disciple's wish for knowledge and his earnest striving is all that is necessary; the *guru's* only true function then is to act as a messenger. Seen in this light, one can easily understand the statements that contend that there is no lack of *gurus*, only of qualified and true disciples.

That the prestige and influence enjoyed by *gurus* has persisted to modern times is attested to by certain preceptors of our period who possess the force and unmistakable ring of authenticity. One need only mention, by way of example, the writings by and about Sri Ramakrishna, Ramana Maharshi and Sri Sathya Sai.

Although, in modern times, there has been a great deal of speculation and criticism about the claims made by many spiritual guides, it would be difficult and perhaps a mistake to attempt to judge those teachers on the basis of their outward actions. For no one could know the motives behind the actions of a truly realized *guru*. To illustrate this point, a story is said of a *sanyasin* (world-renouncing ascetic) who had been directed by his *guru* to marry. He obeyed, and suffered bitterly in married life. But all four of his children became the greatest saints and '*rshis*' of Maharashtra. (The reference is to the ascetic Vitthalpant, his wife Rakhmuni and their three sons Nivrittinath, Jnaneshwar and Sopandeva, and daughter Muktabai.)

Spiritual Discipline

Throughout history, religious traditions have noted that seekers after enlightenment must, somehow, find a preceptor, a guide, or a set of teachings to help them along. That guide may be a person, an idea, or a set of values. Whatever it may be, it establishes the orientation, and outlines the procedures that seekers should follow in order to make real the transformation for which they hope.

Many traditions further maintain that, having found (or having hoped eventually to find) that guide, the seeker then must practise various regimens that will help him continue along the way to ultimate transformation. Such endeavours constitute spiritual discipline, the means by which people find their fullest potential as to the awareness of their being.

The practice of spiritual discipline marks the notion that one who is in search of the guide is not only a human being but also a human ‘becoming,’ one on one’s way toward an ideal. Images of such discipline, therefore, often include themes of movement or passage. Mahayana Buddhists describe the spiritual endeavour as *Bodhicaryavatara*, ‘entering the path to enlightenment’; Jewish traditions speak of religious norms as *Halakhah*, ‘the way to go’; and traditional Hindu literature outlines the three sacred paths, *marga*, of proper action, proper meditation, and proper devotion. Not infrequently, religious systems refer to the sacred cosmos as a whole with terms meaning *The Way*, like the Chinese *Tao*.

The perfection such a person seeks may take a number of forms, each reflecting the fundamental worldview presented by the concerned religious system. It may be the fulfillment of being or the return to nonbeing; it may be personal or impersonal; it may be the enjoyment of good life or the release of good

death. Whatever be the goal, spiritual disciplines claim to offer their adherents the means by which the religious ideal may be reached.

Without discipline, the seeker founders! The *Sufi* mystic Jalal al-Din Rumi spoke perhaps for many religious traditions besides his own when he noted that ‘whoever travels without a guide needs two hundred years for a two days’ journey.’

The word *discipline* is a particularly apt one. To some people it rings of punishment. But this certainly is not the primary meaning of the term, which carries a good number of connotations.

The word discipline comes to us through one of two ways, or, more likely, in a semantic combination of the two ways. It may come from the Latin *discere* meaning ‘to learn’, and thus be directly related to the English word *disciple*, ‘one who follows the instructions of a teacher.’ *Discere* itself reflects the Indo-European root *dek* (take, accept), which also appears in the English *decent*, *docent*, *docile*, *dogma*, and *dogmatic*; *doctrine*, *doctor* (one who teaches doctrine), and thus *indoctrinate*; as well as *dignity*, ‘to be acceptable’, and *decorous*, ‘elegant, worthy of respect, graceful’.

Perhaps the word comes to us from the Latin *discipulus*, ‘pupil,’ from *dis-capere*, ‘to grasp’, in the sense of ‘to take hold of mentally’ and thus ‘to understand’. If so, then the word discipline derives primarily from the Indo-European *kap* (grab, hold of) and is related to such words as the English *capture*, and *captive*; *accept*, *precept*, *concept*; and *participate*. Often that sense of reception (a related word) is described as a safe and protected experience, as would be the sense of the Germanic derivative of the root ‘*kap-*, *hafno*, appearing in the Old English *haefen*, which leads in turn to the modern English *haven*, ‘place of refuge.’

To be disciplined, then, is to be caught up by the teachings of a guru – a guide – whether that guide be a person, an ethic, a community, a historical tradition, or a set of ideas – and to organize one’s behavior and attitude according to those teachings. The person who undertakes such discipline may be understood, then, to be a disciple of that which is felt to be true, a captive of that which is valuable.

Religious traditions do not tend to view this as ‘punishment.’ Rather, they generally stress the notion that this very captivity allows one to become who he or she really is, or really could be. As Zen Buddhists have long noted, one is most free when one is most disciplined.

Types of Spiritual Discipline

Just what kind of preceptor the disciple follows and what type of relationship exists between the two varies from tradition to tradition, and within each tradition itself. So any typological classification of spiritual disciplines runs the risk of oversimplification. Classed very generally, the different kinds of spiritual discipline may be understood as heteronymous, autonomous or interactive in nature. These three are only ideal types. Analysis of different examples of actual spiritual endeavors will show that individual disciples and specific traditions practise a combination of all three, though in varied proportion.

Heteronymous Discipline

In heteronymous discipline, the disciple submits, in his search for realization, completion or genuine understanding to the guidelines presented by an external authority. This authority may be personal or impersonal in nature. The structure of the relationship between guide and disciple is often represented as objective, and depicted in oppositional images such as creator and creature, lord and subject, teacher and apprentice, parent and child, shepherd and sheep, wise one and foolish one, judge and the judged. In obeying the commands, or by imitating the actions of the central authority, the seeker finds his or her way to fulfillment and meaning.

One sees the ideals of heteronymous discipline in any account of a disciple who serves a master. For example, the Ch’an Buddhist sweeps the floor and washes the vessels for his teacher. The orthodox Hindu obeys the social regulations / injunctions prescribed by the *Dharmasastras*. Heteronomy is found in those cases where people find meaning and validity in their actions as defined by an external authority of some kind.

Sometimes the teacher is very far, either in time or in space, and the disciple learns from a fellow disciple who is wiser and who knows the teachings, if not the teacher, and who, having realized the teachings himself, can illumine the difficult passage for the disciple.

