

UNIVERSAL PHILOSOPHY

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DEDICATION

May Our Oneness Become Manifest

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INTRODUCTION

Two main feelings motivate me to put these thoughts onto paper. One is **gratitude** for the help that they have given me throughout the years. The second is **hope** that they may also serve others in the way they have served me.

I am not a philosopher, nor an author, although I do enjoy writing. I am a practical man who is in constant search for whatever might make life more pleasant, more enjoyable, more fulfilling, more interesting and more meaningful. If the thoughts in this book didn't do that for me, I wouldn't have paid much attention to them nor would I have sat to share them with you.

In my search for what 'works' in life, I've found that the **spiritual approach is the most practical one**. This is obvious if you think about it. Since spirit is the cause of everything that exists and happens, the most practical move you can make is to capture the spiritual; then all the rest will be yours.

The following parable demonstrates this. There is a coconut tree with a coconut hanging high up in its branches. The sun is behind the tree and casts the shadow of the coconut on the sand in front of us. We see the shadow, believe it to be a coconut, and try to grab it. It passes through our hands. No matter how often we try to hold on to it or to have it, it slips away from us. Suddenly we realize that the real coconut is up in the tree. We make many attempts. It takes us a long time and much effort. It's not as easy as reaching for the shadow. Eventually we succeed. We arrive at the top of the tree and bring the coconut down with us. As we walk away, we notice something else- wherever we go the shadow follows us. We now have control over both the coconut and its shadow.

In this example, the coconut, which is more difficult to get, is our

spiritual self. The coconut's shadow represents all the objects, situations, and people which we try to possess and hold onto for security or happiness. They are temporary and keep passing through our hands. We cannot hold on to them. And if we can, we cannot control them so as to get the happiness we want out of them.

After trying to get happiness out of this 'shadow world' for many years, we realize that the only way to real happiness is to climb the tree of spiritual growth, which means making some spiritual effort. In this way, we eventually obtain inner peace, inner spiritual wisdom and power. Life in the material world becomes easy and enjoyable because we're not dependent upon it anymore and not trying to hold on to it. When you get the coconut, you have control over its shadow. When you get in touch with your spiritual self, the world is pleasant and easy. That's why I say that I am a practical man and not a philosopher.

Just as there is pure science and applied science, there is pure philosophy and applied philosophy. This book touches the deepest roots of pure Universal Philosophy but is much more concerned with its **application** in our daily life. It concerns itself with **how this philosophy can improve the quality of our lives individually, as families, as societies and as humanity.**

This universal philosophy, as you will quickly understand, has nothing to do with any particular religion. It is based on what is common to all religions. Whoever attempts to apply it in life will simply become a more effective follower of his own religion. It does not even require that one believes in God, especially in the type of God we have learned about as children.

Neither is it important to accept anything that you read in this book. Think about what you read. Don't accept it because it is written. Books are written by people, people who are not totally enlightened or perhaps who have a different path than you do. Read and think deeply. If what you read suits you, accept it. If it doesn't, put it on a shelf in your mind as you continue to observe life. It may be useful later. It may not.

At times texts in this book might seem to have been written by different people. This is because they've been written over a twelve-year period and the author's perception and focus have gradually changed. Most parts have been revised now as these writings come together in this book. Some parts have been deliberately left with a different style and emphasis because they represent real stages which we all pass through and thus will relate to a wider variety of readers who are at various stages of growth.

Also many concepts and basic truths have purposely been repeated several times. The reason for this is that the author has discovered over a period of thirty years of teaching and working with people on belief transformation that few ideas really register in our minds unless we read or hear them many times, in different ways, and in relation to different situations.

We've been programmed into believing this 'shadow world' through the sheer repetition of our childhood programming. Only through frequent exposure to these spiritual truths will the light of truth begin to break through the clouds of our present beliefs and preconceptions.

At various points the author will recommend other of his books that give more details about certain subjects which cannot be touched on more deeply in this book. To save words and redundancy, all books which are referred to are by the same author, unless otherwise indicated.

The best way to read this book is to read it twice. Read it once at your normal rate. The second time, read just a few pages a day and try to put the ideas you read into practice in your daily life.

***May you live a healthy, happy, harmonious life,
sharing in love, peace and unity
with those around you.***

CHAPTER I

WHAT IS UNIVERSAL PHILOSOPHY ?

WHY PHILOSOPHY?

What purpose might philosophy play in the life of the practical person? Can philosophy be useful to the parent, teacher, student, engineer, artist, business person, farmer, sailor, army general, politician, doctor, lawyer, plumber, or carpenter? Can philosophy be applied to the process of performing and fulfilling those roles? Can philosophy be useful in everyday life and mundane responsibilities?

My personal belief is, **yes**, definitely. In fact, my experience is that none of these roles can be properly and harmoniously performed without the ability to think about and conceive the deeper reality which is the **cause** of this material existence, all those above mentioned roles and all that we experience.

Christ explained that if we live according to His commandments, we will come to **know the truth** and the **truth will set us free**. His followers were confused by this and answered that they were not slaves to anyone. From **what** would they be set free? Christ answered that anyone who sins is a slave of that sin.

What is this truth about life that will set us free? And does sin have to do with truth and freedom? Philosophy means being a friend (Philo) of wisdom (Sophia). Philosophy is the study of wisdom, the study of truth, the search for an explanation for the various phenomena and questions concerning human existence and the nature of life and the universe.

What then is the relationship between truth or wisdom which are the goals of philosophy and sin, the source of one's bondage and unhappiness. An answer might be found in the possible etymology of the Greek word for sin *AMARTIA*. The most probable explanation of this word is that it comes from 'A' which indicates the negative or opposite and *MARTIRO* (I partake, know, witness) or *MARTIRAS* (the witness and also the MARTYR as in the saints of the early church).

Thus, a sin is a state of **not** being the **witness to the truth**. Sin is an act which we perform when or because we are not witnesses. We are not aware yet of the truth of our divine nature and our spiritual oneness with all beings. **Sin is the natural result of ignorance**. But sin or *self-centered action* binds us to the returning results of those actions. "As you sow, so shall you reap."

According to Christ, we are slaves in bondage by our own ignorance of the ultimate spiritual truth. This ignorance causes us, out of fear, to act selfishly and this creates a state of being bound to the result or return of those selfishly oriented actions back to us. Truth, wisdom and philosophy are the only ultimate cure to this situation, as ignorance is its cause.

Whatever we do in life, we must be able to perceive what we are doing in the context of the whole. We need to understand basic points such as why we are here on this planet? Why have we come here? What is the purpose of life? What is our relationship with those around us, people, animals, nature, the planet? What is God? What is our relationship to Him (or Her or It)? What is life and what is death? What happens after we leave these physical bodies? Where were we before we were born?

It is essential to investigate these questions in order to be able to perform any of our life roles with clarity and discrimination, knowing what is useful and what is not, based on the real purpose of our existence on the earth.

Have you ever considered the above questions? Most of us have entertained such thoughts at some moment during our lives. Can

we really live our lives in a meaningful way without seeking out the answers to such questions? To live a life without a conscious purpose often results in living a meaningless life.

A holy man living in India today, expresses this truth in this humorous way:

*There are four things in which every man must interest himself; **who** am I, **where** from have I come, **where** am I going and **how long** shall I be here?*

*All spiritual inquiry begins with these questions and attempts to discover the answers. Suppose there is a letter put into the post box without the address to which it should go or the address from which it has come. It will not reach anywhere. It is a waste to have written it. So too, it is a waste to have come into this world if it is not known from where you have come and to where you go. The letter will go to the **dead letter office**.*

Unfortunately most people today live their lives in this way. They follow blindly the values dictated by a confused and superficial, materially oriented society, failing to think deeply about the meaning and purpose of their lives. Can a passenger arrive at the proper destination if the driver doesn't know where he is going? How can society (the driver) or the individual (the passenger) find fulfillment if they don't know wherein their fulfillment lies? How can one decide how to live, how to act, what to do with his or her time, whether to be moral or not, what to eat, where to put one's efforts, energy or thoughts, if one doesn't know what the purpose of life is?

Ignorance of our true nature, our relationship to the environment and our purpose in this world is responsible for this great confusion, lack of moral values, and the spreading conflict, violence and human suffering in the world today. Because of this basic ignorance among the masses and their leaders today, life on earth is far inferior to what it could be if people paid more attention to their inner life.

WHAT DO WE ACTUALLY KNOW?

As science continues to uncover more questions than answers about the universe, we arrive at the same conclusion that Socrates did two thousand five hundred years ago when he said, "I know only one thing, that I know nothing". Focusing only on the surface of things, we believe that we live in a very concrete world in which things are the way we think they are. This is like believing that we see the entire iceberg when in reality we see only one ninth of it.

For example, at this moment you're holding this book and are probably sitting motionless in a chair or lying in bed. You only **feel** motionless however. The truth is that you are flying 1000 miles per hour around the center of the Earth, 67,000 miles per hour around the Sun and 600,000 miles per hour around the center of our galaxy. Yet we perceive ourselves to be motionless. Do we then perceive the **truth** of reality or only our own personal distortion?

We say that the sun is rising and setting on the horizon as if the sun is traveling around the Earth when the truth is that the movement of the earth on its axis creates the illusion of the sun's rising and setting. And as for the rotation of the Earth around the Sun, Copernicus was put into jail for daring to say such a thing. At that time science and the Church were agreed that the Earth was the center of the universe and that the sun must revolve around the Earth. What makes us so sure today that we are not **equally ignorant** of a higher truth which some other scientist will discover in the near future?

What do we really know? We think we live in a material universe in which we and the objects, which make it up, are made of some solid stuff. Yet modern nuclear physics has proven the opposite. The reality is that the atoms that make up this material universe are as empty as the night sky. They are a void with various electrical charges. The atom is virtually empty of matter. If an atom were as large as a **fourteen-story** building, then the nucleus (the only actual matter in the atom) would be like a **grain of salt on the seventh story**. The piece of steel which makes up our car or holds our building up is actually 99.999999 percent vacuum sprinkled

with a little matter and energy. This, then, is also true for our physical bodies. Our muscles and organs are made up of these same empty atoms. You and I are just vacuums with a little matter sprinkled around and various energy fields flowing through us.

There are even stranger things to believe coming from modern physics. In studying the matter which makes up the large stars of the universe scientists have found out that the type of star called a white dwarf weighs about **ten tons** per **thimbleful**. A large crane would be required to lift something the size of a sewing thimble which, if dropped, would certainly crush your house.

As if that's not enough, there are also stars which collapse onto themselves, creating a material of unbelievable density. One cubic centimeter, approximately the size of one bullion (soup) cube weighs 10,000,000 (ten million) tons. If matter can be so compressed so that a **bullion cube can weigh 10 million tons**, then the matter we are made up of must be pretty empty.

Our sense of material existence seems to be basically a matter of perception. Perhaps for that reason we hear of spiritually advanced individuals being able to make themselves incredibly light, levitate or pass through matter such as the Philippine psychic surgeons who pass their hands into the other's body and remove cancerous growths.

Our minds cannot even begin to comprehend this physical universe so how can we even dare reject the existence of the spiritual universe simply because we haven't perceived it or studied it?

Have you ever looked at the North Star at night? Did you realize that the light you're seeing is actually **680 years old**? Yes, it takes this long for this light to reach your eyes from that star. You are actually looking back 680 years into the Middle Ages. Where then is time? It could already have disappeared and we wouldn't know it for another 680 years.

Every second the universe is expanding by a volume as large as our galaxy, the Milky Way. Every second. **Yes, every second**. There

are 31,536,000 seconds a year so if you live 80 years the universe has expanded by the size of 2,522,880,000 Milky Way galaxies in the length of your life time.

Matter is condensed energy. Much energy is compressed in order to create little matter. The energy of the atomic bomb that killed 140,000 people in Hiroshima was produced by turning the mass equivalent of a **one-penny** piece into energy.

It's beyond our capacity to comprehend the smallness of an atom. A cubic inch of air (16.38 cubic centimeters), or a cube in which each side is about the size of your thumb, contains 300,000,000,000,000,000,000 (300 billion billion) molecules of air, all moving 1000 miles an hour and hitting each other 5 billion times a second. All this is happening just in front of our nose (and even in our lungs and stomach) and we are completely oblivious to it all. If we are so incapable of perceiving this simple physical universe, how can we possibly reject the possibility of a spiritual reality that is much more subtle and infinite?

Lets' look at our own bodies. The DNA that conveys our genetic code is coiled up in string-like spirals in each cell. If we took the DNA chromosomes in **one** of our cells and put them end to end in a straight line they would be 6 feet or 2 meters for each cell. Since the body has 60 trillion cells this means that there are **several billion miles of DNA in our body at this time.**

These facts are mind boggling. For me they are powerful evidence of the existence of a **universal intelligence** which is the cause and motivating power of this universe in which we live. If there were only slight changes in how things are, life would not be possible. Everything is so incredibly interconnected and interdependent.

When I was a student in high school, I decided I would become a scientist because science would replace religion and explain all the mysteries of life. At seventeen years of age I was convinced that humans, out of fear and ignorance, had created the idea of God in order to answer the questions which we could not answer. We also

found, in this way, refuge from fear of death.

I went off to university, studied science and became a chemical engineer. I learned that science didn't really explain why anything happens, but only how. The more I learned about the various phenomena of the universe, the more it became apparent that there was some type of universal, non-material cause for all that we see. I decided to search for an answer, for a meaning to the life we live. That search took me into an investigation of most of the major religions and philosophers, as well as psychology, the arts, spiritual systems and even more science.

In all of them I found common factors, common points on which they all agreed. The points on which they differed were superficial details. I began to see that a very **practical** philosophy of life came out of these common factors, a philosophy which gave much meaning, fullness and joy (all of which were previously missing) to my life. Thus, having rejected God for Science, through Science I reconnected with God but now He was everywhere.

The famous philosopher and author Aldous Huxley called this the **perennial philosophy** because it kept cropping up in various cultures and places throughout history. It's as if the one root of truth was sprouting trunks and branches all over the earth. They may use different words, symbols, rituals, names, terminology and dogmas but they are based on the same root beliefs, the same universal truths. Thus I call it **universal philosophy**.

WHAT IS UNIVERSAL PHILOSOPHY?

Universal philosophy, as we are calling it in this book, is the philosophy that we find at the basis of all religions. It is universally encompassing. Although a few of its tenants may not be accepted by some few religions, **universal philosophy** itself accepts these and all religions, philosophies, science, and even various art forms as attempts to understand and get in touch with the basic truths of the universe. It rejects no religion or philosophy, respecting humankind's every attempt to discover the truth and to manifest that truth in some way on the earth.

As mentioned, some religious or philosophical systems may not accept all the aspects of the universal philosophy but their **basic** principles are in complete harmony with its basic principles. Only secondary factors might differ. Another phenomenon is that these universal principles are sometimes unknown to the masses who are following a certain religion or philosophy but are well known and sometimes secretly protected by the inner esoteric circles. This is especially evident in the case of esoteric Christianity and esoteric Islam or Sufism.

The masses usually need an earthier, anthropomorphic type of religion with emphasis on the modes of behavior and forms or ideals to worship. Most people are not yet ready emotionally, mentally and spiritually for the highest truths which tend to transcend the apparent opposites of daily life. While in some cases the esoteric circles of various religions may wholeheartedly embrace these universal principles, they may not make them easily available to the masses in order to protect them from possible harm and confusion. Christ himself commented on the necessity for discrimination in the dissemination of spiritual wisdom.

What are some of the basic principles of this universal philosophy?

1. There is only one primal cause for all that exists. All objects, beings and events are projections of the one Supreme Being who is not physical and remains unmanifest, although all of the universe is His (Its) manifestation. This primal cause is alternatively called God, the Father, the Christ, the Logos, the Unmanifest, the Divine Ground, the Supreme Being, Universal Consciousness, Universal Energy, the Void, the One, All That Is, Brahman, Allah, Nature, The Divine Mother or The Light. These and many many more are the names which people are inspired to use in referring to this universal intelligence which is the cause of the universe we live in.

2. This Universal Intelligence is Omnipresent, Omniscient and in incessant unbroken contact with each and every being in the universe. There is no place one could possibly go where this *Being* would not be aware of and in contact with him or

her. There is nothing that we could ever do or think or say which is not known (in its own way of knowing) to this Universal Consciousness. There is nothing that we could ever do in order to break contact with It. We can, however, be ignorant or blind to It.

3. This Universal Consciousness is within each and every being. It is the inner force in every being and the creator of life through that being. (As in St. Paul's statements, "*The body is the temple of God*" and to the Athenians, "*In Him we are born, grow and live our lives*".)

This consciousness is in every being and yet not limited by any being. It is not limited by any form. We can use a form in order to concentrate on this reality, which is usually beyond our comprehension otherwise, but it is better not to **limit** this Universal Consciousness to that form. This is perhaps what Christ was trying to tell us in the parable where on Judgment day we will be asked why we didn't help Him (the Lord) when he was hungry, without clothing, or in prison. And we in surprise will ask, "But when were You in these states?" and He will answer, "Whenever any of my beings were in this condition, it was I."

In other words, The Divine Consciousness can be focused on through the form of Jesus the Christ but it must not be limited to that form. The Christ, the Universal Being, lives in all people everywhere, even if they are not Christians, even if they are Atheists. There is **no other** life energy but this one. Every being is a manifestation of It. Perhaps this is also why Christ said to His disciples when He told them that He would be leaving them soon, "*It is better that I leave so then will come the Helper*" (meaning the Holy Spirit). As long as the Christ existed before them in the form of Jesus, it was difficult, if not impossible, to imagine that this same power could be in them and operate through them.

Thus, while Universal Philosophy encourages all peoples to have a form which they worship and use as a means to communicate with and develop their love for and relationship with this Divine Principle, it also encourages them to see this Divine Essence in **every** being that they meet and respect and love that essence in

others. One does not conflict with the other. One enhances the other.

4. The purpose of life is to reconnect with and eventually identify totally with this Universal Consciousness, or God if you like. The purpose of this human existence is to free ourselves from the ego-centered existence of being totally identified with these bodies and minds and their needs, desires, attachments and preoccupations and to realize our higher nature, the soul, spirit or higher Self which is directly linked with this Universal Being. We also need to embody many of its higher qualities such as universal love, wisdom, inner peace, compassion, right action, selflessness, service to others, clarity of vision, spiritual discrimination, nonviolence and so on. Beyond even that goal is the goal to become totally united with that Supreme Being, losing all traces of individual limitation.

This purpose is achieved through two basic methods, i.e, human effort and Divine Grace. There are various types of efforts that we can make towards achieving these goals and they are mentioned in later chapters. These seem to be very common throughout the various supposedly different religious and philosophical paths. From Christianity to Islam, from Buddhism to the followers of Pythagoras, the methods are basically the same.

The purpose of human beings on Earth can be described as physical, emotional and spiritual evolution or self-improvement. This is what is meant by Christ's parable about the three men who received five, two and one talent from their master. (Although the talent was a form of monetary measurement in those days, it obviously also means talent in terms of human ability, human potential). When the time had come to report to their master what they had done with their 'talents', the ones who had five and two had doubled theirs and the one who had only one had hidden his and thus still had only one.

The master was pleased with those who had used their talents and had doubled them and gave them greater responsibilities in his estate. He was displeased with the one who had hidden his talent,

not used it, not increased it and had it taken away from him. We are here on the Earth to improve who we are, to grow spiritually in various ways.

5. The human soul is immortal. It does not die with the body but continues after the death of the physical body in a subtler spiritual body. What exactly happens to the soul after this death of the physical body is also agreed upon to a considerable degree. (Refer to the book, **THE MYSTICAL CIRCLE OF LIFE**)

One point on which there seem to be two differing views is the concept of reincarnation; whether or not the soul has other chances to come back to Earth to continue its evolutionary effort, or whether it has only one chance. The one chance idea is held by Christian and Islamic theologians, whereas the more than one chance is held by most of the other belief systems and especially among some of the worlds most respected thinkers in every field.

This, however, is not an important part of the Universal Philosophy. Whether one has one or more chances is a detail. The most important point is that we agree on everything else and especially on what are we to do with this chance which we are **presently** living. Whether we have had previous or will have future lives or not does not change in any way what we must be doing now at this moment. The thought concerning reincarnation simply helps us to put some otherwise unexplainable phenomena into perspective and perhaps allows us to more easily forgive and forget the wrongs others might do us. We will discuss this later.

6. The most effective way of achieving the purpose of life is through wisdom and love- love for God, love for humans, love for all beings, even for those who have harmed us. **That is universal, unconditional love.**

Universal Philosophy has six simple principles which are basic to almost all, if not all systems, religions and philosophies. Let's state them briefly:

1. THERE IS ONE PRIMAL CAUSE FOR EVERYTHING THAT EXISTS.

2. THIS UNIVERSAL INTELLIGENCE IS OMNIPRESENT AND OMNISCIENT.

3. THIS UNIVERSAL CONSCIOUSNESS IS RESIDENT IN EVERY BEING.

4. THE PURPOSE OF LIFE IS TO RECONNECT WITH OUR UNIVERSAL NATURE.

5. THE HUMAN SOUL IS IMMORTAL.

6. THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY OF ACHIEVING THE GOAL OF LIFE IS THROUGH UNIVERSAL, UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.

CHAPTER II

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE UNIVERSAL

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE

All religions proclaim that the purpose of life is reunion with the original source of all life - GOD. The English word 'religion' comes from the two Latin words, 're' (again) and 'ligere' (to link). Religion is a process of re-linking the individual with God. This presupposes that humans were once originally linked with God in the most intimate manner.

Our separation from God is represented by literally hundreds of myths, stories and parables generated by the various cultures and religions of the world. There are amazing similarities among these creation stories. The actual reality of the creation of the world and our relationship with God before, during and after this process we call 'life' will probably always remain a mystery to the rational mind. Such truths exist beyond the duality of the rational mind and can thus only be approached through models, examples, stories and parables, all of which fail to give the entire picture. The total reality can be experienced only once the mind has been transcended, such as during deep meditation, or in ecstasy, or in highly creative processes, when the feeling of individual selfhood is erased and one merges with the All.

In our discussion here, we can only hope to approximate the answers to these vital questions. Hopefully these models and examples will provide the steps of a ladder upon which we may

climb up the spiritual path. Some day when we arrive at the experience of Unity, we'll kick the ladder away and no longer be limited by our systems of belief. But until that day, the ladder remains useful and even necessary for our stable and steady growth into beings of greater emotional and mental maturity with greater levels of awareness.

As individual beings, we feel ourselves to be separate entities in this world. We feel isolated from God, nature and other beings. According to most spiritual philosophies, this is actually an illusion. We have been fooled by the illusive power of matter (MAYA) into thinking that we are separate. Maya is the illusory power of material creation which causes us to forget our eternal, omniscient, ever blissful spiritual nature. By eating the fruit of the tree of the 'knowledge of good and evil', we have lost sight of the One. We have become blind to our real God-like nature which remains waiting latent within like a seed ready to sprout, if only it is given some water.

Ignorant of our real nature, we're forced to identify with what we can see, that is, the body, mind and personality. All beings have come from the One Source, and in reality, remain one with that source in their true nature, although on the surface a separate isolated identity seems to exist. This often-used example of the wave is helpful here.

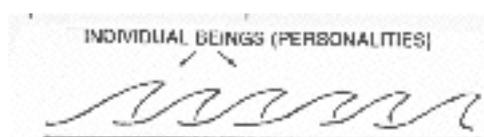


Diagram No.1 **THE OCEAN AND THE WAVES**

THE OCEAN AND THE WAVES

Each wave appears to be an individual entity separate from the other waves. However, this is only the temporary surface reality

which will soon come to an end as the wave sinks back into its original source, the OCEAN. The basic and lasting reality of the wave from which it has come and to which it will go is the ocean itself. All waves come from the ocean and all waves return to the ocean. And even while the wave existed, it was always in contact with and had as its true basic reality the ocean itself.

In the same way, we are like the wave and God is the ocean. All created beings are momentary and partial expressions of the one God. We exist in and identify with our temporary physical and mental forms but we must inevitably give them up. Our true eternal Reality before, during and after our appearance as separate personalities is actually the Divine Basis of all life - God. The purpose of life, then, is to break through the illusion of separateness caused by the identification with the WAVE NATURE, in order to realize one's **ONENESS** with all life through identification with the OCEAN NATURE.

When we see another individual and feel antagonistic, competitive, fearful, jealous, envious, angry or hateful, we are blind to this innate oneness. We amplify our ignorance of the truth and perpetuate suffering for ourselves and others. However, the feeling of love moves us towards attraction and union with others and helps us overcome this isolated and vulnerable position.

When we identify with our wave nature, we compare ourselves as waves to the other waves. We think about who is bigger, more beautiful, or more important. We get caught up in feelings of attraction and repulsion, superiority and inferiority and lose our feelings of unity and security. Separateness creates fear. Fear creates various defense mechanisms which are unpleasant to both us and those around us.

When we begin to see each person (and even animals, plants and insects) as other waves on the same sea, as parts of our own Self, all these negative feelings, games and their unpleasant and sometimes violent and destructive results will simply disappear.

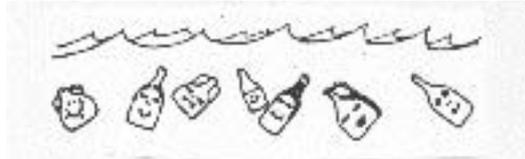


Diagram No. 2 **THE BOTTLES IN THE SEA**

THE BOTTLES IN THE SEA

Another example using the sea is that of a bottle of salt water which is submerged in the sea. Inside the bottle is seawater. Seawater is also outside the bottle. Only the glass of the bottle separates the seawater from its own self. Imagine a sea filled with millions of such bottles. Each bottle is an individual incarnated spirit. Each bottle feels separate and distinct. Each bottle may have a different shape and color and size.

God, or the Universal Divine Consciousness, is the seawater which is in every bottle and surrounding every bottle. God is in every human being and surrounding every human being. The bottle is our body and ego structure which tends to separate the God within from the God without. Thus, we feel separate and vulnerable and try to protect ourselves by accumulating whatever we can, often at the others' expense.

We are focused on the shape and appearances of the bottles (the aspects of the body and personality) and not on the water (the spiritual essence) which is the same in each bottle-person. We again get caught up in the games of inferiority - superiority, attraction - repulsion, attachment - fear, competition, antagonism and a wide variety of unpleasant destructive states of consciousness.

By remembering that we're really the water and not the temporary bottle and that others, too, are the water, the spiritual essence and not the body and personality, we will overcome separateness and fear and experience more and more love and unity. *"The Truth will set us free."*

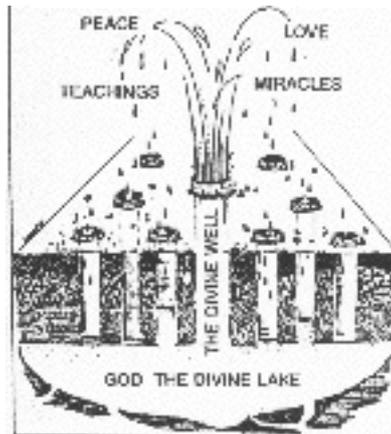


Diagram no.3 **The Wells and the Underground Lake**

THE LAKE AND ITS WELLS

We may also imagine a field with millions of wells which have been dug into the earth. Underneath the surface of the earth is a huge, limitless, Divine Lake that is able to feed all these wells. The problem is that most wells are not dug deeply enough and thus have no contact with the sublime essence of this Divine Lake. The Divine Lake is the Universal Spirit that supports all of life. Each well is an individual incarnated being which appears different and separate from the other wells in the field.

Imagine also that these wells are self-excavating, that they have the ability to dig even further into themselves toward that Divine Lake. Most wells today are very shallow and have little or no contact with that Divine Essence which is waiting for an opportunity to bless each well. Occasionally, during so-called 'spiritual droughts', the Lake forms itself into a Divine Well in the form of a God-human so that it can sprinkle this Divine Essence onto the surface of the field into the dried up wells and re-wet their appetite for that Divine Essence.

The God-human rekindles our desire for that divine peace, love and

truth. We begin digging more deeply within us, reaching further and further down towards the Divine Lake. When we begin to experience that inner bliss, we realize that this Divine Lake is the basis of our being. Simultaneously, we realize our unity with all beings through our connection with the Divine Source of our own and all other beings.

We will meet this model again when we discuss the relationship between the unmanifest Divine Essence (the Father, the Divine Ground) and the incarnation of God, i.e., Jesus Christ.



Diagram No.4 **THE PASCAL FLAME**

THE PASCAL FLAME

Another example that helps us to understand the relationship between humans and their Creator is that of the Greek Orthodox Resurrection ritual performed on Easter Eve. The church is darkened, as the lights are switched off. The priest comes out from behind the altar holding high a candle flame representing the **One Light**, called the Holy Light, from which all other lights have come. The parishioners come forth with their unlit candles and light them from this one flame and other flames which have been lit by this one flame.

Each candle has the inner potential to shine in the same way that

the first one does. All the candles in the church are lit from that one light. The one light becomes the many, just as the one God becomes the many beings that occupy the earth. Although all those flames came forth from that first flame (which we could imagine was self-creating), that original flame was in no way diminished. Although God has manifested Himself as all things and beings which occupy the world, in no way is He any less infinite than He was. No matter what you take away from infinity, you always have infinity remaining.

Now, if we take one of those flames and put it very close to that original flame, we can see that they will become one flame again. Although there will be two candle bodies, there will be one flame. In the same way, we have the potential to reunite on the spiritual level with the one God with whom we are, in essence, the same. In reuniting with the Universal Spirit, we unite with all beings. Then the distinction between the individual, the environment and God disappears and we experience ourselves as one with all.

It's important to realize here that there is only **one flame** in the church. It has simply spread, dividing itself and yet remaining the same. The one self-starting flame is now occupying the hundreds or thousands of previously unlit candles in the church. In the same way there is only one Spirit which is the life force, the "light" in everybody we meet.

If we are focused on the level of what kind of candle the other is, we will be blinded by a myriad of white, plain, heavily dressed and decorated, colored, large, medium, small, impressive, unimpressive, expensive and inexpensive candles. We'll forget about the fact that it's the same flame burning on each different candle.

When we try to experience unity with those around us, we usually attempt this on a physical, emotional, or mental level. This type of unity can never really last because these levels are in a constant state of change. If we try to unite two candles, it cannot be done because a law of physics states that two material objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time.

There are two solutions. The first is to **tip the two candles** towards each other. In such a case (of humility and simplicity) the bodies will remain separate but the souls will unite. There will be two candles but one flame. The only way lasting unity can be experienced is spiritually.

The second solution is to **melt the two candles** (dissolving the ego - personality) and unite them into one candle. Perhaps this is what love and marriage are supposed to be about.

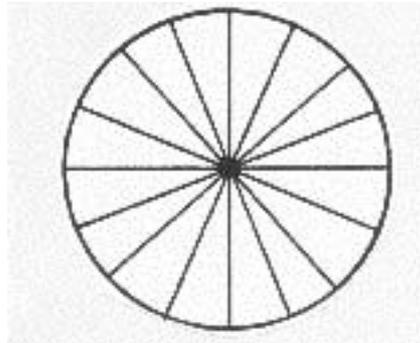


Diagram No.5 **THE CENTER AND THE SPOKES**

THE CENTER AND ITS SPOKES

Another helpful model is that of a wheel with spokes. In the center of the wheel all the spokes join in union. The further out from the center we go, the greater is the distance between the spokes. It's impossible for any of the spokes to join at the circumference. All the various spokes, however, become one in the center, no matter how distant they may seem from each other towards the circumference.

In the same way God is the center of the Wheel where all individuals find their unified existence. The wheel cannot exist without the union of the spokes in the center. Individuals and society cannot exist without their connecting link to the central, creating and sustaining life force which we call God. As we move outward toward the circumference of the circle, we move away from the inner spiritual levels of the being into the external superficial

personality and physical traits that separate us into different entities. No matter how different or distant they may seem on the surface, we are all connected in that central spiritual union, whether we recognize it or not.

Each of us may choose whether to identify and concentrate on the superficial differences between ourselves and others or on the innate oneness of Spirit.

Union cannot be achieved on a physical level where each being is distinctly separate and unique. The physical and mental levels have to be overcome in order to experience that spiritual union. Attempts at union with others on the physical, emotional and mental levels, such as through verbal communication, sexual intercourse, dance, singing etc., can help us move in this direction. But true spiritual union can be experienced only when there is no trace of identification with the body or personality.

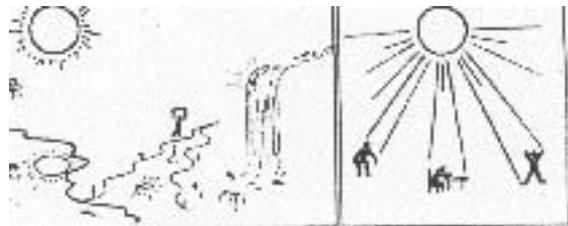


Diagram No.6 **THE SUN AND ITS REFLECTIONS**

THE SUN'S REFLECTIONS

Another example is the **sun**, the physical source of all life in this solar system. The sun represents the one God who is expressing Himself through the power of the sun so as to make life possible in the physical form. The sun reflects on the millions of different bodies of water all over the earth. It reflects on rivers, streams, lakes, oceans, seas, swimming pools, cisterns and even puddles and glasses of water. Thus, there are millions of different reflections of the sun, none of which is the same.

Each unique reflection of the sun will depend on the quality of water, its color, its transparency, its motion or stillness and its surroundings. It will also depend on the position and state of mind of the observer of the reflection. In this example, the sun is God. Each unique reflection is a living being who appears differently depending on the tendencies and qualities which he manifests and also on the 'eyes of the beholder'.

Obviously, all these various differences in the reflections are illusory because, in reality, there is only one sun and it has a specific image when seen directly. The same may be imagined about humans. All the physical and personality differences that we perceive among human beings are temporary illusions, for each is simply a reflection or a projection of the One Universal Consciousness.

Thinking in this way, we can gradually overlook our differences with people around us and begin to experience our unity with them as unique manifestations of the same Divine Being.

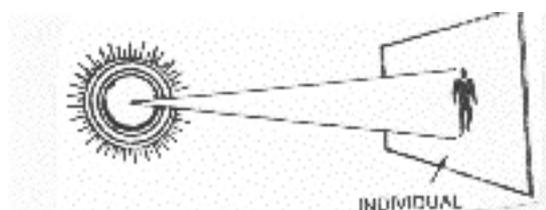


Diagram No.7 **THE MIRROR OF NATURE**

THE IMAGE IN THE MIRROR

Here is an example of a human being's relationship to the world and God, as expressed by Satya Sai Baba.

You are the image of the supreme Soul, the image that is reflected in the body that is part of the physical world. The original Divine Spirit, the individualized spirit, which is its image, and the

objective world of which the body is a part - these are three entities called God - Individual - World. Success in spiritual effort is won the moment you are able to either deny the objective world as a delusion or recognize it as nothing but the Supreme Spirit itself. When the mirror (the world) disappears, the image (the personality) also disappears. When the mirror is eliminated two entities disappear, the mirror itself and the reflection it can cast. And you merge in the Divine.

Through this example we can see that the Universal Spirit is the only eternally existent reality. The world itself and human beings, who are a part of the world, are simply like the false images we see when we look into a mirror. The basis of the physical world is the mirror which simply creates a false image of the one basic reality appearing as the many different beings and objects. When we are able to break through these illusory images and break the mirror, our own form, which is a part of this illusory and temporary reality, will also lose its reality for us and we will identify now with the one original reality which is the only non-image - Universal Consciousness. We will realize that we are nothing but a reflection of God. We can understand that the universe itself is the body of the Universal Spirit, while the human body is the physical manifestation of the individual spirit.

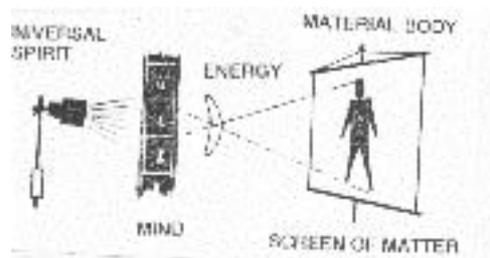


Diagram No.8 **THE PROJECTION LIGHT**

THE PROJECTION LIGHT

Another similar example is that of a movie projector. In the projector there is a powerful lamp which emits pure white light. Let

us suppose that this is the eternal Universal Consciousness that has no beginning and no end and is self-lighting. In front of this light passes the film (our mind - conscious, subconscious and unconscious). As this pure, white light passes through the film it becomes broken down into forms and colors. When people are smoking in the theater we can see these beams of color playing on the smoke particles. We might imagine that this is the energy that is given form by the mind. Thought forms project energy forms. These energy forms then project material forms which, in our example, are the images that appear on the screen.

No matter how many images, perhaps many thousands of people and objects, appear on the screen, they are all simply projections of the one pure white light. This one light has projected itself as all these images, forms and colors. Yet, it still remains pure and white previous to passing through the film. In the same way, the one Universal Consciousness projects itself as all of this material universe and all the beings within it. Yet, it is still Pure Consciousness in its unmanifest form.

All of creation is a continuous projection of this Divine Consciousness. If it ever stopped projecting, all of creation would disappear. Just as if the light of the projector was switched off, there would be no forms appearing on the screen.

The images on the screen may be experiencing great pain or immense pleasure, intense creativity or productivity or complete catastrophe yet nothing at all is felt in the pure white light of the projector. We are the white light, we are Spirit. The forms that appear are our bodies and personalities. The events that occur are the events of our incarnated lives. Our real Self, the light, is totally unaffected by the birth, death and other events occurring to the images on the screen.

We will understand and experience this more deeply with time and spiritual practices.

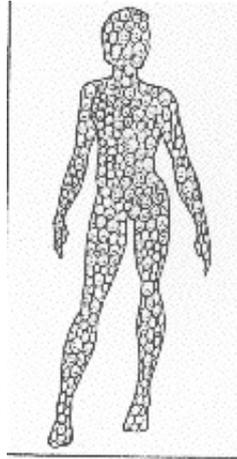


Diagram No.9
THE BODY CONSCIOUSNESS AND ITS CELLS

THE BODY'S CELLS

The human body has about 60 trillion cells (60,000,000,000,000). This complex system demonstrates the delicate balance between separateness and unity on the physical level. Each cell has an autonomic existence. It is born, grows and dies within the consciousness and energy field of the body. Otherwise, it cannot survive. It is a part of the body. It is produced by the consciousness, which is creating and projecting the body and yet when it dies, the body does not suffer in the least.

The consciousness, which is governing the body, supplies all the cell's needs for food, oxygen, hormones, enzymes, and antibodies; and even removes its waste products. The cell, in turn, lives and functions for the body. It does not live for itself, hoarding and competing with other cells (unless it is a cancerous cell). The cell's life and functions are totally dedicated to the whole of the body. The body, in return, through the cooperation of all its other healthy cells gives birth to, nurtures, protects and provides for the cell until its death.

We are all cells given birth to by the One Universal Consciousness. We are provided for and protected and guided by that Consciousness (even though we are consciously ignorant of this). We live, function, and evolve within this Consciousness. As St. Paul said to the Athenians, "*In Him we live and move and exist*".

When we live for the whole, serving and helping others, we are in harmony with this Consciousness. When we grab, hoard and live in an ego-centered way, we are like cancerous cells in the body of humanity. Most people in fact live this way and we could say that humanity has a serious case of cancer. (I hope it's not terminal).

Remember also that all those 60 trillion cells came from **one** cell in our mother's womb. **One cell** became 60,000,000,000,000 cells, many of which have completely different functions. Each cell is separate and unique and yet connected with all the others through its creative source and its present motivating power.

Thus, the message of this chapter is clear:

- 1. There is **One Spiritual Universal Consciousness** that is responsible for all myriad forms and beings that exist in this universe.*
- 2. This Consciousness **continues to project Itself** as all objects and beings and even the events that take place between them.*
- 3. **We are in reality not these bodies and personalities** but rather that Immortal Consciousness which is both experiencing this material world and expressing Itself through these bodies.*
- 4. **The purpose of life is to realize this Truth**, dis-identify with the body and mind and once again experience ourselves as this Universal Consciousness free from physical, emotional and mental limitations. This is the Truth that Christ promised would set us free.*

In the next chapter we'll discuss the basic ways in which this can be done.

CHAPTER III

METHODS OF UNION

The purpose of our lives here on Earth is to rediscover our latent divine nature and express this nature in all its power and beauty on the mental, emotional and physical levels of creation. We are here to rediscover our innate divinity and our oneness with all other human beings and with all of creation.

Human beings have two purposes on earth:

1. To experience our Real **Self**. (self-knowledge).
2. To express that **Self** here on the Earth Plane. (creativity)

There are various ways of doing this. All religions and spiritual philosophies have this goal.

Swami Vivekananda was an Indian scholar, saint and spiritual teacher well known for his lectures in America, England and Europe, especially at the Congress for World Religions in Chicago at the end of the nineteenth century. There he received a standing ovation far beyond that received by any other speaker because he was able to make all those theologians and representatives from the various religions of the world realize that all religions are really in essence **one** and they worship the **same one God**.

Here is how he expresses it in a concise and simple way:

Each soul is potentially divine.

The goal is to manifest the divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal.

*Do this either by work or worship or psychic control or philosophy
- by one or more or all of these - and be free.*

*This is the whole of religion. Doctrines or dogmas or rituals or
books or temples or forms are but secondary details.*

There are four basic methods of spiritual effort. There are many techniques of spiritual growth, but they will all fit into one or more of these categories: work, worship, psychic (or mental) control and philosophy.

All these paths have the same goals:

1. **Harmony** between body, mind and soul
2. **Harmony** between human beings
3. **Freedom** from mechanical, unconscious, robot-like ways of thinking and living
4. **Transcendence** of the limitations of the body and personality, and the reduction of ego and selfishness
5. And eventually the **experience of the Divine** in oneself and others

These are several paths towards the same goals which facilitate the different needs, characters and inclinations of the various types of people. Each is free to follow whichever path is suitable personally. Most people, however, find that a combination of the paths suits them more. There's a path for the practical person, for the doer, for the emotionally oriented, and for the mentally and philosophically oriented; and a path for the development of will-power which is useful for all the paths. You may choose according to your inclinations. Most, however, find a combination of paths useful.

THE PATH OF SELFLESS WORK OR SELFLESS ACTION

The first path is the path of **selfless service** or the **path of**

action, of activity in the world. Here the emphasis is not on practicing any special techniques or going to any special classes or retreating from life at all. One simply learns to **serve without expecting anything in return** and to **act without being attached to the result of the action**.

One serves family, helps friends, and offers whatever selfless service is possible to society so as to lessen others' suffering. The ego is diminished by becoming free from one's own needs and pleasures, so that something worthwhile can be offered to society. **One is not at all indifferent to others' problems.**

On this path, we don't worry. We act. There is a great difference between **action** and **worry**. Worry is worthless and brings negative results. Action with love and self-confidence can bring about great changes. We may run a business, fight a court case, drive a taxi, or bring up children. But whatever we do, we'll use all our mental and physical powers to create the desired result. However, **happiness will not depend on the result.**

Happiness depends on knowing we're doing our best. A business may fail, we may lose a court case, our children may not act in the way we'd like them to, but we are at peace. We've done and are doing our absolute best and will continue to do so without anxiety over success or failure.

We begin to feel as a cell in the body of humanity and start to look around to see **what we can do to make the world a better place to live**; to help the poor, the orphans, the blind, the lonely, the ill. We may choose to direct our energies towards various movements such as those for World Peace or for Human Rights. We correct the world and ourselves at the same time.

The key words here are **selfless service** and **detachment from the fruit of the action**. The motto here is that "*Service to Humanity is Service to Divinity*". This brings to mind the teaching of Christ in which He explains that He is in every being and that whenever we help anyone we are helping Him in reality. Christ also points out that whenever we ignore the others' needs then we are

ignoring Him. When we harm others, we are harming Him. For, as He explains in the gospel of the Apostle John, "*I am in you and you are in me*".

Christ is obviously speaking here as the Divine Universal Consciousness which is the life force in every being. In that sense, Christ is the life power within us and the Consciousness in which we exist. Christ is not speaking here as the form of Jesus which existed 2000 years ago on the Earth so that we could see Him and hear Him. He is speaking more as the Holy Spirit that is the life force in all of creation forever.

This path of service is the means of reuniting with that Spirit within us and within all beings through service to It in the form of all of Its physical manifestations. The individual is **universalized** by redirecting one's actions from "ego centered" to "universally centered". The individual overcomes the illusion of separateness by serving and living for the whole.

THE PATH OF LOVE, DEVOTION OR WORSHIP

Worship is the integral path of every religion, especially emphasized in Christianity. Through worship the emotional energies of the individual are gradually withdrawn from the various worldly attachments and intense concentration and love are developed for God in a human form such as Jesus, Krishna, Rama or Buddha, depending on the religion into which one is born.

This path of devotion leaves the form of worship up to the individual. It encourages the Christian to worship Christ, the holy Mother and various saints each according to one's inclination. The Hindus, Buddhists, Moslems and Jews will each worship in their own way.

This is the path of complete surrender to the Divine will. One tries as much as possible to have the name and form of the Divine constantly in mind, i.e., the ceaseless prayer recommended by St. Paul, "***Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.***"

This path is expressed in Christ's words, "*Love God with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul and all your strength*". And this commandment soon leads into the second, "*Love your neighbor as you love yourself*". He does not make any conditions on this statement, such as being a Christian, a saint, a sinner, a communist, a Jew or a Black.

As we channel all our emotional energies into the worship of our chosen ideal, at the same time our hearts and minds naturally open to everyone else, no matter what their chosen way of worship or belief. The followers of this path soon start to discover that **God is the inner resident of each and every being in creation** and that Divine love expands towards all. Our egos and selfishness are slowly eroded by this love which is like a light removing the darkness in life.

It's not possible to love God without loving people. This path purifies our negative emotions, lower desires, the mind and the character. It is considered one of the most suitable methods for enlightenment in our present age. The methods of this path are prayer, chanting, spiritual discussion, repetition of the name of God and various traditional rituals that may suit the individual.

The secret here is **love for a Universal Personality**. We are individual personalities. When someone loves us, we want him or her to love only us and no one else. We want to be the center of their attention and feel jealous otherwise. Jesus is a Universal Personality. He is not limited like us by the awareness of the body and the mind. He was the incarnation of Christ the Universal Spirit. He was aware of this and thus asked that if we loved Him and wanted to please Him, we would love everyone else and help and serve them. Thus, through love for Christ, our love is expanded and becomes universal love for all beings.

Whereas in the previous path we experience universalization through action, in this path we experience it through the emotional opening to love.

THE PATH OF MENTAL (PSYCHIC) CONTROL

This is the **path of gradual control over one's self** through the development of discipline and will power. It's a system useful to us all, even if we choose to follow the other paths. It offers techniques for the harmonization and eventual mastery of the body, breath, energy, emotions, senses and mind. Whatever we do in life, we do it with our body and our mind. Our efficiency in every action, in every effort is improved when the quality of the body and mind are improved and our control over them is increased. At present, most of us have little control over our minds. We cannot relax, cannot concentrate, cannot overcome obstacles such as tiredness, lack of energy, illness, negative reactions to heat and cold, emotional tensions, fear and our subconscious conditioning. Few people are masters of themselves and have control over their lives.

The follower of this path gains control in a step by step process starting with the most material aspect of existence and slowly working towards the more subtle, the mind.

This gradual development of the higher will culminates in the control of the mind and its merger with the soul in meditation and a state of ecstasy. Thus, through self control, austerity and various disciplines designed to purify the body and mind, we prepare ourselves for union with the Universal Source of all life.

This is the path followed by most of those in monasteries of the various religious paths. It's usually combined with the other paths of service, devotion and philosophy.

In this path, universalization takes place through freeing one's consciousness from the limitations of the body and personality and experiencing blissful unity with the Universal Consciousness. This is done through the following eight steps:

1) Control of behavior is recommended for those who want to become the masters of themselves. The key to all individual and social harmony is to **do to others as we would like others to do to us** and **not to do to others anything we would not**

like them to do to us. If we follow this one recipe for life, we will have inner peace. The mind will be at ease knowing that there is consistency between beliefs, words and actions. For this, the following five requirements are necessary.

a. Not to consciously harm any being, with thoughts, words or deeds.

b. Always to speak the truth.

c. Never take anything which does not lawfully belong to us through honest work.

d. Not to harbor envy or jealousy for what others have but be happy for them.

e. Not to unnecessarily waste energy on sexual activity either mentally or physically.

2) The development of Discipline is the second requirement on this path. We are asked to discipline ourselves in various ways:

a. To practice disciplines and vows, such as fasting, occasional silence, and in general the practice of a simple life without many unnecessary comforts which weaken the body and mind.

b. To maintain cleanliness and purity of the body and mind.

c. To worship God daily in our chosen way.

d. To study the truth of self both as a personality and as a soul, through self-observation, reading and discussion.

e. To practice contentment. To be at peace with ourselves, accepting what life has given and not be greedy for more and more material possessions.

The first two steps of this path remind us to a certain degree of the

Ten Commandments. They are guidelines which are found in all spiritual paths and help to set a safe and stable foundation for the spiritual structure which we are about to build. If the foundation is not well formed we could have problems later as we begin to increase the energy and power flowing through our bodies and minds.

3) Control of the body is then developed through the use of specific exercises, some dynamic and others static. Breath control and deep relaxation are also used in this stage so as to develop the strength of the nervous system and harmonize the endocrine system. This is very necessary in order to succeed in the advanced stages of mastery of the emotional and mental energies. These exercises and techniques are also used today for therapy, especially for psychosomatic illness.

4) Control of bioenergy is then achieved through the mastery of certain advanced breathing techniques in conjunction with concentration on certain parts of the body. This creates an excellent state of health and vitality and facilitates the eventual control of the mind. Breath, bioenergy and mind are very much interconnected. These techniques are very useful for learning to master the emotions but are also dangerous if practiced without expert guidance.

5) Control of the senses is necessary as the mind is usually at the mercy of the various sense inputs which bombard the eyes, ears and other sense organs. We learn to disconnect the mind from the incoming sense messages and allow them to go directly into the subconscious without disturbing the conscious mind. In this way, we can concentrate on what we're doing. This frequently happens involuntarily as a result of intense concentration on some creative activity, i.e. painting, dancing, singing, playing music, gardening, knitting, etc.

6) Concentration of the mind on a single point.

7) Meditation on a chosen object of consciousness.

8) *Ecstasy of union with the object of consciousness.*

The first five steps are called outer control because they have to do with controlling of factors outside the mind. The last three steps are called inner control because they have to do with the control of the mind itself.

The last three steps have to do with learning to hold the mind on one object of concentration for a long time. Then one begins to experience deepening levels of that object until one experiences a oneness with that object. For example, we might start by concentrating on the name and form of Jesus the Christ. After some intense practice we will begin to feel Christ not as a man with a form, but as an energy, light, consciousness, vibration, or as the Logos. In the final step we'll lose our sense of self, our sense of individuality and separateness and there will be only the Christ Consciousness. We will have merged into unity with Christ.

This path is discussed in complete detail in the book, **THE ART OF MEDITATION**.

THE PATH OF WISDOM, PHILOSOPHY OR SPIRITUAL DISCRIMINATION

This is the path of **wisdom**, understanding, discrimination and **philosophy**. It's the path that few can follow. It takes a razor sharp, spiritual discrimination that is always aware of the truth that we are not the contents of the mind nor the body and that everything we see is just a temporary reality which is always changing and will soon pass. The followers of this path gradually cease to identify with the body, emotions, and contents of the mind. We begin to experience our Self as the WITNESS of all these changing phenomena that are taking place in the body and mind and all around us.

We practice non-attachment to every person or situation. We love but are not attached. Our love is felt as a union with but not a need for the other being nor possession of the other being.

There is a great difference between **attachment and love**. They are opposites. Real love can exist only when there is absolutely no attachment, no need for anything from the other, not even the other's presence. Only then can one love unconditionally.

On this path, we as philosophers seek to experience the Truth. We've heard from others that there is a more permanent reality behind this world in which all forms are sure to decay, die and disappear. Our logic, as Socrates' did so well, confirms that this must be true. But now we want **to experience it**. There is a great difference between hearing, believing and **knowing by experience**.

The way of the philosopher is usually to not concentrate on Holy forms such as that of Jesus or the Holy Mother. Rather, we seek to know the formless Father, the unmanifest God, to discover God as the basis of every being and object which exists in this world. Everyone and everything is seen simply as a temporary projection of the **One Universal Spirit**.

We constantly struggle against the tendency of the mind to identify with pleasures and pains and emotional states which cause us to lose its awareness of the Truth. That Truth teaches us that we are souls independent of all that is going on in our life. That life is a temporary drama in which we are playing a role for the time being. The day will come when we will wake up either through a spiritual awakening or through the death of the physical body. We will realize that all this was like a dream, that we are not really a man or a woman, a mother or father. We are souls who were just temporarily playing those roles. This is the path we are discussing in this book.

The path of philosophy by itself is difficult. Although the truths which it offers us are very useful in keeping a peaceful and clear mind for facing the tests of life, it usually requires help from the other paths.

It also requires a considerable amount of preparation through the other paths. Wisdom is sometimes a dangerous power in the hands

of the immature and unprepared. At the least, it's a worthless waste of time for those who are not prepared to make it a way of life. Knowing something without employing it in one's life can create a number of difficulties. It would be better to be ignorant rather than to know and not to act in accordance with that wisdom.

Wisdom is like a seed, as mentioned in Christ's parable of the seeds that fall in various areas. Those which fall onto hard rock don't even get a chance to sprout. Others that fall among bushes sprout but soon die as they are unable to get enough sunlight to develop. Those that fall onto good earth develop and produce fruit. Many seeds of wisdom fall into the field of our mind. How many of them actually sprout and grow and bear fruit in our daily lives? This is the goal of philosophy, at least of the practical philosophy presented in this book.

The field of our mind needs preparation before we plant the seeds of truth. We need to plow the soil to make it soft and receptive. This means plowing our belief system. Self-analysis and meditation help to soften the hardness of the conditioned mind. Prayer and devotion also help. Once the seeds have been sown they need water in the form of study, meditation, self-analysis, spiritual discussion and the **employment** of these truths through acts of service. We occasionally need to uproot from the garden of our mind the weeds of fear, attachment, aversion and negative thoughts in general which may completely cover the spiritual sprouts fighting for space in an already extremely crowded garden.

Philosophy is not something we learn from books and then just store up in our minds so that we can impress others by how much we know. It is the mental expression of the life force of creation. It must be lived, put into practice. The purpose of this book is to offer you that opportunity.

THIS IS THE WHOLE OF RELIGION

We return to the last phrase of Swami Vivekananda's quotation. This is the whole of religion (selfless service, devotion, control over the mind and philosophy). "*Doctrines or dogmas or rituals, or*

books or temples or forms are but secondary details".

Let's leave these secondary details for each of us to choose for ourselves. Let's follow our own path as we choose. Let us, however, respect and not criticize or reject or slander those paths chosen by others. Let's concentrate on what is common between all religions and spiritual philosophies and systems, not on the secondary details which may differ.

All religions use these four basic paths of service, love, self-control and spiritual truth or spiritual teachings. They also all agree that:

- 1. There is **one Divine Consciousness** that is the cause and motivating power of all creation.*
- 2. **All beings have come from this One Consciousness** and are in continual communication with it (even if they are not aware of this).*
- 3. **The purpose of life is reunion** with this Divine Principle.*
- 4. **Love is the most powerful method for achieving this goal.***

CHAPTER IV

THE REAL vs. NON-REAL

We often have in such philosophy books the statement, "*All the material world is illusion, nothing we see or hear is real*". We also hear that we are incapable of perceiving the true reality; that the truth is beyond time and space, beyond mental comprehension. How are we to understand these statements? They seem likely to be true but how do they fit in with my experience of the pen in my hand and of you presently holding this paper allowing the words to flow into and affect your mind?

This is a difficult paradox to solve. The problem revolves around the word 'real' or 'reality'. What is real in the highest sense remains the same, unchanging forever. It remains as it is. It doesn't stop existing and doesn't change into something else. Or else it was not real.

The key is the duration of the object, experience or state. When something is of a transitory nature, that is, if it changes or transforms into something else with time, then it cannot be considered real. What is real must survive the effect of time. Otherwise, it is illusion.

Perhaps these examples will help us to understand this point.

You have a dream that you're being chased by beings intending to harm you. You awaken and realize the temporary nature of the reality, its 'non-reality'. Or you dream that you've found a treasure chest and become very rich and powerful. When you wake up, there is no money or power. It was non-real, non-lasting.

It's the same with the dream of our life. When it ends, all the states

and accumulations disappear. This is what we mean when we say all this drama we often worry about is not real. It is not lasting. It will pass.

Before we're born, the drama did not exist. During our life in the physical body, we are put into a 'dream-like state' through the power of the illusion of the material world. We experience the drama of our human incarnation in all its physical variations. We are a particular sex, with a certain type of body, of a certain social class and from a specific ethnic origin. We have a role to play. We become lost in the role. We identify totally with it, forgetting that it's only one part out of many that we've played and will play. Even within this one 'Life-script' we play many transitory and different parts, such as, parent, child, relative, mate, employee, employer, teacher, student, etc.

Behind all these changeable roles there is one continuous feeling of "I". The "I" will change its identification according to the situation or role it finds itself in. But it's always 'I', an individual, separate and in opposition to the world stage around it.

Then, one day, the curtain will fall. The dream will end. The "I" will find that it has been sitting in the audience witnessing the drama all this time. It will realize that although it got caught up in the drama and felt everything as real, it was not real. It was only a drama and the "I" had simply forgotten to remember that it was watching the drama and not actually acting in it.

In the same way, the dreamer will awaken from the dream and realize that it was not real. What one had thought was reality was only a passing experience.

Each incarnation is an entering into a dream or starting a new drama. The sole purpose of this whole 'dream-drama' is to remember that one's true reality is that of the witness, or the dreamer, and not that of thoughts, words, actions or experiences taking place in that non-reality.

When the reality of the witness is remembered, one experiences the

nature of the REAL or the truth of one's eternal, non-changing nature. One experiences pure unmodified Consciousness and the internal bliss based on no external or changing phenomena. Eternal existence, pure, unmodified Consciousness and eternal bliss; these three qualities are totally unaffected and undisturbed by the changing flow of events and experiences occurring in the dream-drama of one's incarnation.

Philosophy is the method of reunion with the soul through discriminative wisdom. One constantly seeks to discriminate in each experience between the drama and the witness, between the unreal and the real. One seeks to identify with the witness and objectively observe the drama in an unattached way.

Although this is certainly a very difficult path, established for a minute portion of spiritual seekers, almost every individual can gain great benefit and certainly more objectivity, clarity and peace of mind by objectively watching the drama of his or her life.

In this way, situations and experiences gradually lose their power to totally overcloud one's consciousness, creating negative states such as anger, fear or depression. One begins to see events in perspective, noticing a pattern of repetitive experiences which seem to be trying to teach one some lesson about life.

One becomes more relaxed, learns more, and becomes fascinated with how perfect a teacher life is. One learns to pay attention to and benefit from the message life is giving, rather than complaining about and suffering from every little obstacle. There develops a certain steadiness from identifying with the witness and a greater tolerance to the changes taking place in the drama. It's easier to accept problems and obstacles affecting others on television than in the drama around us. In the same way, when we can observe our drama as objectively as someone else's drama, then we suffer much less and the meaning and message of experiences become much clearer.

Let's try, then, to remember in as many situations as possible, that what we are experiencing is a transitory reality, all of which will

change and pass. The more quickly we realize this, the more life will be spent experiencing the Real rather than the non-real.

HOW WE KNOW WHAT WE KNOW

Before continuing our discussion it may be useful to examine how we know what we know. There are basically three ways of knowing something.

The first is by **learning** it from someone else, either by listening or reading. In other words, we accept what we hear or read to be true although we haven't actually seen or discovered this truth for ourselves. For example a doctor tells you that you have a liver. Although you haven't seen your liver, you believe the doctor. The scientist says the world is made up of tiny atoms. We believe this although we cannot see the atoms. Ninety percent of the information in our minds is constructed from facts that we've heard or read and accepted although we haven't experienced them directly.

The second type of knowledge is gained through **inference**. You see light coming through the window and you infer that the sun is outside, although you haven't actually seen it. When you infer something, you accept something to be true because of the evidence that you see which suggests it. This association is based on previous knowledge and experience. But you haven't directly experienced the actual fact that you are inferring. That is, you haven't seen the sun.

The third way to know something is to **experience it directly**. Your own senses and mind come into direct contact with the fact you are accepting to be true. Let's take an example that demonstrates the three types of knowing.

Someone comes in from outside and says that it's raining. You respect the person and have no reason to disbelieve him or her and so you accept the fact that it's raining. That's knowing by hearing. Or you may see someone come in from outside with their hair and clothing wet and you may hear a sound like falling rain outside. From these two facts you may indirectly infer that it's raining

outside. If you go outside and stand looking up at the sky and let the rain fall all over your face so that your senses experience directly the reality of the rain, then you have knowledge by direct experience.

In the cases of hearing and inference there is always room for doubt, i.e. the person could be lying or misinformed or having illusions. Or the second person could have been accidentally sprayed with a garden hose and the sound could be that of the wind or water falling from the balconies above. But if you go out and experience the rain directly with your own senses, there is very little room for doubt, unless of course you doubt the functioning of your own senses and mind.

Spiritual knowledge is also gained in the above three ways. Most of what we know about the spiritual realm, about life and death, about what happens after death, about the meaning of life, we know by hearing and inference.

We have the Bible and other Holy Scriptures and saints and sages to communicate these truths to us. Until we have that direct experience of the Ultimate Truth, we can accept and use these helpful hints and explanations which are given to us by those saints and sages who have gone before us. We can also observe the world and use our logic to infer some of the spiritual truths that we have not yet experienced first hand. There is a saying which goes "*As above, so below.*" This means that the laws we observe on a physical level are simply material manifestations of the same laws operating on the more subtle levels of existence.

For example, Newton's law of physics which states that "*each and every force exerted on an object will stimulate an equal and opposite force*", is simply a more physical manifestation of the Law of **Action and Reaction**. By observing nature we can infer facts about the subtle reality of which nature is a more gross physical manifestation. (The law of **Action and Reaction** will be discussed further on).

However, in spite of all the readings, the lectures we may hear, and intellectual observations we may make, there remains the

possibility of doubt, until the day we are able to transcend the rational mind and enter into **direct experience of the Truth**.

The Ultimate Truth is beyond the mind and beyond words. Hearing, reading and inferring can only bring us close to the edge of it because they're functions of the mind and are based on dualistic thinking. The Ultimate Truth is One and beyond all thought, argument, speech or explanation. Through meditation or intense devotion the mind can be overcome and direct experience can be acquired

Techniques of meditation are explained in the book **THE ART OF MEDITATION**).

CHAPTER V

GROSS AND SUBTLE BODIES

THE DIVINE BEING

In chapter two we discussed various models which help us comprehend to some extent the enigma of our separate identity and simultaneously our spiritual unity. We now understand that there is one Universal Spirit, which is expressing Itself as all the material universe and all the beings in it.

Remember also that this Universal Consciousness may be called by you and others by various names such as: Universal Energy, the Absolute, the Divine, God, the Divine Ground, the Father, the Logos, Divine Mother, the Christ, Supreme Being, Brahma, Allah, the Void, etc. It makes no difference how you are used to calling it. The following discussion concerns that Highest Reality.

This Universal Consciousness is said to have three qualities. Firstly, it is **eternal existence**. There never was a time when it did not exist. Never will there be a time when it will not exist. In fact, time itself is its creation. It existed before the creation of the universe and time and space. Thus, even if all the universe collapses and disappears, this eternally existent Consciousness will still exist.

Secondly, it is pure, **unlimited Consciousness** which permeates all things, space and beings but is not limited by any of them. We cannot find or even imagine something, or some place or someone, which is not permeated by this Consciousness. It's in every person, tree, animal, insect, rock, star, planet, and even in our thoughts and emotions.

Imagine an infinitely large TV screen that is lit up but without any image. This is pure unlimited Consciousness. Various images appear then on the screen. They seem to limit this Consciousness to a specific form. But all the time this unlimited Consciousness (the light of the TV screen) is responsible for their existence. At some time the program ends and the images disappear and we are left again with the pure, undistorted lit screen - Pure Consciousness.

The third aspect of the absolute is everlasting, unchanging **bliss**. The bliss is not like our ordinary happiness, which is usually the result of something that happens or does not happen. Our happiness has a cause, a stimulus, usually some event. It is dependent on external factors and constantly changes. Bliss is without external cause and undergoes no change. It is experience of total inner fullness and ultimate existence.

This state of bliss has been described by the various religions and philosophical systems as ecstasy, union, transcendence, Samadhi, the Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom of God, Nirvana, Satori, or enlightenment. Some psychologists call an experience of this type a 'peak experience' or 'mystical experience'.

These three qualities describe the state of the Supreme Being. But this Being is in all beings. In a sense this Universal Consciousness is the sum total of all consciousness in the universe (manifest and unmanifest). Thus it can also be called the *Over Soul* or the *Collective Spirit*. All the spirits (incarnated or not) in the Universe make up this one Universal Spirit.

We, as spirits, are constituted of the same qualities as is the Universal Spirit, just as a drop of water or a wave on the ocean is made up of exactly the same qualities as the ocean itself. We as spirit are in fact those same three qualities of eternal existence, pure unlimited Consciousness and unending bliss. This is our true nature when we're not immersed in ignorance of our true Self and identification with the various bodies through which we're expressing ourselves.

In reality, the spirit does not actually undergo birth, death, change,

evolution, decay or improvement. The spirit remains always perfect, unlimited and unaffected by whatever the personality or the body may be experiencing. All suffering and change is taking place in the various bodies through which the soul expresses itself on the earth. For example, the sun's image (Diagram No.6, Chapter II) shows in millions of different ways on the thousands of bodies of water all over the planet. Thus the One Universal Spirit projects itself as the various beings existing on the planet. Now, when we disturb the water, the image changes its shape but is the sun in any way affected by the ripples in the water? Obviously not. In the same way the spirit, which is pure existence, Consciousness, bliss, is in no way affected by the ups and downs experienced by the body, mind and personality.

THE CAUSAL BODY

In order for the spirit to express itself on earth, it must project a series of bodies, vehicles or instruments, (however you would like to call them) through which it can perceive and interact with the physical and subtle worlds. We might imagine that these are sheaths or coverings. Although the spirit is omnipresent, it appears to be limited by these sheaths or coverings. The spirit exists beyond these coverings in time and space, for these bodies are mortal and finite whereas the spirit is immortal and infinite. These bodies are called: the causal body, intellectual body (or higher intellect), mental body, energy body, and physical body.

The subtlest body is the bliss body, or the **causal body**. This body is far subtler than the mind. It is the storehouse of experiences of all the various incarnations this particular spirit has projected into the material plane. All the actions, thoughts, words and perceptions of all the previous bodies having belonged to this spirit are recorded in this subtle body which continues to exist after the death of the physical bodies. This body exists between lives and is carried along by the spirit through the various incarnations until final liberation.

Self-realization is the giving up of every identification with these coverings and the realizing of the Spirit's true eternal, unlimited existence. When this happens even this subtle body is destroyed

and the spirit exists in its union with the Divine. It is called causal body because these recorded experiences of the past lives form the limiting factors of the present and future lives through the law of **Action and Reaction**. Because these actions must be re-paid, they determine the type of body, personality and life experiences which are fated for each particular life.

The law of Action and Reaction (or cause and effect or *Karma*) dictates that all thoughts, words and actions which have been committed by the bodies must return to the bodies. The spirit is not in any way affected by this karmic reaction. But the present and future bodies and minds that are projected by the spirit are affected by the actions and reactions of the previous bodies used by that spirit. This may take place somewhat like the transfer of momentum from one billiard ball to another.

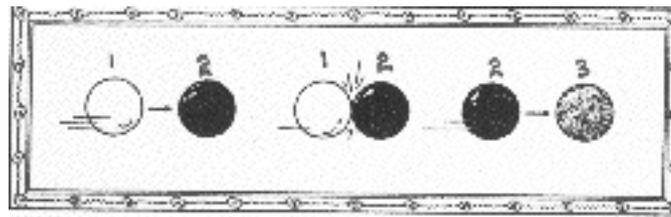


Diagram No.10 **THE BILLIARD BALLS**

A billiard ball is set into motion. When it hits another ball, it stops and the other ball continues. The direction of the second ball is dependent on the speed and direction of the first. If it hits a third ball, it will stop and the third ball will continue. Its direction will depend on the velocity and direction of the second ball that was a reflection of the first ball. So, karma is the momentum and direction of the previous bodies which is transferred to the newly created bodies. This continues until finally one of the balls (bodies) escapes through the hole of self-realization.

Thus the information stored in the causal body causes the states of the next bodies such as the physical and mental characteristics, the various inherited strengths and weaknesses, the social class one is born into, the major relationships and experiences, and the length

of the life itself. Heredity and chromosomes then are simply physical manifestations of the tendencies, or impulses, which are stored in the causal body.

A spirit will choose parents who can supply the chromosomes necessary to create the type of body and mind it needs in order to work out its karma. The exact choice of this chromosome combination is guided by the spirit out of the millions of possible combinations.

These tendencies or characteristics are not only reactions from previous actions but also qualities that we develop as we seek to survive and evolve on this material plane. We bring with us tendencies such as compassion, anger, self rejection, guilt, self-confidence, mental clarity, confusion, sexual desires, love, peace, humility, an obsession with food, talents in art, music, writing, technical abilities in mathematics, machinery, gardening, running a business, fears of different types from claustrophobia or agoraphobia, to fear of heights, water, dogs, insects, fire, earthquakes, magic and an unlimited variety of other qualities, talents, emotional states and mental tendencies. We bring much of this with us as the result of the ways in which we have lived, thought and acted in our previous incarnations. These are all stored in and transferred from the previous bodies and minds to the next through the vehicle of the causal body. (In the next chapter you will find some recent scientific theories which support the concept of the causal body).

THE HIGHER INTELLECT

The next most subtle body is the intellectual body or the pure intellect or **higher intellect**. The intellect mentioned here has nothing to do with the intellect of the university professor or of the 'intellectual' individual. Here intellect means the power of spiritual discrimination between the changing relative reality of emotions, thoughts and actions, and the unchanging reality of the spirit.

The higher intellect observes the lower mental body and determines the correctness of its functioning and hopefully is eventually able to

control it. It is the vehicle that enables us to become objectively aware of our minds in meditation or in normal daily functioning. It observes and evaluates the functioning of the mind. When it is developed we are able to watch the various changing emotional and physical conditions as a passing drama. We then understand that we are not those emotions but rather that they are temporary waves of experience which will pass through us if we allow them. The development of the higher intellect through meditation and philosophical inquiry is essential for anyone seeking a way out of the nightmare of the emotional and mental confusion plaguing so much of society today.

As the higher intellect is developed, we become more and more the witness of life's drama. We gain perspective and clarity concerning events and choices. We become clearer concerning what is useful and beneficial for our real happiness and evolution. We are able to govern our lives and direct our energies much more effectively. Problems are solved more easily and we learn much more from them. We are happier because we fear less and are more self-confident.

The higher intellect is our spiritual eye, which guides us out of Plato's cave of ignorance into the Truth of the brilliant sun light.

PLATO'S CAVE

Plato's use of the cave as an example of ignorance and lack of spiritual sight is an excellent one. Imagine a society of people all living in a cave, all chained with their hands, legs and heads in such a way that they could not get up, not turn right, left nor around. They are limited to looking at the wall in front of them. This is in fact the case of most of society. We are so programmed into thinking automatically and mechanically that we are like horses with blinders. We have no possibility of looking at something in a different way. We are unable to change our position and see something from another vantage point .

Imagine that behind them there is another wall and behind that wall a pathway where farmers pass holding their tools over their

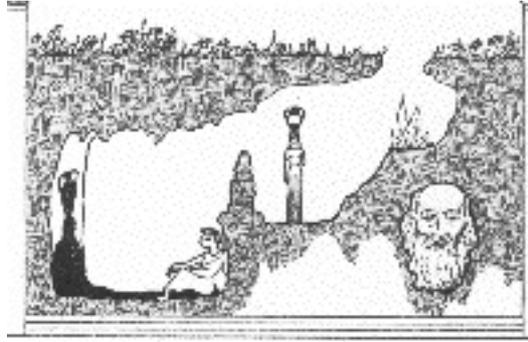


Diagram No.11 **PLATO'S CAVE**

shoulders. Behind the passing farmers is a fire. The light of the fire creates shadow forms on the wall in front of this chained society. They see in front of them the moving shadows of the tools carried by the farmers back and forth in front of the fire.

Their only reality is these shadows. They study them, make up theories about them, gossip about them and wait for them with much expectation because it's their only reality and only form of recreation. It's the only thing they know.

Imagine that one day one of them breaks free from his chains. In other words, he breaks free from the limiting belief system and preconceptions which prevent him from seeing clearly and moving freely. He begins to move upwards towards the mouth of the cave. He begins to see a light there. The light is blinding, perhaps creating fear at first. This is something unfamiliar, strange. Perhaps he feels fear and danger. But it's also very enticing, interesting and alluring. Many experience this stage when they have their first intense experiences in meditation or begin to perceive the world differently. This sometimes creates fear, or at least a difficulty in readjustment and frequently problems in communication with others who haven't yet experienced this dimension of reality.

He decides to risk it and goes out into full daylight and is temporarily blinded by the power of this 'real' reality in comparison

to the limited reality which he has been experiencing until now. Gradually his eyes become accustomed and he's overwhelmed by the beauty of this **true reality**. He's filled with joy and the desire to share this wonderful news with his friends in the cave.

He rushes down to tell them all of the truth, that what they've been seeing all their lives is illusion, only shadows of the farmers tools. The truth is much greater, much more beautiful. The world they know is nothing in comparison to this.

What is their reaction? The same reaction they had towards Socrates and Christ. No one is ready to hear this. People fear change. They will kill if you push them too quickly towards change.

What happened to the man in the cave? His higher intellect started working. He began to see a different reality. We don't have to go anywhere special to do this. Both the cave and the sunlight are in our minds. We all have so much to gain by awakening the higher intellect and climbing out of the cave of ignorance. The four methods of evolution mentioned in chapter III are the way out: service, worship, control of the mind and philosophy.

THE TERMS SOUL AND SPIRIT

We make up words in order to help us to communicate needs, desires, feelings, thoughts and concepts. We give meanings to these words. They have the meaning we agree upon to give them.

The various philosophies, spiritual systems and religions use the words soul and spirit in various contexts. There's no right or wrong meaning. For the sake of clarity, we'll define what **we** mean in this book by the words 'soul' and 'spirit'. That doesn't mean that it's wrong to use these words differently.

Also, because we already have the habit of using these words interchangeably to describe some higher aspect of human beings, we may not be able to avoid occasionally using the one where perhaps it would be more accurate to use the other.

Thus, we are defining **'soul' as the combination of the causal and intellectual bodies.**

And we will call that which is perfect throughout the whole evolutionary process and **always in union with God, the 'spirit'.**

The two subtle bodies which the spirit takes then are the soul. We make this distinction because these bodies, unlike the mental and physical bodies, do not perish upon the death of the physical body. Rather they (or what we now refer to as the soul) exist between lives and undergo a gradual process of purification and development until they realize their true identity as the spirit.

Thus when we speak of the evolution of soul we mean the causal and intellectual bodies. We cannot speak about the evolution of spirit, for how can something which is eternal, omniscient and ever blissful evolve?

The spirit is Pure Consciousness and cannot actually be born, or grow, or diminish or die. The spirit or Pure Consciousness of all beings is one and the same.

The consciousness in a child is the same as that of a learned adult. Consciousness is the same in the genius and the dullard, the saint, the criminal, the tree, the fly or the sun. They are all projections of the one Pure Consciousness called God or Spirit. (Brahma or Atman). The model of an ever-shining light is helpful.

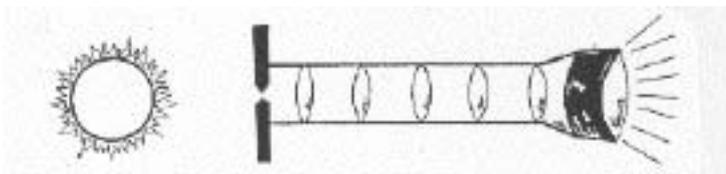


Diagram No.12 **THE FILTERS OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

The light is shining through an aperture like that of a camera. There is a long lens attached that has five filters on it representing the five bodies- causal, intellectual, mental, energetic and physical.

The light is the eternal, unchanging, Pure Consciousness aspect of the spirit. Although it is ever the same, its projection into the physical world is altered by the size of the aperture and the purity and clarity of the lenses. Before birth the aperture is closed and there is no appearance of the light of Consciousness in the physical world.

In the process of the birth of a being into the physical world, the aperture opens and Consciousness then manifests physically. Was it born, or created? Of course not, it always existed. It has simply now become visible to the gross physical senses. In the same way, when the aperture is closed, we call this death for there is no more physical sign of this Consciousness. Has Consciousness died? No, it is simply not apparent to the physical senses.

The quality of light filtering out through the body and mind will depend on the purity of the various bodies. Karmic conditions may call for the creation of a mentally handicapped being. Is the Consciousness less? No, the vehicle through which it's expressing itself is simply damaged and imperfect. As we evolve through many incarnations, hopefully we are learning and purifying the filters so that the amount of that Consciousness which is being expressed through our thoughts, words and actions is increasing. Thus we manifest greater energy, love, power, understanding, and creativity in our lives.

But Consciousness remains the same. The aperture has become wider and the lenses more pure. Jesus Christ was an example of a wide-open aperture and perfectly clear lenses. He had no ego. He was all Love and Wisdom.

Please notice that the two subtle lenses of the soul (causal and intellectual bodies) are on the inside of the aperture. They continue to enjoy the light of the spirit even after death and before rebirth. As mentioned before, these bodies exist between lives and are given up only upon final self-realization. The grosser vehicles, such as the mind, energy body and physical body are destroyed and recreated with each successive incarnation.

THE LOWER BODIES

The mind or **mental body** is the next filter or vehicle. It's responsible for interacting with the external world. It is the aspect of mind that experiences the various ups and downs of life which is often confused and misdirected. The lower mind usually seeks to find security and happiness in the external world of possessions and relationships. Because it's unable to succeed in finding this security or happiness, it often experiences suffering and depression. It becomes disillusioned with the 'world of shadows'.

Eventually, after failing to find what it desires in the external world, it begins to look within. It's then that the higher intellect can be awakened. It is developed through experience, spiritual disciplines and the Grace of God. As it develops, it guides the mind as a loving parent would guide a child with compassion and discipline.

The mind cannot function without the **energy body**, the vital or etheric body which exists as the sustaining force for the mind's functions. This Bioenergy also activates the physical body and provides the communication link between the mind and the physical body. This cosmic energy can be expressed in any variety of ways, i.e., nervous, thought, sexual or heat energy, physical movement, healing energy, chemical, solar, wind or nuclear energy. All energies are forms of it.

This cosmic energy can be likened to the electrical energy that we have in our homes. It can be expressed in many ways depending on our needs, desires and interests. It can become heat, cold, sound, light, mechanical movement, air movement, images on a screen or a vacuum which cleans. This one energy is expressed differently by different instruments.

We're all disposed to use this cosmic energy in our own characteristic way. Some of us will be more intellectual, others emotional. Some will be interested in physical or sexual activity while others will express themselves through creative activities such as music or art. When the supply of energy is low, the mind and body cannot function properly and are more susceptible to

illness and breakdown.

There is a whole science of keeping this energy in an abundant and harmonious flow. This can be done through regular proper diet, physical exercise, breath control, concentration and mastery of the behavior and emotions.

It's important to realize that, although this cosmic energy is universal and limited, our personal access to it is limited by the degree to which we are open to it. Most of us are not yet fully open to and in tune with it and thus experience limited amounts of energy.

Since we have limited energy resources, we'll need to study a little **energy management**. A person or a business with limited economic energy (money) needs to pay close attention to where there are money leaks or where money is being spent in a way which doesn't offer much benefit. When we discover these leaks or wastes or perhaps internal blockages to money flow, we will want to correct them.

The same is even truer of our 'energy assets' because our health, happiness, harmony, mental clarity and spiritual evolution are much more dependent upon our vital energy than upon our economic energy.

Thus, we would do well to study the science of human energy production, regulation and attunement. (This matter is taken up in the books **SELF THERAPY** and **THE ART OF MEDITATION**. Because such techniques are learned more easily from people than from books, check for seminars or classes concerning physical, emotional and mental harmony which might be available in the city where you live).

The grossest projection of the spirit is the **physical body** or the body made from food. The energy body communicates the messages of the higher vehicles to the physical body through the use of the nervous system and endocrine system. These master systems then control the rest of the physical body.

We create a whole world of attachments, habits and fears based on our identification with this physical body. It certainly is an important **part** of our existence but as we can see now, a very **small** part. It's like the tip of the iceberg of which the visible portion is exceedingly small compared to the invisible portion.

Spiritual evolution then, is a process of purifying these various bodies and developing the higher ones so that they may guide the lower ones. Thus is self-knowledge gained. We cease to identify with these bodies realizing that our real existence is far beyond them. We see them as clothing which we put on in order to play our part in the drama of life.

We realize that we will take off this clothing at the end of the drama just as the actor undresses after the performance. We understand that we've played other parts in other plays (past lives) and will play other parts in future dramas (future lives).

These lives or dramas continue until we learn that we are not the role we are playing. We remain constantly aware of the temporary and relative nature of the chosen role and the whole drama itself.

The following diagram may help us to put all of what we've said until now into perspective. In the center we have the universal, eternal and omnipresent Consciousness. This is represented by an eternal, unchanging light. This light flows out through the many beings who are presently incarnated on earth giving life to their temporary drama.

Each being has the five vehicles, bodies or filters which we've just discussed. The causal body and the higher intellect are the first and closest to the Universal Spirit.