A good example of heteronymous discipline appears in Islamic spiritual traditions. Muslims repeatedly hear in the Quran the notion that a person's sole purpose in life is to serve the will of God (*Allah*) by cultivating his or her potential in accordance with God's 'command' (*amr*). This submission (*Islaam*) to God is the purpose for which God sends, through prophets and revealed literatures, the divine 'guidance' (*hidayah*). The central revelation, the Quran, describes itself as an invitation to come to the right path (*hudan li-al-naas*) and is the source of the Islamic sacred law (*shariah*, literally, 'the way to the water hole', an appropriate image for spiritual travelers in a desert region). Islamic tradition notes that examples of such guiding laws include what is known as *fard* or *waajib* – those duties and actions all Muslims must obey such as daily prayer (*salat*), alms-giving (*sakat*), and fasting during the holy month of Ramadan (*sawm*).

According to Islamic mystical traditions, primarily those influenced by *Sufi* ideologies and practices, a person intent on gaining a direct experience of God's presence and power first seeks out a preceptor who guides the disciple through the stages of the spiritual journey. The preceptor then watches over the *murid* carefully, for the path (*tariqah*) is a long and difficult one.

The preceptor comes to know the disciple at the most intimate of levels. He reads the disciple's mind and sees into his dreams so that he can advise the disciple as he moves through the anxiety and doubt inherent in the spiritual transformation. He may make the *murid* practise ascetic meditation for periods of forty days at a time, and demand that the pupil direct all of his

attention to God; or he may require the pupil to live in a community of fellow seekers in order to benefit from the support a group can give.

The master is careful to keep the disciple attentive to his spiritual duties as he progresses through the 'stations' on the path such as repentance (*tawbah*), abstinence (*wara*), renunciation (*zuhd*), fasting (*sawm*), surrender to God (*tawakkul*), poverty (*faqr*), patience (*sabr*), gratitude (*shukr*), the cultivation of ecstatic joy (*bast*) through constraint of the ego (*qabd*), and finally love (*mahabbah*) and mystic annihilation (*mafiyah*) into the being of God. Bringing the disciple through these stages, the *Sufi* master shows him the way to *Fanaa*, in which the seeker rids himself of all human imperfections, and takes on the qualities of the Divine.

Autonomous Discipline

The typological opposite of heteronymous discipline is characterized by ideologies in which the guru (guide) is said not to live or exist somewhere outside of the seeker but, rather, to inhabit the very depths of one's personal being. There, deep within the soul, the guru rests timelessly beneath the swirling currents of the seeker's confused identity, unaffected by the vagaries of the objective world. The seeker's task is to discover that inner wisdom. The discipline that arises from this notion of the guru may be called autonomous in nature because the seeker's spiritual endeavors are self-contained and independent of external authority.

A good example of the autonomous discipline would be the set of practices and assumptions reflected in the stories of Siddhartha Gautama's enlightenment and his subsequent life as the Buddha. According to traditional accounts, the prince led a comfortable and secure life in his father's palace until, as a young man, he was shocked and utterly disillusioned with the passing

enjoyments of the material world by the sight, outside the royal walls, of an old person, a sick person and a corpse - sights that his father's protection had hitherto prevented him from seeing.

After encountering a wandering ascetic who seemed to have attained certain equanimity in the world of sickness and death, Gautama, at age twenty-nine, left his father's palace in search of a guru (teacher) who could help him understand the nature of life. He is said to have found successively two highly respected masters, but eventually left each one, unsatisfied, because he had become their equal in wisdom and yet still did not understand. He despaired of any teachings from another person, as even the most knowledgeable people did not know the full truth.

Traditional accounts say that Gautama then went alone into the forest, where he found a quiet place to fast, and to control his breathing in order to enter into a trance in which he could gain transcendent knowledge. Eventually, abandoning even some of these techniques because they led to what he experienced as a debilitating and, therefore, counterproductive physical weakness, he developed his own kind of meditation, which was neither austere nor self-indulgent. While meditating in this 'middle way,' he was confronted by demonic forces, which tempted him, unsuccessfully, with worldly power and prestige.

Gautama is said to have entered into four successive levels of meditation (*dhyana*), each one giving him deeper awareness of the origins and nature of suffering. Finally, at the dawn ending the night of the full moon, he gained complete understanding and stood up, alone. At that point he became the Buddha, the Enlightened One. He understood what have come to be known as the Four Noble Truths that all conditioned existence is permeated by suffering, that there is a cause of suffering (namely, desire), that there is a way to end suffering (namely, to cease

desiring) and that the way to cease desiring is to follow a set of principles that became known as the Noble Eightfold Path.

Traditional Buddhist hagiographies and commentaries note that one follows that path by maintaining and practising the disciplines, namely, correct views (*samma-ditthi*) directed only to the goal of enlightenment; correct speech (*samma-vaca*) in which one does not say anything that would harm his or other people's integrity; correct action (*samma-kammnta*) in which one refuses to kill another creature, take what is not given, or enjoy illicit sexual relations; correct livelihood (*samma-ajiva*), to earn a living only by ways in which living beings are not injured; correct exertion (*samma-vayama*) characterized by dispassion and benevolence; correct mindfulness (*samma-sati*), that is, the remembrance of the Four Noble Truths; and correct meditative concentration (*samma-samadhi*) which allows one to understand the harmful nature of selfish desire. The Eightfold Path thus combines the practice of proper wisdom (correct views and thoughts), morality (correct speech, action and livelihood) and meditation (correct mindfulness and concentration).

Buddhist tradition firmly maintains that the Buddha gained this insight by himself. Records of the Buddha's first discourse after his enlightenment note that he told his followers thus: 'No one in any of the worlds – neither the gods, nor Mara, nor Brahma, nor ascetics or priests or gods or human beings – had ever gained this highest complete enlightenment. I (alone) knew this. Knowledge arose in me, insight that even my mind cannot shake.' No teacher is said to have given this insight to the Buddha.

The account of the enlightenment of the Buddha is detailed, for the implicit lesson is that other people, too, can gain such knowledge if they cultivate autonomous discipline. Gautama himself seems to have resisted the role of a master. One text records his encouragement to others that 'as wise people test

gold by burning, cutting and rubbing it, so are you also to accept my teachings only after examining them, and not simply out of loyalty to me' (*Jnanasara-samuccaya* 31).

Interactive Discipline

In another form of discipline, the teacher is neither completely external, nor completely internal to the seeker. Rather, teaching and learning occur in a continuing and flexible process. The discipline needed here centres on a dialectical way of seeing or knowing that, in itself, brings the seeker to the desired transformation.