Falling outside the line separating life from death, we have the three lower bodies- the mental, energetic and physical.



DIAGRAM No.13
ALL BODIES RADIATE FROM
ONE UNIVERSAL SOURCE

Although on the surface (on the circumference of the circle) there seem to be many different beings, in reality they are all lit up by one light. What makes this one light appear differently through each being is the quality and state of the filters which limit and distort this light, giving form and color to it. Each filter has various impurities which reduce and eventually almost totally conceal this light so that we can barely perceive it.

Looking around us at the way people drag themselves through life, it's difficult to remember that within that body there is the ever-shining universal Light. But it is true and as our eyes become clearer, we will see it also in them. We may be able to see it more easily in those who have proceeded spiritually and shine more brightly.

This diagram helps us understand what is meant by the total

equality of all beings. Beings are not equal in their performance or ability on the mental, emotional and physical levels. But each is equally an expression of the one Universal Consciousness and thus, each deserves the same respect and love independent of what he or she does or does not do on the external levels.

From now on when we see someone who stands out either negatively or positively in respect to the others, we'll be able to remember that they too are simply expressions of the one universal Light. The differences are in the filters, the bodies that are distorting that Light.

Consciousness is one in all beings. Consciousness does not evolve but is gradually uncovered or exposed more and more to the lower levels of existence. In the case that all the filters may be blocked and someone is not mentally capable or even in a coma, this doesn't mean that one has less Consciousness as a spirit. It means that this Consciousness is at the present unable to express itself on the mental or physical level because of blockages in the bodies.

The same Consciousness exists in the wise person of eighty and the child of two. The vehicles of the one are simply more exercised in expression on the material level. The same Consciousness exists in the saint and the criminal. It is simply expressed differently by the vehicles. The same universal Light is shining through both. There is the same Consciousness flowing through men and women and even animals and plants. The same Consciousness flows through the intellectual and the uneducated, through the healthy and the ill, through the spiritually advanced and the less spiritually advanced. The only difference between all these categories is what happens to this one Universal Consciousness on its way towards being expressed in the material world.

We can start giving much less importance to titles, religions, nationalities, intelligence, color, physical appearances, illnesses, physical handicaps and a wide variety of other factors which cause us to put people into different categories and, more unfortunately, to place them into hierarchies of importance in our minds. This causes us to have a biased behavior towards different groups of

people because we see them as being more important or less important than others are.

Let's free ourselves from this tendency and feel the same unity with the rich and poor, with the prime minister and the beggar, with men and women, with people of all nationalities, with people from all social classes. All these labels are simply the costumes which we actors are wearing in the play of life. We are all, in reality, one.

May we, too, attempt to play our parts perfectly while remembering that we've played many others and will still play others. May we be more objective and full of the peace which comes in realizing that all physical reality is a temporary, ever changing state of affairs and that we are the Spirit which exists above and beyond all this. May we be filled with the love of oneness towards our fellow humans by realizing that, on the spiritual level, there is only one Being who is expressing Itself as the many bodies that we call our self and others.

CHAPTER VI

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE FOR THE EXISTENCE OF THE CAUSAL BODY

Many books and articles have recently been published by respected nuclear physicists presenting theories and explanations of reality which closely coincide with ancient spiritual truths. In this chapter we'll take a look at a recent theory presented by well-known biologist, Dr. Rupert Sheldrake, the former Director of Studies in Biochemistry and Cell Biology at Cambridge University. The information and quotations concerning Dr. Sheldrake's theories are taken from the article **BEYOND THE BRAIN'S BOUNDARIES** by Prof. John Gliedman in the February 1983 issue of Science Digest.

SHELDRAKE'S THEORY

Dr. Sheldrake suggests that memory, evolution and learning take place outside of the physical brain. He claims that mutation, evolution and embryological development are not governed by the interaction of DNA with the environment, as biologists had believed until today. He claims that...

...embryos and their brains develop by tuning into an entirely new kind of non-material formative force called morphogenetic fields. Just as a magnetic field can orient a pile of iron fillings into a certain pattern, so this mysterious new force can shape body and mind. What he calls morphic resonance between organisms and morphogenetic fields determines everything from anatomical changes in evolution to the learning of a new skill.

This morphogenetic field is a wonderful description of the causal body which we discussed in the previous chapter. In this causal

body all of the experiences, actions, thoughts and memories of the soul are recorded throughout its various incarnations into matter. With each new life experience, this causal body or morphogenetic field evolves a bit more. Thus it has evolved in its ability to interact with matter gradually becoming able to manipulate more and more complicated biological organisms. We started functioning on the earth in the form of one-celled organisms and evolved through plants, insects, animals, and primates and have reached the level of human beings. Scientists believed until now that this evolution took place through the reaction of DNA molecules to environmental stimulation. This is obviously true from a mechanical point of view. But biologists have no idea of why or how the DNA makes these changes. This is because **the DNA change is simply another effect and not the essential cause.**

Rupert Sheldrake's theory is that the changes which occur in the DNA are the results of changes in the morphogenetic field or causal body. These create a corresponding change in the DNA structure which in turn create corresponding changes in genes, body structure, instinct, behavior and character. The DNA molecules and genes are like the components of the television which simply transfer the changes to the screen. The incoming waves from the station form various invisible wave patterns which create changes in the components of the television, thus forming the various images on the screen. In the same way, our bodies and character are formed by the causal body or morphogenetic field. Here is Prof. Gliedman's description of Dr. Sheldrake's theory.

"Inheritance does depend on genes," he observes, "but only in the round-about way that a TV set depends on its components. DNA is not a blueprint for the body, as most biologists believe. DNA determines protein production and I think that an organism's proteins are rather like the TV's components. Gene change alters the proteins and therefore the way that the organism tunes in to its particular morphogenetic field. These changes add up to changes in body structure. His critics reply that everything science has so far learned about life strongly supports the working hypothesis that interactions between DNA-synthesized molecules

and the changing embryological environment are responsible for building everything from mollusks to man."

It seems entirely possible that both Dr. Sheldrake and his critics can be corrected in their theories. A scientist examining the functioning of a television for the first time would certainly believe that the changing state in the components of the TV was causing the changing images on the screen. Sheldrake is simply going one step further and pointing out that, yes, this is correct but there are more subtle causes that are creating the changes in the components themselves. One idea does not exclude the other. We have simply moved one level deeper into the analysis of causation from the physical body and mind to the causal body and higher intelligence.

Dr. Sheldrake's aberrant ideas about embryology lead to an equally deviant evolutionary theory. He maintains that species remain stable for millions of years because morphogenetic fields are like habits and grow stronger with repetition. "The structure of morphogenetic fields is determined by the actual structures of previous organisms of the same species," he says. "Thus, there is a direct connection between the forms of organisms over space and time." This means that a developing embryo, for example, will tune in to the form of previous embryos of the same species. Moreover, something similar occurs with behavior. Animals tune in to the actual behavior of previous similar animals. So there is a sort of pooled species memory in operation.

THE MONKEY EXPERIMENT

This concept of a pooled species memory is well supported by an experiment on monkeys in Japan here retold by Ken Keyes in his book, **THE HUNDREDTH MONKEY**. (Ken Keyes is the author of many books including the **HANDBOOK TO HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS** and is the founder of the **Center of Living Love**).

There is a phenomenon I'd like to tell you about. In it may lie our only hope of a future for our species! Here is the story of the Hundredth Monkey:

The Japanese monkey, "Macacafuscata", had been observed in the wild for a period of over 30 years. In 1952 on the island of Koshima, scientists were providing monkeys with sweet potatoes dropped in the sand. The monkeys liked the taste of the raw sweet potatoes but they found the dirt unpleasant. An 18-month-old female named Imo found she could solve the problem by washing the potatoes in a nearby stream. She taught this trick to her mother. Her playmates also learned this way and they taught their mothers, too. This cultural innovation was gradually picked up by various monkeys before the eyes of the scientists. Between 1952 and 1958 all the young monkeys learned to wash the sandy sweet potatoes to make them more palatable. Only the adults who imitated their children learned this social improvement. Other adults kept eating the dirty sweet potatoes. Then something startling took place. In the autumn of 1958, a certain number of Koshima monkeys were washing sweet potatoes - the exact number is not known. Let us suppose that when the sun rose one morning there were 99 monkeys on Koshima Island who had learned to wash their sweet potatoes. Let's further suppose that later that morning, the hundredth monkey learned to wash potatoes. THEN IT HAPPENED!

By that evening almost everyone in the tribe was washing sweet potatoes before eating them. The added energy of this hundredth monkey somehow created an ideological breakthrough! But notice. The most surprising thing observed by these scientists was that the habit of washing sweet potatoes then spontaneously jumped over the sea-colonies of monkeys on other islands and the mainland troop of monkeys at Takasa Kiyama began washing their sweet potatoes!

Ken Keys referred to this fact as a point of hope in avoiding nuclear war. His hope was that if enough people decide that they do not want to continue the arms race, then at some point ("the hundredth monkey" so to speak) everyone will quickly realize the folly of it all and we will have peace.

In this experiment we see evidence which supports Dr. Sheldrake's theory. It's unlikely that there were any DNA changes caused in the

monkeys already born, especially those living on another island. The concept of the morphogenetic field can easily explain that monkeys all over the world will start tuning into this new evolutionary bit of information in the morphogenetic field of the species.

Let's continue with Prof. Gleidman's explanation.

According to Sheldrake, evolutionary change occurs whenever genetic or environmental shifts produce an embryo so different from its parents that the deviant cannot resonate with the species morphogenetic field. But the deviant is not left without a field of its own. The instant the old link dissolves, a compatible morphogenetic field mysteriously springs into existence. This new field guides the deviant's development into the first member of a new species, as well as governing the development of subsequent members of the same species.

GROUP MORPHOGENETIC FIELDS

According to Theosophical thought, this morphogenetic field expresses itself differently at the various levels of evolution. In crystals, it generates the whole class of crystal wherever it may appear on the planet. For insects, it generates a particular colony of insects' morphogenetic field. As we move up the evolutionary scale, the morphogenetic field becomes more individual and unique. It might become a herd of deer, a flock of birds, a pack of dogs or the like. Animals that have close contact with human beings tend to evolve more quickly and develop particular qualities differentiating them from the rest of their species, i.e., extremely intelligent dogs and cats with distinct characters.

According to this Theosophical theory, a morphogenetic field can produce only one human being - a unique individual entity. Thus we could imagine that in our evolutionary journey the spirit which has been expressing itself as crystals, cells, plant species, insect colonies, herds of sheep, packs of lions, flocks of birds or families of monkeys is now finally expressed as a human being. We can understand the remaining animal instincts still present in our

morphogenetic field and the need to work on purifying and transmuting them.

While we do have an individual morphogenetic field or an individual causal body, we also belong to or are connected up, if you like, to other larger group fields or collective fields.

We might imagine that there is a Universal Morphogenetic field or Universal Causal body which contains all of the blue prints or archetypes for all the elements, objects and beings in creation. Depending on the particular incarnation which we choose, we may be tuning into selected ethnic, religious, social, or racial morphogenetic fields (in addition to that of our species) which have been developed over the ages. It's important, however, to remember that we as **spirits** are beyond and free of these fields.

These fields may also easily be connected with Psychiatrist Carl Jung's theory of the Collective Unconscious and the archetypes which exist therein.

THE FRUIT FLY EXPERIMENTS

It very well may be possible to test and prove or disprove Dr. Shelldrake's theory at least at the level of crystals, fruit flies, and monkeys. Tests have been and can be made in order to show that the source of formative and mutational changes is beyond the physical realm of DNA and genes. Here is Prof. Gliedman's explanation of the possibilities of testing Dr. Shelldrake's theory.

Following the footsteps of the great biologist Conrad Waddington, Ho studied the disruptive effects of ether on the embryological development of the geneticist's favorite experimental animal, the humble fruit fly, drosophila. Like Waddington and his co-workers, she found that ether killed some eggs outright, left other embryos unscathed and induced in others a developmental change that resembled the results of a mutation called bithorax. Instead of developing into a normal winged fly, the last group of embryos grew up with an extra set of wings. The defect here was not genetic - the flies had normal chromosomes - but resulted from

ether's interference with DNA controlled growth patterns. Thalidomide babies exhibit the same non-genetic developmental deformities.

After the normal and deviant fruit flies reached sexual maturity, Ho collected all their eggs and exposed them to the same ether dosage as before. She repeated this procedure until she had exposed five successive generations of fruit flies to ether while they were still embryos. Since the mutations in the population were not recorded in the genes, one would expect the percentage of mutants in each subsequent generation would be the same. But Ho discovered that in each generation the percentage of the deviant four-wingers was greater than it had been in their parents' generation and steadily increased among descendants until it was highest in the first generation's great great grandchildren. Sheldrake thinks the increase is due to the progressive strengthening of the morphogenetic field for four-winged flies. But conventional genetic theory could also explain the increase by positing that the gene or gene complex that protects against ether poisoning is linked to another factor that makes embryos prone to develop an extra pair of wings. However, says Sheldrake, conventional theory cannot explain some of Ho's subsequent results. After completing her first experiment, she took a fresh batch of eggs drawn from a fruit fly population that had never been exposed to ether and gave them ether treatment. This time, the ether had a much greater transformative effect in each generation: the percentage of four-winged phenocopies was significantly higher in each generation than it was in the first experiment.

THE ONE PERCENT THEORY

This point discovered in the test on the fruit flies may at the same time generate some hope for human evolution. This is what Ken Keys mentions as the hundredth monkey effect and what the Maharishi Maheesh Yogi calls the 1% effect. The Maharishi Maheesh Yogi, founder of the Transcendental Meditation Society of America and subsequently a number of universities dedicated to unifying the scientific, social and spiritual, showed in a live

experiment that the behavior of the whole population could be changed for the better if one percent of the population would meditate regularly.

In the small state of Rhode Island in the U.S.A., this statement was proven. When the number of meditators reached one percent of the population, the crime rate and divorce rate dropped significantly for the total population. Whereas these rates in the surrounding states actually rose during the same period of time. This one percent of the population might just really have had this calming effect on the whole of the population. A basic change might have been made in the morphogenetic field of that area. There is hope.

It seems logical that a process like meditation, prayer or positive thought projection would be our major tools for altering our morphogenetic fields in an evolutionary way both for the individual and the society. According to most systems of spiritual thought we can remove or alter the impressions in the causal body through regular meditation in which we go beyond the thought complexes (i.e. the TV images) and go to the source of thought in the causal body (the TV waves).

If Sheldrake's theory could be proven in a scientific way, we would have a very valuable link between science and spirituality; a link which in itself would be very helpful for the evolution of the morphogenetic field. If we all keep exploring our inner consciousness, we will be adding in our own unique way to the general evolution of the human being towards our divine potential. We can understand the meaning of the statement that God made man in His own image. As we proceed in the evolution of our morphogenetic field, the form we take has greater and greater divine potentials such as creativity, self awareness, love, healing powers, an ability to produce music, mathematics, art and philosophies of life.

THE CRYSTAL EXPERIMENTS

Sheldrake himself suggests one possible experiment that would prove his theory at least at the level of crystals.

Sheldrake's theory also allows for a new perspective on non-living phenomena. Consider a substance that has never before been crystallized in a lab. A chemist must somehow work out the conditions that will favor crystal formation. Some claim, however, that once a crystal has been made many times over, subsequent crystallizations become easier and easier. Many chemists cite greater skill and improved technique as the factors involved. But others, says Sheldrake, claim that microscopic pieces of the new crystals escape into the air; these, he says, can theoretically "seed" new solutions of the chemical and speed crystal growth. He thinks there is more to it and predicts that even when airborne crystal transfer is vigorously prevented, crystallization will become progressively easier. There will be a strengthening of the morphogenetic field that is responsible for the chemical's crystalline pattern. According to the hypothesis of formative causation (a newly synthesized chemical's) crystalline form will not be predictable in advance and no morphogenetic field for this form will yet exist. But after it has been crystallized for the first time, the form of its crystals will influence subsequent crystallizations by morphic resonance, and the more often it is crystallized, the stronger this influence should be. Once again, Sheldrake's proposal is not a shot in the dark but a simply tested proposition; a researcher could divide a newly synthesized chemical into three batches and send each to a different lab. Scientists at the branch laboratories could then seed each of the batches with different shapes of crystal, in the hope of forcing the chemical to assume a different form in each location. Next, one of the laboratories would be instructed to mass-produce the crystal that had grown in its vats, while the other two would be instructed to shut down. The purpose of the mass production would be to try to strengthen one of the three potential morphogenetic forms. Finally, scientists at the two remaining labs should produce the same crystal forms as before with the same ease. The formative causation hypothesis, however, predicts that the crystal form that has been mass-produced will crystallize far more readily than the other. If, in all three labs, the mass-produced crystal form began falling out of solutions, then, says Sheldrake, "a really convincing weight of evidence for natural selection could be built up".

THE OVERALL PICTURE

Independent of what conclusion the scientist comes up with, the idea of a subtle causal field which projects the mental, energy and physical forms we know is ancient, appealing and logical. It explains many otherwise non-explainable phenomena such as the extreme differences in the births of children, i.e. blindness, various deformities, and child genius in the arts or the sciences. (This point is discussed in detail in the book, **THE MYSTICAL CIRCLE OF LIFE** and thus we will not continue here).

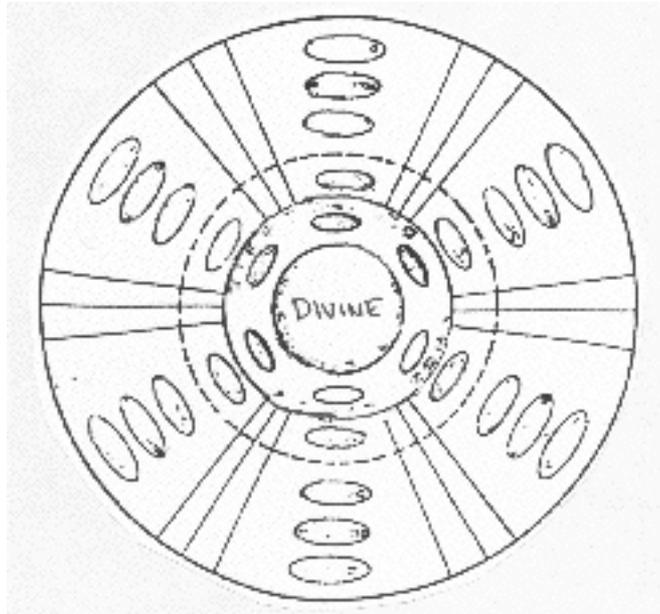


Diagram No.14

THE UNIVERSAL MORPHOGENETIC FIELD

This diagram may help us understand what we are saying more clearly. Observe that in the center we have the eternal omnipresent Universal Consciousness which is represented by a self-lighting and everlasting light. Around this light we have a sphere (here we see only a cross section of it) which has trillions of holes with tiny film images imprinted on it. This is the Universal Morphogenetic field

or the Universal Causal body which has in it all of the archetypes of all the possible objects and beings which have manifested or are in the process of developing.

Thus, as this one light passes through each image it produces onto the screen of life the physical appearance of this object or being. As changes take place in this universal field, the appearance of these beings undergo corresponding changes on the mental, emotional and physical levels. Changes made on the other levels such as the mental and physical seem also to have some slight effect on the images imprinted on this universal 'film record'.

It's useful to realize that when we look at someone across from us and feel separate from that person, this is in actuality an illusion, for he or she is just another projection of the same light through a slightly different film image. Understanding this truth will help us to eventually create the inter-human harmony that is required to create health, happiness and well being for all people living on this planet.

It's also important to realize that **our thoughts and feelings do not affect only ourselves**. Everything we think, feel, say or do is simultaneously registered both in our individual causal body **and also in the universal causal body**. Our unexpressed thoughts and feelings affect those around us. With each thought we add to the misery or to the happiness of this world. When we love, we are adding love to the world. When we hate, we are adding hate to the Universal Causal body. We are making it more possible for others to hate. When we forgive, we are making forgiveness a more available human trait. When we live in a self-destructive way, we are intensifying this trait in the universal field which affects us all. When we live selflessly, this trait becomes strengthened in all people everywhere.

Our every thought, word and action is like a pebble falling into a universal pool creating waves for the other beings taking their energy from that pool. Whatever we do is to some extent felt by the others. It **is** possible, however, for us to get free from this effect of the Universal Causal field through meditation, wisdom and divine

grace which allow us to transcend this level and experience that
Light which exists before and beyond the archetypal film.

CHAPTER VII

THE MERGING OF SCIENCE AND UNIVERSAL PHILOSOPHY

It's a common belief, in fact a serious misconception, that the discoveries of modern science are in conflict with the universal philosophical truths about the nature of the world. Actually the exact opposite is true. The latest discoveries in nuclear physics are amazingly in harmony with the metaphysical explanations of the universe.

Unfortunately, the average human mind today is conditioned by a belief system and a language based on a completely outdated understanding of the nature of the physical world. Most of us think and communicate in concepts and terms proven untrue ever since the discoveries of Albert Einstein in the early 1900's.

We think in terms of time and space as being separate and independent. We think in terms of only three dimensions although science has proven that time is a fourth dimension and most likely, there are still further dimensions to this reality which scientists have not yet discovered. We continue to think of objects and beings as being completely independent and unrelated even though scientists understand that all things and beings are related through force field, e.g., electromagnetic interactions. We continue to think of matter as something permanent whereas scientists now know it to be only another manifestation of energy.

PHYSICS AND METAPHYSICS

Physics and metaphysics are two parallel approaches whose

common goal is to understand nature and its forces and laws of interaction. The approach of physics is to achieve this goal through the logical study of the external world through hypothesis, experimentation, observation, reasoning, inference and conclusions. These conclusions we now understand as only relatively true for they are continually being found inadequate and are being modified so as to better describe the physical world as we learn more and more about it. The laws of physics have continually been modified and replaced throughout the history of humankind's search for knowledge.

This also means that there are few theories or conclusions which are upheld by all physicists at any time. Actually, today there is a very serious crisis as there seem to be more (rather than fewer) unanswered questions than ever before. Every new discovery in the world of nuclear physics brings more questions than answers. Scientists are being forced to realize that in order to go further, they will have to completely restructure their way of thinking and viewing the world.

There is disagreement among scientists today as to where the answer to these ever increasing questions lies. There are various theories and relative confusion as we try to explain a reality beyond our conditioned concepts of time and space, mind and matter. A number of well-respected scientists have begun to successfully use some of the metaphysical concepts in order to answer these questions.

Metaphysics uses intuition in addition to reason and inference. Metaphysics investigates both the external material universe and the internal mental and supra-mental worlds. Metaphysics is the study of what is beyond the known physics. As the unknown becomes known, then physics and metaphysics will become one.

The sage, mystic, saint or yogi who wants to "know" something has the mental control to direct thought power into the object or being he or she wants to study and discover its reality from within. Such a being can actually become one with the tree, or the planet, or the atom which is studied and gain total knowledge of it. He or she can

merge the limited lower mind with the unlimited Universal Mind in which all the knowledge of the universe is stored. Thus, all information of all things and events past, present and future become available. This may be difficult to believe but it has been proven by great people throughout history.

Newtonian physics, which has influenced and limited the present concept of the world, holds true only for the reality we can see with our rather feeble unaided external senses. But as scientists now peer deep into the microcosm of the nuclear and sub-nuclear particles, they see that we need a whole new way of thinking and a new language by which to formulate and communicate these new truths about the **reality** of the physical world.

The same is true for the discoveries made by the astronomers who are viewing farther and farther out into the universe. These new discoveries are causing a quantum level change in scientific thought; and the change is very much in the direction of metaphysical thought. Physics and metaphysics are converging.

Let's take a brief layman's look at some of these new scientific concepts and how they corroborate the ancient spiritual truths. In doing so, remember that there is not one accepted view in either physics or metaphysics, as there are many schools of thought within both.

Most of the following comparisons and quotations have been taken from the very excellent work on this subject, **THE TAO OF PHYSICS** by Fritjof Capra. Mr. Capra is a Ph.D. physicist who has done research in theoretical high-energy physics at the University of Paris, the University of California in Santa Cruz, Stanford University, and the Imperial College in London. He is presently lecturing at the University of California in Berkeley.

Mr. Capra has been struck by the overwhelming similarities between modern scientific discoveries and theories and the ancient spiritual truths. He seeks to weave them together into a marriage of physics and metaphysics in his excellent book.

THE ILLUSION OF SOLID MATTER

As scientists penetrate more deeply into the reality of matter, they realize that matter is simply not the definite solid reality which it seems to be to the naked eye. First of all, the atom is really much more space than it is solid. The relationship between the nucleus of an atom and the space it occupies is like that of a grain of salt at the center of a fourteen-story building. Most of it is space and energy field. In addition, the nucleus itself and the surrounding electrons seem to have simultaneously a particle and wave nature. It seems that all matter and all energy have both a particle and wave nature. It seems that it is difficult finally to distinguish between energy and matter. That is, matter can be converted to energy and energy to matter. In fact, scientists now measure the mass of these small particles in terms of energy rather than mass.

Einstein has given us the relationship between matter and energy to be $E=mc^2$. This means that the energy of a particle is equal to the mass of the particle multiplied by the speed of light times the speed of light. The speed of light is 186,000 miles per second. Thus, a very small amount of mass can be converted into a tremendous amount of energy. This is the basis behind the atomic bomb and the nuclear reactors which can provide so much energy.

Furthermore, it seems that on the sub-nuclear level particles appear and disappear spontaneously. Matter is transformed into energy and back into matter again. The basis of the universe seems to be energy rather than matter. The further we search into the subatomic reality the more we realize that there is actually no concrete building block of the physical universe, that all things are manifestations and transformations of energy patterns which sometimes appear as matter and at other times as energy.

We also begin to see that all forms are temporary. We learn that these subatomic particles don't have a steady permanent existence but rather go through innumerable transformations and mutations every second. We begin to see the world in terms of processes rather than objects and forms. When we think about matter in this way, we see that the wall in our room is actually much more space

than solid and that this matter is simply a condensed form of energy. Furthermore, the particles comprising that wall are in a constant process of vibration and mutation. This same truth must hold for our own physical bodies. Our concept of a solid physical reality is shattered, and we come so very close to a spiritual perception of reality. The following excerpts from Capra's book point out this fact.

Once it (the matter) is seen to be a form of energy, mass is no longer required to be indestructible but can be transformed into other forms of energy. This can happen when subatomic particles collide with one another. In such collisions, particles can be destroyed and the energy contained in their masses can be transformed into kinetic energy distributed among the other particles participating in the collision. Conversely, when particles collide with very high velocities, their kinetic energy can be used to form new particles.

*These dynamic patterns, or **energy bundles**, form the stable nuclear, atomic and molecular structures which build up matter and give its macroscopic solid aspect, thus making us believe that it is made of some material substance. At the macroscopic level this notion of substance is a useful approximation but at the atomic level it no longer makes sense. Atoms consist of particles and these particles are not made of any material stuff. When we observe them, we never see any substance; what we observe are dynamic patterns changing into one another - a continuous dance of energy.*

Capra likens this dance of the substance of the world to the dance of God who creates, sustains and destroys the forms of the universe. The spiritual philosophies understand that the world is a world of processes in continual change. They understand that physical matter is a condensation of energy, which is, in return, controlled by thought and consciousness. They understood long before today's physicists that the observer, the observed and the act of observing are intimately related and that no observation is completely objective. They have long understood the world in terms of energies, vibrations and thoughts, rather than in terms of objects.

They have used the mind and will power to control energy and consequently matter itself. They have for over 4,000 years taught that this world of form is indeed illusory and has no absolute reality of its own. And now all this is corroborated for us by our scientists who have declared the illusion of solid matter.

THE CREATION OF THE UNIVERSE

The origin of the universe has been a question which has enticed the human mind into reflection ever since we've existed on this planet. Both physics and metaphysics seek to answer this most elusive question as to how the world started. Each of the various religions offer their own creation stories which try through their symbols to help us understand a process beyond the capacity of our limited mind to understand. The process of creation is a process beyond time and space. It starts at a point in which time and space have not yet manifested - shall we say a point in which time and space were dormant or latent just as the tree is latent within the seed.

Because our conceptual ability and language are limited by the concepts of time and space, there is no way we can understand the final truth about creation with words or the rational mind. The answer to this question lies within the higher mind which is able to transcend time and space and realize the answer through direct experience of the process of creation itself. That answer is, of course, incommunicable as our language does not offer the necessary terminology.

The stance of Universal Philosophy is that creation is not an event that took place millions of years ago but rather a process that is eternally happening every second. If the universe was not continuously created every fraction of a second, it would cease to exist. There is a void, an infinite non-physical, unchanging, unmanifest Reality from which creation is constantly being projected somewhat in the way that an image is projected onto a screen by a projector. Remember that this Ultimate Reality is called by various groups- the Absolute, the Supreme Being, All That Is, the Void, the One, Universal Consciousness, Universal Energy, the

Father, the Christ, the Logos, Brahma, God, Allah, the Monad, the Oversoul, Universal Spirit, the Primal Cause and other names in other languages.

Although this physical creation is in a constant rhythmic process of creation and destruction, this Ultimate Reality (as Spirit or Consciousness) cannot be created or destroyed. All of creation alternates between expansion, manifestation and contraction then back into the latent unmanifest state. Just as we have the rhythmic cycles of night and day, summer and winter, we have the cycles of creation and reabsorption of the universe back into the Unmanifest.

This concept is very much in harmony with some of the recent scientific hypotheses of the creation of the universe. Following are some comments by Mr. Capra on this subject.

In physics we recognize the dynamic nature of the universe not only when we go to the small dimensions, to the world of atoms and nuclei but also when we turn to large dimensions, to the world of stars and galaxies. Through the powerful telescopes we observe a universe in ceaseless motion. Rotating clouds of hydrogen gas contract to form stars, heating up in the process until they become burning fires in the sky. When they have reached that stage, they still continue to rotate, some of them ejecting material into space which spirals outwards and condenses into planets circling around the star. Eventually after millions of years, when most of its hydrogen fuel is used up, a star expands and then contracts again in the final gravitational collapse. This collapse may involve gigantic explosions and may even turn the star into a black hole. All these activities, the formation of the stars out of interstellar gas clouds, their contraction and subsequent expansion, and their final collapse can all actually be observed somewhere in the skies.

The spinning, contracting, expanding or exploding stars cluster into galaxies of various shapes, flat discs, spheres, spirals, etc. which, again, are not motionless but rotate. Our galaxy, the Milky Way, is an immense disc of stars and gas turning in space like a huge wheel so that all its stars, including the Sun and its planets, move around the galaxy's center. The universe is, in fact, full of

galaxies, strewn through all the space we can see, all spinning like our own.

When we study the universe as a whole, with its millions of galaxies, we have reached the largest scale of space and time; and again, at that cosmic level, we discover that the universe is not static, it is expanding! This has been one of the most important discoveries in modern astronomy. A detailed analysis of the light received from distant galaxies has shown that the whole swarm of galaxies expands and that it does so in a well orchestrated way. The recession velocity of any galaxy we observe is proportional to the galaxy's distance. The more distant the galaxy the faster it moves away from us; at double the distance, the recession velocity will also double.

An obvious question to be asked about the expanding universe is: how did it all start? from the relation between the distance of a galaxy and its recession velocity which is known as Hubble's law, one can calculate the starting point of the expansion, in other words, the age of the universe.

Assuming that there has been no change in the rate of expansion, which is by no means certain, one arrives at an age of the order of 10,000 million years. This, then, is the age of the universe. Most cosmologists believe today that the universe came into being in a highly dramatic event about 10,000 million years ago, when its total mass exploded out of a small primeval fireball. The present expansion of the universe is seen as the remaining thrust of this initial explosion. According to this "Big Bang", the moment of the Big Bang marked the beginning of the universe and the beginning of space and time. If we want to know what happened before that moment, we run again into severe difficulties of thought and language.

There we reach the great barrier of thought because we begin to struggle with the concepts of time and space before they existed in terms of our everyday experience. I feel as though I've suddenly driven into a great fog barrier where the familiar world has disappeared.

As far as the future of the expanding universe is concerned, Einstein's equations do not provide a unique answer. They allow for several different solutions corresponding to different models of the universe. Some models predict that the expansions will continue forever. According to others, it is slowing down and will eventually change into contraction. These models describe an oscillating universe, expanding for billions of years then contracting until its total mass has condensed into a small ball of matter, then expanding again, and so on without end.

This idea of a periodically expanding and contracting universe, which involves a scale of time and space of vast proportions, has arisen not only in modern cosmology but also in ancient Indian mythology. Experiencing the universe as an organic and rhythmically moving cosmos, the Hindus were able to develop evolutionary cosmologies which come very close to our modern scientific models.

The Big Bang of astronomy and the Hindu concept of the out breath (expansion of creation into manifestation) and in-breath (its absorption back into the unmanifest) of God the Creator are strikingly similar. Even the time factors suggested are similar.

The scientific method mentioned here approximates the beginning of this expansion at 10,000 million years. The Vedas and other Indian scriptures estimate that the day of Brahma is a thousand ages and that the night is a thousand ages. This is explained by Swami Vishnudevananda in the following passage:

Beyond the three worlds as far as the abode of Brahma, the creator of the universe, one thousand revolutions of the four yugas (4,320,000 X 1,000 human years) constitutes a day. Equal in length is the night, which is the night of the creator Brahma who withdraws all the three worlds into himself. This is the dissolution or opposite of evolution or creation. Again the cycle of creation begins at the close of the night of Brahma. The creation of the three worlds commences (as in the preceding kalpa or age) and continues for the day of the Brahma.

According to Universal Philosophy, this process of creation and destruction is also continuously happening on all levels of creation. Matter is not something stable and permanent.

Nuclear physicists are now being forced through their findings to accept a similar point of view. Consider these explanations by Capra.

The distinction between matter and empty space finally had to be abandoned when it became evident that virtual particles can come into being spontaneously out of the void and vanish again into the void, without any nucleon or other strongly interacting particle being present... According to field theory, events of that kind can happen all the time. The vacuum is far from empty. It contains an unlimited number of particles that can come into being and vanish without end.

In the same way the whole infinite universe of objects and beings lie potential in the Unmanifest One.

Mr. Capra continues.

Here then, is the closest parallel to the void of Eastern mysticism in modern physics. Like the Eastern void, the physical vacuum, as it is called in field theory - is not a state of mere nothingness but contains the potentiality for all forms of the particle world. These forms, in turn, are not independent physical entities but merely transient manifestations of the underlying void. As the scriptures say, "Form is emptiness and emptiness is indeed form".

The relationship between the virtual particles and the vacuum is an essentially dynamic relation; the vacuum is truly a living Void, pulsating in endless rhythms of creation and destruction. The discovery of the dynamic quality of a vacuum is seen by many physicists as one of the most important findings of modern physics. From its role as an empty container of the physical phenomena, the void has emerged as a dynamic quantity of utmost importance. The results of modern physics thus seem to confirm the words of the Chinese sage Chang Tsai:

"When one knows the Great Void is full of CHI, one realizes that there is no such thing as nothingness."

That CHI is the prana, the life-energy of the universe, which is responsible for every process, interaction, force, form of energy and manifestation of matter. Mind directs and uses this universal energy of the universe to create, sustain and destroy the physical forms of the universe. It is exactly because of these virtual potentialities of the physical vacuum that great beings like Sai Baba are able to create whatever comes to their minds in a fraction of a second. The powerful will can transform this vacuum into whatever physical object it may wish to create.

That energy may also be directed towards an illness to eliminate it and the person is healed. It is the mystic's awareness of this energy which gives them such miraculous powers over form and its changes such as birth, growth, decay and death. Because Jesus the Christ had power over this *force* (known to Christians as the Holy Spirit), He was able to raise the dead, walk on water, heal the ill, provide food, read the minds of all, change the water into wine, and many other miracles. These phenomena seem much more normal to the mind which understands the power of this vital force and its relationship to mind and matter.

THE RELATIVITY OF TIME AND SPACE

Concepts and communications about everyday reality are very much conditioned by our concepts of time and space as absolute realities. Our minds are unable to understand a universe without the conditioned structure of time and space. Spiritual philosophies have for centuries expressed the idea that time and space are illusory and relative, that they are, in fact, creations of the mind. Time and space do not exist without the human mind. The Western perception, however, was very much affected by the ancient Greek thought which explained the world in the very definite terms of geometry.

According to Capra,

It took an Einstein to make scientists and philosophers realize that geometry is not inherent in nature, but is imposed upon it by the mind. In the words of Henry Margenau, "The central recognition of the theory of relativity is that geometry... is a construct of the intellect. Only when this discovery is accepted, can the mind feel free to tamper with the time-honoured notions of space and time, to survey the range of possibilities available for defining them, and to select that formulation which agrees with observation."

According to the relativity theory, the time and space of an event is going to depend on the point of view of the observer. A similar event or object may exist in different time and space dimensions to different observers. The truth of this is obvious for space. Two beings viewing any object from different vantage points will obviously see a different object or event. Every artist is acutely aware of this. However, concerning time:

The temporal order of two events was assumed to be independent of any observer. Specifications referring to time - such as 'before', 'after', or 'simultaneous' were thought to have an absolute meaning independent of any coordinate system.

Einstein recognized that temporal specifications, too, are relative and depend on the observer. In everyday life, the impression that we can arrange events around us in a unique time sequence is created by the fact that the velocity of light – 186,000 miles per second - is so high, compared to any other velocity we experience, that we can assume we are observing events at the instant they are occurring. This however, is incorrect. Light needs some time to travel from the event to the observer. Normally, this time is so short that the propagation of light can be considered to be instantaneous. But when the observer moves with the occurrence of the event, its observation plays a crucial role in establishing a sequence of events. Einstein realized that in such a case observers moving at different velocities will order events differently.

Capra then goes on to quote physicist Mendel Sachs:

The real revolution that came with Einstein's theory... was this;

the abandonment of the idea that space-time coordinate system has objective significance as a separate physical entity. Instead of this the relativity theory implies that the space and time coordinates are only the elements of language used by an observer to describe the environment.

These statements are quite in harmony with Universal Philosophic concepts that time and space are illusions fabricated by the mind in order to function in this temporary physical reality. It's well known to enlightened persons that the dimensions of time and space expand with the expansion of consciousness. The various levels of awareness perceive time and space in different ways. As it says in the Bible, "One day for God is 1000 years for man".

Besides the fact that time and space are relative to each observer, we are also faced with the fact that we, at times, cannot distinguish between time and space. That is, time and space have a similar relationship to that of energy and matter. According to Capra:

*This is indeed an entirely new situation. Every change of coordinate systems mixes space and time in a mathematically well-defined way. The two can therefore no longer be separated because what is space to one observer will be a mixture of time and space to another observer. Relativity theory has shown that space is not three-dimensional and time is not a separate entity. Both are intimately and inseparably connected and form a four-dimensional continuum which is called **space time**. This concept of space-time was introduced by Hermann Minkowski in a famous lecture in 1908 with the following words:*

"The views of space and time which I wish to lay before you have sprung from the soil of experimental physics and therein lies their strength. They are radical. Henceforth, space by itself and time by itself are doomed to fade away into mere shadows and only a kind of union of the two will preserve an independent reality."

The awareness of the interpenetration of time and space is very common among the Eastern mystics and philosophers. Compare the above quotation by a scientist and the following by Zen master

D.T. Suzuki.

The significance of the Avatamasaka and its philosophy is unintelligible unless we once experience... a state of complete dissolution where there is no more distinction between mind and body, subject and object... We look around and perceive that... every object is related to every other object... not only spatially, but temporally. As a fact of pure experience there is no space without time, no time without space. They are interpenetrating.

OPPOSITES AND THE UNITY OF ALL THINGS

The concept of opposites is common in both physics and metaphysics. The various philosophies abound with concepts of the dual nature of reality which must eventually be balanced and harmonized. They speak of the forces of Yin and Yang, the qualities of Tamas and Rajas, the opposites of Good and Evil, activity and rest, of earth and spirit, and of mind and body. All these opposites are seen to exist in the material universe as forces comprising the natural laws under which the physical universe runs.

It is understood however, that these opposites are unified into one higher principle upon the transcendence of the human mind which is limited to this level of duality. These dualities do not exist when the mind enters into a higher level of consciousness.

Science, too, explains the universe in terms of laws of opposites such as positive and negative charges, waves and particles, matter and energy, motion and rest and existence and nonexistence. Mr. Capra comments:

Force and matter, particles and waves, motion and rest, existence and nonexistence- these are some of the opposites or contradictory concepts which are transcended in modern physics. Of all these opposite pairs, the last seems to be the most fundamental and yet, in atomic physics we have to go beyond the concepts of existence and nonexistence.

Like the atomic physicists, spiritual truths deal with a reality that

lies beyond existence and nonexistence.

The famous atomic physicist and Nobel winner, Niels Bohr, was aware of this ability of the spiritual philosophies to resolve the various opposites in life into a complementary unity. Thus, when he was knighted for his excellent scientific work, he chose the Zen symbol of Yin and Yang flowing into each other creating a unity of opposites.