Outside authority exists in the form of tradition, ethos, or structures of the natural world. But that authority is affected in various degrees by the hopes, worldviews, and training of the disciple. Similarly, internal authority holds sway, but it is defined and given form by external structures. Interactive discipline centres on practices that arise in an open-ended relationship between the seeker and what he seeks.

Representative examples of interactive discipline might best come from the aesthetic arena. One thinks of a craftsman crafting a perfectly simple wooden chair, a sitar player quietly practising a raga in the early dawn, or a sculptor lovingly fashioning an image of the chosen entity out of a piece of marble. In such cases, the disciple undergoes experiences in which the ideal is made real through his or her own creative power, but that ideal itself determines the form in which the disciple can make it real. Not only is there disciplined action; there is also a cultivated interaction between the disciple and the discipline itself.

At times the artist seems to be the effective agent in the creative process, which brings his or her work to fruition through bold assertion. 'This is not the moment for hesitation and doubt,'

Vincent van Gogh write of the creative process; 'the hand may not tremble, nor may the eye wander, but must remain fixed on what is before one.'

Yet, no matter how subjective or personal this creative discipline may be, it frequently is described as participation in an impersonal event that transcends the idiosyncrasies of the artist. 'Everything vanishes around me,' Paul Klee once noted to himself, 'and works are born out of the voidMy hand has become the obedient instrument of a remote will.' The artist cultivates a vision, and subjective worlds converge and yet remain distinct. Such instances are innumerable.

Interactive discipline thus involves a kind of 'attentive selflessness.' Or perhaps it would be better to say that it centres on an 'attentive wholeness', for one who perfects this type of discipline is said to experience oneself as a creative and vital participant in the larger scope of life itself. Techniques of interactive discipline are different from those of heteronymous and autonomous disciplines in that the former do not revolve around conceptual knowledge. The master is both external and internal, and neither external nor internal, to the disciple.

Interactive experience, like the artistic experience, centres on the wondrous mystery and rhythmic flow of life. One who disciplines oneself toward this experience seeks to know eternal truths within the mysteries of the constantly changing world. Such discipline is exemplified in any number of possibilities.

If perfected, such interactive awareness of the world is said to lead to enlightenment which finds its meaning in one's everyday activities such as eating, sleeping, and moving one's body. What enlightens these activities does not come from outside; it is in the event itself. It is being-ness, or life itself. Better still, it is the 'is-as-it-is-ness' of something. It is this discipline of

‘seeing the is-ness’ of the world that is said to lead one to enlightenment.

The freedom to experience the world as it arises from such cognitive or perceptual discipline occurs only when the seeker’s mind, rather soul, is in perfect harmony with the rhythms of life itself.

There are no heteronymous or autonomous authorities in this type of discipline, for to distinguish between object and subject is to bifurcate the essential unity of being. Interactive discipline takes a person beyond all dualities, including the duality of ‘self’ and ‘other’, or ‘disciple’ and ‘master.’ Interactive discipline eventually frees the disciple from the need for a teacher. Such discipline recognizes that the guide, the way, and the wayfarer are one.

Modes of Spiritual Discipline

The three types of spiritual discipline stated above are not exclusive. Despite the autonomous ideals reflected in his early discourses, for example, even Gautama’s followers directed their lives according to the instructions given them by their Master and subsequently codified in the *Vinayapitika*, a canonical collection of community rules and regulations established by the Buddha and his immediate followers.

Conversely, even the *Sufi* mystic who advances through the stages of the path under the heteronymous guidance of a *shaykh* finally experiences *Fana*, the annihilation of ego-consciousness that brings knowledge of the unity of Reality.

In all the three types of discipline, therefore, the seeker and the path on which the seeker travels are inextricably linked. Within the general parameters of these three types of spiritual discipline, one may recognize a number of ways in which the disciple actually practises the regimens deemed necessary for movement along the path. These modes of activity may be classified as ecstatic discipline, constructive discipline, discipline of the body, discipline of the mind, discipline of the heart, and discipline of enduring personal relationships.

It is worth remembering that these categories serve typological purposes only; they are not rigid classifications but general descriptive groupings of a variety of practices and ideas.

Ecstatic Discipline

Many religious traditions maintain that the desired state exists outside of the human realm. It may lie in some other place such as the heavens, across the mountains, at the bottom of the sea; or it may take place in some other time, typically the past or

the future. Whatever may be the case, in order to reach that extraordinary state personally or in order to be able to communicate with spirits from that other world, the seeker must somehow cultivate the ability to move out of his or her physical body, since that body is limited by the confining structures of time and space. Such out-of-the-body experience is classified generally as *ecstasy*.

The discipline needed to attain ecstasy typically includes such practices as deprive of normal bodily pleasures in order to be free of physical body-consciousness. Such deprivation or ascetic discipline may begin with the seeker's withdrawal into solitude and spiritual tutelage under a preceptor. It often results in the visitation by a guardian spirit and subsequent transformative vision, or in an experience of death and resurrection. Ecstatic discipline appears, for example, in North American Indian practices centered on what has come to be known as the vision quest. These visions are often described as journeys taken into the worlds of the spirits, where the seeker is introduced to divine teachers who, it is believed, would guide him throughout his life.

Such ecstatic practices often include the seeker's ritualized symbolic death and resurrection. In some instances, the value of an enduring, rather than temporary, out-of-the-body experience lies at the very centre of religious ideology itself. Perhaps the best example is that of the Tibetan traditions based on the notion of *bar do*, the 'intermediate stage' through which a departed soul moves over the interval of forty-nine days between death and rebirth. Tibetan priests read a series of instructions – most frequently from the *bar do*, the Tibetan Book of the Dead – to the dying or dead person to help him through the dangers of the *bar do* and to help him gain a comfortable rebirth or, ideally, freedom from the cycle of birth itself.

Constructive Discipline

This mode of discipline does not seek, in general, to deprive the spiritual aspirant of unwanted or harmful characteristics. Rather, it helps the person perfect his being by building on desirable characteristics that are already there.

Such constructive discipline often takes the form of personal imitation of a paradigmatic figure or figures, which are said to embody desirable qualities or to have undertaken beneficial actions. Many times, therefore, such discipline takes the form of the correct performance of a ritual. 'We do here what the gods did in the beginning,' the priests report while explaining why they officiate at the sacred Vedic rites (*Satapatha Brahmanam* 7.2.1.4). For those priests, all work performed as part of the ritual thus becomes a disciplined imitation of a divine model.

So, for example, the artist, who fashions the utensils and ritual paraphernalia, expresses his artistry in a religious context: 'Those works of art produced here by a human being – (an image of) an elephant, a goblet, a sacred robe, a god figure, a chariot – are works of art only because they imitate the art of the gods' (*Aitareya Brahmanam* 6.27).

But it need not be explicit ritual behavior only that embodies the ideals and techniques of constructive discipline. Such discipline appears in any system, which assumes that, within the seeker, lie qualities that, although perhaps dormant, can be brought to the surface so that the ideal can be made real. 'Be faithful imitators of Jesus, and perfect imitators of Mary,' the fifteenth-century monk Thomas A Kempis wrote to his fellow Christians in his *Imitation of Mary*. 'Be simple, like the simple children of God, without deception, without envy, without criticism, without murmuring, and without suspicion.' In his

Imitation of Christ, Thomas similarly taught others to ‘learn to turn from worldly things, and give yourself to spiritual things, and you will see the Kingdom of God come within you’ (2.1).

Elements of constructive discipline are also seen in the Chinese, specifically the Neo-Confucian, tradition of the cultivation of sage-hood. Chang Tsai (1021-1077) defined the sage as one who understands the harmonious and holistic nature of oneself and one’s relationship to the world. According to his teachings, a human being’s essential nature is identical with all of nature, and the sage understands the principle that unites his essential nature with all things.

According to the Neo-Confucian thought, transformative understanding of this unity can be obtained through various techniques reflecting the ideology of constructive discipline. Kao P’an Lung (1562-1626), for example, advocated a combination of several attitudes and practices such as the cultivation of an open-minded reverence for all things, an intuitive exploration of the unifying principle that links the inner and outer worlds, a pervasive appreciation of the natural world, a sense of one’s place in history, and a practice he generally characterized as ‘quiet sitting’ in which the disciple brings the body and mind together into a whole. Kao described this latter technique as ‘ordinary’ since it reflects the basic unified nature of being itself.

Discipline of the Body

There is a general recognition among religious traditions that the body’s tendency to please its own senses tends to distract the spirit from its more ethereal tasks. Therefore, most spiritual disciplines involve the seeker’s control and restraint of his or her physical body.

Christian monastic traditions provide a good example of such discipline of the body. Benedict of Nursia wrote in the sixth century that ‘monks should have not even their bodies or their wills under their own command’. According to him, monks are to ‘let one pound of bread be enough for one day, whether there be one meal only, or both dinner and supper,’ and ‘wine is not appropriate for monks at all’. He nevertheless admitted, ‘since it is not possible these days to convince the monks of this, let us agree at least on this; we should not drink excessively nor to the point of satiation . . . one pint of wine a day is enough for each one’.

Benedict’s Rule thus reflects the value he placed on the monk’s renunciation of material goods, the primary purpose of which is to satisfy the body. ‘He should have nothing at all as his own, neither a book, nor tablets, nor a pen, nothing at all’. Six centuries later, Francis of Assisi restated and modified for his fellow monastics many of Benedict’s rules, telling them, for example, ‘to go and sell all that they have and carefully give it to the poor,’ and that ‘all the brothers shall wear humble garments, and may repair them with sack cloth and other remnants’.

It may be, however, that the best classical example of the discipline of the body comes from the *Raja-yoga* tradition, particularly as represented by Patanjali’s *Yoga-Sutras*, and its principal commentaries - Vyasa’s *Yogabhashya* and Vachaspati Misra’s *Tattvavaisaradi*. According to that tradition, the path to the ultimate goal of meditation practices, namely, complete deliverance (*kaivalya*) involves eight stages or ‘branches’ (*anga*), and is, therefore, known as the ‘eight-limbed discipline’ (*astanga-yoga*).

The first of the eight stages given by Patanjali is known as restraint (*yama*) and is centered on injunctions not to kill, not to lie, not to steal, not to enjoy sexual contact, and not to envy

other people's possessions. The second stage is comprised of the five traditional spiritual practices (*niyama*) of cleanliness, mental equanimity, asceticism, scriptural study and devotion to a master. At the third level, the *yogi* masters the various limber body postures (*asanas* such as the lotus position) that strengthen the body against the rigors of severe asceticism, some of which take many years of training before they can be practised without the risk of dangerous injury. The fourth level consists of breath control (*pranaayaama*) in which the adept slows down his rate of respiration, sometimes to the point of stopping his breathing altogether for long periods of time, and, in so doing, releases for his disciplined use all of the life force (*praana*) that is said to reside within the breath itself.

At the fifth stage of the eight-limbed discipline, the *yogi* withdraws all of his senses from their objects in an ecstatic process known as *pratyahaara*, which includes in part his focusing all of his attention, thus retrieved from external distractions, on a single object – such as the spot between his eyebrows – in a technique described as *ekagrata*, the sustained concentration on one thing. Mastering this technique gives the *yogi* power over all of his body, which possesses an almost immeasurable amount of energy.

The sixth level, known as *dharana*, a term that might best be translated as 'mental concentration,' is a form of *ekagrata* in which the *yogi*, under strict guidance of a master, concentrates all of his powerful attention on a single sacred syllable (*mantra*) or visual diagram (*yantra*) in such a way that his mind ceases to wander about in its constant fluctuations, and he comes to know and experience the unity of his soul (*atman*) with the soul of the universe.

In these first six stages of the eight-limbed discipline, the adept subdues and controls the instincts, desires, movements, respiration, senses, and mental activities of his physical body.

He does so in order to prepare himself for the seventh and eighth levels of discipline, which may be said to transcend corporal existence. The seventh stage is known as *dhyana* (deep meditation) in which the adept experiences the light of the Absolute within his own eternal soul. The final stage, *samadhi*, brings the *yogic* discipline to its fruition. At this point, the *yogi* knows Pure Being, Absolute Consciousness, and complete Bliss, and is released from all suffering entailed in the cycle of birth.

Discipline of the Mind

Many religions teach that one's mind tends to distract one from the necessities of spiritual growth and that it, like the body, must be restrained. Sometimes, religious masters admonish their disciples not to daydream. Sometimes, they scold them for being too analytical. In either case, they encourage them to retain control over the mind.

The *Katha-Upanisad* records a mythic conversation between Nachiketas, a young boy desirous of sacred knowledge, and Yama, the Lord of the dead. We see, reflected in Yama's teachings, the notion, cited often in ancient India, that the mind must be restrained the way a charioteer controls his horses. The narration in the *Upanisad* runs thus:

Think of the true self as (riding in) a chariot
 And that the body is the chariot.
 Think of the intellect as the charioteer
 And the mind as the reins

He who has no understanding,
 Whose mind is out of control,
 His senses are unchecked
 Like wild horses (when unrestrained by a bad) charioteer.