More and more scientists are realizing the inherent unity underlying this world of opposites. Modern Quantum theory points to the fact that all objects and beings in this universe are related through the various types of force fields. No object or being is separate but each is an integral and essential part of the whole. All things and beings are interconnected. Mr. Capra expresses it in this way:

At the atomic level, then, the solid material objects of classical physics dissolve into patterns of probabilities and these patterns do not represent probabilities of things, but rather probabilities of interconnections. Quantum theory forces us to see the universe not as a collection of physical objects but rather as a complicated web of relations between the various parts of a unified whole.

Consider the striking similarity between the following two quotations, the first by a scientist and the second by a person describing a spiritual experience.

The Scientist:

The world thus appears as a complicated tissue of events, in which connections of different kinds alternate or overlap or combine and thereby determine the texture of the whole.

The description of a spiritual experience:

The material object becomes... something different from what we now see, not a separate object in the background or the environment of the rest of nature but an indivisible part and even,

in a subtle way, an expression of the unity of all that we see.

If in fact, all beings and things are interconnected in some subtle way, that means that the scientist and the phenomenon he or she is observing are also connected in a relationship more intimate than that of observer and observed. The observer is influencing the existence and behavior of the observed by one's mere presence and process of observing. Thus it seems that the world becomes much more subjective and we have reason to question the objectivity of the scientists' findings. We begin to see that no object or event can truly be isolated for observation and that each of us is interconnected with the rest of the universe. Scientist John Wheeler comments on this point of view:

*Nothing is more important about quantum principle than this, that it destroys the concept of the world as 'sitting out there', with the observer safely separated from it by a 20 centimeter slab or plate of glass. Even to observe so minuscule an object as an electron, he must shatter the glass. He must reach in. He must install his chosen measuring equipment. It is up to him to decide whether he shall measure position or momentum; to install the equipment to measure the one prevents and excludes his installing the equipment to measure the other. Moreover, the measurement changes the state of the electron. The universe will never afterwards be the same. To describe what has happened, one has to cross out that old word **observer** and put in its place the new word **participator**. In some strange sense the universe is a participatory universe.*

This point of view is quite similar to the spiritual approach which maintains that an object or being can be known only through total participation with the observed. Actually, in the highest means of spiritual investigation, the observer, the observed and process of observing become unified and cannot be distinguished in the supramental consciousness. One understands a thing, being or process by becoming one with it. This type of perception gradually brings about a feeling of unity with all things and beings in the world.

We begin to feel that we're related to the world in the way a cell is

related to the body. The cell has all the chromosomes necessary to become the whole body. The cell has no physical existence outside its relationship to the whole body. Thus each human being is like a microcosm of the macrocosm of which we are a part. Everything which occurs in the universe is in some way reflected in each individual and each individual action is in some way affecting the state of the whole.

We can see from the previously mentioned quotations that atomic physicists are moving steadily towards such a point of view of the interpenetration or interconnectedness of all things. Of course it will take many years before such concepts are agreed upon and probably more than decades before the public mind is able to absorb these new concepts.

Consider that most of these important discoveries and theories were realized in the early 1900' s and yet the common public opinion is that science is in some way disproving spiritual tenets. Nothing could be further from the truth. Rather, the opposite is true. Science and spirituality are converging into a common point of view of the world. They are now arriving at the same point from opposite directions.

Those who would like to further their investigation of this subject are encouraged to read the **TAO OF PHYSICS** by Fritjof Capra or any of the many similar books which have been published recently by competent physicists.

Let us briefly review the points on which they are converging:

- 1. The illusion of solid matter. Matter is mostly space and is simply another form of energy.***
- 2. The Creation of the Universe is from one unmanifest Primal Cause.***

3. Energy is the basic reality behind the physical universe we are observing.

4. All comes forth from a void which is full of every possible creation.

5. Time and space are relative and at some point interpenetrate. They are interpretations of the mind.

6. All forces, things and beings are ultimately connected and, at some dimension of reality, are inseparably one.

7. Universal Philosophy would go further to say that **Consciousness is the basic reality of the Universe**. From it all the Universe-objects, beings, events, time and space- are projected.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CAUSES OF HUMAN SUFFERING

PHILOSOPHY MUST BE PRACTICAL

Philosophy is worthless if it does not help us live a happier life. Philosophy is not just a lot of intelligent words. It must put that wisdom into the context of our daily life and its problems. The philosophical Truths, if they are Truths, must be as applicable to our material, emotional, economic, social, professional and family lives as they are to the spiritual dimensions. As the saying goes "*As Above, So Below*". The same laws are functioning at the various levels of reality.

In this chapter, we are concerned with how philosophy can help us understand and transcend the sources of our suffering. Why is that important? Why is it important for someone not to suffer? The answer is that suffering is the indication that there is ignorance. Just as smoke means that there is fire, suffering occurs when one is ignorant of one's Real Nature as unlimited immortal Consciousness.

Before we continue this extremely important discussion, we must make a distinction between unpleasant events and situations and suffering. Someone may be passing through the most pleasant of events and situations, having health, friends, money, success and other forms of pleasure. Yet there may be intense suffering within because of attachment to something else which one doesn't have.

Another person may be seriously, perhaps fatally ill, may just have lost an important loved one and all material possessions and yet not

be suffering at all because of the awareness of one's real spiritual nature and of the temporary nature of everything in this material world. If he or she has total faith in the Divine Plan, then the belief that Life gives exactly what is needed at every moment alleviates suffering.

Suffering, then, is an inner state which is dependent on our beliefs and our degree of attachment to the world around us and is not so much a result of what's happening to us externally.

Consequently, the analysis of suffering is an important step towards getting free from the ignorance that binds us to that suffering. Let's begin that analysis.

IGNORANCE - FALSE IDENTIFICATION

No one likes to suffer. At least no one will admit that he or she likes to suffer. Why, then, is there so much suffering in the world? Pleasure and pain, enjoyment and suffering, happiness and sadness are dualities that occupy opposite sides of the coin of life. One does not seem to exist without the other.

Since we don't want to suffer, why then do we suffer? There must be some force which pulls us towards that which causes us to suffer. The answer is very simple. The need for identity pulls us towards situations in which we suffer.

In the previous chapters we explained that our real Self is the immortal and infinite, beyond every physical or mental limitation. However, through the illusory power of matter we are blind to our real nature. We are ignorant of what we really are. This ignorance is the basic source of our suffering.

This ignorance leaves us feeling empty and without identity or selfhood. For this reason, we are motivated to identify with the bodies through which the Self is expressed on earth. We identify with the physical body, mind and personality. This is our basic mistake. This ignorance and resulting case of mistaken identity are the root causes of all human suffering. They are the cause of all

negative human interaction, all hate, fear, envy and jealousy, all wars and injustice. If we could remove this ignorance and mistaken identity, all these would become unnecessary. We would lose all fear and feeling of isolation and antagonism and realize our innate oneness with all beings. We would live in familial love.

When we identify with the body or personality or some part of the personality, we fear for our safety and self worth. In order to feel safe and worthy, we create a whole world of attachments and aversions. We begin to desire certain objects, relationships and situations that we believe we must have in order to fulfill that role that we are identifying with. We begin to spend so much time, thought, words, energy and action on trying to manipulate our external environment in order to fulfill these attachments and desires that we forget completely that all this is a temporary drama. We forget that we are not the body or the personality that we are so frantically trying to satisfy. We forget that we are immortal spirits which have projected many bodies and personalities throughout the ages. We get lost in the drama of life, losing all objective perspective, forgetting that all situations, pleasant and unpleasant, dissolve in the rain of time. We forget that we're going to die and lose all that seems so utterly indispensable to us. Every scene has an end. In other words, we suffer.

ATTACHMENTS AND AVERSIONS

We suffer when we cannot fulfill the attachments or desires which we think we have to fulfill in order to be happy. We suffer when we fear losing that which we **think** we **must** have. In reality we **have** nothing. All that we think we own, including our own physical body, is simply on loan from the planet earth. All will have to be once again returned to the earth sooner or later. We will take nothing with us when we leave. How can it be ours? It's all borrowed.

Look around the room. Whatever you see will someday not be there. All these forms, animate and inanimate, are only relatively real. Some day they will disintegrate so that new forms may be formed from the same basic substance.

All these possessions, i.e., my wife, husband, mother and father, my house, car, name, body, and profession, my emotions and ideas, all these are part of a temporary ever-changing world of energy. They will all disappear some day. Our attachment to these causes us to suffer because obviously we are impotent to keep them. This attachment is a result of our identification with the body and personality which in turn results from ignorance of our true nature.

The opposite of attachment and desire is aversion. Our false identification also causes us to reject certain aspects of life as not suitable for us or as unpleasant or dangerous. Many of our aversions are a result of our fear of harm to the physical body or ego. We like to avoid any thing or situation that might cause pain to our body or ego. Depending on our conditioning, we may try to avoid certain types of people, certain races or classes of people, probably insects, especially cockroaches, flies, mosquitoes and dirty places.

We may also feel fear, or at least have aversion towards situations in which we have to face the truth about our personality, the death of a loved one, illness of any kind, perhaps riding in airplanes or boats- the list is endless. Each of us is conditioned with a different set of attachments and aversions. When we cannot avoid that to which we have the aversion, then we suffer. For example, if we have an aversion to being kept waiting and we are in fact kept waiting, then we obviously will suffer.

We see now the evolution of suffering. Ignorance of our transcendent spiritual identity causes us to identify with the body and personality. This identification creates fear, attachments and aversions based on what we think will offer security, pleasure or affirmation to the body, the personality or the different roles we play. When we're not able to satisfy our attachments or avoid the objects of our aversions, then we experience unhappiness. We suffer.

This increases the identification with the physical body, thus creating the most powerful attachment; the attachment to life itself in a physical body. Even the wisest of sages find it difficult to

overcome this attachment. This is probably so because we need the physical body in order to continue learning the lessons which we have come to the earth to learn. It is said that the evolutionary progress can take place only while in a physical form on the earth. Between life states can be used for reviewing previous lives and planning new ones but not for actually learning lessons or taking exams. Each life is like a year in the cosmic school for the soul which is evolving out of the animal kingdom, through the human kingdom unto its divine nature. Lessons are learned and tests are taken. Depending on the achievement in a particular life, the lessons for the next life are prearranged.

Thus, it is very natural for an individual to be attached to keeping the physical body alive. How else can the purpose for which one has come to earth be fulfilled? This doesn't mean, however, that we have to remain clouded by the ignorance of our true infinite nature and identify totally with the body. It means that we'll give up attachment to the body when we've fulfilled our purpose in life. We'll die gracefully knowing that the body has served us well and we'll gracefully discharge it from its service.

OBJECTIVE DETACHMENT

For example, we have a car. We have the goal of reaching a certain destination with that car. If the car breaks down or someone tries to damage or steal it, we react because we need the car to fulfill our purpose. But we don't think that we **are** the car and that we'll suffer the damage that might be done to the car. We'll take good care of the car and repair it if it should become damaged so that we can continue with the journey. But we'd be silly to cry about the damage to the car as if the damage were done to us. When we arrive at the destination and fulfill the goal, we willingly get out of the car and leave it in order to carry on with other business. Thus, when we come to the end of our lives on earth, let's gracefully leave our bodies which have served us well.

When we learn to see our bodies like cars which carry us around, we'll not identify so much with the pleasures and pains that the body may experience. At the same time, we'll be more careful to

treat the body well, giving it the proper food, exercise and rest it needs in order to stay in good condition so that we can safely and efficiently fulfill the goal for which we created the body.

The same attitude is required towards the ego itself. The ego must be seen as an instrument through which we perceive and interact with the world. It's like a windowpane at the junction of the inner and the outer world. If we identify with the ego and its various personality roles, then we'll be constantly trying to protect and defend the ego from possible hurt. We'll blindly defend the ego, losing all objective discrimination as to whether the ego may or may not actually be at fault in certain situations. A person who fails to see the ego as an instrument through which he or she functions and identifies with will always be on the defensive. Such a person will not want to hear or face the truth about the ego and its habits and will be unable to change.

But, as we mentioned earlier, life itself is in a constant state of change. One who is afraid to change will simply suffer in a world of change. One will unsuccessfully attempt to create a static, secure environment but being powerless to do so, he or she will suffer.

Thus the cause of suffering is simply explained.

- 1) We are ignorant of our real nature as immortal, all-knowing, ever blissful spirits.*
- 2) Because of this ignorance, we are forced to identify with the body and personality through which we are expressing ourself on this earth.*
- 3) This identification creates an intricate complex of attachments and aversions.*
- 4) Because the nature of the physical world is change and because we have no real power over external events, we are unable always to secure what we are attached to or avoid that to which we have aversion.*

5) *Thus we suffer and experience the whole range of negative emotions, such as disappointment, envy, jealousy, anger, fear, resentment, bitterness, hatred- all these because we simply cannot get what we want.*

6) *The need for a physical body until our life mission is completed causes a natural attachment to that body which naturally causes us to suffer if it should be harmed or in danger.*

THE WEB OF ATTACHMENT

Once, someone asked a great wise woman for inner peace. He said, "I want peace". The wise one smiled, writing these three words on the ground with a stick that was handy. Then she looked up at the man and said, "You see, it's very simple" and with the stick she made two motions. "You cross out the 'I' and you cross out the 'want' and you are left with 'Peace'. The man sat watching this simple but powerful image on the ground before him. The **I** and the **Want** were crossed out and only the word **Peace** was left.

How can we find the inner peace which we all desire so much? We can diminish our ego-centeredness and we can diminish our wants and desires, needs and attachments. It's not necessary to give up the objects of desire themselves but it is necessary to give up our attachment to them. It's not our having or owning things which make them an obstacle to our happiness. It's our dependence on them, our belief that we cannot live without them. That same wise woman explained this to our friend with the example of a bird.

A bird is sitting on a branch. It rests there, enjoying the branch's support. It's very happy there. It may even be the best branch it has ever sat on, perhaps its favorite branch where it sits everyday. Then one day a strong wind blows so strongly that the branch is ready to break. Is the bird afraid? Does it say, "O, my God, what will I do if this branch breaks? My life is coming to an end". No, of course not. The bird has no problem. Why? Because it knows two things. Firstly, it knows that it can fly on its own power and that its safety is not dependent on the branch and secondly, that there are plenty of branches in the world.

This is the type of relationship that we need to have with the people, objects and situations of our lives. We enjoy them, care for them, serve them and grow through and with them without fearing that we cannot continue without them. What kind of branches have you been resting on- a relationship partner, money, material objects, a professional position? Having these is not an obstacle to our spiritual growth. But fearing the loss of them or believing that we cannot live or feel safe or happy without them is both an obstacle to our growth and also to our happiness on a day to day basis.

This diagram may help us to understand how completely these feelings of identification, attachment and aversion permeate every aspect of our lives. In the center we have the spirit which is, as you remember, pure existence - Consciousness - bliss. It has absolutely no needs, desires, attachments or fears. It is fullness itself. It has within it all the possibilities of the universe. It lacks nothing. It is one with the Universal Consciousness.

Our individual consciousness is not aware of the existence of this spirit at the center of our being and thus focuses on the aspects of our being which are more perceptible to our senses, that is, the mind, energy and physical body which are the three outer concentric circles. We identify with them, believing that we are them. Our identification does not stop there however, because that body and mind are connected to a wide variety of external realities to which we also become attached.

SOME EXAMPLES OF HOW ATTACHMENT AFFECTS US

Each identification brings about its own attachments and aversions and thus, its own sources of worry, anxiety, fear, hurt, anger and suffering in general. Take the **physical body** for example. A separate sub-circle has been projected outside of the concentric circles for this identification because it's one of our major concerns. Around this sub-circle for the physical body we've placed the attachments which concern us: its state of health, desires, pleasures, appearance to others, comforts and discomforts, age, weight and other factors. If these are not all the way we want them, we're unhappy and discontent.

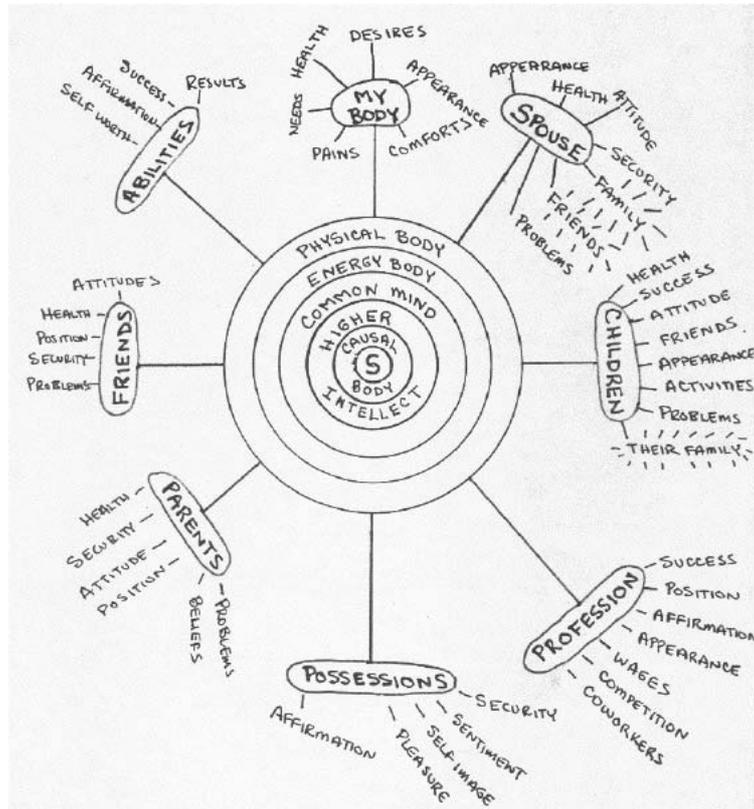


Diagram No.15 **THE WEB OF ATTACHMENT**

This body and mind often create a relationship with another body and mind, which is then, called a **partner or spouse**. We then identify with this other body and mind and become concerned about his/her health, success, appearance to others, comforts, desires and needs. We are also now concerned with whether her/his behavior is pleasant and supportive or the opposite. We're concerned about what we had expected to receive from this spouse and whether or not what we're receiving is what we had expected. We're concerned that perhaps this spouse might pay too much attention to others or to other things and not to us as we had hoped. The identification with the idea of *my spouse* is on one hand a

source of happiness and security but the attachments and aversions which are created are a source of suffering. This type of happiness is fragile and transient because it depends on what's happening outside of ourselves which is something that we can never really control.

The tendency, then, is to try to control this spouse, to make her/him live and act in the way we want, so that we can feel secure, happy and affirmed and reassured of our self worth. This tactic seldom works as it usually produces exactly the opposite results.

Now this **spouse** is also likely to have **friends** and almost certainly a **family**, which means another whole group of beings to worry about their health, happiness, success and, most of all, their behavior towards us and their opinion of us. More attachments and aversions. More prerequisites which need to be fulfilled in order for us to be at peace. We now have a longer list of wants which must be satisfied in order for us to feel inner peace.

It's common to create **children** with this spouse, which means that we now have one or more beings for whom we are temporarily (we must emphasize the word temporarily) responsible. Our peace is considerably disturbed as we cannot relax if everything isn't perfect with our children. Their health, progress, success, the quality of their friends, their problems (which we believe they are incapable of solving without our intervention - even when they don't want our help), their appearance to others and what others think about us through their appearance, and of course their behavior towards us and others; if all these factors are exactly as we want them, then we're very happy. If just one of them is not, then we're not. We suffer.

THE MOSQUITO EFFECT

That old wise woman calls this the mosquito effect. She says that if there are ten mosquitoes in your room and they don't let you sleep and you get up and manage to kill or chase away or in some way incapacitate nine of them, the tenth one will prevent you from sleeping anyway. That means that if we have ten wants or desires

and manage to satisfy nine of them, we'll still not be happy because the tenth one is not satisfied.

We will not think, "Oh, how lucky I am that I've been able to satisfy nine out of ten of my desires." No, we'll say, "Oh, how unhappy I am that I can't satisfy that tenth desire, how difficult and unjust life is." That's the **mosquito effect**. Are you a victim of it? Think about it. Philosophy is useless unless we can apply it to our lives, unless it makes us more peaceful, more satisfied, and happier.

Continuing our analysis of the sub-circles which represent people, things and situations with which we identify, we notice the circle called **parents**. We're attached to their health, happiness and to a specific type of attitude and behavior from them. We're attached to their approval, to their agreeing with us and with our way of life. We might also be concerned about their behavior and what others think about us through them.

We can see as we look through these sub-circles of identifications and attachments that the list is quite extensive. How easily the mind is drawn outward being forced to think about all these factors and about how we might be able to control them all so that they might be just as we **need** them to be or more accurately how we **believe** that things **must** be in order for us to feel secure or happy. This has nothing to do with the love that we feel for these beings. Love is the desire for the other to be happy, well and to grow in their own unique way. It has nothing to do with needing the other or needing a certain type of behavior from them.

The problem is not that we're connected to these sub-circles but that we're trying to take from them. Through them we're trying to find security, happiness, meaning in our lives and perhaps affirmation of our worthiness. When we're focused on them out of need, we cannot feel real unconditional love. Need and love cannot coexist. **Love is free of need**. Just as wisdom is free of need. Perfect love and perfect wisdom are openings out of the cave of ignorance.

The solution then is to **reverse the direction of the flow** so that

we are interested in these relationships, in terms of what we can **offer** to them and not what we can take from them. We love our loved ones, care for them, help them, share with them and communicate openly with them. We accept help and support from them. But like the bird on the branch, we don't let our feelings of security or happiness or meaning in life depend on them. We love and give without expecting in return.

Continuing the analysis of these sub-circles, we notice those labeled **profession, material possessions, talents and abilities**. Through these we usually seek to gain feelings of security and self-affirmation, that we're capable and worthy through our achievements or professional position. We can easily create anxiety about these; how to obtain them, how to keep them, protect them and how to project them so that others notice them. And, if life circumstances threaten them, we tremble with fear believing that we will not be able to continue without them.

THE ROLES WHICH WE PLAY

There are many, varied roles we tend to play. These too create attachments, aversion and, in general, obstruct our happiness. Some who play the role of the **victim** will be attached to being suppressed, ignored, and in general abused. They will avoid success. Being unhappy is a part of their role. They will prefer being unhappy and suppressed rather than lose their role. We get used to these roles, believe that we are them and fear the unknown. Who would we be if we were not the victim?

Those who identify with the role of the **savior** are attached to helping people, to saving them, occasionally even when they don't want help, even if that help is, in the long run, destructive to them. If they're successful in their attempt to save, then they're happy and feel worthy. If they fail, they feel unworthy and might even get angry with those who refused to be saved because they are preventing them from feeling okay about themselves.

The savior along with the **perfect one** and the **strong one** do not allow themselves to have needs. Of course, in reality they have

plenty of needs but they're afraid to express them because then they wouldn't be saviors, perfect or strong. Thus they're attached to situations in which they can reaffirm their superior position. This often requires that the other be weak, needy or have a problem. These people will be attached to people, who through their weakness or problems, help them to feel stronger or superior in comparison. If the other changes and suddenly finds inner strength, or looks elsewhere for help, then these *superior beings* begin to doubt their worth and feel unhappy.

Then there is the role of the **rebel** which forces us to reject everything, even if we like it. It forces us to be negative, anti-everything, so as to preserve our *independence*. We are attached to being different. We are caught up in that role and can't be ourselves, free to express what we really feel. We're trapped in our false idea of freedom.

Some of us play the role of the **happy one** who's attached to presenting an image of always being happy. We have an aversion to anyone discovering our unhappiness or weak points. This doesn't allow us to be ourselves.

Almost all of us play the role of the **child** to some degree. We put many others into the role of our parents and try in various ways to get their approval. We're attached to being accepted by everyone all the time. Is this possible? To be accepted by everyone all the time? Only if we completely deny who we really are and become a *social chameleon* is it possible. But, even in such a case, we'll have to find social groups in which everyone thinks in exactly the same way.

THE WAY OUT

It must be clear now that we're caught in quite an intricate web of identifications, roles, attachments and aversions. These draw the mind outward into an incessant flow of anxious thoughts about how we're going to manage to keep everything from falling apart so that we can feel safe and happy. Every time one of these sub-circles seems to be in danger or perhaps disillusion us, we suffer, feel fear, hurt, weakness, perhaps even inferiority, rejection or injustice and,

in some cases, anger, hate and revenge.

Let us return to the wise woman. She said, "Cross out the **I** and the **Want**." This means less attachment towards these external sources of happiness. It also means freeing ourselves from the belief that we cannot be secure or happy without whatever we're getting from them. Let's remember the story about the bird again. Rest on them, enjoy and love them, and interact with them creatively, honestly and productively.

Know, however, that, if the *branch ever breaks*, we have the inner power to fly and also that there are other branches. Then we will not suffer. If we're secure and happy, those sub-circles will also be much happier because it's a great **burden to them** to know or feel that our happiness or security depends on them. It limits their freedom. It is not pleasant.

How can we do this? That wise woman used to tell us another story. There was once a great she-lion that went hunting with her newly born lion cub. One day in the chase after some sheep, she wasn't careful and fell over a cliff and died. The lion cub remained with the sheep and grew up with them. It became programmed by their ways of thinking and acting. It learned fear. It learned to huddle with the others, never to go off by itself. It ate grass and made a bleating sound like the other sheep.

After some years another lion attacked this herd of sheep. As the lion was in full chase, he suddenly noticed this other sheep-lion running from him bleating like a sheep. This sight outraged him. He ran after him, caught him and asked, "What are you doing behaving in this way...running, fearing and bleating like a sheep?" The sheep-lion looked at him trembling in fear, "But I am a sheep. I'm weak and vulnerable. It's natural that I fear you."

The lion was shocked and saddened by this sheep-lion's ignorance of the truth about himself. (You could say that someone had pulled the wool over his eyes).

He felt great compassion and wanted to help him. However, no

amount of words could convince the sheep-lion that he was actually a lion and not a sheep and that there was absolutely no reason for fear. Then an idea lit up in his mind. He took the sheep-lion down to the lake and said, "Look at yourself and look at me. Who do you look like, those sheep or me?"

The sheep-lion was shocked out of his sheepishness, realized his real nature and became a full lion free from fear. He never feared again. He was no longer attached to the herd and their ways for security. He was free.

We are all sheep-lions. Our spiritual nature is like a lion. Our personality, which has been programmed by a sheep-like society, is the sheep. We're identified with our sheep nature and thus huddle together out of fear. We attach ourselves to others out of fear, not out of love.

The great spiritual teachers and godly people are those who have realized their lion-nature and have come to awaken us to that. Their words sometimes help but seldom are enough to free us from our illusion of sheephood. We need to be taken to the lake of direct experience which is within us so that we may see our lion-face within. This is facilitated by techniques such as meditation and other spiritual disciplines. These disciplines have the power to grant us the direct experience of our lion nature. Then, we will be totally free of fear, attachment and aversion and thus, free from suffering.

Self-analysis will also help to gradually let go of these external sub-circles of illusionary security long enough so that we can direct our attention sufficiently (in terms of time and intensity) towards our inner self, towards the inner circles (of diagram No.15), the higher intellect and spirit.

We will discuss methods of freeing ourselves from this web of attachment in chapter twelve.

CHAPTER IX

THE THREE LAWS OF EVOLUTION

There are three basic laws that motivate and guide us along the evolutionary path from the individual personality to the Universal Spirit, from selfishness to selflessness.

THE LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT

This law operates on all beings through the duality of pain and pleasure. According to this law, every thought, word, or action which is emitted by our gross and subtle bodies must return to us. Life is a mirror reflecting back to us what we are emitting so that we may see ourselves through others and events. When we harm, we are harmed. When we love, we are loved. Very simply, as we do to others, it will be done to us.

With the help of this law we learn by trial and error. When we suffer, we understand how others feel when we act selfishly towards them. When we're happy, we understand how others feel when we love them. Learning through the law of action and reaction is a rather slow and painful process. We will call this law for simplicity's sake by its Sanskrit name, **karma**. From here on we shall refer to the Law of Cause and Effect as the **Law of Karma**.

Karma actually has two meanings in Sanskrit. It means action, but it also means the reaction to the action, or, if you like, the result of that action. It was understood by ancient sages that every action in this universe has a reaction back towards the source of the action. They used the word Karma for both realities since they are automatically connected.

Sir Isaac Newton discovered this law in his study of forces and movement. He revealed a law that is used widely today by scientists and engineers. *"For every force exerted on an object there will be an equal force exerted in the opposite direction by that object (unless it moves)."* Consider **Life** or **Universe** to be immovable objects against which our actions are forces returned in **exactly equal** measure but in the opposite direction, that is, towards us.

All religions have taught this doctrine since the beginning of time, especially the Christian religion, which has directly related illness and suffering with previous self-centered actions. Consider these statements made by Jesus Christ.

1. When He healed the man who was paralyzed, He said, "Get up and walk, your sins are forgiven". This obviously means that his illness was a direct result of his previous sins.

2. When He healed the man who was blind from birth, His disciples asked, "Is he blind, because of his own sins or his parents' sins?" This indicates that it was taken for granted that no one suffers unless there is a cause. In those days, they believed in the possibility that we could suffer because of our parents' mistakes. This is not possible, as we will see.

It happens, however, that in this particular case (as perhaps in the case of most or all miracles) the cause was an exception. Christ explained that, *"He was born blind to show the glory of God."*

This puts the possibility of Divine intervention in our evolutionary process in some doubt. It just may be that most miracles are actually not the removal of karma or sin but events *staged by the Divine* so as to help us believe. The only real solution for our change is **repentance** and **communion** in their real sense. In other words, it's unlikely that God will change our lives for us without our intense effort.

The word 'repentance' in Greek is 'metanoia'. It comes from the word 'meta' which means 'after' but when used as a prefix usually infers some **change**, often radical and sometimes transcendental

(as in the word 'metamorphosis'). The other word is 'nous' which means **mind**. Thus metanoia or repentance is a **radical change of mind**, a transformation from one way of thinking and acting to a completely different one. It is a change from one state of consciousness to another. Consider the following quotation from the **EPIPHANY JOURNAL** by Bishop Kallistos Ware, a lecturer on Orthodox studies at Oxford University in England.

We come closer to the heart of the matter if we reflect on the literal sense of the Greek term for repentance, Metanoia. This means 'change of mind'- not just regret for the past, but a fundamental transformation of our outlook, a new way of looking at ourselves, at others and at God. In the words of The Shepherd of Hermas, it is "a great understanding". A great understanding - but not necessarily an emotional crisis. Repentance is not a paroxysm of remorse and self-pity, but conversion, the re-centering of our life upon the Holy Trinity.

*As a 'new mind', conversion, re-centering, and repentance are positive, not negative. As St. John Climacus says, "Repentance is the daughter of hope and the denial of despair." It is not despondency but eager expectation. It is not to feel that one has reached an impasse, but to take the way out. It is not self-hatred but the **affirmation of my true self as made in God's image**. To repent is to look, not downward at my own shortcomings, but upward at God's love; not backward with self-reproach, but forward with trustfulness. It is to see, not what I have failed to be, but what, by the grace of Christ I can yet become.*

When interpreted in this positive sense, repentance is seen to be not just a single act but a continuing attitude. In the personal experience of each person there are decisive moments of conversion, but in this present life the work of repenting remains always incomplete. The turning of re-centering must be constantly renewed; up to the moment of death, as Abba Sisoës realized, the change of mind must become always more radical, the great understanding always more profound.

The positive character of repentance is clearly apparent if we

consider what comes just before the words of Christ already quoted, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand". In the preceding verse the Evangelist cites Isaiah 9:2, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shone." Such is the immediate context of our Lord's command to repent. It is directly preceded by a reference to a great light shining on those in darkness, and directly followed by a reference to the imminence of the kingdom. Repentance, then, is an illumination, a transition from darkness to light; to repent is to open your eyes to the divine radiance - not to sit dolefully in the twilight but to greet the dawn. And repentance is also eschatological, an openness to the Last Things that are not merely in the future but already present. To repent is to recognize that the kingdom of heaven is in our midst, at work among us, and that, if we will only accept the coming of this kingdom, all things will be made new for us.

We will return to the importance of *metanoia* later on. I prefer to use the Greek word because the word repentance for us has a connotation of breast beating, self-rejection and self-condemnation which I sincerely doubt Christ had in mind. I personally believe He wanted us to see our mistakes, learn from them and change radically our mental processes that created the ground for those mistakes.

All 'sin' comes from ignorance. I cannot act in an ego-centered way. I cannot harm others or myself unless I'm living in the illusion that I am this separate body and mind which I must protect in a dangerous world. When ignorance is removed, sin will not be possible. Remember Christ's statement, "*The Truth will set you free*".

Let's remind ourselves of more sayings that we've heard from childhood concerning the Law of Karma.

3. *As you sow, so shall you reap.*

4. *As you judge, so shall you be judged.*

5. One who lives by the sword will die by the sword.

These statements require no philosophical interpretations. They state outright, clearly and absolutely the Law of Karma. This is why Christ reminded us so many times, "*Do not do to others as you would not like them to do to you*" and "*Do to others as you would like them to do to you*". He was aware of this simple truth that it will eventually be done to us as we have done and not done to others. It is an absolute law, accepted by all religions.

We'll examine the Law of Karma in more detail in the next chapter.

THE LAW OF RIGHTEOUS ACTION

When we have evolved sufficiently, we begin to operate more through the **Law of Righteous Action**. Although we still learn through the Law of Karma, we now are very interested in doing what is right, regardless of whether the results will be pleasant or unpleasant. Pain and pleasure are not so important. We are motivated by a sense of righteous action.

Many have been the great saints who have demonstrated this great steadfastness to the truth in spite of all kinds of physical and mental suffering. Such individuals are concerned for the social welfare and for the needs of others. They feel strongly about living according to the universal laws of harmony, equality, non-violence and correct action. There is again one word in Sanskrit which stands for all these laws. We'll use it from here on because it's more concise than referring to all these laws. It's called the **Law of Dharma**.

This is an extremely important concept which cannot be interpreted by one word. Let's look at some of the various meanings and inferences of the word Dharma.

- 1. Dharma is truth in action.*
- 2. It is correct action.*
- 3. It is any action that is helpful and supportive to human evolution.*

4. *It is a correct means of earning one's living.*
5. *It means running your business in an honest and fair way.*
6. *It means doing to others as you would like them to do to you.*
7. *It means being interested in the welfare of the whole and not only in oneself.*
8. *It means that each will perform his or her duty and obligations conscientiously and selflessly so that in this way society will be in perfect harmony and all needs of all beings will be cared for.*
9. *One's dharma is also the specific type of work or life activity which each of us has come to perform in this incarnated form. One's dharma might be to raise children, to teach, to build buildings, sing songs, write music or books, to farm the land, cook food, clean houses, report the news, help the ill, protect the poor, uphold justice or listen to people's problems. There are as many specific individual dharmas as there are incarnated souls. Each of us has a slightly different unique combination of activities that we must fulfill in this incarnation. This will be the perfect combination of activities to offer each of us spiritual growth and at the same time benefit society.*

Although we all have a slightly different individual dharma, our basic dharma or purpose for existence is threefold:

1. Spiritual dharma is the way in which we must live and act in order to continue our process of self-knowledge and spiritual growth. Included here are all the different spiritual disciplines such as prayer, meditation, fasting, self-analysis, etc.

2. Social dharma is what we offer to our family, friends, work environment and the society in general. Included in this is the earning of money for the survival of our family (in an honest way, at no one else's expense); performing our professional services in a conscientious way, as perfectly as we can; and offering selfless service to all those around us who are in need.

3. Ethical dharma, which means living an ethical life.

A prerequisite, which is common to all of these, is the **dharma to our body and mind** which must be in excellent condition if we are to perform the above dharmas effectively. Included in this dharma are proper diet, exercises, breathing techniques, relaxation techniques and cleansing techniques for the body.

Each act, thought and word which we express can be done so in a dharmic way or in an adharmic way, which means that it is not dharmic. An act, thought or word is dharmic when:

1. *It is not done with intention to harm anyone.*
2. *It betters the quality of the individual and society.*
3. *It is a movement from separateness towards unity.*
4. *It is in harmony with the universal laws of equality, non-violence and correct action.*
5. *We can honestly say that we would like someone else to perform that act, speak those words or think those thoughts about us.*

Thus, there is no specific profession or activity which is more dharmic than another. It's the state of mind and motive which makes a particular act dharmic or not. One person may work to make a lot of money because he wants to feed his children. This is dharmic. Another may do selfless service in order to get recognition and approval from others. This is not dharmic.

It's important for each of us to align our life with the dharma. Those who live by the dharma will be protected and supported by the dharma. Christ promised this when He said that all those who live according to the will of the Father will have all their needs completely taken care of, just as the birds and the lilies in the fields (Matthew 6:31).

Most people have little faith in this promise. This is sad because it is absolutely true. If we can find the courage to give up wasting time trying to find happiness in accumulating for ourselves and start

living for the others around us, all that we **need** for our survival and evolutionary process will come to us at exactly the **moment in which we need it.**

Dharma is, in general, a movement from a separate life disconnected from the whole towards a life united with the whole, through love and service. Each of us may serve, however, in our own way. One may serve by building houses for the homeless and another may serve by praying in seclusion for people's hearts and minds to open to the truth. Both are possible dharmas, only that specific individual can know if he or she is doing it with real love and selflessness.

It's extremely important for each of us to find our specific dharma in our present incarnation. That is the role that we've come to play on earth. Some lose contact with this inner goal because of social, parental and educational programming which orients them towards material success and social recognition. It's a shame for a soul to come into this world, forget why it incarnated and leave, never having really lived the purpose which brought it here. But it happens frequently.

You are encouraged to think deeply about this point. Are you living as you really think you should be? Do you respect everything that you do? Does your life have meaning for you? Are you doing what your inner self really wants to do? Are you happy with your life? Do you feel that your life is connected in some way with the whole? If the answer is not 'yes' to all of these questions, then perhaps you haven't yet totally found your dharma. You may have partially found it but there may be some activities that you'd like to increase, add, reduce or eliminate so that your life represents your true values and interests at this time.

The way in which one will express one's dharma is not static, it may change from stage to stage of life. It may also remain the same. There are many possibilities. The only guide for all of this is our own inner self. That's why it's so important to get in touch with it.

A separate chapter will be included towards the end of this book as

a guide for helping people to find their dharma. Let's now move on to the third law of evolution.

THE LAW OF LOVE

Eventually, we are inspired with selfless love. The **Law of Love** inspires a feeling of union and oneness between the spiritual aspirant and the beings and world around. We cease to feel ourselves as separate entities with selfish needs. We love everyone and everything and willingly give all that we have for the benefit of the whole. Our actions are not motivated by fear of retribution as in the case of the Law of Karma nor by duty as in the case of the law of Dharma. We simply see no difference between our own needs and others' needs. We exert no effort in order to be in harmony with others because for us there are no *others*. Just as a mother easily gives all to her child, the individual living the Law of Love gives all to the world.

We use the word **love** to represent many different feelings and states of mind. In its grossest sense it can mean animal lust for some object or being; an intense desire to have something, to own it, to consume it, to become one with it in some way. Some people love sex. Others love music or art. Others say they love ice cream or sweets. Most love their family members. Some love their friends. Fewer love their enemies. Some claim to love God. When we use the word **love** we could mean any of the following words: lust, desire, attachment, addiction, infatuation, fascination, selfish love, selfless love, pure love, unconditional love, universal love or Divine Love.

We could even extend our imagination to think that the electron is in love with the proton and the earth is in love with the Sun. Thus, the forces of electromagnetism and gravity become physical manifestations of love. The Law of Love is the force which attracts things and brings together toward union. We could also imagine that the forces holding together the numerous particles of the atomic nucleus together are also the manifestation of this Law of Love, the law of attraction, the law of union. Some scientists recognize the law of negentropy, which is the opposite of the law of entropy. The law of entropy states that all things in this universe tend to move towards greater dissolution.

This means that things naturally tend to come apart, dissolve, dissipate, or mix together randomly. On a material level this is definitely happening. But on the other hand something else seems to be putting things together. Some power is putting all these beings together- humans, animals, insects, plants, microbes, and crystals. Some force is causing atoms, molecules (earth, air and water) to come together, to temporarily unite forming all these beings. There is also a power which is **very slowly** causing these beings to come together into greater harmony into a United Nations, a United Europe, into movements for World Peace and World Unity for ecology and harmony with nature. These are all the results of the power of Spirit, the force of Love.

STAGES OF HUMAN LOVE

Let's consider the stages of human love. In the earlier stages, most human love is based on emotionally immature motives. Most human relationships are formed out of insecurity, desire, loneliness, social pressure, habit or feelings of incompleteness. Very few relationships are based on pure unconditional love. Most seek to take rather than to give in their relationships. Most want the other to change in order to fit their own image of how the other should be. Relationship partners imagine that it's the other's responsibility to make them happy. They unreasonably believe that even though they're not happy within, the other can make them happy by being as they want them to be. This is especially true of husbands/wives and parents/children.

Most people marry for the wrong reasons. They marry because they feel emotionally or financially insecure and hope that the marriage will give them that security. Others marry because they've been conditioned by social pressure to believe that there's something wrong with the person who doesn't get married. This is especially true for women. Women are socially programmed to feel vulnerable financially and emotionally if they don't have a husband. When one marries with such motivations, disappointment is very likely. Others marry out of a feeling of incompleteness, hoping that the other will fulfill them.

However, relationships based upon wanting to take something from the other individual are usually doomed to failure as has been adequately proven by the overwhelming percentage of unhappy marriages and divorces all over the world today. This is a result of the fact that no one can really make anyone else happy. Happiness, security and completeness can come from within only. When we expect the other to make us happy and they fail to fulfill that expectation, then we blame them. We begin to complain and argue and try to make them change. If we, on the other hand, thought more about how **we could help the other** to feel more happy and secure, then the relationship would be much more successful and loving.

"Love is giving and forgiving. Self is getting and forgetting". We will do well to examine what motives our relationships are based on.

There's a great confusion today between love and attachment. Many people think they are loving, when in reality they are simply attached to someone because of the security, pleasure or power they get, or hope to get, from the relationship. This has absolutely nothing to do with love. When we're attached, we want to get something, to receive. When we're unable to have that something, whether it's mental, emotional, physical or material, then we suffer and feel hurt and perhaps angry. On the other hand, when we love, we simply want the other to be happy, regardless of what we may get or not get in return.

This is of course an ideal kind of love, called **unconditional love**, or pure love, or selfless love. Very few of us are able to feel this kind of love. We've been encouraged by the great spiritual beings of all religions to develop this kind of love in our lives. We're told that this love is latent within us, that in fact it is our own intrinsic nature, which will bubble up when we are completely at ease. Let's look at some of the qualities of this kind of love and how we may work toward developing it.

SELFLESS LOVE

In order to love selflessly, we need to **feel secure and content.**

Otherwise our fears and needs will drive us to try to protect ourselves from others or manipulate them so that we can obtain that security or contentment which we lack. We can love selflessly only when we don't need or desire anything from the other person. It is impossible to love someone if we're attached to their fulfilling our needs.

Few of us, however, have yet reached such a level of self-sufficiency and self-realization, so that we might love in this way. That doesn't mean that we should reject ourselves as being unworthy and give up all hope of being able one day to love totally unconditionally. It does mean that we will need to work consciously on ourselves if we want to uncover the love which lies within us just waiting to flow.

We **are** Love in the center of our being. Our natural tendency is to love. That's why the opposite feelings of separateness, loneliness, anger, jealousy, and hate are so unpleasant and so unhealthy. They're not natural to our inner self. That's why love feels so good. That's why it calms us, makes us feel secure. That's why it makes us joyful.

It's natural for us to love but we've been conditioned not to love by a society ignorant of spiritual truths and thus, steeped in fear. We're taught to protect ourselves, to lock our cars, houses and hearts. Through our efforts towards spiritual unfoldment we can once again find the inner strength, security and courage to throw open the locks on our hearts and love unconditionally. What does that mean?

Loving unconditionally means to learn to **accept others as they are**. It means not making expectations and demands on them so that our love increases or decreases depending on their behavior. It is, however, possible to love and accept a being totally without having to accept his every behavior. Behavior is something separate from one's being. It's especially important to show unconditional love to children. Explain to them that although you may not be able to approve of their behavior, you accept and love them as beings and that that love will never be diminished by anything they might do.

Forgiveness is an essential part of this kind of love. Jesus Christ repeatedly warned us not to judge others and encouraged us to forgive everything that anyone might do to us. He gave us a living example by asking God to forgive those who were crucifying Him. When Peter asked Him if we had to forgive someone 7 times, He answered that we must forgive 70 X 7 times (490 times).

Loving unconditionally means being mature enough to understand that the harm others do to us and to others is a result of their **ignorance**, their **fear**, and their **immaturity**. It means being wise enough to see through these externally aggressive actions and to perceive the scared child within that being. We may then let our love persist and penetrate through that outer show of hardness. This takes great strength that comes only with greater inner security and faith in God. According to St. John the Evangelist, *"There is no fear in love; perfect love drives out all fear. So then, love has not been made perfect in anyone who is afraid..."*.

Selfless love requires **self-sacrifice**. This means learning to compromise one's own needs in order to help the other. We must analyze in each situation whether it's more important to fulfill our own needs or the other's needs at that particular moment. Are our needs really so important? Are they really needs or habits, addictions or desires based on insecurity or discontent?

If we decide that in truth our needs are more important, then let us fulfill them without guilt. If not, let us sacrifice them lovingly. At the same time, we must be careful to analyze whether the other being really needs what he or she is asking for. Sometimes we can harm others and keep them from growing by taking care of all their needs or solving their problems as if they are children.

Reducing our own desires and needs will help us to become more loving. The less time, energy, money and thought we require for ourselves, the more we can dedicate to serving others. Christ sacrificed His own body out of His love for us. Christ was Love Incarnated.

We have everything to gain and nothing at all to lose by working

gradually and steadily towards this kind of thinking and loving. Only then will we proceed spiritually. No amount of exercises and meditation will help us find God if we don't learn to sacrifice our ego-centered desires and love others. We can pray daily that God may help us in this transformation. When we've found love, we've found God. In the words of the Apostle John, "**Love is God and God is Love**".

UNIVERSAL LOVE

Universal love extends to include an **ever-widening circle** of beings. Each of us has a certain limiting circle of identification where we allow ourselves to be accepting, open and loving. Some people's circle ends within themselves. They feel alienated, lonely and separated from everyone. They love no one, perhaps not even themselves. The truth is that you cannot really love others if you don't love yourself to a certain degree.

Some feel comfortable with and love the members of their family but feel alienated from or actually reject everyone else who is not a part of the family. Still others are able to let their love expand outward to their friends, or even business associates. Some have managed to let their love extend out to encompass all those of the same nationality or religion or social class. Universal love must continue expanding to encompass all of humanity and even animals and plants.

Sai Baba says, "*Love is expansion. Self is contraction*". If we want to develop Universal Love, we must see through every form and realize our Oneness with each and every being in all of creation. We will have to overcome our conditioning that has caused us to accept or reject others on the basis of their appearance, religion, nationality, race, social class or any other factor.

When we love universally, we will not be capable of harming others. We'll realize our inherent oneness with all beings and that whatever we do to others, we're really doing to ourselves. Such love creates within us a **natural morality**, removing violence, untruth, theft, envy, jealousy, anger, and other harmful emotions and activities

from our nature. There's no need for external controls and laws when one has developed Universal Love and sees all beings as oneself.

In the Bible, Jesus Christ has given us three commandments that will guide us toward Union with God.

The first is to *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength."*

Sri Krishna offers the same advice in the Bhagavad Gita to those who want to have God- realization.

*"Give Me your whole heart,
love and adore Me,
Worship Me always,
Bow to me only,
And you shall find Me.
This is My promise
Who love you dearly".*

Since love is the power which creates union between the loved and the lover, it only makes sense that **love of God will result in Union with God**. But how much time do we spend thinking about, or communicating with God? What proportion of our time do we spend on God and what proportion do we spend on our earthly desires and preoccupations? Perhaps we need to make some adjustments here.

Christ also tells us that the **Kingdom of Heaven** where God resides **is within us**. Paul, in his letters, confirms that we are *temples of the living God*. Therefore God is obviously residing in each and every living being. How else could beings survive or exist, if God's creating and sustaining power were not within? Is there any other power which gives and sustains life? At least science hasn't discovered any other power, if it does exist.

In order to love God we must also love all other beings. It's impossible to Love God and not love the people around us. If we say

we love God and harm the people around us, we're simply hypocrites. Love of God means love of Humanity.

Christ's second commandment is exactly this, to "*Love others as you love your selves*". And His third, "*Love your enemies*". He asks us not only to love our friends but also our enemies. Even animals love their children and their own groupings. Humans must bring the evolution of love to a higher level by learning to love even those who are different and even those who may try to harm them.

This may be difficult for most of us. We've learned to harbor negative feelings towards those who try to harm us. To do the opposite and love them requires great philosophical clarity and spiritual strength and discrimination. Loving or not loving is not so much a moral issue, nor a matter of 'sin' or 'meritorious action'. Loving is simply a measure of emotional maturity or spiritual wisdom. Whether we're able to love our enemies or not doesn't depend on whether we're *good* or *bad* but rather on how well we've understood the basic laws of the creation of personal reality.

We'll discuss how we create our personal reality later on in this book. Here we will simply say that we're totally responsible for everything that happens to ourselves. No one else is ever the **cause** of what happens to us. They may very well be, and often are, the means by which something happens to us but never are they the cause. They are also never the cause for what we feel within our mind. They may be the stimulus for what we're feeling but never the cause of our emotions.

The emotions which we feel can be likened to seeds and seedlings which sprout forth from deep within us. Others and their actions are like the rain, which stimulate these seeds to sprout. But the field is ours and we've planted those seeds there. This will become clearer later.

If we can believe this, then we can forgive everyone simply because there is nothing to forgive. No one has done anything to us. They are simply the means by which events necessary for our spiritual growth occur to us. Neither are they responsible for how we feel

about what is happening. They simply are not responsible for our reality.

LOVING OURSELVES

Ken Keys in his **HANDBOOK TO HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS**, states that the law of higher consciousness is to "*Love everyone unconditionally - including yourself*". There's great wisdom in adding the words "including yourself". Christ said, "*Love others as you love yourself*". That implies that one needs also to love one's self. This may not always be the case. Many of us have negative feelings about ourselves, based on early childhood programming. We've learned to think about ourselves as guilty, weak, helpless, evil and unworthy in general.

The subject of learning to love ourselves and others more openly, less conditionally and more completely is discussed in detail in the book **THE MIRACLES OF LOVE AND WISDOM** and for this reason, we won't discuss it further here.

Suffice it to say that again our ability to love ourselves and others unconditionally is an indication of our spiritual clarity. Spiritual wisdom makes two very important truths very clear:

1. That we are not our bodies and minds and thus we are not the actions and behaviors which they produce. We are all eternal divine witnesses of this material, emotional, mental drama. We are responsible for whatever we do; and everything we do will return to us. We deserve to be loved independently of our character, actions and behavior, simply because we are not them.

Spiritual wisdom, in this way, allows us to love ourselves and others even though we're not perfect. We're able to accept our weaknesses and negative aspects as natural for our present state of evolution. This doesn't mean, of course, that we don't continue our efforts towards self-improvement.

The child in the first grade doesn't reject himself or stop loving himself because he's not able to do what the children in the twelfth

grade are able to do. But neither does he say, "I will remain here as I am in the first grade". No, he wants very much to continue learning so that he can eventually act and perform like a twelfth grader. In the same way, we accept and love ourselves and others in the first grade of spiritual life, but we're simultaneously eager to keep on growing into the higher levels of love and wisdom.

Sathya Sai Baba explains that, *"The deeds, good and bad, performed by the body do not infect the Spirit. All that is done with the body is experienced by the body itself. It is not proper to think that the sins performed by the body and experienced by the mind can be attributed to the Spirit. The Spirit has got eternal contentment. The sins committed by the body do not affect it. The various Spiritual practices are not really for Self-realization but for attaining and appreciating this distinctiveness of the body from the Spirit and getting over the illusions of relating to the body"*.

If we can develop this discrimination, we'll be able to see that we and every other being is Pure Consciousness and Pure Love, and that all the drama of life is but a temporary relative reality which hides the truth of our Oneness with all beings. We'll then be able to love ourselves and others unconditionally.

2. Secondly, spiritual wisdom affirms our spiritual unity; that we are all different expressions of one Divine Consciousness. The realization that we are actually one with the other automatically creates feelings of love and unity with the other.

Spiritual wisdom creates an inner opening so that our love can flow. And in turn, love removes blockages, thus allowing our inner wisdom to develop. Both love and wisdom are within us. Developing the one increases the other. They're like the two pedals of a bicycle. Pushing on the one brings the other upward and vice versa. In this way, we move quickly and safely up the path of spiritual evolution.

DIVINE LOVE

St. John the Evangelist adds Christ's fourth commandment concerning love in his gospel. Christ says, *"Love each other as I*

have loved you". First, He asked us to love each other as we love ourselves. But our love for ourselves is sometimes doubtful. The next stage is to love our fellow beings as God is able to love us. God's love is perfect love. God is Love. God doesn't need anything at all from us. He (She or It) wants only to give. He wants only to see us, His creations, grow and be happy. He wants every thing for us and needs nothing for Himself.

He wants these things because, in the highest reality, God is our own higher nature. God is within us. Our spirit is one with God. As Khalil Gibran so poetically puts, *"God, I am your Yesterday and You are my Tomorrow"*. We are divine seeds dropped from the Divine Being which will someday evolve into that Divine Tree from which we have come. The Apostle Paul emphasizes in his letter to the Romans that **nothing can stop God from loving us**. No matter what we may do, God's love will always be there. When we perform harmful actions to others, we simply remove ourselves from that Divine Radiance, through our ignorance. God's love has not stopped, we've simply cut ourselves off from it.

Satya Sai Baba confirms the irrefragability of God's Love. *"Spiritual aspirants in the midst of their efforts sometimes imagine God to be less glorious than He really is. They feel that the Lord differentiates between sinners and saints, good and bad, the wise and the ignorant. These are unsound inferences. The Lord does not separate people thus"*.

In order to be able to love others as God loves us, we will need to steadily develop our own latent divine nature. The techniques offered by the various religions and spiritual systems are designed for exactly this purpose. Let's each move forward, reducing the pull of the ego and all its demands and desires, and identify more and more each day with our higher soul nature which is Pure Love and Pure Consciousness.

THE THREE LAWS

In this chapter we've discussed three laws through which we can evolve. We can learn through the Law of Karma, making mistakes,

acting selfishly and learning through the suffering which returns. Or we can evolve through the Law of Dharma, paying close attention to living and acting always in harmony with the golden rule, "*Do to others only that which you would like them to do to you*".

Or, we can rise upward through selfless Love.

The more we operate out of Dharma and Love, the less Karma we create. It is our choice.

When a child is dirty, he needs to take a bath. His parents tell him to go and take a bath. Inside, he knows he must. He also knows he'll feel better when he's clean. But he's too preoccupied with what he's doing, with the games he's playing. Or, sometimes, he just doesn't want to do what he *must* do. He feels a false sense of freedom in not doing what is correct to do, even though he knows deep inside that he will feel better.

After the parents have reminded him quite a number of times in many ways, from soft to aggressive, they eventually just catch him and drag him crying into the bathtub.

Washing up (spiritual purification) could have been a relaxed and pleasant experience if the child had gone when he first got the message. Since he ignored the messages for so long, the message came in a rather unpleasant form.

We have a lot of purification to do in our lives. We can begin now living in the Dharma or in Love or we can wait for a really painful message to come and to force us to get started.

These three laws are summed up in the following words: "*Remember, when you love another person, you are really loving yourself, for there is only you in everyone. He is I. Whenever you injure, it is you that suffers. Whenever you cheat, it is you who are cheated. If you do not do your duty to the best of your ability and intelligence and to the satisfaction of your conscience, you are only cheating your Self*".

CHAPTER X

THE LAW OF KARMA

Since most of us are still learning primarily through the Law of Karma, let's look in more detail at this subject.

For every action there is a reaction. For every result there is a cause. Every impulse must return to its original sender. Nothing happens to us in our lives that is a matter of chance. Every experience, pleasant or unpleasant, is the perfect reflection of our past thoughts, words and actions. There is no such reality as injustice, no excuse for bitterness, envy, jealousy, pride or bitterness, for we're getting exactly what we deserve at every moment.

THE CIRCLE OF INCARNATIONS

We mentioned in an earlier chapter that all of the actions, words, thoughts, and experiences of each being are registered as tendencies or qualities in the causal body or the morphogenetic field. The causal body acts like a cosmic computer recording each and every act, thought, word and experience of all the various incarnations which a spirit projects onto the earth. These activities are stored as subtle impressions called *samskaras*. In the same way that an audible physical sound is recorded as a subtle magnetic arrangement on a cassette tape, our actions, desires and experiences are recorded as subtle *samskaras* in the causal body. These *samskaras* must be expressed in present and future lives. The tape must be played back and the subsequent reaction is again recorded. This goes on indefinitely until we learn not to react with attachment. When there is no attachment there is no more recording. The recorded impulses play out and become less. When there are no more *samskaras*, there is no more need for reincarnation. The tape has been made clean.

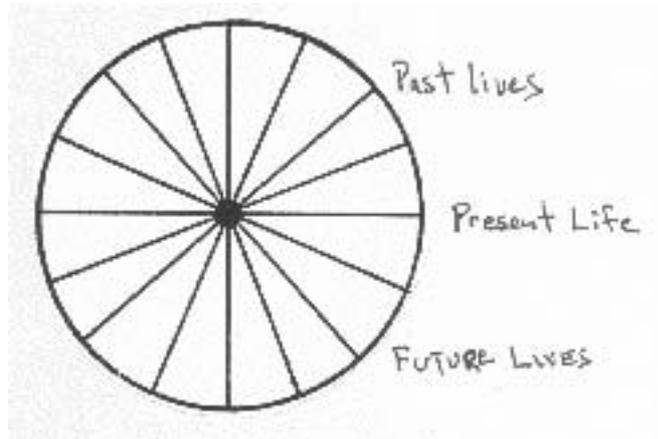


Diagram No.16
THE CIRCLE OF INCARNATIONS

This diagram may help us to understand the relationship between the spirit, the causal body and the various lives. In the center of the model is the Spirit, which is immortal, omniscient, omnipresent and ever blissful. This Spirit, however, projects its Consciousness into the material dimensions, where it's expressed through various bodies or vehicles. As it passes through these bodies, it loses awareness of its real nature and identifies with the bodies.

The closest body to the Spirit is the causal body where our tendencies are stored as samskaras. Then there is the higher intellect. These two subtle bodies remain with the spirit even after death. These two bodies, which we call the soul, are common to all the various lives, present, past and future. These various lives are represented by the many spokes that are emanating from the spirit and soul. The horizontal line on the right indicates the present life. Those in the upper hemisphere represent the already manifested lives, that is, the already expressed mental, energy and physical bodies used by the soul on earth.

In each new incarnation, the spirit and soul generate a new type of mental, energy and physical body. The tendencies associated with the actions and energies of these bodies are recorded in the causal

body. Those recorded impulses will form the limiting factors and tendencies of the next incarnation, through the Law of Karma.

Neither time nor karma are experienced by the Spirit. It is in the unmoving center. The wheel turns and the drama takes its course, but the Spirit rests blissfully in the center, beyond time and space.

All these seemingly separate lives are linked through the common causal body and higher intellect which are responsible for the recording impulses and experiences and discriminating as to how best to work out the process of liberation. For the Spirit in the unmoving center, there is no time; past, present and future are simultaneous.

What we experience today is the result of what we've done in the past. But the past is not only past lives but also our childhood and last week and five seconds ago. The contents of the causal body are in constant change with our every new action.

FACTORS CONTROLLING BIRTH

When the soul is ready to incarnate again it will select (or the selection will take place according to Universal Laws) the specific samskaras (tendencies stored in the causal body) which will be worked out in this impending incarnation. These tendencies will form the deciding factors as to what type of body and personality will be manifested, so as to most efficiently learn the specific lessons which must be learned in this life. Thus, the soul chooses the sex, the parents, the strengths and weaknesses of the body and mind. It also chooses the various major events it will experience as well as the important close relationships and the length of the life. According to the Law of Karma, all these are pretty much established before birth.

This doesn't mean, however, that an individual doesn't have the ability to change the course of things through personal spiritual effort and Divine Grace. Although the major events are predetermined by our previous actions, our freedom lies in our ability to react in a different way. When we learn to act with

detachment, forgiveness, understanding and love, then we cease to perpetuate the karmic cycle. When we react with resentment, bitterness, anger and intolerance, we continue to generate karma for ourselves and negativity for others.

Present experiences depend on our past way of behaving and future experiences depend on our past and present way of behaving. The point of power to change and transcend the limitations is in the present moment. **The present is the past of the future.** Our actions and realizations in the present can always change the future because they change the contents of the causal body. Also, we don't know what events we've chosen until they've already happened. Therefore, we have no choice but to try to create the most positive, happy, healthy life that we can.

Of course, not all the samskaras can be worked out in one life. Only a certain portion of the total amount of samskaras stored in the causal body is selected for expression in a particular life. When that portion is worked out, the individual is free to leave the physical body. Until that time, the physical body is needed in order to work out the karma.

There are three categories of karma.

1) The total karma which is stored in the causal body in order to be worked out at some time in the future before enlightenment.

2) The karma which has been chosen to be worked out in a particular life.

3) The karma which is being worked out at any given time period in that life.

The question comes to mind as to how this cosmic game got started. How and why was the first samskara developed. The common answer offered by most schools of thought is that this question cannot be answered with words, but that it can be experienced upon the transcendence of the rational mind. However, even if once you have experienced the answer, you cannot communicate it because it

is beyond duality and beyond the comprehension of the mind. Accepting that it has started in some way, let's consider the explanation of I.K. Taimni's, a well-known author and scholar of the Theosophical School of Thought, as to how it has progressed.

In fact, the moment consciousness comes into contact with matter with the birth of ignorance and the identification with the relative form begins to work, samskaras begin to form. Attractions and repulsions of various degrees and kinds are present even in the earliest stages of evolution-mineral, vegetable and animal. An individual who attains the human stage after passing through all the previous stages brings with him all samskaras of the stages through which he has passed, though most of these samskaras lie dormant in a latent condition. Animal traits are recognized even by Western psychology as present in our subconscious mind and the occasional emergence of these traits belonging to the lower stages is due to the presence within us of all the samskaras which we have gathered in our evolutionary development.

The soul is in a state of evolution through the various forms of life. The evolution of humans continues through the purification of tendencies, habits and attitudes until we are able some day to manifest our latent divinity.

The Law of Karma guides us along this spiritual path; it helps us to understand right from wrong, through pleasure and suffering. Pleasure is the result of selfless actions and pain is the result of selfish actions.

Through the Law of Karma we learn to identify with a wider segment of reality. Through Karma we learn the lessons which we need to mature, both mentally and emotionally. The same difficulty, however, can be viewed either as a **punishment**, a **test**, or an **opportunity** to develop spiritual strength and faith. Although, as true spiritual aspirants, we don't seek suffering, we also don't resent difficulties which come, for we know that the difficulties are sent by life itself to help to take the next step forward. A general rule to accept is that life is always giving us exactly what we need at every moment in order to learn the lessons

we need to learn. Perhaps they're not the lessons we would like to learn, but they are certainly the ones we need to learn. Consider these words by Satya Sai Baba.

The Lord does not test one just for fun; He does not pile suffering upon difficulty because he enjoys it. Examinations are held to measure achievement and award marks and honors. You must ask to be examined, so that your progress may be recorded.

St. Paul expressed the same thought in his letter to the Hebrews. *My son, pay attention when the Lord corrects you, and do not be discouraged when He rebukes you. Because the Lord corrects everyone He loves, and punishes everyone He accepts as a child. Endure what you suffer as being a father's punishment; your suffering shows that God is treating you as His son.*

This reminds me of a story about the Spanish saint, St. Teresa. She was called on to come to the aid of a very sick person at night in the middle of a furious rainstorm. About half way there, her horses slipped and her carriage turned over in the mud. She was lying in the rain completely drenched and covered with mud. She looked up into the sky and asked, "God, I was on my way to help one of your children. Why did you do this to me?"

She heard a voice speak out, "But Teresa, this is how I treat all my friends".

She looked up with a twinkle in her eye and answered, "Yes, God, that's why you have so few friends."

PUNISHMENT OR OPPORTUNITY

I wouldn't agree, however, with the way in which St. Paul expresses his message to the Hebrews. The word *punishment* seems to be a poor choice of words here. Or perhaps it was chosen, because those listening could understand him only in this way.

A parent doesn't want to punish the child. It pains him to punish the child. He does so only if he believes that this event will, in some

way, **educate** the child. His goal is always the child's education, growth, maturity, evolution and self-improvement. It's unfortunate that we interpret the difficulties of life as punishment. God is Love. God is the Universal Consciousness residing in all beings. What purpose could punishment serve when evolution in the manifestation of the divine tendencies in all beings is the only purpose for creation? All events simply serve as opportunities to learn.

Now that we understand the law of Karma, we realize that no God is responsible for these events which are happening to us. These are all simply our own thoughts, words and actions reflected back to us from the Universal Consciousness which acts like a mirror. We are the creators of what happens to us. God, the Universal Consciousness, is the impartial witness of all this. When we realize that we are really that witness, we will be freed from the game.

We can interpret suffering as punishment, as a test or as an opportunity for greater self-expression, as Sai Baba suggests here.

Just as sugar cane does not yield sugar juice unless it is crushed, as a sandal wood does not give the fragrant paste unless it is rubbed on the stone, the goodness of people does not come out unless they go through difficulties.

A diamond is first just a dull piece of stone, a hard pebble. Only when it is cut by a skillful artisan, does it become a multifaceted flame. Allow yourselves to be so treated, that all your dullness will disappear and you will emerge as a resplendent diamond.

When we're being tested by life, let's remember that what is happening is offering us an opportunity to grow and learn more about ourselves and the nature of reality. Rather than worry, fear or feel incapable or wronged or angry, we can direct our energy towards discovering what life is trying to teach us through this event or situation. (Many examples of how this analysis can be made are given in the book **THE PSYCHOLOGY OF HAPPINESS**).

BALANCING ACCOUNTS

Another aspect of karma is that it helps us balance ourselves with the world around us and within us. The way in which we treat others is a measure of the way in which we will ultimately treat ourselves. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, *"If you put a chain around the neck of a slave, the other end fastens itself around your own"*. Abraham Lincoln agrees that, *"This is a world of **compensation**; and he who would be no slave must consent to have no slave."* We are simply not allowed to have double standards.

"Do unto others what you wish them to do unto you.

Do not do to others what you do not wish them to do to you.

Do not have a double standard.

Treat all as your own self.

That is to say, you must have faith in yourself and then only can you have faith in others.

Love of Self is the measure of your Altruism.

Humankind is one community.

You harm yourself, and you harm all.

You make a person stand erect and that act makes you stand erect.

The treatment you wish others to render to you is itself the measure of your duty to them."

Actually our karma is not with another person. All karma is contained within the individual. The karmic return of goodness or evil doesn't need to return from the same individual to which it was expressed. We may help one person and be helped by another. We may harm one person and be harmed by another.

Our karma is with ourselves. If we harm someone and they forgive us, then we might have to work this karma out with someone else. In the same way, when we forgive someone for what they've done to us, we free ourselves from the cycle of action and reaction with this person. If he or she wants to continue playing this game, someone else will take our place; someone who still needs this lesson.

No one creates karma for us, not even our parents. And we don't create karma for anyone else.

Because our mind is not strong enough to penetrate into the higher levels of our being where the memories of past lives are available, we must accept blindly that there is a just law which determines the results of our efforts in life. One who can see into the past and future is aware of the karmic situation of each. He or she is able to understand the relationship of cause and effect, which our feeble minds miss. Here Sai Baba gives an example:

Everyone is good, but there are bad actions. Actions and reactions. In terms of the victims of bad action, everything was exactly right. You see only the present, I see the past also. A four year old boy was attacked by robbers for the gold chain around his neck. The robbers blinded the boy so he could not identify them. The boy was crying bitterly that he could not see. The parents also were crying. They came to me. In the past life, the boy had been a cruel man who had blinded several people.

Sai Baba goes on to say that if the boy eventually realizes this and repents and turns towards God, then the condition may be rectified. Let's remember that repentance means to **change the nature of the mind**. Thus the karmic blindness in this case becomes the stimulus for a spiritual transformation.

From this statement by Sai Baba, we can make some possible conclusions:

- 1) *All experiences are a result of karmic factors.*
- 2) *The average person is unable to see the relationship between the*

past action and the present reaction.

3) Selfish, egotistical actions bring suffering; selfless altruistic actions bring joy.

4) Lessons can be learned through the karmic return.

5) There is the free choice to learn the lesson or not.

6) If the lesson is learned and one asks for Divine Grace, the karma may be removed by Grace.

7) All beings are innately good, only their actions can be harmful.

8) There is no such thing as injustice.

ACCUMULATIVE KNOWLEDGE

This knowledge is an invaluable tool for interpreting the results of our efforts both in material and spiritual life. Two people may make the same effort but have different degrees of success depending on what efforts they've also made in past lives. Actually, one person might make a big effort and not succeed as much as one who makes little effort. The result is never dependent on the efforts of this life only, but rather on the accumulative effort of many lives.

Sai Baba gives us an example here.

You complain that your neighbor began his spiritual discipline only two years ago, while you have been keeping the schedule for 20 years. But he has secured happiness and you are still miserable. You feel that you have been coming to me for years but I take near to me those who have come just a short while ago. Your reactions lead you to ascribe injustice and partiality, but the answer lies in the past of which you are not aware.

Twenty hammer strokes (years of effort) have been given to a slab, but it did not break. Another fellow comes along and at his second stroke the slab is broken. The man who dealt the twenty is

disappointed and the man who broke it in two strokes is elated but the slab broke as a result of the cumulative impact of the twenty-two.

Your neighbor has to his credit 20 years of spiritual effort stored up in the causal body with which he has come from his previous birth into this present one. Your nature and your tendencies are shaped by the way in which you have lived and reacted, fed and fought, in the long series of lives you have already lived.

God is not involved in either rewards or punishments. He only reflects, resounds and reacts. He is the eternal unaffected Witness. You decide your own fate.

If we believe this, we can no longer blame others, or the government, or weather conditions for our suffering. We must take full responsibility for what we experience; for we have created it with our **own** past actions. Even to say that it is *God's will* is shirking the responsibility that we ourselves have caused these situations. God is simply witnessing the fate we have created for ourselves.

Let's remember then that what happens to us and our loved ones, as well as the results of our various efforts are not the results of our present life efforts only. Our present life efforts are important and must be made both for the physical survival and for spiritual growth, but they're not the only factors which will determine the results. There are various other factors, one of which is our past.

ABILITIES AND TALENTS

Most people are not aware of abilities and talents which have already been developed in previous lives and are at the present waiting within them for just a little effort to be awakened. We have considerably more inner potential than we realize. In addition to our spiritual nature, we also have our previous life experiences and efforts.

You see, then, that karma is not only unpleasant. It's also the

transference of our positive activities and tendencies into the present and future. Nothing we ever learn is lost. Everything we have ever learned is still recorded in our causal body.

This is why the Greek philosopher Plato believed that we do not actually learn but simply remember what we already know. According to Plato, *"The soul then, being immortal, and having been born many times, and having seen all things that exist, whether in this world or the world below, has knowledge of them all; and it is no wonder that she would be able to call to remembrance all that she ever knew about virtue and about everything; for as all nature is akin and the soul has learned all things, there is no difficulty in her eliciting, or as men say, learning out of a single recollection all the rest, if a man is strenuous and does not faint for all inquiry and all learning is but recollection."*

THE THREE CAUSES OF PERSONAL REALITY

Let's make a brief clarification here. There are actually three factors that create our present reality. They basically come from the same source but are expressed slightly differently through the three dimensions of time (which we must remember is simply a creation of the mind). When time disappears, these three become one again. They together are effects of our consciousness which is expressing itself in the evolutionary process. The cause of our reality is our consciousness. Our awareness itself is projecting the reality, which we perceive as a movie projector projects images on a screen.

What are those three factors? One is the **past** that we've already mentioned. Our past thoughts, words and actions are presently being projected out onto the screen of life, creating our present reality. The second is our **present belief system**. The beliefs, thoughts, values, emotions, preconceptions, expectations, desires and habits which presently dominate our conscious and subconscious minds are also projecting outward onto the screen of our present life.

Therefore, what we're experiencing may not be a *karma* from the past but in reality a **result of our present belief system**. For

example, we may be experiencing rejection or antagonistic behavior from someone. This behavior might not be the result of something we've done in the past but a reflection of our present beliefs about ourselves, others and the nature of reality.

If we believe that we're unworthy of respect, or if we believe that the world is full of injustice or that people are incapable of loving us and treating us correctly, then we'll attract exactly these types of behavior from people. We might attract disrespect, failure, and a variety of calamities not because they're our karma, but because they're the products of our present conscious and subconscious belief system.

For this reason, we must never simply accept what is happening in our lives without internal inquiry and effort to change it. We have the obligation to try to create the best possible life for ourselves and those around us. In that effort, however, we need to be detached from the result of our effort, knowing that it will always be the perfect result of our combined past and present actions. We can continue our efforts if we believe in them, always accepting the correctness of the results.

The third factor, which creates our present reality, is the **goals or lessons** that we've set for our evolutionary process in this life. For example, if we've chosen to become a doctor, we'll need to pass through many years of study, hard work and difficulties, depriving ourselves perhaps of comforts and pleasures which others around us are enjoying temporarily. We'll have to go through a series of difficult examinations in order to arrive at our goal.

In the same way, if we've chosen in this life to learn selfless unconditional love, it will be necessary to go through the appropriate lessons and exams such as living with a very difficult person, being harmed by people we love, being disappointed. The only way to learn unconditional love is to be faced by the very conditions that we until now put on our love so that we can learn to let go of those conditions and love the other anyway. If we want to learn inner security there is no other way but to have no one else to depend on. Only when we have no other external support can we

really develop inner security. We can see that the highest goals of spiritual development sometimes require specific learning situations which most might consider as punishment or injustice.

But they obviously are not. Just as the doctor is not being punished by tests and efforts she must go through, the spiritual aspirant is not being punished. These are simply the learning situations, which are required for one who wants to achieve a high goal. We might suppose, then, that these difficult life experiences are not so much a result of past karma, but rather the soul's choice for further growth. It's very possible, however, that the soul will have forgotten that it has made these choices. They may seem unfair to us at first, but we gradually find our way out of the cave and into the light. Afterwards, we will clearly see that all this was for our spiritual benefit.

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?

If we can be truly conscious of these truths on a continuous basis, what will our life be like?

1. We will seldom feel that we have been wronged or done an injustice. We will remember always that we are the sole creators of our personal reality. We create what is happening to us in the above mentioned three ways.

We are also responsible for the way in which we interpret these events and the corresponding feelings that we create within ourselves with these stimuli. It's as if we write a scenario, play the part we ourselves have written and feel wronged by the part that we've been given.

Let's also remember that the lesson is not always to accept an unpleasant situation. Quite often the lesson is not to accept, but rather to gain the inner strength and courage to face the situation more dynamically so as to change it. We don't help people to grow when we allow them to treat us in a disrespectful way. It might be our karma, or it might be a test of our real love to face this situation without fear and dynamically earn this person's respect. There are

situations in which we are to learn acceptance and others in which we are to learn dynamic effort. In most cases we'll need a combination of both.

2. *We will never fear the future* or how events will turn out because we know that they will occur just as they need to for our spiritual growth process. We'll make our efforts toward a better life but will have faith that the *best* will always come about.

3. *We will feel sure about the future of our loved ones.* We won't worry about them because we know that they too are immortal souls in the process of evolution. We'll remember that they too have written their scripts and must play them out. We'll help them in every way we can but we won't worry or fear for them. This is important, for when we fear for someone, we give them the subconscious message that we don't have faith in their inner strength or their powers of discrimination. This undermines their self-confidence. This occurs independently of whether we express these feelings overtly or not. It's sufficient to feel them.

4. *We will not be able to harbor hurt, anger or hatred* because we'll realize that no one has ever done anything to us which we didn't create for ourselves. Even if another wanted to do us harm, he would be unable to succeed unless we ourselves had created that event in one of the three ways mentioned.

If we've planned a certain event to learn through which includes some other to play a role in that event, then, even if the other didn't want to hurt us, he or she will involuntarily or inadvertently become the vehicle for that event. We'll remember that others are simply the means by which things happen. They are never the cause. The past, present and future contents of our consciousness are the only cause of our personal reality.

5. *We will never fear taking up some new activity* for we'll realize that nothing we ever learn is lost. We now know that all is recorded in the causal body, and that talents and knowledge accumulate from life to life. Thus, it still makes sense to take up the piano at eighty.

6. We will never feel jealousy or envy for we'll be aware that each of us has exactly what he or she needs for his or her growth process. We would not be able to grow as effectively in another's life situation. We will also remember that these life situations are not by chance, nor are they distributed by an unfair God, but are our own personal creations. If we don't like ours, we can start creating another one.

7. We will develop patience in our efforts on all levels, material, social, economic, and spiritual, knowing that the results of our efforts are also dependent on other past factors of which we are not aware. We'll continue making our best effort, being relaxed and patient about when the results will come. We will not lose faith nor give up the effort.

8. We will learn to be much more selective in our choice of actions and activities. Knowing that everything we do creates a reaction, we will want to prefer actions which are in line with the basic laws of the universe.

9. Because of the above changes, **we will love and enjoy life much more. We will not fear death**, because we know that it is just a continuation on another level. What more could we ask for? To enjoy life and not to fear death.

SOME INTERESTING QUOTATIONS ABOUT INCARNATION

Most people are unaware at how many deeply respected thinkers of the western world accepted the concept of reincarnation. Here are just a few quotations which you will probably find interesting and even surprising.

JESUS OF NAZARETH: "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" And the disciples answered: "Some say that thou art Elijah, and others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets". "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist. And if you will receive it, this is Elijah who was destined to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Matthew 16:13-14, 11:11, 14-15.

PLATO: O youth, who fancy that you are neglected by the Gods, know that if you become worse you shall go to the worse souls, or if better to the better, and in every succession of life and death you will do and suffer what like may fitly suffer at the hand of like. This is the justice of heaven, which neither you nor any other unfortunate will ever glory in escaping. Take heed thereof, for it will be sure to take heed of you. If you say - I am small and will creep into the depths of the earth, or I am high and will fly up to heaven, you are not so small or so high that you shall not pay the fitting penalty. And thinkest thou, bold one, that thou neediest not to know this? - he who knows it not can never form any true idea of the happiness or unhappiness of life or hold any rational discourse respecting either.

Laws (Book X)

HERMES TRISMEGISTUS: The Soul passes from form to form; and the mansions of her pilgrimage are manifold. Thou putteth off thy bodies as raiment, and as vesture dost thou fold them up. Thou art from old, O Soul of man, yea, thou art from everlasting.

Egyptian Hermetic Fragments

ALBERT SCHWEITZER: By reason of the idea of reincarnation, Indian thought can be reconciled to the fact that so many people in their minds and actions are still so engrossed in the world. If we assume that we have but one existence, there arises the insoluble problem of what becomes of the spiritual ego which has lost all contact with the Eternal. Those who hold the doctrine of reincarnation are faced by no such problem. For them that non-spiritual attitude only means that those men and women have not yet attained to the purified form of existence in which they are capable of knowing the truth and translating it into action. So the idea of reincarnation contains a most comforting explanation of reality by means of which Indian thought surmounts difficulties which baffle the thinkers of Europe.

Indian Thought and Its Development

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN: Finding myself to exist in the world, I believe I shall, in some shape or other, always exist, and with all the inconvenience human life is liable to, I shall not object to a new edition of mine, hoping, however, that the errata of the last may be corrected.

Letters

GOETHE: I am certain that I have been here as I am now a thousand times before, and I hope to return a thousand times. When one reflects upon the eternity of the universe, one can conceive of no other destiny than that the Monads or Souls should eventually participate in the bliss of the Gods as joyfully cooperating forces. The work of creation will be entrusted to them. Man is the dialogue between nature and God. On other planets this dialogue will doubtless be of a higher and profounder character.

Conversation with Johannes Falk

CARL JUNG: My life as I lived it had often seemed to me like a story that has no beginning and no end. I had the feeling that I was a historical fragment, an excerpt for which the preceding and succeeding text was missing. I could well imagine that I might have lived in former centuries and there encountered questions I was not yet able to answer that I had to be born again because I had not fulfilled the task that was given to me. When I die, my deeds will

flow along with me - that is how I imagine it. I will bring with me what I have done. In the meantime it is important to insure that I do not stand at the end with empty hands.

Memories, Dreams, Reflections

TOLSTOY: How interesting it would be to write the story of the experiences in this life of a man who killed himself in his previous life; how he now stumbles against the very demands which had offered themselves before, until he arrives at the realization that he must fulfill those demands... The deeds of the preceding life give direction to the present life. This is what the Hindus call Karma.

Diary and other writings

NIETZSCHE: My doctrine is: Live so that thou mayest desire to live again - that is my duty - for in any case thou wilt live again! This doctrine is lenient towards those who do not believe in it. It speaks of no hells and it contains no threats. He who does not believe in it has but a fleeting life in his consciousness. Let us guard against teaching such a doctrine as if it were a suddenly discovered religion! It must percolate through slowly, and whole generations must build on it and become fruitful through it - in order that it may grow into a large tree which will shelter all posterity.

Eternal Recurrence

GIORDANO BRUNO: I have held and hold souls to be immortal. Speaking as a Catholic, they do not pass from body to body, but go to Paradise, Purgatory, or Hell. But I have reasoned deeply, and, speaking as a philosopher, since the soul is not found without body and yet is not body, it may be in one body or in another, and pass from body to body. From Spirit, the Life of the Universe, proceeds the life and soul of everything that has soul and life.