He, however, who has understanding,
Whose mind is always under control,
His senses are checked
Like the obedient horses (of a good) charioteer.

The Lord of the dead continues to teach Nachiketas that the search for the Absolute Truth residing within the self is difficult because it ‘cannot be known through language, or by the mind, or by sight’. According to Yama, one reason it is so difficult to comprehend the nature of the self is that it has no discernible qualities or characteristics. It is ‘without sound, without touch, without form, imperishable . . . without taste, eternal, odorless, without a beginning and without an end, beyond the great, constant.’ Nevertheless, Yama asserts that ‘by discerning That, one is liberated from the jaws of death (overcomes the cycle of birth and death)’.

Mundaka-Upanisad notes that the master, *guru*, should accept as a disciple only a pupil ‘whose mind is tranquil and who has attained peace. He teaches, in its very truth, that knowledge of the Brahman (Absolute Reality) by which one knows the true Eternal Soul’.

The seeker who disciplines his mind undergoes here a kind of ‘unknowing’ of all of the categories through which he normally understands himself, the world, and the Divine Reality. Part of this mental discipline involves the practice of seeing the essence of things as distinct from their form. In a classic teaching recorded in the *Bṛhadaranyaka-Upanisad*, the sage Yajñavalkya repeatedly asserts that the Eternal Soul is ‘not this, not this.’

Christian mystical traditions centered on the ‘*via negativa*’ present similar teachings regarding the need in one’s spiritual advancement to break down the categories to which one’s undisciplined empirical mind clings. In his work *The Mystical*

Theology, Dionysius the Areopagite (sixth century) taught that ‘the universal and transcendent Cause of all things is neither . . . a body, nor has He a form, or shape, or quality, or quantity, or weight; nor has He any localized, visible, or tangible existence; He is not sensible or perceptible’.

Dionysius accordingly encouraged his followers to ‘leave behind the senses and the operations of the intellect, and all things sensible and intellectual, and all things in the world of being and nonbeing, that thou mayest arise, by knowing, towards the union, as far as is attainable, with Him Who transcends all being and all knowledge’.

Discipline of the Heart

Some religious traditions teach that the final universal Truth centers on a profound, delicate and enduring love. According to these traditions, everything that is real arises from and returns into love; and it is through the openhearted awareness of that love that one comes closer to Divine Truth. The cultivation of those attitudes and actions that help one see and know that love may, therefore, be called the discipline of the heart, or rather the soul.

At times such discipline of the heart is described as a way of seeing the world in its sublime nature. The *Sufi* poet Muhammad Gisudaraz proclaims thus.

You look at the beautiful one and see figure and statue –
I do not see anything save the beauty and art of the
Creator.

Jalal al-Din Rumi, similarly, sees the structures of the natural world as expressions of ‘universal love’:

If this heaven were not in love, then its breast would have no purity;
And if the sun were not in love, in his beauty would be no light;
And if earth and mountain were not lovers;
Grass would not grow out of their breast.

The Hebrew *Song of Songs* presents classic love imagery set in a dialogue between a bride and her groom. Traditional commentaries have interpreted the relationship between the characters of the bride and the groom in four ways - literally, as a man and a woman in love with each other. The essence of the Song is that 'when God loves, He wants nothing else than to be loved; for He loves for no other purpose than that He may be loved, knowing that those who love Him are blessed by that very love'.

Christian mystics of that era often defined God in masculine and the soul in feminine terms, and described the religious life as a relationship between the two. Richard of Saint-Victor, for example, outlined in the Four Degrees of Passionate Charity the stages through which the soul moves in its relationship to the loving God thus: 'In the first degree, God enters into the soul and she turns inward into herself. In the second, she ascends above herself and is lifted up to God. In the third, the soul, lifted up to God, passes over altogether into Him. In the fourth, the soul goes forth on God's behalf and descends below herself.'

Discipline of the heart carries the seeker further and further into the depths, or heights, of Divine Love. In the Bhagavad-Gita, Lord Krishna tells His disciple Arjuna thus:

Through loving devotion (*bhakti*), he comes to know Me,
My measure, and who, in very truth, I am.
Then, knowing Me, in that complete truth, he enters
immediately into Me.

Discipline of Enduring Personal Relationships

According to some religious ideologies, religious fulfillment is best achieved through the observance of principles that serve to uphold the relationship between the human community and the deity, or to maintain important familial and other interpersonal bonds.

A classical example of such relational discipline appears in the traditions centered on and developed from the Jewish notion of *mitsvah* (commandment), a rule of discipline that is understood to have divine sanction. The rabbinic tradition of Judaism notes that God has given the people of Israel 613 *mitsvot* outlining 248 positive and 365 negative instructions the people are obligated to honour. The most general and the most familiar of the *mitsvot* are known as the Ten Commandments, which combine strict monotheistic ideology with rules against destructive social behavior.

According to these rules of discipline, the people of Israel are to believe in no other god than *Yahveh*, not to construct idols, to keep the commandments, not to misuse god's name, to observe the day of rest, to honour their parents, not to commit murder, not to commit adultery, not to steal, not to testify falsely against their neighbors, and not to be envious of other people's possessions. Rabbinic traditions are careful to say that the Ten Commandments do not exhaust *mitsvot*, and remind the people of Israel of the religious duty incumbent on all Jews, for example, to marry and have at least two children in accordance with the divine commandment to 'be fruitful and multiply'.

Such relational discipline finds similar expression in Paul's teachings to the Hellenized Jewish-Christians at Thessalonica that the true disciple must 'not (give) way to lust like the pagans who are ignorant of God; and no man must do his brother wrong in

this matter, or invade his rights, because, as we have told you before with all emphasis, the Lord punishes all such offences.’ Paul further noted to those disciples that we are ‘taught by God to love one another’ in a selfless way and that ‘anyone who flouts these rules is flouting not man but God’.

Discipline based on the maintenance of proper relationships appears in another way in the classical Indian notion of *Varnasrama-dharma*, the sacred duties determined by one’s vocation and stage of life. It is an entire science (*sastra*) of such sacred duties developed in ancient India in order to interpret and preserve those rules by which Indians are to act in society.

According to the texts of that tradition, the *Dharma-sastras*, society is divided into four classes (*varnas*, sometimes translated as ‘castes’) of people. Each *varna* has its own particular functions, and the whole system may be understood as a symbiosis in which all parts depend on the others. The priests (*brahmanas*) perform rituals that ensure the favor of the gods for specific individuals or for society in general. Warriors (*kshatriyas*) protect the society from foreign invasions and increase its land holding. The responsibilities of production and distribution of material goods throughout society fall to the merchants (*vaisyas*), and the laborers (*sudras*) perform the manual work the other classes need in order to fulfill their responsibilities.

Dharmasastra literature similarly outlines the four stages (*asramas*) of one’s individual life, each having its own disciplined requirements. According to a representative text, the *Manava Dharmasastra* (the Laws of Manu), a student (*brahmacharin*) must study the Vedic scriptures under the guidance of a master until he is old enough to marry. Becoming a householder (*grhastha*), one must raise a family and secure its well-being. Having carried out these responsibilities long enough to see one’s grandchildren grow to be adults, one leaves the demands of family

life to his children and enters the stage of the forest-dweller (*vanaprasta*) in order to offer private oblations to his ancestors and various deities. Only if one lives long enough, and only if one has met all of these other responsibilities, can one then become a wandering ascetic (*sanyasin*) who, having finally abandoned all possessions and family obligations, seeks the inner wisdom that will bring him eternal release.

The Life Saints Live

Every religion and age has produced great saints, sages and mystics. It is these great ones who keep sanity and integrity in the world, as they radiate peace, joy and love. Sankaracharya puts it thus: 'There are good souls, calm and magnanimous, who do good to others as does the spring, and who, having themselves crossed this dreadful ocean of birth and death, help others also to cross the same, without any motive whatsoever.'

By realizing God, a saint only develops discrimination between the real and the unreal, obtains spiritual consciousness, and goes beyond life and death. He knows that he is one with the Brahman. He sees the Brahman everywhere, in everything.

The holy man surrenders his body, mind and innermost self to God. He constantly thinks of God, and does not indulge in any talk except about spiritual. He serves all beings, knowing that God resides in everybody's heart.

Swami Vivekananda says that religion is not talk, but realization. Inspiration can come only from a living soul. A lighted lamp alone can light other lamps. Only a saint can inspire men to lead a holy life. Every true saint inspires people without number, to tread the spiritual path.

How do we know that the teachings of the scriptures, which claim to unveil Truth, are indeed true? It is only by seeing the teachings of the scriptures carried out in the life of a saint that we can have faith that they are true. Their experiences alone authenticate the truth of the scriptures.

Saints become what they are through super-human efforts. They, too, have to fight temptations, lethargy and doubts. But they toil unceasingly, and reach the goal. The toils of saints

encourage others not to cease their efforts, however heart breaking they may appear to be. That they serve as examples to others to live the truths of the scriptures may, perhaps, be their most important function and contribution.

How does a saint, the emancipated soul, live in the world? He lives like a diver-bird, which dives into water without getting its plumage. The few drops of water that stick to its body are easily shaken off when once it flaps its wings.

Saints know no distinction of caste, creed, sex or social status. They rise above all narrow considerations. They treat all beings as manifestations of the same God. They become even and equal-sighted. 'The wise ones look upon all as equal, be it a learned, humble *brahmana*, a cow, an elephant, a dog or a dog-eater. At the centre of a saint is God, God alone.

'With a choking voice, a thrilled frame, and streaming tears of joy, the saints converse with one another. They purify their families and the entire world. They make holy places holy, render actions righteous and good, and lend authority to scriptures', according to *Narada Bhakti-sutras*.

A saint is the perfect image of a model citizen and mature personality the human society can look for.

A saint lives ever in joy. It is because he lives, moves and has his being in God who is *ananda-swarupa*, bliss embodied. Every saint is an embodiment of pure love. This is because he looks upon all beings as manifestations of God. Love, therefore, pours out of every pore of his being. He looks upon all embodied beings alike, be they human or animal or insect species. Love manifests in joy, knowledge, care and responsibility. A saint does not proclaim his service as it is part of his being, the

manifestation of his pure love. Whatever a saint does, he does it with all dexterity as he considers it as service to God.

The scriptures declare that ‘fear comes from the second’. A saint attains oneness with the non-dual Brahman. For him, there is no second to the Brahman. As such, he transcends all fear. A saint also transcends all delusion and grief, and overcomes all sorrow. The *Isa-Upanisad* declares: ‘What delusion, what sorrow is there for the wise man that sees the unity of existence, and perceives all beings as his own self?’ A saint has neither a friend nor a foe, for he is ever in unison with God.

It is not as if a saint does not encounter human misery or suffering. It is always possible that he, as a mortal, has a fair share of troubles and trouble-givers. It may be that some of them experience more suffering than what ordinary mortals experience. But the way a saint faces and reacts to such misery and suffering is what makes him different from ordinary mortals. Pain and pleasure, good and evil, praise and censure, etc have no impact on a saint. He reacts to all events with equanimity. He takes whatever happens to be the Will of the Divine. He integrates, whatever happens, into his being which, for him, is the Supreme Being.

Thomas Carlyle writes cryptically thus: ‘As I take it, universal history, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is, at bottom, the history of great men who have worked here... The soul of the whole world’s history was the history of these... Great men, taken up in any way, are profitable company. We cannot look, however imperfectly, upon a great man without gaining something by him.’

Jivanmukta

The Ultimate the spiritual as per it seeks to realize is the state of a *Jivanmukta*. *Laghu Yogavasistam* describes a *Jivanmukta* thus:

He is the true *jivanmukta*, for whom the phenomenal world, wherein he moves and acts, ceases to exist, leaving alone the all-pervading eternal noumenon.

He is the true *jivanmukta*, whose facial expression neither flushes nor fades under pleasure or pain, and who subsists on whatever comes of its own accord.

He is the true *jivanmukta*, who is awake though asleep, who knows no waking, and whose knowledge is entirely free from all desires.

He is the real *jivanmukta*, who, though responding to feelings such as attachment, hatred, fear, and other kindred feelings, stands wholly pure within, like the sky.

He is the real *jivanmukta* whose real nature is not influenced by egotism and whose mind is not subjected to attachment, whether he remains active or inactive.

He is the real *jivanmukta*, whom the world fears not and who is not afraid of the world; and who is free from joy, jealousy and fear.

He is the real *jivanmukta*, who is at peace with the ways of the world; who, though full of all learning and arts, is yet without any of it; and who, though endowed with the mind, is without it.

He is the real *jivanmukta*, who, though deeply immersed in all things, keeps his head cool, just as anyone would do, when engaged in attending to another's affairs; and whose self is whole.