Bruno's Trial before the Inquisition

BALZAC: Who knows how many fleshly forms the heir of heaven occupies before he can be brought to understand the value of that silence and solitude whose starry plains are but the vestibule of Spiritual Worlds? A lifetime may be needed merely to gain the virtues which annul the errors of man's preceding life. The virtues we acquire, which develop slowly within us, are the invisible links

that bind each one of our existences to the others - existences which the spirit alone remembers, for Matter has no memory for spiritual things. The endless legacy of the past to the present is the secret source of human genius.

Seraphita

THOMAS HUXLEY: In the doctrine of transmigration, whatever its origin, Brahmanical and Buddhist speculation found, ready to hand, the means of constructing a plausible vindication of the ways of the Cosmos to man. None but very hasty thinkers will reject it on the ground of inherent absurdity. Like the doctrine of evolution itself, that of transmigration has its roots in the world of reality.

Evolution and Ethics

HENRIK IBSEN: There is One who ever reappears, at certain intervals, in the course of human history. He is like a rider taming a wild horse in the arena. Again and yet again it throws him. A moment, and he is in the saddle again, each time more secure and more expert; but off he has had to go, in all his varying incarnations, until this day. Who knows how often he has wandered among us when none have recognized him?

The Emperor Julian

CHAPTER XI

FATE AND FREE WILL

Are we puppets moved by some divine hand? Is our every thought and act already planned? Or are we independent souls able to make decisions and create our own destiny? Or is the truth found in a merging of these two opposites? In this Chapter we will investigate some possible answers to these questions.

CAN BOTH BE TRUE?

We are conditioned to believe that opposites cannot be true. The new discoveries in modern physics force us to accept the possibility that seemingly opposite concepts like void, consciousness, energy and matter are united and connected at some level, and that time and space are relative to the view point and velocity of the spectator. In the same way, the concept of fate and free will may be simultaneously true.

On the one hand, it's obvious that we think, make decisions and act accordingly and thus move voluntarily towards certain goals. There seems to be a relationship between effort and result. We decide to become a painter, lawyer, engineer, musician or salesperson and we make the effort and become one. We decide to get married and have children and we do so. We decide to stop smoking or lose weight and we do so. These decisions involve discrimination, will power and effort to move towards a goal which we have decided. In this way, there seems to be free will.

On the other hand, many of us make decisions that we're not able to fulfill because of various events or circumstances in life. Some may not even have been given a decision. They may have been born

very poor, blind or paralyzed or in a minority group in a hostile environment. Their choices may be few if any. Others make choices but are never able to fulfill them because of various 'accidents' and natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, drought, fire or man made disasters such as economic depression, violence or war. Others lose a loved one very early in life or suffer a car crash or disabling illness which greatly limits their freedom of movement.

Ten people make the **same** effort toward the same goal such as starting a business, getting married, making money, having children, raising their children harmoniously, learning to play a musical instrument, learning to dance or to play a sport, or to relax or meditate, etc. But, although these ten people have made the same effort in terms of time and dedication, they don't have the same results. Some meet only with failure while others find it quite simple and easy from the beginning. Still others proceed at varying rates and with differing degrees of success. Since they made the same effort, what is that factor which has limited some and helped others? What is that factor which has caused one to be born blind and the other to see, one materially poor and the other materially rich, one weak and sickly and the other full of strength, one quick to learn music and the other stone deaf, one predisposed to happiness and the other to depression, one to the arts and the other to the sciences?

What is this unknown factor which seems to have so much control over our lives? It seems on the one hand that we have free will to make choices and to strive to fulfill them. If we sat and did nothing, we would starve to death and we would certainly not develop along any lines. We would become stagnant physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. Yet our efforts are not the sole factor which govern the results. What is this other factor?

THE PAST

This invisible factor is, for the most part, **the past**. You will remember that our past is recorded in a morphogenetic field which is a subtle field of energy and consciousness which gives birth to our

physical body and to our material, emotional, and mental reality. This field, or causal body, is the cause of our mental and physical forms. It is not the creative cause but the forming cause. The creative cause is Spirit, or God, but this morphogenetic field molds and forms this Spiritual Consciousness as it is projected through the field onto earth dimension. That is what we call incarnation.

As long as we are identified with and attached to this physical form and the ego, the present is never actually the present. The present is shadowed by the past. It's as if we are moving into the future with the past chained around our legs obstructing our free movement. In some other cases, however, our past may be a positive helpful factor in the efforts.

THE CONCEPT OF REINCARNATION

We are left with some basic questions. Where do these past impressions or tendencies come from? How could a person born blind, paralyzed, poor, or seriously ill have acted wrongly or sinned before birth? How can Christ's words, "*He who lives by the sword will die by the sword*" be true, since we see many innocent men, women and children who have never acted violently die apparently unjust, meaningless, violent deaths at the hands of others? Yet some of those who have lived violently harming others live on into old age without problems? How can we understand this?

Since all are God's children, how is it that one is given greater abilities or talent at music, dancing, mathematics, business and some are given very few, if any, abilities? What is that factor in God's judgment which makes one 'lucky' and the other 'unlucky'? Or is there perhaps no such thing as luck? Perhaps God does not involve himself in the process; but we create our talents, luck and misfortune. Over and over again in the New Testament Christ uses parables to make people understand that they must use and develop their abilities, that they must become productive and creative or else they will lose whatever abilities they have. In the parable about the fig tree, which did not produce fruit, and in the parables about the servants who are given a certain amount of money (talents) to see how they will use them, we are made to

understand that we create our future and develop our talents and abilities and that if we do not, we will lose them.

There could be a variety of answers to these many questions: I can only give the one that seems most logical to me. The most reasonable explanation I've heard until now is the concept of reincarnation. This is the idea that the soul does not really die when it leaves the physical body but eventually returns again creating a new human body so as to continue its evolutionary process towards union with God. This concept explains so many otherwise unexplainable phenomena. (There is no space to discuss that here but those who are interested can refer to the book **THE MYSTICAL CIRCLE OF LIFE** by the same author.)

Since probably 80% of those reading this text are likely to be coming from a Christian background, it would probably be worth while here to say a few words about reincarnation and Christianity. I am a Christian. I believe in Jesus Christ. I love Him. I am grateful to Him, His teachings, His life, His example and His sacrifice for our sake. I try to see Him in each person and in each situation. When I need to make a decision, I try to think what would Christ want me to do in this situation? However, I do not reject other spiritual leaders. I accept them. I respect them. I learn from them. I am grateful to them. But my Spiritual Focus is Christ.

I feel absolutely no conflict between my Christian focus and my belief in reincarnation. After reading and studying the New Testament cover to cover a number of times, I cannot find any sentence which says that there is no reincarnation or that the soul did not exist before this lifetime. On the other hand, there are many phrases which can be interpreted as referring to the concept of reincarnation. In the final analysis, however, it's not important whether one believes or not in reincarnation but whether one acts with love and unity in relationship to others.

LIFE IS A SCHOOL

The following models may help us understand the balance between

fate and free will. No model, however, can be perfect in its attempt to describe a reality which is actually beyond time and space. Every model will have flaws but each will help us to understand this enigma in a different way.

The first model is that of a school. When we first go to school we have no choice about the subjects we are going to study. We don't even have a choice about whether to go to school or not. We must start in the autumn and finish in the fall and must study exactly what we're told at each point along the way. We have no freedom of choice, no free will. As we become more mature, we are allowed to make decisions as to when we want to study and what we want to study. There are still limitations. We are still required to study but there is greater flexibility in choice and timing and we can even change our choices occasionally.

Life is the school. We spirits incarnate into the school of life. A lifetime is like a year at school. In our earlier incarnations, as souls with little experience on the earth level, we are forced to incarnate at certain times and to take certain basic lessons concerning how to function on the earth plane. As time passes and we become more capable, more spiritually evolved, we have greater freedom of choice concerning how we are going to proceed. Our eventual goal of self-realization and reunion with God is fixed, but the way in which we are going to approach this destination is variable and each takes a different route.

In school, however, our freedom to choose among professions and lifestyles depends on how much we've studied and worked in the earlier grades. Our past performance limits or enhances our choices in later years. In the same way, our performance in previous lives and in the past of this present life limits or enhances our freedom of choice in the present. If we've behaved in an egotistical way or have done nothing to develop our inner abilities, then we'll have limited degrees of freedom in this life.

In this way, it can be seen that not everyone has the same amount of free will. Some are more limited by their past than others. This will depend partly on their past and partially on their way of

thinking today and also the degree to which they're really conscious or whether they're functioning mechanically based on past or childhood programmings. If someone chooses to be a doctor because his father was one or because he's programmed to feel secure only if he has a lot of money and not because he really loves to be a doctor, then his choice is not made out of free will. It's a mechanical choice made through social programmings.

Each person experiences a varying mixture of fate and free will based on previous actions, present attitude, will power and the degree of freedom from childhood programming. It must be remembered that even the factor of fate is self-created and not the will of some other power.

LIFE IS LIKE A MOVING CAR

Our life is like a moving car which has a certain direction and momentum, depending on its speed and weight. If the car is moving very fast and has a great weight, it will be difficult to change its direction. If we don't have a good hold on the steering wheel, we may not be able to change the direction of the car in case it might be headed for danger. If we cannot see clearly, we cannot steer the car effectively so as to avoid obstacles and arrive where we want.

We are like the car. Our body is like a car's body; our energy body is the engine, our mind is the steering wheel, our higher self is the driver and the Spirit is the owner of the car.

Most of us have little control over where our car is going because the driver (the higher self) is asleep, undeveloped. Because of this, the steering wheel is unattended and turns at each bump, moving downhill along the path of easiest motion. We follow the senses, avoid whatever requires effort and lose control over where we are going. We seek after the superficially pleasant and avoid the unpleasant, even though it may mean greater joy and health in the long run. We lack discipline, discrimination and willpower.

The momentum and direction of life is controlled by our habits, our ways of eating, acting, thinking, reacting and feeling. These are

fixed and heading us in a certain direction. If we like that direction, then every thing is fine. But if we don't like it, if we would like to change the way we're eating, acting, living and thinking, and cannot, then we have no free will. Why? Because we have no will.

Two factors determine how much free will we have, how free we really are. One is how much **spiritual discrimination** we have. That is whether we can see the road clearly, whether we can distinguish what is really beneficial for ourselves and others in the long run. Discrimination means being able to understand what has real value and what does not. For example, it means choosing to give more importance to money, personal possessions, sensory pleasures, professional and social recognition, or to love, unity, helping others, self knowledge and spiritual growth. Discrimination means having the ability to see far down the road, understand where it's leading and being able to decide whether that's really where we want to go.

The second, **will power** is having the ability to turn the direction of the steering wheel once the discrimination has determined where we really want to go. It's being able to change our way of thinking and living so as to move in a new direction which is more in line with our real inner desires.

Without discrimination, we are spiritually blind and cannot see the road. We have no control over where we're going. We have no free will. Without will power, we have no strength to make changes in our life direction.

To sum up, whether or not we have free will depends on the development of our spiritual discrimination and will power.

A GOAT TIED TO A POLE

Imagine a goat, or a dog if you like, tied to a pole. This animal has a certain degree of freedom depending on the length of the rope. If the rope is long, he can move about quite freely. If it's infinitely long, he can go just about anywhere, if he doesn't get it tangled up. If the rope is short, he's limited to a very small degree of freedom.

We are like that goat tied to the tree. We're born into this life with a certain length of rope. That length is dependent on how we've lived our past lives. If we've lived very selfishly or if we've lived a lazy life without developing our abilities and our knowledge, then our rope will be short, we'll have few talents to start off with and we'll learn slowly. If we've harmed others, then we'll be chained, as it were, to certain experiences such as abuse from others or hardships and illness that are the result of our past negative actions. Our freedom of choice in this life will be limited, at least until we mature and begin a process of spiritual growth and self-development. Then we may release ourselves from certain past limitations and lengthen our rope.

If, on the other hand, we've lived lives of love and service, helping others, if we've developed our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual abilities, then they're already developed when we're born. We don't actually learn things from scratch in this life but rather remember what we've already learned before. Things come easily to us and we feel free to move in the various directions that interest us.

Our past actions are responsible to a great extent for the length of the rope. The other factor is our degree of inner strength and self-acceptance, our lack of fear to move on into new directions. If we don't believe in ourselves, then we shorten the rope. If we fear failure or rejection, then we shorten the rope and are fated to live a limited life. We're not limited by some other power but by our own fear, our own lack of courage and self-acceptance. We're limited by ignorance of our true limitless nature.

Today is tomorrow's past. Today we have the power to change the future. Free will doesn't exist in the past and neither does it exist in the future. The present point in time is the only power we have. I am free if at this moment I can free myself from my limiting beliefs, if I can free myself from my habits and my mechanical nature and lengthen the rope of my destiny. I am free if I can get free of my ignorance and resulting desires and addictions, which cause me to ignore the golden rule and harm those around me and thus shorten my rope. When I harm, my rope is shortened. I may even find myself in jail, in which case my free will is greatly limited.

(In some extreme cases one may find the rope around his neck).

Let's decide to work on lengthening our rope daily by developing ourselves emotionally, mentally and spiritually and living a life of love and service to others. In this way, we'll regain our freedom of movement which we lost as spirits incarnating into matter.

OUR COSMIC BANK ACCOUNT

Most of us have had some experience with a bank account. We make deposits and withdrawals. As long as our deposits are greater in sum total than our withdrawals, we have a positive balance and can use our money to move around freely. The more we have in our account, the greater the degree of freedom to try out new things or to journey, etc.

If, on the other hand, we make more withdrawals than deposits, our bank gets upset with us. Not only do we not have money in the bank in order to move about, but also we owe money; and people are pressuring us to pay them back. We're forced to limit our expenses, do less and perhaps increase our hours of work so that we can make up what we owe and pay it back. Our freedom is limited. If this continues for large sums of money or long periods of time, we might find that they come and take our belongings or they might even put us in jail. Then we have very little freedom of movement.

Our relative freedom of movement depends on how we manage our bank account, on the relationship between our deposits and our withdrawals.

The same relationship is true between our free will and our **Cosmic Bank Account**. Our cosmic bank account is a record of all our thoughts, words and actions. It's also a depository of all the efforts, improvements, talents and abilities we've developed, as well as everything we've learned. It's another way of describing the morphogenetic field or the causal body.

Our deposits are our selfless, altruistic thoughts, words and actions; and our efforts to develop and improve physically, emotionally,

mentally and spiritually. Our deposits are all our efforts to develop spiritual discrimination and will power. Love is our greatest deposit.

Our withdrawals are our selfish thoughts, words and actions, the harm we've done to others, the hours we've wasted in laziness, our lack of self-development, and our failure to develop discrimination and will power. Hate, anger, bitterness, jealousy, fear and selfishness are all withdrawals.

A major factor determining whether or not we have free will depends on the state of our cosmic bank account. If we come into this life time carrying a large deficit, we may have to make deposits continuously without making withdrawals in order to balance our account so that we can eventually move about more freely and perhaps even start receiving interest.

For example, if we come into this lifetime carrying a large deficit in our account concerning love, if we were very selfish and unloving in the past, we may need to give love selflessly for many years before we'll actually begin receiving love back. Others around us may give much less but receive much more from the very beginning. Their account may be more positive than ours.

We may come into this life with a large deficit in our account concerning self-improvement and self-development. We may need years of effort to learn to relax or meditate, to stop smoking or lose weight, or to overcome our emotions of fear, anger or guilt. We may not make as much progress as someone else whose 'discipline account' is very positive. They may have worked on this aspect of themselves more, just as we may have worked on some other aspect more than they. That doesn't mean we should forget about trying to discipline ourselves. It means the opposite, that we need to work more than the others on self discipline until we eventually balance our cosmic account and start having the results we want. Sincere effort and patience will be required.

It appears, then, that we are free to make any efforts we desire in life towards any goals that we value. Our freedom of choosing and

trying is not limited but the results which we will obtain are limited, at least temporarily, due to the inertia of our past. We might say that many of the events which happen and do not happen are a function of the past but that how we react to them in the present is our free will.

We can resist the events which our cosmic bank account sends us (e.g., a monthly balance sheet, which arrives, however, on a second to second basis). We may reject an event believing it to be a mistake or an injustice. We can doubt the fairness or the intelligence of the **Cosmic Accountant**. We can blame him for not dealing fairly with our account. We can become depressed, feeling weak and helpless, a victim of unjust supernatural forces, believing that what has happened to us is the result of the whims of some playful or unjust God.

Or we can realize that whatever happens or ever will happen to us in our life will always be in exact harmony with our cosmic bank balance. We can trust that the cosmic accountant knows what he is doing and neither punishes, nor gives rewards, but simply tallies our account; and we are paid (or not) accordingly. With this understanding, we can accept what has happened until now as exactly just and correct.

We can ask for guidance as to how to react to these situations in the most effective way in order to grow spiritually and improve our account. We can accept each experience as an opportunity for self-knowledge, growth and self-improvement. It may have been fate that my loved one would leave me or leave his body, but it is my free will to react positively or negatively to this. I can become angry, fearful, hurt, depressed, and, in general, negative towards life. I can search to find someone else immediately so as to cover up the hurt, insecurity and fear which I feel. I can turn to tranquilizers, alcohol or various other chemical substances to drug my mind and ease the pain.

Or I can use this experience to realize that life in the physical body is temporary and fragile; that I cannot really depend on someone outside myself; and that I must develop my spiritual nature, my

faith, my concentration, my self mastery and proceed in my spiritual evolution.

Life is like a game of cards. The cards we're dealt by the cosmic dealer are our fate - a fate however which we've created through our previous thoughts, words and actions, as well as our present beliefs. How we play those cards is our free will. Play them smart and we'll get better cards in the future.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM WHAT IS HAPPENING?

According to what we've said this far, these various life events are exactly what we've created by our own past actions and present thoughts, words and actions. On the other hand, they seem to be exactly what we need in order to continue our growth process as souls in a process of evolution from a lower state to a higher state of consciousness.

It's more effective to see these events as possible learning experiences rather than some form of punishment. Rather than seeing them as something that we must pass through in order to pay for what we have done, we can see them as opportunities which life is offering us so that we may grow emotionally, mentally and spiritually more mature.

As mentioned previously, in every situation we have various choices as to how to react. We can react with fear, denial, aggressiveness or with some type of escapism. Or we can react by searching for the inner strength necessary to overcome the particular problem. Our freedom to react positively or negatively to a particular event will depend on our freedom from fears, attachments and beliefs about our own weaknesses or about the dangers that exist in the world around us.

We see again that our *free will* is totally dependent on the degree to which we've developed our freedom from the inner programmings and emotional mechanisms, fears and expectations which force us into becoming robots incapable of even conceiving alternative

reactions to certain stimuli.

We have free will only if we've worked on developing that *will* against our own mechanical and habitual, emotional, mental and physical functioning. This freedom can be achieved through self-analysis and serious spiritual effort.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM AN ILLNESS

Illness is one of those fated events of our lives which seems to be at times related and at other times unrelated to how we live in the present. Even those who do all the 'right things' physically and spiritually sometimes become ill or suffer from accidents of some type. It's something over which we can have some control but is not within our total control.

We could hypothesize that an illness in most cases has something to teach us; either about what we are doing which has created the imbalance called illness or about attitudes, or powers which we can develop in facing it. Let's look at some examples of what we might learn in confronting an illness.

1. We may learn to *change our diet*. We may discover that the way we're eating is causing our body (and also our mind) to lose its balance or vitality, and it's necessary to change our dietary habits. These changes may serve to help raise the overall vibration or quality of the body and mind so that it becomes more sensitive to higher spiritual energies, qualities, powers and truths. The result is that our overall evolution is enhanced through our reaction to the stimulus of the illness.

2. We might learn to *stop, relax and create a more harmonious life rhythm* which is neither overactive nor sluggish. This reassessment of our routine and our level of activity will benefit all aspects of our lives including our mental abilities and relationships. We use the illness to teach us about harmony and rhythm, something we may have ignored until now.

3. Our negative thoughts and feelings such as worry, fear, bitterness, self pity, jealousy, anxiety and weakness or inability are known to play an important function in determining the degree of resistance the body and mind have to illness. We may be forced through an illness **to observe, analyze and change negative emotional and mental habits** so that we can get well and stay well. This change in our thinking patterns leads to greater emotional, mental and spiritual maturity.

4. An illness is often humbling. Some of us need this **lesson in humility**. We can often get an unnaturally high opinion of our body and mind, believing that we are in some way the center of the universe or that we're worthier or more important than the others are. Having a small microbe, which we cannot even see knocking us flat on our back helps us change our perspective. The need to accept help from others and the realization that this body is only a temporary and fragile reality creates a clearer perspective on our place in the universe.

5. We can **learn to accept love and caring from others**. Some of us are programmed that we must only give and must never receive. We believe that this is altruistic; but it can also be very selfish. We may not want to be put in a position of owing something to someone (which is an indication of a feeling of separation). We may feel that we must always give more than we receive so that we can be *better* than the others, or worthy of their respect and love. Through an illness some may learn the lesson of *receiving gracefully* or the lesson that they *deserve love* and acceptance even if they cannot offer something back to others in that particular situation.

6. An illness may force us to stop activity for an extended period of time. This quietness may then become a stimulus for **deeper thought about life**, what we are doing, where we are going and if that is really what we want. Many of us get caught up in a life style based on the needs during a past period of our lives. As the years passed and our needs changed, we haven't taken the time to make the corresponding changes in our lifestyle. Illness often offers an opportunity to stop and think more deeply about what we want

from life and whether we're moving towards those goals effectively.

7. Many systems of **positive thought projection** have been developed and taught over the last years. These mental projection techniques have successfully created cures and recovery for the wide range of physical problems from arthritis and high blood pressure to cancer. Thousands of people all over the world in the last decades have been motivated to learn how to channel the positive powers of mind and spirit out of their need to cure themselves of an illness or solve some problem. However, regardless of what happens with this illness, this new positive mental power remains as a newly acquired mental ability. Many people would never have had the incentive to develop this mental power without the stimulus of the illness.

8. We all need to take a **more active role in creating our health and happiness**. Few people realize that they themselves are totally responsible for their health, happiness, harmony and success in life. No one else can give these to us or take responsibility for these. No one else can create our health or happiness. This is our responsibility. An illness may be the only way in which we realize this and the only experience that will force us to finally take an active role in creating health, happiness and harmony for ourselves.

9. Often illness is an opportunity to **examine and reassess our values in life**. This is especially true when that illness brings us to the realization that this body is only temporary and that our days here on this planet are limited. This new perception of life causes us to examine more deeply the purpose of life and thus the purpose of our own life and how we want to live it. Many people have had life changing experiences through a serious illness or a near death experience.

10. When there is intense pain accompanying the illness it becomes an opportunity **to learn to deal with pain**. One way to deal with pain is to **cease identifying with the area of pain**. When we put our attention elsewhere the pain message doesn't overwhelm our consciousness. When we can experience the separation of our consciousness from our physical body, we can transcend the pain.

This ability and experience then become an important asset in our spiritual growth process, which is basically to realize our conscious existence as independent from the physical body. This reality is now being scientifically investigated in near death experiences where people leave their bodies which are often clinically dead, and yet are totally aware of what is going on or being said. Their consciousness is functioning independently of the brain, nervous system and senses.

11. Many people *turn to God* when they have problems. It is unfortunate that we have to have problems in order to feel the need to contact such an important aspect of our reality as the creative and sustaining Force of all that exists. We are still quite superficially oriented and usually need a serious problem to force us to look at things more deeply. Illness may be the stimulus which will cause someone to come into deeper contact with God and develop that relationship more seriously and consciously. This hopefully becomes a habit which continues after the problem subsides.

12. *Surrender*, like active effort, is a quality which one needs to learn and master. There are moments when we need to master all our energy and abilities and try to change or correct something. There are times when we also need to learn to surrender. Most often we need a combination. We need to make the most intense effort we can while simultaneously surrendering the results up to God or to life. This is the key to life; trying our best, but being able to accept whatever the results are.

This doesn't mean that we would benefit from seeking to become ill in order to learn lessons. It does mean, however, that when we do have a problem, it's much more effective to try to understand what we can learn from that problem and how we can go about solving it. That is our free will, the ability to face and learn from the events of our lives. Otherwise we can fear, resent, worry and complain about what life gives us. It's our choice. We can choose.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE

Let's now examine the same question in relationship to separation from a loved one either through a parting of ways or through the leaving of the physical body. Let's take the example of a spouse to whom we've become accustomed, dependent upon and probably attached to. In the case of a parting of ways, such as separation or divorce, what can we learn? If we've done everything that we could to save the relationship and in spite of that, we pass through the experience of separation (at least temporarily), what can we learn?

1. It can be an opportunity to *examine our behavior and our beliefs* about ourselves, and the other, and about relationships in general so as to determine how we may have contributed to this disharmony. There will surely be weaknesses, faults or negative thinking patterns we can discover, analyze and seek to free ourselves from. Then, in the case that we get back together or create a new relationship, we won't make the same mistakes. We'll have grown in our self-knowledge and emotional and spiritual maturity.

2. We can *learn to love the other in spite of their behavior* or their abandoning us. We can learn forgiveness. We can learn to wish the other to be well and happy, whatever he or she does, and with whomever he or she chooses to be. Unconditional love is a difficult lesson but an unavoidable one on the spiritual path. It doesn't need, however, to be learned in this way. This is only one of the many ways in which this lesson can be learned.

3. As we're left to face life on our own, we'll feel a temporary emptiness and perhaps a fear or insecurity. In such a situation we have various possible solutions. Some people try to find someone else immediately to cover up their inner emptiness and insecurity. Others fall into a depression and retreat from life, sometimes through tranquilizers, drugs or alcohol.

But we can choose another solution. We can face the fear of loneliness and pass through it to *discover the fulfillment and the power which exist within us*. This effort to develop inner

strength often starts the person on an inner spiritual search which is beneficial on all levels of life, and of course, in future relationships which can be created out of love and not out of need or dependency.

One lesson then may be that we can live alone and face life alone; that we have the power to do so. This doesn't mean that we would benefit from leaving our present relationships in order to discover this fact. We can learn this while remaining in the relationships we've presently created.

Many more lessons can be learned by improving ourselves so that the relationship can work and be loving and harmonious. However, if in spite of our efforts at improving ourselves and the relationship, it doesn't work out, we might as well take this opportunity to face our fear of loneliness and our insecurity and work with them before we rush to create a new relationship.

4. We seek to find security, happiness, fulfillment, affirmation and pleasure by creating relationships with people around us. Sooner or later, we realize that people cannot really give us these feelings which we're seeking to create. When we've realized this clearly, we may then seek to find what we're looking for through ***a spiritual relationship with our inner self, a spiritual teacher or with God.***

People who have passed through disappointments (no appointments - no disappointments) eventually turn to developing a deeper spiritual life, finding within themselves or in their relationship with God that which they were seeking until now in other people.

This doesn't mean that they don't love or care for others. Rather, it means that they don't hope to **get** something from others but are satisfied to be able to **give** to them. They can accept from others but do **not expect** from others. Then they are truly happy and can, for the first time, truly love the other independently of what the other may or may not do.

In the case of the **departure of our loved one from the physical body**, there are even other possible lessons.

5. Facing death is a difficult and unhappy experience. It can also be the shock which we need to think more deeply about life and to **realize that we are only temporarily here**; that these physical bodies and all the objects and physical pleasures we seek are only temporary sources of superficial and short lived security which we'll eventually lose. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't enjoy life and all the physical and other pleasures that it offers us. It does mean that we need to spend time looking more deeply at what's behind this physical reality. It means that we would do well to investigate the nature of the human soul, what happens at the moment of death, and how we can live so as to get the most out of life while being simultaneously ready for the inevitable moments of departure, whether it be ours or a loved one's.

The death of a loved one is an opportunity to think more deeply about life, to reexamine our values and way of life, and to give more importance to emotional, mental and spiritual maturity and evolution.

6. When something happens that we don't want to happen, we often feel that an injustice has been done to us and feel angry towards whomever we believe is responsible. In the case of the death of a loved one, we may feel that God is responsible since we're told that He controls these matters. We can hold onto this feeling of injustice and resulting resentment or anger for years or a whole lifetime. Or we can overcome this test of faith and **believe in the wisdom of the Divine Plan** that knows when each spirit has decided to leave its body and that there are no mistakes or accidents or injustice.

If we can develop faith through this experience, we can learn to have the same faith in other matters. This ability allows us to remain free from fear of what will happen; for only that which needs to happen will happen. This doesn't, however, free us from the need to think, analyze, decide and act. It frees us not from action but from the fear or worry about the result of our actions.

Then we are much freer to act according to what we believe and feel rather than out of fear of failure or of what others might say.

A belief in a divine plan also frees us from bitterness, resentment or anger towards people who may have harmed us in the past. Since we cannot change the past, it's much more useful to accept that an event, for some reason, had to happen and let go of those negative feelings. This doesn't mean that we allow people to do whatever they want to do in the present but we let go of the negativity about the past.

There are many lessons we can learn from the loss of a loved one through separation or death. The choice is ours. We can do everything in our power to prevent such an event and it's our free will and responsibility to do so. But if, in spite of all these efforts, we lose the presence of this person in our lives, then it's our free will to react positively and constructively with strength and love; or negatively with hurt, fear and perhaps anger. Each can choose for oneself.

THE FLOW OF THE RIVER

Let's take one last example, that of a river flowing from the right side of the page towards the left. This is the river of life, of evolution, the river of the gradual perfection of humanity and of creation. The flow of this river represents the divine plan, the direction in which the process of evolution is proceeding. All beings, human, animal, plant, insect, microbes and even minerals, all of creation, mountains, seas, suns, stars and galaxies are flowing along this river. You and I are also flowing along this river.

The flow of this river creates the events which we call fate. They aren't events that come from some other higher power. They're created by our collective way of thinking and functioning. Our every thought, word and deed creates a disturbance and a movement on this river which is so large that it is like an infinitely large sea moving in a direction. Our collective thoughts, emotions and actions create what we call material reality and the events we experience.

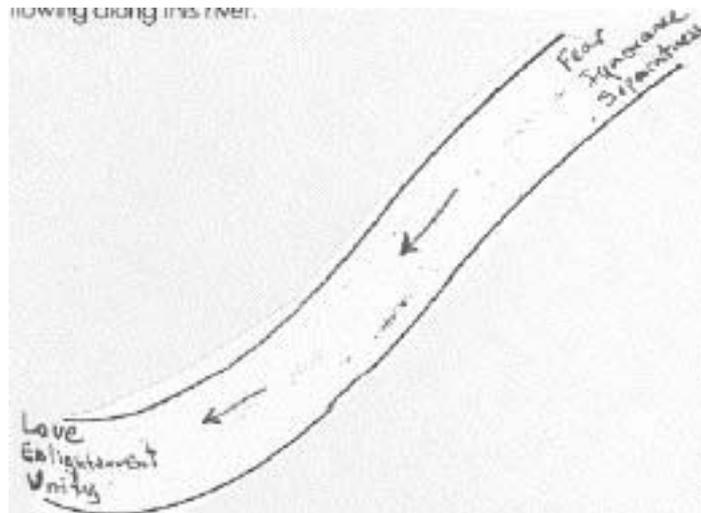


Diagram No. 17
THE RIVER OF EVOLUTION

These events are exactly the stimuli which we need in order to keep moving along in the direction of the river's flow. Whenever we move against the flow of the river, it's natural that the river exerts an equal force back at us. If we're clear enough in our perception and thinking, the water's force will make us turn and start flowing again in the direction of the river. If we try to move towards the banks of the river, again it will continue exerting a force on us until we let go of the banks and continue flowing in the direction we are destined to eventually flow.

Our free will is to resist and delay our flow from fear and separateness to love and unity, or to flow freely without resistance and perhaps help ourselves to flow more quickly down the river of evolution. Our free will is to flow or not, to resist, reject, fear and hold on, or to have faith in the flow of the river.

Let's remember, however, that the lesson is not always to accept what is happening. Sometimes the lesson is to find greater inner strength, overcome fear and fight (without attachment or negative

feelings) for what we believe. Sometimes the lesson is to accept more, other times the lesson is to make a greater effort. We must cultivate the clarity and discrimination which will allow us to understand which it is. "*Father, give me the strength to change what I can, the peace to accept what I cannot and the wisdom to know the difference*".

What are those actions, which resist the flow of the river? Since the river is flowing towards a manifestation of our inner power and of our spiritual unity with all beings, any actions that obstruct these resist the flow of the river. When we act selfishly, when we attach ourselves to external forms of security, pleasure, affirmation or power, when we act out of negative feelings such as fear, hurt, jealousy, anger, hate, etc., we are resisting the flow.

How can we move with the flow? We can do so by acts which help us get free from our feelings of weakness and our need to attach ourselves to the banks. Such ways include spiritual disciplines, depending more on our own power and not on others, believing in ourselves, acting out of compassion and love, and serving our fellow beings who are all flowing along the same river. We need to develop contact with our inner spiritual dimensions so as to receive power and guidance from within; have faith that the river knows where it is taking us; and *trust* in life and what it will bring us in the future and what it has brought us in the past.

That means no feelings of injustice, for the river has given at every moment of our lives exactly what we needed in order to grow (regardless of whether we took the opportunity or not). The river gave to us and is presently giving us simply the reflection of our own thoughts, words and actions, past and present.

This means no fear of the future, for it will bring exactly what we need in order to grow. This is also true for our loved ones. It means to not worry about them. Life has been giving, is giving and will always give them as souls in the process of evolution exactly what they need in order to keep moving along the river. Remember that our worry doesn't help them in the slightest. It harms them because we send them the message (unconsciously if not consciously) that

we don't have faith in their ability to handle and overcome any difficulties that life may be presenting to them. They get the message from us (regardless of whether we express it or not - it is sufficient just to worry inside ourselves) that we don't believe in their discrimination, clarity and inner power to face life. This doesn't help them.

This means that we can live with an inner sense of peace and freedom, that we can live an open, loving, joyful life. All our worries were illusions based on our previous ignorance. Life is simple, easy, and each of us can be a creative happy and helpful being if he or she so chooses.

Author Richard Bach uses the same metaphor in the introduction to his book **ILLUSIONS - THE ADVENTURES OF A RELUCTANT MESSIAH.**

And he said unto them, "within each of us lies the power of our consent to health and to sickness, to riches and to poverty, to freedom and to slavery. It is we who control these, and not another".

A mill-man spoke and said, "Easy words for you, Master, for you are guided as we are not, and need not toil as we toil. A man has to work for his living in this world."

The Master answered and said, "Once there lived a village of creatures along the bottom of a great crystal river.

The current of the river swept silently over them all young and old, rich and poor, good and evil, the current going its own way knowing only its own crystal self.

Each creature in its own manner clung tightly to the twigs and rocks of the river bottom, for clinging was their way of life, and resisting the current was what each had learned from birth.

But one creature said at last, "I am tired of clinging. Though I cannot see it with my eyes, I trust that the current knows where it

is going. I shall let go and let it take me where it will. Clinging I shall die of boredom."

The other creatures laughed and said, "Fool! Let go, and that current you worship will throw you troubled and smashed across the rocks and you will die quicker than boredom!"

But the one heard them not, and taking a breath did let go, and at once was tumbled and smashed by the current across the rocks.

Yet in time, as the creature refused to cling, the current lifted him free from the bottom and he was bruised and hurt no more.

And the creatures downstream, to whom he was a stranger, cried: "See a miracle! A creature like ourselves, yet he flies! See the Messiah, come to save us all!"

And the one carried in the current said, "I am no more Messiah than you. The river delights to lift us free, if only we dare let go. Our true mark is this voyage, this adventure."

But they cried the more, all the while clinging to the rocks, and when they looked again he was gone and they were left alone making legends of a Savior.

Each of us is a 'messiah' in the making. Each of us is the Divine itself in the process of perfecting its ability to express its divinity on the physical and mental levels. The river will gladly lift us up, if only we have faith in it.

Faith in God. That simple formula which we heard as children. After much searching, much philosophy, many techniques, we come back to this simple formula, faith in that One Universal Consciousness which is the cause and motivating power of every being and object. Faith that we are only temporarily here on the earth engaged in a learning process. Faith that we are immortal and can never come to harm, even if we lose our temporary physical bodies.

Everything that happens to us is designed to help us. In some cases where we resist, what happens may force us to return to that simple faith, *"Unless you become like these children, you cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven"*.

Our free will is to look at these events in this way and thus benefit by the lessons that they contain for us, or to reject, resist and fear thus creating more suffering for ourselves and others. Which do you choose?

It appears that, ultimately, our free will lies in our ability to **merge our individual will with the Universal Will** of the Divine Plan. When we are able to let go of our personal desires and attachments and desire the greatest good for all, then we merge with the Universal Flow of life which supports and guides us. Our needs (not our desires) will be taken care of and we will experience unity with all beings. Although we still learn through the Law of Karma, we have comprehended the laws of Dharma and Love.

When we learn to merge the individual will with that Universal Will, the ego is diminished. When there are fewer ego demands, there is less identification with the body and ego. Less karma is generated and we gradually become free from the bondage of the karmic restrictions. The choice to be made is between egoism and selflessness.

This transcendence of karmic situations seems to come in stages.

1) We act in order to satisfy selfish needs desiring some result for ourselves.

2) We begin to act seeking results for others.

3) We learn to act with detachment offering all results up to God.

Thus, although we act with intensity and sincerity, we are willing to accept any result as exactly what is necessary at the moment.

4) When we act without seeking or expecting any result, we cease to create new Karma.

Remember, we do not give up the action, but the attachment to the fruits of the action.

CHAPTER XII

The Circle Of Impulses

Now we're beginning to get the whole picture. As souls who incarnate to continue our evolutionary process, we bring tendencies, which are the continuation of the way we have lived and thought in the past. These tendencies govern, to a great degree, both what happens to us and how we react to what happens to us. If we do not get free from the control of these impulses, we have no free will, no happiness, and no real freedom. Perhaps the following diagram will help us to understand this.

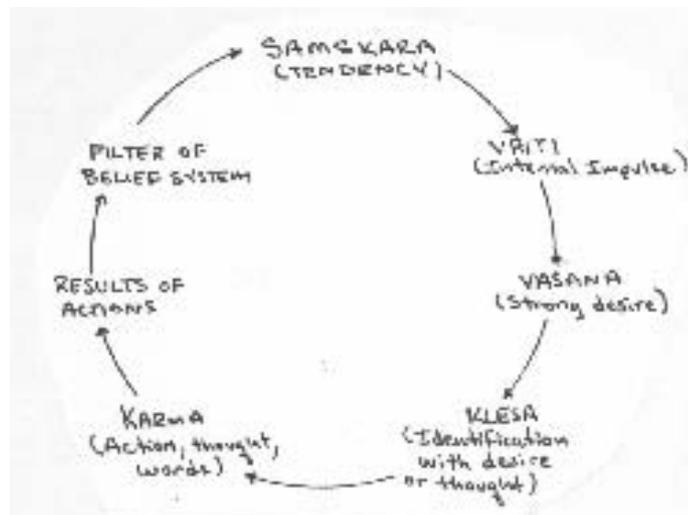


Diagram No. 18
THE CIRCLE OF IMPULSES

THE TENDENCIES

At point number one at the top of the circle we have the various tendencies which the soul has already accumulated and developed. These *samskaras* have both positive and negative effects on all aspects and levels of our existence. They form our habits of thinking and feeling, our tendencies towards certain emotions, beliefs or fears.

We may bring with us and develop in the early years of this life a tendency towards fear, possessiveness, carelessness, anger, joy, love, selfishness, music, dance, art, arithmetic, geography, nature and an endless list of other qualities, talents, interests and abilities. Everything we know and do is characterized by these factors.

Their basic cause exists in previous life situations but they've been reinforced by present life conditions, especially those of early childhood. You will remember that these energies in the causal body also dictate the type of parents, siblings, teachers, environment and events we will experience in our childhood years. All this is preplanned before we enter into these physical bodies. Only in the later years do we really have the opportunity to experience possibilities of free will in this lifetime. The childhood years are simply a continuation of previous tendencies. We set the stage in order to strengthen or bring into manifestation certain tendencies that we want to work with later on in the incarnation.

For example, if we want to work on inner security, we may choose to be abandoned as a child, so as to be particularly sensitive to this aspect of security. Or, if we have come to work on self-acceptance, we may choose a childhood environment which will reject us, causing us in later years to consciously work with the question of self worth. There are infinite possibilities for a soul to choose from in creating the childhood environment for the sake of optimum growth later on in life. Some of these childhood factors will be pleasant and some will be unpleasant. They are not however luck or injustice. They are perfect.

SUBCONSCIOUS IMPULSES

Each of us at every moment is being motivated and, to some extent, controlled by these tendencies which are at the center of our incarnated self. (Not at the center of our spiritual being. Our spiritual being is beyond all this process. It is unlimited existence - Consciousness - bliss).

These tendencies first start to express themselves as subconscious thoughts or feeling impulses (point no. 2 on diagram). These are seldom perceived on the subconscious level. They may however, be noticed when we are very inwardly concentrated say in meditation or deep relaxation. They are not exactly concrete thoughts. They are subtler. As they come up towards the surface of the mind they manifest as specific thoughts, feelings, or desires. In dreams they may manifest as images or scenes.