12. Living a Spiritual Life in the Temporal World

The spiritual faith is that religious truth is not absolute, but relative, continuous and progressive. The founders and spiritual promoters of all religions, though different in the non-essential aspects of their teachings, abide in the principle of the organic unity of mankind as representing the consummation of the whole process of human evolution. All religious faiths recognize the unity of God, uphold the principle of an unfettered search after truth, and condemn all forms of superstition and prejudice.

All religious traditions agree that bliss is an authentic sign of spiritual life. There is a possibility that bliss can get equated with pleasure regardless of its source or substance. Bliss is an elusive thing; it cannot be sought after, and attained in itself. It is what results from a way of life that is centered on God, and sensitive to the whole of creation.

The spirit, in Biblical thought, is a principle of dynamic integration. It is like the inner unity of the body effected by blood circulation. Blood unites all parts of the body flowing through them. In the process, it not only unites, but also nourishes and purifies the body system. The resultant well-being of the body is the physical counterpart of the spiritual 'bliss'.

Bliss is, essentially, a matter of spirit. Spiritual bliss arises out of being right with God and our fellow human beings. It is misleading to project it in terms of some rarefied states of mind and experience, analogous to drug-induced ecstasy. Human nature is such that man cannot be happy in a state of self-centeredness. Man's happiness is to blossom in the social and spiritual space.

We associate various qualities such as love, compassion, selfless service, righteousness, etc with spiritual life. None of them can be practised in isolation. All of them involve a triangle of relationships comprising God, self and others. Spiritual life is thus lived in double equilibrium, with God on one hand, and with those around us on the other.

To live a spiritual life is to live in all its fullness. Fullness points to integration of the physical, the mental and the spiritual dimensions of human life. The human tendency is to live only in terms of the physical dimension. But this is inimical to a human being. A human being is three in one – body, mind and spirit integrated. Man misses the bliss of being truly human if he lives only according in terms of one or two dimensions. Spirituality involves the dynamic integration of all the three dimensions in living.

The result of this three-fold integration is transformation. Transformation denotes a state in which our latent potentiality is activated and empowered. Such empowered transformation has mind-boggling possibilities. For instance, oxygen and hydrogen combine to form water; but the properties of water are quite different from those of its two constituent elements. Similarly, the transformation resulting from the three-fold integration creates a spiritually vibrant personality – a miracle of miracles.

Our life today is deformed and disabled by the loss of this integration. The various facets of our being lie in a state of mutually distorted relationships. As a result, the Divine in us is distorted, though It can never be wholly destroyed. The possibility of regaining It and the potentiality to activate It are still there. It is in this sense that the religious traditions maintain that human beings are created in the image of God. The same truth is illumined in the Vedic intuition that Godhead is within us. Jesus says in a similar vein that ‘the Kingdom of God is within you’.

Each of the three constituent parts of our being – body, mind and spirit – is a dynamic and complex entity. In ourselves, we do not have the ability to cope with the complexity arising from the dynamism of the three parts being active at a time. It is this phenomenon that makes dependence on God and guidance of the spirit a daily necessity. Those who consider themselves self-reliant and are too proud to depend on God do not find spiritual life a welcome prospect. Such people remain far removed from the bliss of spirituality.

Every manifestation of life has both surface and depth. Materialistic life accounts for the surface, and its strategy is of manipulation. It excludes the claims of the depth. On the other hand, spiritual life is directed by the dynamisms of the depth. Wonder and humility, creativity and transcendence, renewal and regeneration mark spiritual living. It is the depth that nourishes life, though the blossoms of life are seen on the surface. But for the depth, there will be neither any blossom nor any fruit that expresses and enriches life.

Love rules the depth of life while power reigns on its surface. The more we are alienated from the depth, the more we are taken over by the lust and logic of power. Power is necessarily superficial while the depth cannot be manipulated or controlled.

Who can control an ocean? We can only allow the ocean to hold us up according to its own logic, provided we know how to negotiate it. To swim or to cross is to abide in the ocean. To lead a spiritual life, likewise, is to abide in the spirit, according to the genius of the spirit. It is like manifesting on the surface, which is the outward manifestation of the depth, which is verily its logic. It is to live in this world of power and materialism as the agent of love. It is to manifest the power of love in our very existence.

Swami Vivekananda says that human beings are free, and their freedom is neither in the material nor in the mental realm. We are free only in the sphere of the spirit. The spirit is pure freedom. It alone leads us to Truth and Truth sets us free. This is for the reason that the realm of the spirit is free from the human will to exercise power.

Freedom and the will to dominate are in a relation of inverse proportion. Freedom declines proportionately as the will to exercise power takes hold of a person, culture or society. The realm of the spirit is the realm of love; and love redeems, enables and enlarges freedom. Secondly, the realm of the spirit is free from fixity and dogmatism. Stereotypes, prejudices and hate rule the worldly mind. But the spirit abhors stigmas and stereotypes. The realm of the spirit is the realm of compassion, not stone-heartedness. No human being or society can be truly free unless freedom is established firmly on its spiritual foundations. Spiritual life is thus marked by creative freedom – the freedom to love, to create, to care and to share. The negativism of hate, cruelty, destruction, exploitation, etc intensifies as the positive impact of the spirit is defied.

The spirit is a domain of sanctity. Sanctity is to our spiritual life what purity is to our physical life. Life can survive on the foundations of purity. Most of the important organs of the body such as heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, etc are meant to safeguard the purity of the body. When this purity is compromised, the health and survival of the body are endangered. The same logic applies, perhaps, to a greater extent, to our spiritual life.

Spiritual sanctity is compacted of values such as love, truth, compassion, selflessness, justice, generosity, self-control and so on. When our inner hygiene is compromised, love degenerates into the lust for flesh, lucre or power. Justice

degenerates into oppression, truth into untruth. Darkness eclipses the light within us. Death looms large over life. The Vedic prayer 'Lead us from darkness to light, from untruth to truth, from death to eternal life' captures the longings of our spiritual life. Such a prayer has no relevance to physical consciousness. To live a spiritual life is to live according to the hygiene of the spirit.

While pursuing spiritual life, one is to pledge one's life to God sacrificing pleasures, enjoyments and all for His sake. It is very hard to lead such pure and unsullied life. It is like walking on the edge of a drawn sword. Every moment there is the chance of a fall, of being sliced to pieces. Perfect continence is the only condition of success in spiritual life. And it is difficult, nay impossible, to practise absolute purity, without love for and faith in God.

Those who intend to lead a life of continence must always engage their minds in thinking good thoughts, studying good books, and in discussing elevating subjects. They must spend their time in the worship of God, service of holy men, in the company of pious people, and in the practice of meditation and other spiritual disciplines. This is the only way to mould one's character.

Perfection in continence cannot be attained without spiritual practices. Without perfect continence, realization of God is impossible. In the absence of realization of God, real bliss cannot be had. In the absence of real bliss, human life will have been spent in vain.

Purity is a precondition for unity. If a part of the body loses its purity, it gets alienated from the rest of the body. If a limb suffers from gangrene, it is to be amputated. A tooth infected is to be thrown off the body. An open wound is a chink for the

physical overall well-being. When the kidneys fail, the integrity and unity of the whole body is imperiled.

Similarly, in a personal and social sense, sanctity is a precondition for unity. Truth, love and justice are some of the basic ingredients of spiritual hygiene. A society that rejects truth in favor of falsehood, love in favor of hate, and justice in favor of oppression accelerates its own disintegration. Swami Vivekananda says, 'Truth does not pay homage to any society, ancient or modern. Society has to pay homage to truth or die'.

No society that ignores its moral and spiritual hygiene can hope to remain united and progressing. This is a spiritual truth that we can ignore only at our peril. The culture of India has endured the test of time only because of its spiritual foundations. Today's consumerism around the world is cancerous; its materialism is without soul. They threaten to tear apart the very spiritual foundations of human society.

The spirit is a realm of dynamism, rather than of inertia. It is of *rajas* rather than of *tamas*. The dynamism of the spirit expresses itself through the passion for doing good. The agents of materialistic darkness focus on negativity and destructiveness. They are stimulated by what is wicked and violent, and have no concern for peace and goodwill.

One living in spirit is a *karma-yogi* or a perfect sage. This is not the state of a *sanyasin* or a recluse, though that state can be entered upon anytime when one puts away all the desires, and one's spirit is content in itself. Conversely this state is one of freedom from selfish desires, and of meditation on the Supreme Being. Such one's mind is not troubled when encountered with sorrow, and is free from eager desire in the midst of pleasure. Such one is free from all passions such as fear, rage, jealousy,

etc, and of all tension. This is what is called *akshobha vritti* (tension-free attitude).

What ensures a tension-free state of mind is only renunciation of the fruits of action. When there is no desire for fruit, there is no temptation for untruth or violence. Perfect renunciation is impossible without perfect observance of non-violence in any form or shape. Gandhiji enunciates six principles that establish supremacy for non-violence. They are:

Non-violence is the supreme virtue of mankind and is infinitely superior to brute force.

However, it cannot benefit those that lack faith in God as the embodiment of love.

It does not protect the property earned through exploitation, fraud or force.

A votary of non-violence must be prepared to lose his wealth and even life to fight the usurper.

Non-violence can be used by everybody, be it children, men and women, young and old.

Non-violence is not a tool only for an individual. It is an instrument for effective social action.

Spiritual life can never be a state of apathy. It is marked, instead, by a passionate intensity in the pursuit of what is good and godly. This is what characterizes the life of the enlightened. In them, the dynamism of the good finds its creative and redemptive expression.

The realm of the spirit is not a realm of fantasies and fairy tales. Instead, it is a sphere of conflict and struggle. In this world of complex interactions and conflicting interests, it is not possible to do good without provoking conflicts and resulting losses. One cannot be spiritually enlightened, while being a mute spectator to injustice and oppression all around.

The spirit is the quintessence of life, and brings with it a passion to fight the forces of evil and darkness. Spirituality is to be subversive of the systems and structures of *adharma* and evil. The spiritual war is, therefore, to be more intense than a physical war. It is certainly pivotal to human dignity and wellbeing.

To live in spirit is an attitude of mind performing all work as an offering to God. The spiritual aspirant adopting this attitude spiritualizes his daily activity. The Bhagavad-Gita says: 'Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer, whatever you give away, whatever austerities you perform, do all of them as an offering unto Me.'

The fruits of this practice are many and enduring. Keeping our minds fixed on our spiritual ideal at all times, we forget self. We get purged of selfishness, and the heart remains pure. We no longer feel any sense of attachment to anything including work, relieving us of misery and bondage.

When we look upon action as an offering, we are free to give it up, too. Whatever we do has relevance from our spiritual angle; as such we perform it with greater efficiency and diligence. As our action is God-centered, we are no longer concerned with praise or blame that attaches to the said action.

When we think of work as worship of God, drudgery no longer attaches to it. We consider all our actions as opportunities for spiritual growth. We consider no work as either menial or stately, and derive joy in the very act of doing.

Human life has a supreme goal, the attainment of perfection. Swami Vivekananda says, 'each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within by work or worship, by psychic control or philosophy, by one or more or all these, and be free.' Jesus says: 'Be you perfect even as your

Father in heaven is perfect.' Thus, to attain perfection, that is, to realize that we, as individual souls, are infinitely blissful, infinite consciousness and power, is the goal of human life.

This is the spiritual goal, an extension of the goal of temporal life, which seeks enjoyment of sensual pleasures, and acquisition of knowledge, wealth and power. While the goal of temporal life is limited to one life of the body, the spiritual goal extends to the life of the soul in eternity. A harmonious blending of the temporal and the spiritual goals, which gives physical happiness and spiritual bliss, is the best what one can look for.

The alternative to spiritual activism is religious escapism, obscurantism and fundamentalism. Religion then becomes a sphere in which the trivial is made absolute and the Absolute is trivialized. The externals of religious observances and practices become all important. The call of the spirit to uphold truth, justice and righteousness falls on deaf ears. The attention of the people gets focused on what divides and separates in religious traditions. Religion degenerates into an instrument of division and cruelty.

Nations and societies, no less than individuals, need to reinforce their spiritual foundations. Spirituality is the only enduring principle of coherence. It is like water that makes sand and cement cohere and become strong when united. Water has no adhesive property. Similarly, sand and cement have no such property. But when water unites sand and cement, they come together and become one united strong whole.

Similarly, those who live the life of the spirit become agents of purity, unity and all-round health of the society without being aware of such a role for them. They unite and purify by their spiritual presence. It is impossible that there is a stirring of the spirit with the world around remaining indifferent to it.

What we need today is a paradigm shift from religion to spirituality. The spiritual war is, as of now, a nonstarter, and is to be waged in the minds of the people. We have, however, reached the stage when the spiritual war is imperative to make the human society just and righteous. It is now time for all right minded people to work for the spiritual renewal of their own respective religious traditions and societies - to graduate from religion to spirituality.