These subconscious impulses are to the samskaras as a sprout is to a seed. The samskara sprouts into this impulse which is now seeking manifestation as a thought and eventual realization as an action.

If allowed, it automatically becomes a conscious thought, feeling or desire (point 3). Only persons very advanced in meditation and control of the mental process can abort this process willfully. Control is easier in the absence of strong external stimuli, as in meditation. It is more difficult while engaged in daily activity. It is possible, however, through years of meditation, self-analysis, development of spiritual discrimination and will power to be able to consciously choose which impulses will be manifested as thoughts and which will not.

This has absolutely nothing to do with suppression of emotions or feelings. It has to do with the removal of their source. For example, if loud music is playing in the next room, we can try to suppress it by stuffing up the windows and doors. This does not remove the music. It is still there. Or we can open the door, go into the room and remove the power source from the stereo. This is not suppression but removal of the source. Or, in the case of our seed

and sprout, we now choose which sprouts will grow into seedlings and remove the rest.

HABITUAL EMOTIONS

A more real example would be the tendency towards revenge or lust. We begin to feel that urge within us. There's an energy headed in that direction. We meditate and calm the mind of all disturbances transcending this level of functioning. The impulse is allowed to flow out super-mentally through energy channels. It does not require material expression at the moment.

Or we might analyze, remembering how many times in the past we've let feelings of revenge or lust drive us into action. We may remember the results, and ask ourselves, "Was I happy with the results? How many times have I done this? How many times have I allowed myself to be motivated by this impulse? Have I felt happy afterwards? How much happiness has it brought me? Do I really want to follow through on this impulse at this moment?"

We're not saying that lust or revenge are bad or that we mustn't express them. We're asking, "Do I really want to do this? Do I really believe that it will make me happy? Or is this an automatic mechanism from the past that has been controlling me for many years? Would I rather get free from this tendency?" This is not suppression of feelings or needs. It is transcendence through observation, analysis, clarity of vision and good judgment. Some people, however, may fall into the trap of suppressing.

The same discrimination can gradually be developed concerning feelings such as fear or rejection or inferiority. When we have cultivated such feelings in our causal body through past experiences in this and other lives, it's easy to get caught up in these feelings even though there are no actual external reasons to feel them. We might simply be in the habit of feeling fear, or rejection or inferiority. Thus we will take a very neutral or even positive event and interpret it negatively through our habitual feeling pattern.

ADDICTIONS

The same may be true for needs and desires. They may be learned and made habitual thought forms in our subconscious mind, so that we really believe that we need something very much. The truth is, however, that we have simply made a habit of desiring it. This process of addiction can entrap us in a wide variety of self-made prisons. Often we will have arrived at a stage in our evolution where we've realized that we really don't want a certain activity or substance anymore such as coffee, cigarettes, sex, tranquilizers, alcohol, or even salt because we have experienced that they're harmful to us (or for any other reason), but we're unable to discontinue them. They have been ingrained into our causal body. The tendency towards them has a power over the mind. This subconscious thought impulse has too much power for it not to become a **concrete thought form** (No. 3). The thought form becomes very powerful and we identify with it, (No.4). We identify with that part of ourselves which is desiring and thus we act upon this (No.5) and we experience the results of momentary pleasure and eventual long run unhappiness, perhaps guilt or ill health. The tendency has now been imprinted even more deeply and the habit is stronger.

This is the dilemma in which the narcotics addict finds himself. Even if he wants to get clean, the power of this impulse is so strong that the only solution is to be somewhere else where he cannot get a hold of the substance he desires.

However, we're all narcotic addicts to a certain degree. We each have our own narcotic and our own dosage. One's narcotic could be food, sex, alcohol, tranquilizers, talking, work, compliments, television (could even be a certain program), conflict (yes, some are addicted to conflict) or even rejection (some have gotten used to being rejected and they need their weekly dose). Someone might even be addicted to being abused or done injustice to and thus subconsciously create such situations. Others may be addicted to playing cards, to spectator sports, to parties, money or material objects, to shopping or to new clothing. One can even develop an

addiction to exercises, breathing techniques, relaxation and meditation.

These habits have been recorded in our subconscious (which is the psychological organ for the causal body in this incarnation). They demand repetition. If we don't strengthen our discrimination and will power, then we're at the mercy of these habit patterns. It must also be understood that these habits are not evil in themselves. We're not talking about good and evil or sin. We're simply concerned with being the masters of our own lives and being able to do what we really want and not what our habits make us do. We're concerned with what helps us to be really happy and grow spiritually.

The question here is not 'what is right and what is wrong', but **what is useful and what is detrimental** to our happiness, harmony, health and evolution.

THE COMPLETE CIRCLE

We see now the whole picture. We come into this incarnation with various tendencies already written in the depths of our minds. Our childhood experiences strengthen some of these and weaken others. We've chosen this childhood environment and these events before our actual incarnation. We've arrived at adulthood totally programmed by:

- 1. What we've carried over from previous lives.*
- 2. The parental and social programming which we've received in this life.*
- 3. Our experiences in this life.*

These form our character. It's rather rigidly formed and established in certain attitudes and modes of behavior. This is why there's the Greek saying, "*A character is born, it is not made*". This saying is short sighted. It may seem true for most people and for the short

period of time we know them. The truth is that character is continuously changing but that changes are so slow that they are, in the short run, imperceptible. It is also true that only a small segment of society actually occupies itself with the process of improving the character.

Transformation of character is the basis of all religion and of universal philosophy. That is what this book is all about. Reading it simply for knowledge is a waste of time. It's meant as a stimulus and guide for the transformation of character.

These tendencies then continually produce subconscious impulses which are like the sprouts from the seeds. These sprouts then grow into seedlings which are the thought and desire forms in the mind. The seedlings become full-grown plants - or our **identification** with the thought forms. These plants produce flowers which are the actions based on these thought forms. These flowers develop into fruit and these fruit bear new seeds which are the results of these actions. These results (new seeds) are implanted into the causal body and will at some point in the future sprout again into subtle subconscious impulses.

It is a complete circle in which we are mechanically bound, unless we develop spiritual discrimination and realize that we're not actually involved in any of these stages. These stages are going on by themselves. We are actually only the witnesses of what is going on. We are the immortal unaffected witnesses, Pure Consciousness, which is watching all this happen. When we identify with the actor and the results, we suffer. When we realize our true Self which is completely independent of this circle, we are free.

GETTING FREE

How can we begin to free ourselves from this entanglement? Refer to the **Web of Attachment** (diagram No.15 in Chapter 8). Let's look briefly at some of the ways we can get free. We'll mention them only briefly here, as they're explained in detail in our other books.

1. **Discipline** of all types is a powerful tool with which to develop

our will power. For example, the will power that we develop through fasting can then be used in confronting other habits and desires.

2. **Prayer** is a method by which the mind can be focused in a higher spiritual direction so that it can break free from the circle of impulses and the web of attachment. Prayer can be done in the traditional way as learned through one's religion or can be a simple sincere communication with the Divine.

Repeating the name of God or a prayer continuously throughout the day is an extremely powerful tool for liberating the mind from the onslaught of subconscious impulses. The traditional prayer for Christians is "*Lord Jesus Christ, Have Mercy on Me*". Hindus might use "*Hari Rama, Hari Krishna*", or "*Om Nama Shivaya*". A Buddhist might use "*Om Name Padme Hum*". All religions recognize continuous prayer as an invaluable tool. It can be performed in all situations, while driving, walking, working, or waiting. (This subject is discussed in more detail in the book **THE ART OF MEDITATION.**)

3. **Self analysis** is another extremely valuable tool with which to cut through the veil of ignorance created by this web of attachments and impulses. Negative feelings are an indication that we're presently being controlled by ignorance, identification and attachment. Otherwise, we wouldn't be feeling negative feelings. It's like looking for fire when you see smoke. Negative feelings are the smoke and the fire is our ignorance and resulting attachment.

We have more motivation to try to understand what is happening when we're unhappy. We're not really interested in analyzing and getting free of our happy feelings. Let them be for the time being. (Analyzing them may also uncover that they, too, are based on illusion. So leave them for the present time).

We start the analysis with the question "What am I feeling?" We make a list of our feelings at this present time. Let's say that we feel rejection, hurt, inferiority and anger. The next question is "What do I want at this moment which I'm not getting?" Or we might ask,

"What am I attached to here?"

Our search might reveal that we're attached to being the center of attention in a group situation or attached to our children's success at school. We've now found the attachment (or at least one of the many attachments) causing us to have those feelings.

Now we ask, "What do I believe that makes me attached to that? What do I believe which makes me believe that I must have that in order to be happy or feel secure or feel worthy?" Our investigation may uncover such beliefs as:

"I'm worthy only if my partner shows me affection. My partner loves me if he shows me affection. If he doesn't then he doesn't love me. If he doesn't love me, I'm not worthy of love. If he doesn't love me, I'm alone. If I'm alone, I'm not secure, I'm not safe."

OR,

"I'm worthy if other people recognize my worth. They recognize my worth if they pay attention to me. I'm worthy if they pay more attention to me than to others. If they don't pay more attention to me than to others, I'm not worthy, not safe. I cannot be happy. I must have their attention."

Of course, no one thinks these thoughts out loud. These are subconscious beliefs which occur much too quickly and deeply in our minds for us to be consciously aware of them. We're only aware of the result they produce on our body and mind. We may not even be able to say what feelings we have. We might simply be aware of a tension in the stomach, neck, head etc.

These reflex mechanisms have us at their mercy. They can function, however, only in the dark. When we bring the light of conscious reasoning into their workings, they begin to lose their power over us.

In the case of the other examples our beliefs might be as follows:

"I am that child's parent. I'm responsible for his performance. If he does well, then I'm worthy. If he does well, he'll be professionally and materially successful. If he is materially successful, he'll be happy. If he doesn't do well, I'm responsible. I'm a failure. I'm not worthy. I'll be ridiculed by others."

These beliefs are not absolute truths. One could begin to get free from them by thinking more logically. For example:

"My worth is not dependent upon whether others show me affection or pay attention to me or whether my child does very well at school. I've seen parents who have done very conscientious work in bringing up their children but their child didn't do well in school. I've seen other parents pay very little attention to their children and yet their children do well."

The parent's effort is not the only contributing factor to the child's performance. We must remember that the child is bringing with her or him tendencies in the causal body which will have as much if not more weight than the parent's attitude or ability. In this way, the various false beliefs can be removed and we will be left with more clarity. (This process is explained in detail in the book **THE PSYCHOLOGY OF HAPPINESS**.)

We can go one step further, however, from the philosophical point of view. We can ask, "With what role am I identifying at this moment which is creating these beliefs and the resulting attachments? Who do I think I am?" You will remember that the connecting link between ignorance of our spiritual nature and our attachments are the roles with which we identify.

In the example concerning the partner's showing affection, we will identify with the role of the other person's partner. We are certainly identified with the role of the body and the personality. We may also be identified with the role of the child who needs affirmation of the other's love.

The next step in the process of liberation is then to remember and affirm the **truth** to ourselves. *"I am not this person's partner. I am*

an immortal soul who has played the role of partner with thousands of souls in thousands of lifetimes. I am a soul and I am learning to love through this role relationship. I want to be honest, open and loving and devoted to this relationship. There is no need for me to feel that I'm not worthy simply because the other is unable to show affection. I am worthy of love and respect, independent of his inability to express himself. I am not this body nor this personality. Even if I'm rejected or not paid attention to, that has no bearing on my true being. I am not a child. I am not a victim. I am not in need of approval or security from anyone. I am Immortal Consciousness. I am indestructible. I am the Divine Consciousness manifesting itself through this body and mind."

Or in the case of the parent and child. *"I am not a parent. I am an immortal soul temporarily playing the role of parent to this other immortal soul who has agreed to play the role of my child for a period of time so that we can both learn and grow spiritually through this process. My responsibility is to love and care for this soul and offer it all the opportunities I can for its growth process both as a personality and as a soul."*

"My responsibility concerns my effort and not the results. *Her results are up to her and the tendencies and life drama that she has brought with her. I will help her as much as I can but there is no need to worry about her future nor evaluate myself in terms of her academic performance. I am not this body, nor this personality. I am an immortal Divine Consciousness, which has temporarily taken this form for the purpose of increasing my ability to express my divine potential on the material plane."*

This kind of thinking may seem strange, unrealistic, and even ridiculous to some. It is, however, according to universal philosophy, pure truth. This is how Socrates and other great philosophers perceived their daily affairs and relationships.

Consider these comments on the comparison between PLATO'S PHAEDO and concepts for Eastern Philosophy, from the book PLATO AND VEDIC IDEALISM by Swami Paramananda.

For whence come wars and fighting and factions? Whence but from the body and the lusts of the body? For wars are occasioned by the love of money, and money has to be acquired for the sake and in the service of the body; and in consequence of all these things the time which ought to be given to philosophy is lost. Moreover, if there is time and inclination towards philosophy, yet the body introduces a turmoil and confusion and fear into the course of speculation and hinders us from seeing the truth; and all experience shows that if we would have pure knowledge of anything, we must be quit of the body, and the soul in herself must behold all things in themselves. In this present life I reckon that we make the nearest approach to knowledge when we have the least possible concern or interest in the body, and are not saturated with the bodily nature, but remain pure until the hour when God Himself is pleased to release us.

As long as we are absolutely identified with the body, we have no access to the domain of the soul. We don't gain soul vision, however, by destroying the body but by learning to discriminate between the spiritual and the physical, the eternal and the perishable; and by transcending the shifting conditions of bodily life.

The feelings of heat, cold, pleasure and pain are born from the contact of the senses with sense objects; they are with beginning and end, transitory. Therefore endure them. One who is serene and not afflicted by these sensations but is the same in pleasure and pain, is fit to attain immortality.

Such are the words of Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, while Plato expresses it thus:

And thought is best when the mind is gathered into herself and none of the things trouble her - neither sounds nor sights nor pain nor any pleasure, - when she has as little as possible to do with the body and has no bodily sense or feeling, but is aspiring after being.

The Indo-Aryans do not condemn the body nor do they regard it as an evil in itself. It becomes so, they say, when we fail to look upon

it merely as an instrument and take it to be all in all. So long as we remain wholly engrossed in the physical, the soul must be like a prisoner since it can have no freedom for true self-expression.

In this, Vedantic philosophy is in accord with Plato when he says: *"What is purification but the separation of the soul from the body, accustoming her to collect and rally herself from the body on every side, and to dwell alone by herself as much as she can both now and hereafter, released from the bondage of the body?"*

This release, however, is not accomplished by bodily death. On the contrary, mere dying will not bring it to us. If we haven't realized our life as separate from the body while we're still in the body, death will not reveal it. Nor is this liberation from physical bondage to be gained through self-torture or practice of severe austerity. Only through clear knowledge of our soul nature shall we attain it. Free souls, even when they're thrown into the midst of the world, are never overcome by its confusion because they know how to separate the essential from that which is non-essential.

We can see then that this type of thinking was not foreign to the ancient philosophers. The truth is the truth forever and everywhere. It cannot be different in one time or place from another. Only the way in which it is expressed can change. This method of spiritual inquiry is an especially valuable tool for cutting through the web of identification which covers our daily interactions with the material world. Others may not always understand our perception of reality but this is a test of whether we are really dedicated to the truth or not.

Socrates encountered this problem as he expresses here.

I have actually known some who were ready to bite me when I deprived them of a darling folly. They did not perceive that I acted from good will, that no god is enemy of man; neither am I their enemy in all this, but religion will never allow me to admit falsehood, or to stifle the Truth.

There is, however, a basic difference between Socrates' situation

and our own. He was a spiritual teacher. His dharma was to awaken people to the truth. To a truth which he lived; for he lived an austere life with few comforts. We may not yet have lived this truth and our dharma might not yet be to awaken others but rather to manage to wake up our own selves. Thus, we would do well not to speak much of these thoughts to family members or social or professional acquaintances unless they are really very interested and in a position to understand.

Don't take on the role of the savior. Let your emphasis be on your own understanding and application of these concepts in a silent as possible way in your life. In this way, you will avoid a lot of misunderstandings and possible conflicts with those around you. Your example of growing peace and love will speak much more loudly and effectively than your teaching and sermons.

Let's continue with our investigation of ways out of the web of attachment.

4. Meditation is an invaluable technique for gaining insight into and control over the workings of the mind. Through daily meditation, we can eventually transcend the functionings of the mind and experience Pure Consciousness free from the subconscious impulses and thought forms. (See the book **THE ART OF MEDITATION**).

5. Occasional retreats in which we can let go of our mundane responsibilities and daily concerns is very helpful. This is not recommended as a retreat from life but rather as a means of gaining perspective on our priorities and activities and as a preparation for a more effective and harmonious life. Everyone should have the opportunity to be by oneself without any responsibilities whatsoever for a few days at least three times a year.

This aloneness (which is very different from loneliness) will allow us to direct the mind inward and communicate with the inner self. We will be able to experience the peace and fulfillment which exist in the center of our being and take guidelines from within about our

life directions.

The caterpillar is a being which only takes from the world. It eats all forms of vegetation and trees, destroying many of them in its greed. After some time, however, it goes into retreat, building a cocoon around itself. During this retreat it undergoes hormonal changes and is transformed into a beautiful butterfly. It emerges from the cocoon as a completely different being. It hardly eats at all anymore. It offers beauty and peace to all who behold it.

We are at present, like those caterpillars, taking much more than we offer to this world. We are like parasites that are draining the Earth's resources at a rate which is quickly leading to the total destruction of the environment. Our only hope is to be transformed into butterflies. This can happen only by going through the cocoon stage. We need our real Self.

As Plato expressed: "... *Thought is best when the mind is gathered into herself and none of the things trouble her - neither sounds nor sights nor any pleasures - when she has a little to do with the body and has no bodily sense or feeling, but is aspiring after being.*" This could be interpreted as retreat or as meditation.

6. Offering all actions and their results up to the Lord.

This is the key to being in the world with all the responsibilities of a family and profession and yet being totally peaceful. The reason for this is that it's not our responsibilities that wear us down. It's not our physical activity that tires us. Rather, our problems are created by our anxiety, lack of self-confidence and fears concerning the results of our efforts.

When we consider ourselves as temporary residents, visitors on the planet Earth who have been entrusted with the caretaking of beings and objects here, then we'll feel differently. When we realize that nothing here is really ours, not even our house, car, spouse, or child, not even our own body but that these are all simply temporary forms which have been entrusted into our care, we'll perceive them differently. When we realize that we're here for the basic purpose of improving our ability to manifest our innate Divinity, we'll feel

differently. When we realize that every responsibility which we have and every act which we perform have basically that purpose, to offer us opportunities to manifest our inner Divine potential more fully, we'll approach each act with much more peace, clarity and effectiveness.

Wisdom will allow us to execute all of our responsibilities and perform all of our actions as offerings to the One Divine Consciousness or to God or to Christ, however we personally perceive that Ultimate Reality. When we act in this way, the seeds of our actions are not recorded in the causal body. They're offered to the Divine Consciousness and do not enter the individual causal body. This is the key to freedom. Act without attachment to the result of the action.

Some will ask, "Then why would I make any effort if I was not hoping to gain something from that?" I would answer, "What does an apple tree gain by producing apples?" That tree itself gains nothing. Neither does it try to dictate what will happen to its apples; whether they will become other trees, or food for animals or humans, or apple juice or apple pie. It's the apple tree's dharma to produce apples.

It is human's dharma to create and to improve the quality of life on the earth. One force that will cause us to act will be the need to fulfill our dharma and to create. The second force is love. We will not make efforts because we hope to gain many things but we will make efforts out of love for those around us.

Then you might say, "But every time we make any effort, even if it's altruistic and for someone else, we still have some specific goal, some result in mind." Yes, this is true. This is not the problem. This does not create tension. What creates suffering is when our happiness depends on the result.

We can have a specific result in mind as a preference but be able to accept whatever result actually occurs. We will not be unhappy if that result which we had in mind doesn't become a reality because we have complete faith that the Universal Consciousness **is**

reflecting the perfect result possible considering all of the millions of factors which we are not aware of. That doesn't mean that we give up the effort. We continue with the same joyful creative activity and again we may have a result in mind but we again accept whatever result manifests. This is an important point and we will return to it.

7. Think of the opposite positive thought. Another way to positively orient our mental states is to think of the opposite when we're lost in negative thinking. We can step back and observe that we're thinking negatively and willfully introduce the opposite thought. When we feel anger, we can imagine peace, understanding and compassion. When we feel fear, we can imagine courage. When we feel hate, we can imagine love. In this way, the mind will be gradually reconditioned in a positive way.

This has nothing to do with the suppression of fear or hate. We do not suppress or deny the negative feelings. We simply ignore them temporarily and focus on developing another type of thought process.

The subconscious impulse has come mechanically into the mind out of habit. It is not our real self. Our real Self is Pure Consciousness. This fear or hate becomes from our conditioned self which is far from our real Self.

When we imagine what it would be like to feel strong or forgiving, or loving in this situation, we're exercising our right to experiment with and choose the contents of our mind. We have the right to choose and direct our mental states.

8. Become detached from the body. The ultimate solution, however, is simply to stop identifying so intensely with the body and personality. The truth of this solution is so easy to see. Suppose you have a pain in your body. When you fall asleep, do you feel the pain? Where has the pain gone? It's still in the body, because when you wake up it's still there. But during sleep you've stopped identifying with the body and so the pain doesn't register in your consciousness.

The same is true when you become involved in an interesting conversation, or movie or some engrossing activity; you forget the pain. You've stopped identifying with the body. How simple. Simply stop identifying with the body! Stop concentrating on the body. Transcend the body and you transcend the bodily pains and pleasures. It will be difficult, however, to transcend the body if we're intensely addicted to bodily pleasures like food, comfort and sex. The more we indulge in pleasant physical sensations, the more vulnerable we become to physical pain because our attention is naturally focused on the sensual level of our being.

If we want to transcend physical suffering, we must learn to see the body as a separate instrument through which we are to function. We must be able to bring our focus of awareness upward into the higher levels of our being.

All types of austerity, such as fasting, cold showers, sleeping on hard surfaces, physical exercises, avoiding various comforts and habits such as coffee, cigarettes, alcohol or drugs are not ends in themselves but rather techniques through which we can begin to break the hold which the physical -sensual orientation has over the mind. We use the mind to develop will power. We use that will power to raise the focus of awareness and concentration out of the physical, up to the mental and eventually higher onto the spiritual levels of awareness.

One practical technique we can use when we have physical pain is to put all of our concentration on the center of our forehead. If we've been developing our concentration through meditation, then we will succeed in bringing our awareness above the level of pain.

Another technique is to learn to relax each and every muscle as in deep relaxation. Pain and tension are close friends. If we can persuade tension to leave, then pain will follow it out of the body. Most of us are in the habit of doing the opposite. We tend to contract and grit our teeth in the face of pain. Surrender and relaxation are much more efficient ways to transcend pain. This truth is being discovered in pain clinics and hospitals all over the world.

9. Become detached from the personality. The same truths may be applied to the suffering of the ego. Remember that the Spirit is always blissful. All painful emotional experiences, all anger, all hurt, fear, hate, attachment, desire, pleasure and bitterness are generated and experienced on the level of the ego.

Assume the worst possible emotional situation. The person we love most in the world has just left the physical body. We experience a horrible feeling of hurt, unhappiness, bitterness towards the injustice of God and life itself, a feeling that life is not worth continuing, and a fear of not being able to handle the problems of life by ourselves. The whole body aches with hurt.

But what happens when we fall into deep sleep (not dream sleep)? Where have all those feelings gone? We've stopped identifying with the suffering ego. It's natural for the ego to suffer. But we do not have to identify with the ego. Gradually all those feelings will pass with the flow of time. There is no doubt about that. The rate and degree to which they pass will depend on how tightly we hold onto the ego and its suffering. Seeing the ego and the mind as our vehicles will help.

10. Simplify your life as much as possible. We are not more saintly if we choose to have fewer possessions. We are simply happier. We'd do well to make a regular reevaluation of the objects and activities that fill our lives. Each of them surely has played an important role in our growth and maturation into who we are now.

That doesn't mean, however, that they're still beneficial to our further growth. There may be objects or activities which we keep in our lives adding to those sub-circles in the Web of Attachment (Chart No.15, Chapter 8), without offering us much of anything anymore. They may simply be habits.

We would do well, then, to begin to perceive all physical objects as existing for the sole purpose of the evolution of the soul. When we're able to see this, nothing is ours. Everything is here to be used for aiding all of us in the process of creating a harmonious environment conducive to evolution on to higher levels of

consciousness. In this way, our possessions and energies can be directed in the proper directions. That could be money, a car, a house, clothing, and talents, thoughts or time. All of these are precious forms of the One Universal Energy which are to be used for the universal evolutionary process. Let's all devote our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual resources to that process.

CHAPTER XIII

DISCIPLINE - THE FOUNDATION OF EVOLUTION

A person without discipline is like a ship without a rudder in the storm of life. There is no control, no way of creating harmony or improving the quality of life.

Discipline is the key to evolution. It is the key to personal and social harmony and progress. It is the key to real culture and civilization.

In Sanskrit a very special word is used to refer to all kinds of spiritual disciplines. The word is **Tapas**. It has many meanings in English. Some of them are:

- 1. Any **discipline** that is performed with the aim of bettering our body, mind or character.*
- 2. Any **effort** whatsoever which might be made with the aim of spiritual evolution.*
- 3. Any **sacrifice** of pleasure, comfort or negative habits or attitudes which may inhibit our growth.*
- 4. The **development of will power and detachment**, the cultivation of the ability to deny temporary pleasures or rewards for more lasting and real benefits.*
- 5. All attempts towards **self-mastery** in which we learn to master the functioning of the body and mind.*

6. Any ***oath*** taken which requires some sort of control over the body or mind or way of living.

SOME EXAMPLES

There are unlimited examples of possible disciplines that may suit various people with various needs. Here's a small list of some possibilities. The time period for which we may choose to employ such disciplines is a personal decision. Some may choose a week, others a year, and others may decide to employ a discipline for the rest of their lives, as with oaths which are taken by priests or nuns and monks.

1. *Not to eat chocolates or sweets in general.*
2. *Not to criticize others.*
3. *Not to buy new clothing.*
4. *To read from the Bible or other spiritual books daily.*
5. *To limit sexual activity.*
6. *To meditate daily.*
7. *To wake up early.*
8. *To practice silence some hours a week or days per year.*
9. *To keep a daily diary.*
10. *To exercise and do breathing techniques daily.*
11. *To pray daily.*
12. *To avoid movies or TV.*
13. *To give a certain percentage of their income to the poor.*
14. *To visit an orphanage or home for elderly on a regular basis.*
15. *To eat more properly.*
16. *To stop smoking cigarettes or drinking alcohol.*
17. *To talk less on the telephone.*
18. *To play a musical instrument daily.*
19. *To fast one day per week.*

I'm sure that you can add many more possibilities to the list. We each need to evaluate which forms of discipline are most suitable to us. We can ask, "What is it that I'm doing which is preventing me from being healthier, happier or from growing spiritually?" We can also ask, "What is it that, if I were to do more often, would benefit myself and others around me?"

It's like weeding a garden. We go out into the garden of our soul and see what needs to be removed and which tendencies we want to encourage. We water and cultivate habits which are moving us towards health and harmony with ourselves and our environment and start gradually to weed out habits and tendencies which have become obstacles to our health and growth.

NOT A MATTER OF GOOD OF BAD

It's important not to fall into the trap of feeling like a 'good child' if you succeed or a 'bad child' if you fail to immediately make the changes you decide to make. This requires self-acceptance and patience. We are not better persons if we manage to make changes in our life style. It simply would be more useful and more beneficial for us and others.

We want to see what's **useful** for our evolution and not get caught up in concepts of sin, guilt, or pride that we're better than others who are still caught up in self-destructive habits. We're all moving along a path towards harmony and unity. Just as with any journey, we have to keep moving which means not getting stuck in one place.

The forms of discipline, too, tend to continually change. Techniques or habits which we may cultivate at one level of our evolution, may not suit us at some point in the future.

THE GATE TO REAL FREEDOM

Independent of which of the many forms of discipline we choose, each is an opportunity for becoming more conscious of our true role here on the earth.

For example, if we've decided to not eat one day a week, at various times of the day hunger will appear in the body and mind. We'll then be faced with a choice of giving in to the messages from the body and mind which will make up a large number of very clever excuses as to why we should not or need not practice this form of discipline. There will be various forms of reactions all the way from

pain and weakness to negativity or depression. This is the last attempt by the body and mind to avoid succumbing to the control of the higher intelligence or soul. They've had their fun for so many years controlling our lives. We've been led by the various desires of the body and mind all our lives and have not been free to really create the health and harmony which we want and deserve in life. Thus, they will now react in various ways.

This will be our opportunity to strengthen our **will power** over the **power of our desires and habits**. Each time we exercise our will power in any particular situation, we develop our general self-mastery. We start to have greater self-control and can direct our lives as we wish.

Without self-control we gradually lose our self-esteem. We're unable to do what we really want and what is best for our own good. We continue to smoke although we know we're destroying our health and life. We continue to overeat although we know we're undermining our health and harmony.

We continue to criticize others although we realize that we're destroying our relationships, our main source of happiness. We're unable to employ a discipline of exercise, breathing techniques, relaxation or meditation although we know that these will bring us health and harmony. We've become robots, slaves of our habits, desires and tendencies. **We are not free human beings. We have no free will because we have no will.**

The only way to learn to swim is to get into the sea. The only way to develop will is by exercising it in various situations which are appropriate.

CONTACT WITH SPIRITUAL GOAL

Taking again the example of fasting once a week and the feeling of hunger, there's another approach that can be taken. We can offer the pain, hunger or suffering which we feel to God. We can offer the sacrifice to God, thereby intensifying the sense of His presence in our lives.

Each moment of hunger, pain or suffering becomes a stimulus to remember God and offer Him these efforts towards self-improvement. In doing this, we attract to ourselves higher energies which do far more than replace the small and temporary energy or pleasure that we might receive through eating.

Let's remember here that the possible avenues for growth, discussed in the example of fasting, apply to all forms of discipline. The body, mind, desires and habits will protest and we'll be faced with a test as to whether to give in to old habits or exercise our will power or to offer up our effort to God, or some combination of these.

Such situations also offer us an opportunity to remember more intensely and deeply why we're doing this spiritual discipline. Our hunger or desire becomes an opportunity to remember our goal of self-mastery, liberation or spiritual evolution or simply good health.

This method offers us an opportunity to **remember** and **affirm** and **experience** that we can be happy even **if the body does not have what it thinks it needs to have**. The higher intelligence is gradually awakening.

Disciplines are an excellent way to develop **will power**, **discrimination** and **closeness to God**. These are the three basic requirements for spiritual growth. Simple intellectual knowledge of spiritual truths is useless without them.

THREE TYPES OF DISCIPLINES

There are three types of incentives that can motivate someone to perform disciplines.

1. The first category is that of people who do disciplines to punish themselves, to harm their bodies or minds, or without any clear understanding of why they're performing them. They perform them mechanically because they've been told to or because others do.

2. The second category of people performs disciplines in order to gain the attention and respect of others. *If they're fasting, they'll make sure that everyone knows. They'll pray or meditate so that others will think that they are very spiritual. They perform disciplines so as to gain results in this world such as recognition or powers of various sorts.*

It's true that performance of disciplines can awaken certain spiritual powers. When the apostles were unable to remove the demon from a young man in the temple, Christ came and threw it out saying that this type of demon can be removed only through **fasting and prayer**.

We're discouraged, however, from performing disciplines for the purpose of obtaining spiritual powers because we may obtain them before we're spiritually mature enough and egoless enough to use them without danger for ourselves and others.

3. The last group of people who perform disciplines are those who practice them in order to purify their bodies and minds *so that they may uncover their inner divine nature and realize their unity with God and all beings. They are conscious of their evolutionary process and want to participate consciously in it.*

Various disciplines offer us valuable opportunities for developing health, harmony and spiritual growth. Every mastery over our desire, nature and habits is another step towards real freedom.

Unfortunately, people have a very confused idea of what real freedom is. They think that they're free if they can satisfy their desires and impulses. What they don't realize is that they're slaves to them and aren't free not to obey them even if their health and harmony are being destroyed. Real freedom is freedom from desires, habits, fears, programmings and limiting beliefs.

Gradually the heat of discipline burns up the ignorance of our identification with the body and leads to the experience of our real nature.

CHAPTER XIV

DEVOTION TO GOD

We depend on our relationships with those around us. We need others in order to feel security and meaningfulness in our lives. Yet, we ignore the one relationship which has the most to offer us, our relationship with Ultimate Reality, with the Universal Consciousness which is the Source of our lives, with God.

Devotion to our relationship with God is not a particularly popular subject today. You don't see much about it on TV or at the movies or in newspapers or magazines. You don't often hear people referring to their relationship with God.

The sad fact is that very few people today are devoted to any relationship. There is an epidemic of ego-centeredness in which people live more and more for self gratification; wanting to take from others but giving little importance to what they might give. This sad situation has created an unhappy and lonely society.

WHAT IS DEVOTION

Let's consider what we mean by devotion. We mean that there's a degree of respect, love and loyalty to someone or something. When we're devoted to something, we make it the basis of our lives. Every one is devoted to something or someone, even if that might be to their own body pleasures or egotistical satisfaction.

Some are devoted to politics or artistic expression, others to sports stars or movie stars, others to their work or children, still others to

money, fame, power or recognition from society.

Others are devoted to scientific research while others are devoted to their sensual needs. Yet others are devoted to serving humanity, while others are devoted to healing or educating.

The list is endless. We are each devoted to something which attracts our energy and causes us to dedicate much time, thought and energy and, in some cases, our lives themselves to some purpose or goal. We do this with the hope of obtaining satisfaction which may mean that we believe that we'll acquire security, pleasure, affirmation, love, abundance, wisdom or meaning in life.

After we've gone through all these efforts to fulfill our needs and still feel that something is missing, we begin to turn our energies towards the transcendental reality, seeking oneness with the Universal Spirit which we call God. We have no other choice since we've exhausted all the earthly possibilities of satisfaction and have realized that they're temporary and unable to give lasting security or fulfillment.

At that point we start to redirect our energies from a horizontal direction to a vertical one. That is, rather than trying to find happiness and security through relationships with people, activities and objects, we start to develop a vertical relationship with the Universal Spirit which is omnipresent within and around always.

As we gain strength from this relationship, we become more able to offer in a selfless way on the horizontal level to the people around us. Only when we have inner fulfillment and inner security can we offer real love to anyone around us. Otherwise, what we usually call love is often actually codependence on others for the mutual fulfillment of needs. If the other becomes unable to fulfill our needs, or if our needs change, or the other's behavior changes, then our love turns from sweet to sour. That's not love, that is in reality a bartering of emotions and needs. Only when we have an inner source of strength, peace, love and satisfaction can we really love and offer something of value to those around us. The most efficient way to achieve that goal is a direct relationship with the source of

all power and fulfillment - God - the Universal Spirit.

Can there be any other more efficient source of what we're looking for? If we ignore this relationship, we're like fools in the dark trying to use flashlights to help us find our way when we could have direct access to the sun itself. The people around us are like small flashlights, they cannot offer us much in the way of real happiness. But God is like a thousand suns, there is no limit to its light and power. We can open ourselves to this universal source of love, wisdom and peace which is right inside us and then become much larger flashlights, let us say beacons for those around us and really offer something worthwhile to the world.

IMAGINE GOD AS YOU LIKE

We have the right to relate to God in the way that suits us. God is a universal consciousness, which is **beyond all forms**. All forms, however, are a part of God and are manifestations of God and thus can be used in order to relate to Him. But no form can describe His ultimate reality. Thus, various religions have been constructed around various forms and principles. All of these are valid ways for approaching the One Universal Formless Being. The form is a useful point of focus for our minds which have not yet reached the level of evolution where we would be able to concentrate on the formless, pure omnipresent Universal Consciousness.

Our minds cannot comprehend infinity or immortality or omnipresence. Most people need a form of some kind to help them concentrate. But if someone has objections toward limiting God to a form, he or she may choose to use some principle or quality such as love, peace, truth or righteousness as a point of focus. We can easily be devoted to a principle such as love or righteousness. Also we may imagine God as light, as a form made of light or as a ball of light or as a formless light; whatever suits us best.

We may also choose to relate to God as an omnipresent essence; something like space or energy or a presence of some type. Each of the above mentioned possibilities may serve as windows or doors which all lead to the same divine room of the one absolute Source of all creation.

The various religions exist to offer people a variety of ways to approach the one God and each leads to that One. All are equally correct and yet none has a monopoly on God, for God is beyond religions and systems and we can approach Him with or without such organized systems.

Each has a direct connection, a direct personal telephone line to this Universal Consciousness, for it is operating through our bodies and minds. We are the temples of the living God. We are not separate from that Divine Consciousness. Thus, to ignore this connection is like ignoring our own inner self. **God is our own inner self.** When we give so much attention to finding happiness and security and comfort through people and objects external to ourselves, we ignore that tremendous power and ability which lies within ourselves. Developing a relationship with God means developing a relationship with our **real inner self.**

HOW CAN WE DEVELOP THAT RELATIONSHIP

There are various ways through which we can develop our relationship with God. Some ways will be suitable to some and others to others. Each may choose the ways that help most.

Some may like to create an **altar** in their home as a point of focus. They may like to place an icon, flowers, incense, and a flame or light of some type. These are not the essential aspects of communication with God. These are external factors which for some may be simply show. For many of us, however, they may be a valid way of increasing our concentration on a feeling of love for a Being that we can not see, hear or even conceive of at our present state of evolution.

The altar, then, becomes a place where there's a special atmosphere. When we sit there, we feel a natural tendency for our minds to flow inward into an inner **dialogue** or into a silent **union** with the Divine.

It's not useful, however, to limit God's presence to an altar or to

some icons. We can use the icons to remind us of God's presence. But we must **avoid** at all costs **limiting God's presence** to the icon. The Divine is everywhere and, most of all, in the hearts and minds of the people we encounter each day. To love God in an inert image, and to reject Him and abuse Him as a living human being whom we encounter daily is not logical or useful for our evolution, nor for social harmony.

PRAYER

When we have a relationship with someone, it's natural to feel the need to speak with him or her. We like to visit them, see them, talk with them, share with them. We might ask them for help and offer them help. That's the meaning of friendship. The same applies for our relationship with the Universal Spirit. In order to develop our contact, we need to communicate with it regularly. Communication is easier in this case because we need not go anywhere in order to find our loved one, our friend.

He, or she if you like, is omnipresent; and, thus, actually within us in reality. Communication simply means stopping temporarily the incessant flow of the mind towards external events, desires, attachments, fears and expectations and directing our attention into the inner calm where we can think clearly about what's going on within us and communicate it to our friend, to our real mother, our real father.

Just as we report the state of affairs in our lives frequently to those who are close to us, in the same way we communicate our deepest feelings, questions, gratitude and needs to our Universal Self.

This is called prayer. It's simply opening our heart to the Universal Being. We may do this with the help of traditional prayers such as the Lord's Prayer or the various prayers handed down to us by our religious background. Or we may create our own spontaneous communication according to our feelings at the moment. Both are valuable. The traditional prayers have been created by enlightened beings (the Lord's Prayer by Jesus himself) and thus have a special spiritual vibration.

Also, by their continual repetition over thousands of years by billions of people, they've created a power of their own on the spiritual level. Every human thought and word carries a certain amount of spiritual power. When so many billions of people have prayed the same words to the same form of God for thousands of years, this creates a tremendous focus of spiritual power, independent of other factors.

Even if Jesus had never existed (I believe that He did exist) His name has become a great source of spiritual power simply through the faith, thoughts and prayers of so many human hearts.

The greatest power of prayer, however, lies in the sincerity of the heart which is praying. If you can feel more intimate, more real and honest by creating your own prayers while communicating, then follow your inner guidance.

There are three aspects to prayer. The first is the addressing or the describing of the Being to whom we are about to communicate. Here we in some way try to comprehend and describe in our minds this Being to whom we are talking. This is not easy because, as we have already mentioned, God is beyond description. This attempt to describe the Universal Being, however, helps us in some way to open our minds to its great majesty and power.

This reminds me of the story of the young child on the seashore who was gathering water in a cup and emptying it in a bucket. A monk from a nearby monastery happened to be passing by and asked the boy, "What are you doing, my child?" The boy answered, "I 'm trying to put the sea in my bucket." The monk laughed heartily. "My child, you cannot fit the whole sea into that tiny bucket." The child looked into the monk's eyes and answered with a strange wisdom, "Yes, Father, I know and you too must realize that you cannot fit all of God into your mind." The monk walked off wiser and more humble, free now from the illusion that he could ever know God through theological gymnastics.

The second aspect of prayer is the expression of gratitude for all that we have. We tend to remember only our problems when

relating to God. We have so much to be grateful for: our houses, food, money, clothing, friends, access to techniques and concepts with which to improve the quality of our lives, the trees, birds, flowers, the sea, sun, the mountains, colors, sounds, music, art, philosophy, science, and perhaps the most important, for all these lovely beings who are sharing the earth with us.

Let's start off each day by remembering how much we have, how lucky we are. Let those thoughts bring us joy and gratitude and stimulate within us the need to offer something to those who have less than we do.

The third aspect of prayer is the most well known. It's the asking for help. If we're going to ask for help, this is the place to ask. This is where all the power to make things happen is.

We must, however, be careful that what we're asking for is really going to make us happy or really is best for our evolution. We may believe that it would be best for us to be rich, or successful, or for our daughter to get married, or for our child to become a doctor. But we cannot be sure that any of these roads will bring us or our family's happiness or evolution. It's best to leave the Universal Omniscient Consciousness to decide what is best for us and others. Of course we have the right to express our preferences, but we can follow that with an, "If it's Your will" or "If that's best for our evolution towards You" or "Let Your will be done".

Each will get what we ask for. Those who ask for material wealth and success will get that, those who ask for healing will get that, those who ask for knowledge will receive, sooner or later, knowledge. But none of these will bring the lasting inner fulfillment we are looking for.

When a baby wants milk, water will not do. We are all spiritual babies looking for reunion with our real mother - the Universal Consciousness within us. Thus it is best to pray for purification, or to become instruments of divine love and peace on the earth, to be molded in the way which is best for our union with the Divine. We may pray that we might overcome negative habits, or improve our

character, or become fit for union with God, or for the experience of the presence of God in every being and situation we encounter. These, in my humble opinion, are more worthwhile praying for.

This little story illustrates this clearly. Once there was a wealthy merchant who had four wives. When he was about to return home after the end of a long trip, he wrote to his wives asking them what gifts they'd like him to bring. The youngest wife wrote asking for beautiful clothing and ornaments. The second wife asked for medicines, as she was ill. The third asked for books, as she was interested in worldly knowledge. The fourth wrote saying that she didn't want anything except for her husband himself to be close to her.

The merchant returned and gave the clothing to the first wife, the medicines to the second, and the books to the third. They were all so happy that they'd received exactly what they desired and asked for. The husband went and lived with the fourth wife. After a time, the happiness stimulated by their gifts wore off and they wondered where their husband was. They complained to him, "You've been staying exclusively with the fourth wife. Why don't you stay with us?" He answered, "I simply gave to each what she asked for. You asked me for clothing, medicines and books; she asked me for myself. I gave to each what she asked for."

The following story brings out the point concerning the balance between gratitude and requesting in our prayers.

While praying, remember the story about the two little angels. One was sitting on a cloud with little to do, watching the other go busily back and forth to the earth. After watching the busy angel for a time, he decided to ask her what she was doing. "What job do you have which causes you to go back and forth between heaven and earth so frequently?" The busy angel answered, "Oh, I collect the various **pleases** from the people on Earth and bring them to God. What is your job, which causes you to sit here on this cloud for such long hours?" The sitting angel answered. "Oh, I collect the **thank-you's** from the people on the earth."

Let's give some work to the Thank You Angel and rest to the Please Angel.

OTHER WAYS OF DEVELOPING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Chanting is another way that we can communicate with the Divine. It has the same results as prayer but the added advantage that our bodies and minds are stimulated by melodies and words which open the heart and create a spiritually oriented emotional ecstasy.

Chanting opens our hearts, releases suppressed negative emotions and inspires higher feelings of love, compassion and unity. When people chant together, they create a unity among them which is seldom created through discussion. We will always find some degree of difference and disagreement on the intellectual level. When we chant, we're united in voice, heart, mind and spirit.

Chanting also has a beneficial effect on all the organs of the body, on the emotions, mind and spirit. Some sects of monks and mystics from various religions use chanting, and sometimes dancing, as a way to develop a feeling of ecstasy and union with God.

Repeating the name of God internally is another very efficient way to liberate the mind from its outer focus and accustom it to maintaining continual contact with the Beloved. This technique is used frequently in eastern cultures but is also well known in the Orthodox Christian tradition as the unceasing prayer, or the prayer of the heart. The "**Philokalia**" and the simple, easily readable book **THE WAY OF THE PILGRIM** deal with this method of enlightenment and union with the Divine. One simply repeats continually in the mind the phrase "*Lord Jesus Christ, Have Mercy On Me*".

One could, however, use other words or phrases, which help to feel the presence of the Divine. One could repeat such words or phrases as, Love, Peace, Christ, I am an eternal soul, I am love, God, I love

you, enlighten me, all is God, I am an innocent child of God.

The possibilities are many. Such a method can be employed most of the hours of the day, when the mind is not consciously engaged, such as while driving, cleaning up, walking, waiting for someone, eating, falling asleep or when waking up. This will gradually lead to the state of feeling the continuous presence of the Divine wherever we are and whatever we're doing. This will bring greater inner peace and love for all beings as we begin to perceive that all beings are expressions of the God that we love.

Reading various religious and philosophical texts can help us in our attempt to perceive the nature of the Divine. Christ gives us many parables which help us to understand the nature of the Father and the Kingdom of God. At the same time He gives us guidelines as to how we must live in order to more quickly and effectively unite with God. We're also told, through such scriptures, what is expected of us by our Father - the Universal Consciousness. We're told that we must love each other, serve each other, help each other. We're told that we must develop the love for each other that He had for us. Such a love enabled Jesus to accept being crucified so as to become a symbol of strength, love and the truth of immortality in our minds. We're told that the way to God is through service and love towards His children here on the earth.

Reading the lives of the various saints also gives us greater courage to proceed without fear on our spiritual path back to our real home and to our real parent. Witnessing their courage and inner strength in overcoming the various difficulties and tests in their lives gives us strength to overcome ours. Their experiences of God and His power and love serve to increase our faith.

We gain the faith which we need to face the world around which is based on lies and slyness with only the truth of a clean conscience and the faith in God to protect us. We gain a new doctor, a new psychiatrist, a new parent, a new friend, a new spiritual teacher and guide in life - God himself.

An inner transformation gradually takes place and we develop an

inner peace and strength that we never before had in our lives. We are sure that whatever may happen in our lives, we will not be left alone and vulnerable.

We have the most powerful and loving friend in the world.

We have the Omnipresent Universal Consciousness itself as a partner in life. Thus, even if we lose all our money and possessions, we don't worry because we're sure that, through our effort and God's grace, all our needs will be taken care of. Even if our spouse leaves us through separation or death, we will not be alone, for we have an omnipresent immortal friend who is always with us. Even if we are seriously ill we know that there is no danger. We will either get well and continue enjoying this world or we will leave our bodies and enjoy an even more intimate and direct relationship with God without the obstacle of our physical body and mind.

The power of faith is our greatest protection. It is a power which makes the difference between those who swim freely in a sea of serious problems and those who are drowning in a teacup of illusory difficulties. The dynamic duo - the individual and the Universal - can overcome all obstacles. Faith in ourselves and faith in God, these are the keys to peace, security, health and happiness.

GIVING GOD A HAND

God obviously does not need our help. But His creation does. We're placed on Earth to become united. We've been asked repeatedly by the founders of all religions to follow the path of love and share with each other and to care for each other as sisters and brothers. We have ignored this request persistently. When we have a relationship with someone, we usually want to make him or her feel well. God is that transcendent formless Being which has no needs from us. But on the other hand, God is also manifest as all the beings and objects in the physical world.

We serve God by serving others. Sai Baba has said that, "*Hands which serve are holier than lips which pray*". There are people who pray to icons but ignore the walking temples of God around them who need so much help. As long as there is famine God is hungry.

As long as there is poverty, God is poor. As long as there is abuse of humans and animals, God is being abused. As long as there are lonely people, God is lonely.

There's no way of approaching God more effectively than by serving humankind with selflessness and love. We can gradually become instruments of love, light, compassion, relief and service to those around us.

This is the fastest road to health, happiness and harmony with ourselves and the universe.

CHAPTER XV

THE INCARNATION OF GOD VS. THE FORMLESS GOD

THE PARADOX

Throughout recorded history, people have argued about whether God can take a form or not. Some choose to worship God as a form, or through a form, such as the image of Jesus the Christ. Others prefer to think of God as the Omniscient, Omnipresent, Omnipotent, formless Presence that fills the universe. Such questions cannot be solved through rational thinking and argumentation. No matter how much discussion may take place, one's beliefs finally come down to a matter of conditioning and faith.

All religions clearly state that God is far beyond all description and mental understanding. Yet some religions maintain that this infinite being can in fact make Himself (Herself or Itself) into a human body and incarnate on the earth for the purpose of correcting the ways of humanity which has lost its way on the evolutionary path.

This is the concept of the God-man such as Jesus the Christ. Most Christians believe that Jesus was the only God-man who ever existed. The Hindus accept Jesus Christ as a God-man and often quote from his teachings. But they also believe that there were and will be other God-men, whom they call *Avatars*. The two most recent incarnations of God in India according to them were Rama and Krishna.

These beliefs cannot be argued. Each has a right to believe, or not believe, according to logic, conditioning, experience and faith. It's not important whether we are devoted to one or another God-man. It's important that we live according to their teachings. All agree that love for our neighbors and ourselves is the path towards freedom. All ask us to treat others as we would like them to treat us. "*There is only one religion, the religion of love*".

It is quite impossible for us to understand a God-man. For he operates outside the laws which confine the human mind. He operates outside the restrictions of time and space.

Remember the story about the monk walking along the sand at the sea. Remember the boy's innocent but wise answer, "Yes, Father, and do you see that you cannot fit the infinite God into your finite mind?"

The oriental and western mystical approach is to give up trying to understand God and to open up to experiencing Him. For this we need to get out of the mind and into the heart, through prayer, chanting, spiritual dance, selfless service, love and meditation.

The temptation is always there, however, *to explain how* a God-man can be both a Universal Being and a man at the same time. In some cases the presence of the physical form of the God-man prevents us from being able to experience the all-pervading universal spirit which is in all beings. The form of this divine person blinds us to His true universal nature. Jesus told us many times that He is in us and that we are in Him. He told His disciples that it's better for Him to go away so that the Helper (the Holy Spirit) could come to them and guide them. As long as Jesus' physical form was with them, they were unable to perceive the Christ Consciousness **within themselves**. After Jesus' form ascended they were filled with the awareness of the Holy Spirit within themselves.

How can we bridge this concept of a man being both God and man at the same time? The following model, accompanied by an illustration may be useful to us in creating some type of mental image, which somewhat resolves this paradox. We will be using the

same diagram No.3 which we used in the second chapter.
We are reproducing it here to expedite your reference to the diagram.

THE DIVINE WELL AND THE DIVINE LAKE

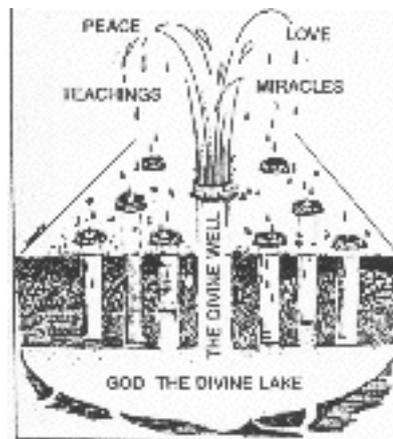


Diagram No. 3

THE DIVINE UNDERGROUND LAKE AND ITS WELLS

Imagine that there is a field with thousands of different types of wells (representing individual beings). Underneath this field, deep under the earth, there's a great infinite subterranean Lake (God) which supplies all the wells with water (Life Force). There are certain seasons or periods of time when the wells become rather dry or full of debris. They don't have the depth required to reach down to the level of the Divine Lake. Thus they dry up and seek to find whatever water they can from the surface of the field or from other wells.

Unfortunately, however, the field is completely dry and very few wells have the sufficient depth required to reach any water available. The little water that these few wells have may be of some help to a few wells close by them but not for all the wells.

Out of compassion for the thousands (or billions) of dried up wells, the Divine infinite underground Lake decides to project itself into a Divine well (God-man) through which to feed the other wells.

This feeding of the other wells may occur on the external level, that is, on the surface of the field where the wells are more focused. The Divine Lake spontaneously flows forth its essence through the Divine well in the form of miracles, truth, wisdom, love, peace, joy and encouragement. This brings new life to the dried up wells, it reawakens within them the taste and desire for that nectar which lays deeper within them just beyond their reach. These reawakened wells begin to dig deeper in search of that source of Life (through prayer, meditation, study, service and other spiritual practices).

Individual wells gradually begin to be able to have some contact with this subterranean Lake in an inward way. At times the Lake voluntarily and compassionately rises up to meet (Divine Grace) the downward, inward seeking wells. This gives them encouragement and increases their desires and efforts to make complete and permanent contact with this Lake, the source of their Life.

So this Divine well (the God-man), which physically seems like an ordinary well, is actually not a well in the ordinary sense but rather a flowing forth of the underground Lake (Life itself) giving the impression of a well. This Divine well is always overflowing with Divine essence and we cannot distinguish between the water in the Divine well and the water in the Divine Lake. They are one.

In this light, Christ's statement, "*I and my Father are one*", makes more sense as the Divine well is nothing more than a temporary, physically visible out-flowing of the Divine Lake into the surface reality. In stating "*I am the Way*", Christ is not referring to the temporary form of Jesus but to the Divine Lake (Christ consciousness) which is at the basis of every being.

A particular ordinary well may choose to seek this Divine Essence either through the form of the Divine well or deep within itself directly through to the Divine Lake. Thus we have the various paths

towards union with the Lake such as devotion, selfless service, meditation and philosophy. The first two tend to concentrate more on the form through devotion and service towards the Divine well.

The second two focus more on the formless underground Lake essence within. Some unique combination of these approaches will aid each of the various wells in reestablishing contact with the Divine Lake from which it has sprung forth.

This Lake is intimately connected with every well. Even if all the wells experience different needs or wishes at the same moment, the Lake is fully able to receive and respond to each of these individual impulses simultaneously. Imagine that an assortment of pebbles (desires, prayers, needs, thoughts, and actions) are dropped simultaneously from each well into this vast Lake. There would appear in response a vast intricate network of inter-combining waves which would seem chaotic to us. But to the Lake, it's the perfectly orderly response to all these thousands or billions of individual inputs.

Thus the response of Life (Lake) to each being (well) is in correspondence to the being's input (pebbles - actions, thoughts, words) into Life itself, in conjunction with all the other inputs discharged by other beings. The Lake of Life is able to respond to these many inputs subconsciously, just as the human consciousness organizes the millions of activities going on in all the systems, organs, tissues and cells of the body without one thought. In the same way the God-man does not need to react **consciously** to any individual's need. God is the Universal Consciousness. Humanity and Creation are His body. Each of us is like a cell in His body. He is like the Cosmic Mind that automatically reacts to needs and prayers coming from His cells (beings).

Thus the reaction, or response, from Life does not need to flow through the form of the Divine well (the physical form of the God-man) but most often will come directly through Life's experiences. At times, however, the Divine Lake, through its compassion in a period of spiritual drought, may use the form of its Divine well either on the surface (conscious) level or subterranean

(subconscious-dream) level to aid or awaken dried up or endangered wells.

Through this model we may also understand Christ's statement that He is in us. For He is the Lake itself and not simply the form of the Divine well which appears on the surface. In reality each well does reach down to the Lake below. But the deeper levels of the wells are undeveloped because most of us "wells" are too concentrated on our surface activity and unaware of this connection to the Divine Lake that is **within us all**. So He **is** within us all as the Divine Source of our being, just as the Lake is the source of all the wells. And we are in Him just as the cells are in the body.

The ultimate purpose of the Divine Lake's projecting the vehicle of the Divine well is to reawaken within each dried-up well the desire to merge itself with the sweet essence of the Lake. The purpose of each well is to bring forth this Divine essence up into the field (the physical world).

In order to do this, it must first re-establish its contact with, and be filled by, the Divine Lake. The Divine well has been formed in order to give us a taste of that Divine essence and show us the way to make our own connection through spiritual effort and Love.

We can never really understand this Divine well because it's not a well but rather the Lake itself. And as in the parable of the young boy and the monk, we cannot possibly fit this Infinite Lake into our tiny ordinary well. The best we can do is to immerse ourselves in the Divine essence flowing from this Divine well and start digging our own connection to the Infinite Lake.

So, if we are Christians we can concentrate on Jesus and if we belong to another religion, we can focus on the God-man of that religion as either the **Divine well**, the **Divine Lake** or as **both**, depending on our inclinations and tendencies. In this way we can understand Him to be simultaneously omnipresent and also located in the physical form.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BIRTH, CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

Since probably over 90 percent of those who will read this book are souls who have incarnated into a Christian tradition, it will be useful to see how Jesus Christ, His life and His teachings fit into the universal philosophy which we've been discussing throughout this book.

We celebrate and mourn His birth, death and resurrection every year. Have we, however, understood His message? Why did He come? Why did He choose to be crucified? What was He trying to teach us?

No one could ever understand the mysteries of Christ and His Divine Mission. Nor can we comprehend the totality of His message, for it can only be experienced upon transcendence of the ego and the mind and not with the rational mind itself. But I would like to share with you here some of my humble thoughts concerning these important parts of His life, birth, death and resurrection which we celebrate yearly.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN JESUS AND THE CHRIST

Let's refer again to the example of the Divine Lake and the Divine Well which we mentioned in the previous chapter. The Divine Underground Lake is God or, in Christian terms, the trinity of the

Father - Son - Holy Ghost. Although three names are used, they describe one Being.

We can call the three of them Christ. Jesus is the name which we give to the temporary form that the Christ took about two thousand years ago. Christ is the Universal Consciousness to which we have repeatedly referred to in this book. Jesus was the projection of that Consciousness into physical form so that we could see it and be moved by its message.

Jesus was born, crucified and resurrected. The Christ could never be born or die. It is unchanging, omnipresent Consciousness. Jesus was one form of the Christ. We are all, to a lesser degree, manifestations of the Christ.

Imagine that Christ is an infinitely powerful electrical energy source and that we are all light bulbs. Each of us is a slightly different light bulb. Some of us are fancy light bulbs, others simple, some white, other brown, others yellow and red. We have various names and categories written on us like Greek, American, Turkish, Russian, Christian, Hindu, Moslem, Jew, Socialist, Capitalist, Communist, male, female, young, old, etc. All these different types of light bulbs, with different names written on them, are powered by the one (and only) electric current which we can call the Christ Consciousness. Whatever light they may be expressing is, in the final analysis, a projection of this one Christ Consciousness.

We use this word Christ Consciousness in order to refer to that one Consciousness which is the cause of all. St. John called it the **Logos**. He also called it the **Light**. He also called it **Love**. It is the Logos, the cause of everything there is. It is the light, the life of everything there is. It is love, the binding force of unity which will create the kingdom of heaven even here on Earth. For as Christ said, *"They will not say here is the kingdom of heaven or there it is. For the kingdom of heaven is within you."*

The Kingdom of heaven is the eventual reigning of the Christ Consciousness within us. We will experience the Kingdom of God when we allow God to make His kingdom within us. According to

St. Paul we are the **temples of the living God.**

God, as the Christ Consciousness, lives within us. It does, however, share that 'temple' with a lot of other residents, i.e., desires, fears and activities. When these other inhabitants of the temple are gradually limited to a single room, then the rightful occupant can really move in.

Returning to the light bulb analogy, each of us as a light bulb emits a certain wattage. The wattage available from the Christ Consciousness is unlimited. But we, as conductors, are not pure enough to transmit very much of this current and manifest it into light here on the earth plane. As we purify ourselves as conductors, more and more wattage will be able to flow through in the form of greater peace, love, wisdom, creativity and perhaps even some of the miraculous charismatic powers that flowed through the Apostles after the Pentecost. (Although it is not suggested that one try to develop these powers.)

Jesus was another type of conductor. He had no impurities, no resistance. He was the pure conductor of the Christ Consciousness. He was the Christ Consciousness appearing on earth. But this does not mean that all other beings are not also projections of this Christ Consciousness. If we are one-watt bulbs, Jesus was a million-watt bulb and Christ is an infinite power source.

CHRIST IN OUR FELLOW HUMANS

We must understand that we can no longer limit Christ to the form of Jesus. The fact is that we really don't know what Jesus looked like. We have a large variety of artists' interpretations; some golden haired (which is unlikely considering his place of birth), others with more Arab-Jewish features, still others with Black or South American features. Each culture has created Jesus in their own image. It's extremely beneficial to use the form of Jesus as a focal point for coming into contact with and worshiping the Christ. But it would be a mistake to limit the Christ Consciousness to that one form.

The early church fathers realized this and for this reason, suggest in the **Philokalia**, as does also a pilgrim monk in his book **THE WAY OF THE PILGRIM**, that we focus on Christ as an energy-light form rather than as a physical form.

Christ tried in various ways to help us realize that he was not limited by the body of Jesus. He said, "*I am in you and you are in me and I am in the Father and the Father is in me*". He obviously could not have been speaking about the physical body which we call Jesus. He was speaking as the Christ Consciousness which is in and around every person. It is in us. We are in it.

When He spoke about the judgment day and how the Lord would say to us that we fed or didn't feed Him, or helped or didn't help Him, He was trying to give the same message. For we would ask, "But when were you in a condition requiring that I help or feed you?" His answer obviously indicates that He is in every being.

He gave us the sacraments of Confession, Repentance and Holy Communion in which we symbolically take His body and blood once again into us, re-establishing that connective link, that unity with the Christ Consciousness.

How do we lose this connection? We lose it when we function out of ignorance in an ego-centered manner. The Christ Consciousness is the basis of our existence. There is no other source of existence. We are not, however, aware of this. We are not witnesses of it. We are not witnesses (martyrs) of the Truth of our unity. Thus we are Amartyrs, (Amartoloi), sinners in the sense that we act egotistically out of ignorance. Holy Communion is the re-establishing of that condition of unity, after confession and repentance bring about the realization of our mistaken perception and generate real desire for change.

We need, however, to broaden our concept of Christ and love for Christ to include humanity and love and service towards all of humanity.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

The birth of Christ then is not limited to the birth of Jesus. The birth, crucifixion and resurrection of the Christ are daily events occurring hundreds of times each day in each of us. The birth of Christ has to do with the birth of the Christ Consciousness within us. It has to do with the birth of wisdom, truth and love within us. It has to do with the birth of a feeling of oneness and unity with all beings. It has to do with the death (crucifixion) of the Ego and resurrection of the Christ within.

Christ will be born within us when we care as much about those around us as we care about ourselves. Otherwise, although Jesus may have come and gone, Christ is still dead to us because He has not been born within us.

Although we celebrate Christmas and Easter at specific times of the year, the reality is that every day can be Christmas or Easter. On the other hand, we can also live a continuous Good Friday in which the Christ Consciousness is continually crucified. Let's consider the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus the Christ and see what kinds of messages we can derive from these events.

CHRIST PLANNED TO BE CRUCIFIED

It was planned long before He descended into the earth plane. It was already written in the Old Testament that it would happen that way. He knew it would happen, mentioned it to His disciples and even pushed Judas into his role.

*JOHN 14.26: Jesus answered, "I will dip some bread in the sauce and give it to him; he is the man". So He took a piece of bread, dipped it, and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. **As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered him. Jesus said to him, "Be quick about what you are doing".***

It was all a divine plan designed to imprint an important archetypal symbol into our minds, a way of getting us to wake up, a piece of live theater to shock us out of our ignorance, our sleep.

Sai Baba, a great holy man now living in India, has said in a lecture he made on the life of Christ during Christmas of 1977. *"The Divine Messengers God sends us to earth are like precious gold and diamonds. The more they are troubled, tested, accused and attacked, the more their spiritual fame spreads in the world."*

Christ was determined to be crucified. He could have avoided it so many times in front of the Jewish elders and in front of Pontius Pilate. But He was purposely non-cooperative, acting in exactly the way He would need to so as to leave them no choice but to kill Him. How else could He prove his Godhood in such an effective way and give us so many messages simultaneously?

THE PAIN AND THE JOY

Most of us have the tendency to focus on the pain and the suffering of Christ. We identify with it, we cry, feel guilty. Afterwards, we feel the joy and the ecstasy of His resurrection and victory over death and all the powers of life. This is useful. It is a cathartic, emotional cleansing and even a physical cleaning for those who fast during the Lenten period. It's a new beginning, an opportunity to start all over again, to forget the past way of life; to live more spiritually, more in harmony with His teachings. Unfortunately this often does not last long. It all happens on the emotional level. Lots of enthusiasm and self-promises but little wisdom or self-control.

Perhaps it's time to go beyond the pain and the joy of this event and try to penetrate some of the deeper messages that we can apply in our daily lives. We can experience the emotional cleansing, but then also go beyond it, using it as a propelling force towards deeper thought and firmer conviction in the application of the spiritual truths that we already know. There are so many lessons that we can learn from the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ. Let's examine some of those that come to my mind. Surely there are many more.

THE LESSON OF SURRENDER, DEVOTION AND LOVE

We are told that surrender, devotion and love for God is the simplest and most direct path to spiritual liberation. This is the unified agreement of almost all religions including Hinduism, Islam and Christianity.

Christ gave us a living example of what true surrender, devotion and love mean in action. He was more dedicated to the Truth, to the principles of right living, to His Father, to our evolution and spiritual awakening than he was to His own body or comfort, or even to His own life. He was willing to suffer ridicule, abuse, torture and even death rather than not stand up for that which He loved and was dedicated to.

The spiritual path is often full of such trials. People are afraid of change, of growth. Their insecurity drives them to panic and even violence towards anyone who tries to elevate their consciousness i.e., Socrates, Gandhi, Martin Luther King.

The message here is, don't be small. Be full of courage. Don't be afraid to stand up for that which you believe. It's better to suffer abuse than to give up the connection with the truth that we know in our hearts. We tend to be so weak, afraid, spineless, to so easily change our opinion, hiding the truth of our feelings and beliefs in the face of resistance, ridicule or rejection.

THE POWER WITHIN US

Through His example, Christ gave us the message that there is a great power within us and that we can do wonders. We must believe in ourselves, in God. With that faith we can move mountains or even conquer death. One may wonder whether that power is God's or ours. What is the difference? Where is God? Inside us. We are the temples of the living God. His power resides within us. It is His. But our lesson is to use it properly in harmony with the Divine Plan, so as to create paradise, and not hell, here on earth. He is the power and we are the manipulators of that power, the co-creators.

Until now, we've been doing a pretty bad job of using that power. We've created a world with a considerable amount of pain, hurt, loneliness, violence and famine. We must find that power again within us and use it now together with its proper companion - **love**. Power without love, as we have used it until today, is destructive and ugly, like our cities. Power with love is creative and beautiful like nature.

THE POWER TO FORGIVE

That power gives us the strength to stop being small human beings, holding on to our little resentments, hurts and anger. What childishness, immaturity! Christ gave us another message with His suffering. **Learn to understand**. To understand what? Exactly what He said in referring to those who abused and killed him, "*They know not what they do*".

Anyone who has studied the psychology of the human being will realize that all negative actions come out of fear, insecurity and ignorance. When people harm us with their words or actions, they are acting out of insecurity; out of a low level of consciousness. They are not capable of doing otherwise.

As we grow into a higher level of consciousness we understand that and we forgive. He forgave even those who killed Him and He even prayed for them. This message has failed to seep into our hearts, even though two thousand years have passed since that powerful event.

We forgive not for the other's sake but for ours. We are the ones who suffer as long as we don't forgive and forget what ever has happened. The other was simply acting on behalf of the Divine Plan in doing what he did to us (and to Jesus). It is a test. How will we react? It's our opportunity for spiritual growth, for growing out of our small egos into the light and understanding of the soul. Jesus passed his test and showed us how it's done. How? Simple.

Understand that the other is acting out of ignorance, insecurity and fear; understand also that this event is happening to us for a reason

to test our wisdom, strength and love. Forgive that person. Learn what we can from the experience. Develop inner strength; forget the whole event; and love the individual. There's a great difference between suppression of negative emotions and the transcendence of them through wisdom and love. In such a case a small part of our ego must die.

DEATH OF THE EGO - RESURRECTION OF THE SOUL

The ego is the prison of the soul. The more inflated are its walls, the more the soul is squeezed into inaction. Spiritual growth occurs in the same way as the process of life - birth, growth, decay, death and the birth of something new. If the old trees in the forest don't die, the new ones cannot grow. If we don't remove the old, worn out, useless parts of our bushes and roses, new buds cannot spring forth into life.

Unless the old habits and programming of the ego die, bit by bit, the latent spiritual qualities and powers within us cannot have space to blossom forth.

It's not necessary for us to pass through a physical crucifixion. Through continual self-analysis and spiritual effort we can let old parts of ourselves, i.e. fears, attachments, desires and habits which have lost their usefulness, drop off; just as the fruit drops off the tree leaving the energy to now be directed to new buds and flowers.

As He said, *"Until a man die and be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."*

WE CRUCIFY HIM EVERY DAY THOUSANDS OF TIMES

Why do we mourn so much for His death? The answer is because we crucify Him every day so many times. Who, or what, is the Christ? Christ is not a man who lived two thousand years ago. He is the power of Spirit, Life, God which lives in us today. He is the Christ Consciousness which lives in every being everywhere,

including the animals and plants. He told this to us over and over. But it's not yet possible for us to understand this because we haven't reached the stage of our evolution where we can feel or experience this Christ Consciousness in ourselves - so how can we see it in others?

We crucify the Christ Consciousness every day in thousands of ways, every time we choose matter over spirit, safety over the truth, comfort over evolution. Every time we ignore the suffering and needs of others, when we prefer to watch TV rather than alleviate the pain, the hunger, the loneliness around us - His pain, His hunger, His loneliness. But we are still too asleep to feel it. We are anesthetized by sensual pleasures, superficial social interaction, fears, pride, greed and various other symptoms of ignorance.

We're not to blame, however. It's our level of evolution, our level of spiritual maturity. But at least we can start trying to wake up and realize what we're doing.

Every moment we have the choice to crucify Him or resurrect Him in our own being. We spend our money (is it really ours?) on expensive clothing, furniture, pictures for our walls, alcohol, food which we waste, simultaneously destroying our own health, or on travels to various parts of the world enjoying our luxuries and comforts while we forget that Christ is dying of starvation in Ethiopia, Somalia and Asia.

We crucify our souls and resurrect our egos every day. No wonder we need tranquilizers, cigarettes and alcohol to relax. No wonder our children turn to narcotics. What have they got to believe in? We haven't even given them the chance to meet Christ so that they can have the choice of crucifying Him or not. He was never born for them. He never existed for them, because we resurrected Him in ourselves so infrequently by really loving, giving, serving and forgiving others, or by getting free from our weaknesses, attachments, and comforts.

Every time we're bitter, we're bitter towards Christ. Every time we hate, we hate Christ. When we harm, we harm the body where

Christ lives. We cheat, lie or abuse the temple of Christ. For Christ is the Universal Consciousness living in all beings, regardless of their religion, political beliefs, nationality, color, or social class; and regardless of their behavior, whether they are saints or sinners. The Christ Consciousness in the Saint is awakened, in the sinner it is still dormant - asleep.

GOD IS NOT A FORM

He gave us also the message that God is not a particular form, but really a type of Universal Consciousness. Each of us has direct access to that Divine Consciousness. Christ, through His resurrection, removed the necessity of a third party in order to have contact with God. He brought God into our hearts, minds and bodies. By leaving the physical form and sending the Holy Spirit, He made it easier for us to realize this. If He had remained in His physical form, it would have been more difficult to comprehend this truth, for we would have in our ignorance believed that the Christ Consciousness was limited to the body of Jesus.

JOHN 14.4. *"You know the way that leads to the place where I am going."*

JOHN 16.7. *"But I am telling you the truth. It is better for you that I go away, because if I do not go, the Helper will not come to you. But if I do go away, then I will send him to you."*

JOHN 16.13. *"When, however, the spirit comes, who reveals the truth about God, He will lead you into all the truth."*

This was a very important new message for the people at that time; one which can be of great use to us. God does not exist outside of ourselves in some heaven. He exists as the **Force of Life** itself, the power of nature within our own bodies and minds.

This power, this Christ Consciousness, lies within us but is covered up by the expansiveness of our ego. Our work is simple. Have faith. Relax. Begin to look into ourselves. Be silent and listen to the *small voice of God*, the Holy Spirit within us. Reduce the concentration

on external events of our lives. Have faith that the power of nature will provide for us if only we harmonize ourselves with its flow - which means living for nature; living for humanity. Humanity, in its totality, is a large section of the manifestation of the Universal Consciousness on the physical plane. When we serve humanity, we align ourselves with this spiritual power and It will, without doubt, care for our needs. Our needs will be cared for, not our desires.

A TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY

Some become angry with God and stop believing in such a Universal Power when they see how things are going in their lives and on the earth in general. Christ, with His crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and eventual sending of the Holy Spirit, transferred to us the responsibility for what happens in our lives and in general on earth.

God came, showed Himself through His miracles and powers, through His love and His message, and then left saying in a sense, "It's up to you. It's in you. You have the Holy Spirit. You have a connection to God. It's all in your hands now. Get together, pray together, work together, love one another, share everything that you have. Connect yourselves to God through prayer and concentration, and everything will be revealed to you. Everything will be fine. I have given you all the help I can. I am the power but you are the instruments of creation here on this earth. It's your mess and you must clean it up".

So, when we see what's happening in Ethiopia, Somalia, India, the Middle East, Iraq, Iran, San Salvador, Chili, New York, London and Athens, we have nothing to do but stop being selfish, stop being lazy, and start living our lives with a focus on service and love for others.

We don't have to go to Africa to do it. Here, all around us, there are lonely children, adults and elderly, the blind, the poor and the handicapped. There is corruption all around us which must be cleaned up. There is inertia within us which must be overcome. We can join together, help each other, share with each other, and trust

in each other. Or else we can continue crucifying Christ daily.

(Methods for concentrating on the Christ Consciousness both as the form of Jesus and as the formless Universal Consciousness are given in the book **THE ART OF MEDITATION**).

CHAPTER XVII

SELF-STUDY & SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Since the beginning of time humans have been enamored by the question as to the nature of the real Self. Socrates dedicated his whole life to this search and in the end, was ordered to give up his life because he was unwilling to cease encouraging others to also search for their real nature.

WHO AM I?

The eternal question of "*who or what am I?*" is for human beings the ultimate question, the ultimate mystery upon which all other questions and answers depend. We've succeeded in arriving at the moon, at the depths of the seas, at the center of the atom, but not at the center of our own being. Our mind and real nature are the most difficult realities to penetrate. Thousands of monks, philosophers, saints and mystics throughout the ages have dedicated their lives to this question. Although they come from a wide variety of historical, cultural, religious and social backgrounds, their discoveries are pretty much the same.

Let's review what we've said so far.

The human being is an **eternal** entity which, in reality, is **nonmaterial** but temporarily takes on a physical body in order to continue a process of **evolution** while here on Earth, moving continually towards perfection. When this immortal being, which we might call the soul, incarnates into a physical body, it forgets, in most cases (except for highly advanced souls), its immortal soul

nature and identifies with the body and the personality. This, in a way, creates a second self - the ego - which becomes the main force in most people's lives and governs their thoughts, words and actions.

The process of self-study is two fold: On the one hand, we study the personality and its functioning while, on the other, we study the nature of the real immortal Self. The one real immortal Self takes on in each incarnation different personality traits, although there will obviously be a carry-over of traits from one incarnation to the next. Thus, the personality is temporary, while the soul is permanent.

THE STUDY OF THE PERSONALITY

The study of the personality is a process of self-observation, self-analysis and self-discovery. This is most effectively done by keeping a **diary**, in which we record each evening the basic emotional experiences and thoughts of a day.

Through this process of objective self-observation, we will gradually discover the various beliefs, programmings, attachments, aversions, fears and expectations which form the flow of our life. We will also discover the roles we're playing in life which cause us to identify with various beliefs and needs, believing them to be absolute, rather than relative as they often are.

We'll begin to understand the mechanical nature of the functioning of our mind and realize that we are not at all free but a slave of our beliefs and attachments, which are a product of our past. We are slaves of the past which is distorting our present perception and internal experiences. [For someone who wants to pursue this process of self-discovery we recommend book **THE PSYCHOLOGY OF HAPPINESS - Vol. 1**].

As we begin to discover the subjectiveness of our reality, we start realizing that the personality is not something established or real, but rather a conglomeration of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and desires which are in a process of evolution and can be changed. We

begin to identify less with the personality, since it's something which is in constant change and something that we can now observe objectively from the outside. Our ability to observe the functioning of the mind and personality affirm to us that we must be something separate and outside of them in order to observe them.

We then become interested in creating harmony in our personality between the various roles and voices which are fighting over time, energy and control of the mind and body. We're interested in harmony with the environment and in developing a peaceful situation within and without ourselves so as to be able, in the inner peace we have created, to catch a glimpse of our real immortal Self.

THE IMMORTAL SELF

The study of the real Self is more difficult (not that the previously mentioned work is easy). It requires great devotion to freeing ourselves of the illusion that these separate physical bodies constitute our basic reality. We must have an intense desire for real freedom and real vision. This may cost us various comforts and old forms of security and pleasure as we seek to get free from the pull of matter on our mind. We do not need ultimately to deny the material world but to see it for what it really is. We may use it and enjoy it without depending on it or believing it to be the ultimate reality.

We will recall from Chapter Four that there are three ways by which we come to know something: **One is through hearing or reading about it.** That is, we learn that something is true or that something is a fact from someone else. **The second is through the process of reasoning and drawing conclusions.** We receive some information through our senses which we compare to other information we've stored in our mind and, thus, reach a conclusion. **The third way of knowing is through direct experience.** The first two methods allow for the possibility of doubt. The third does not.

This is also true concerning our knowledge about the nature of our

real Self. Few of us have any direct experience of our immortality. In the beginning of our search we're dependent on the first two methods of knowing. We can read and listen to the teachings of those who have had the direct experience and have tried, in various ways, to communicate to us the truth about reality.

Of course, words cannot express this real Self which is beyond time and space because words and phrases and our minds in general are limited to the reality of time and space. But these great saints and philosophers have left us an inspiring selection of teachings which can help free our minds of our present conception of how things are.

They unanimously affirm that we are divine and immortal and that we will continue to exist after the death of these physical bodies. These messages are universal and transcend religious or cultural differences.

SOME TEACHINGS ON THE SELF

Before looking at some of the statements made by those who have searched for and found their real self, let's look at the type of reasoning that might be used.

Have you ever tried to answer the question "*What am I*"? If you think deeply about the question, you'll see that it's not so easy to answer. Obviously we cannot be the bodies which we see and identify with. In order for us to be conscious of our bodies we must be something separate from and more conscious than them. The mind, which is beyond the body, is able to travel through space and time without the body. When we think of other places or times, a part of our mind goes there but the physical body does not go. The mind goes through many changes and various identifications. Depending on the moment, it will identify with various roles, such as mother, father, son, daughter, wife, husband, employer, employee, artist, businessperson, scientist, taxi-driver, cook and the innumerable other roles which human beings play in their lives. None of these is complete in its description of what we are.

Even if we say: "I am a human being" - it doesn't really describe our true nature. Today I am a 35 year old human being with certain physical, mental and emotional characteristics which are completely different from those which defined me when I was 2 years old, or 10, 20, or 40 years old. I will be a completely different type of human being five years from now, ten years from now and thirty years from now. Also, what was I before I was a human being and what will I be after I die as a human being?

We can see that all of these types of answers to the question, "*What am I?*" are partial answers which leave many parts of our total being unidentified.

The **Drg-Drysa-Viveka**, an ancient Indian text argues the point this way:

The form is perceived and the eye is its perceiver. The eye is perceived and the mind is its perceiver. The mind with its modifications is perceived and the Witness (the Self) is verily the perceiver. But It (the Witness) is not perceived by any other"

The reasoning is simple and logical. An object cannot observe itself. The eye observes the various changes taking place in the physical reality but cannot observe itself. The mind however, can observe the changes taking place in the functioning of the eye. There is yet another aspect of the being that is able to notice the various changes in the moods and functioning of the mind. That is the true Self. It is the ultimate Self because it cannot be witnessed by any other aspect. The ultimate Self is Pure Consciousness. It is the only self-cognizing entity. The **Drg-Drysa-Viveka** explains more about this Consciousness:

Consciousness illuminates such mental stages as desire, determination and doubt, belief and non-belief, constancy and its opposite, modesty, understanding, fear and others - because Consciousness is a unity.

This Consciousness does not rise nor set. It does not increase; nor does it suffer decay. Being self-luminous, it illumines everything else without any aid.

From this passage we can understand that this Pure Consciousness, which is the ultimate Self, is the sustainer and observer of the mind and all its various moods and states. Because Consciousness is unchanging, it is able to observe the changes taking place in the mind.

Consciousness is neither born nor can it die. It exists equally before, during and after the existence of the human body. It does not increase with the increase of knowledge or experience. Nor can it be diminished by a disease of the brain. Consciousness is the same in all beings. In Pure Consciousness, there's no difference between a baby of one month and a ninety-year-old adult - or between the most erudite genius and a mentally retarded person. Consciousness is the same in the saint and in the sinner.

Consciousness is independent of every visible distinction. It is what sustains life in and out of the physical body. It is the cause of existence. It is existence. There cannot be existence without Consciousness or Consciousness without existence. The following diagram may help us to understand the relationship between Pure Consciousness and the various changing factors which we see in the physical world.

THE PERSONALITY FILTERS

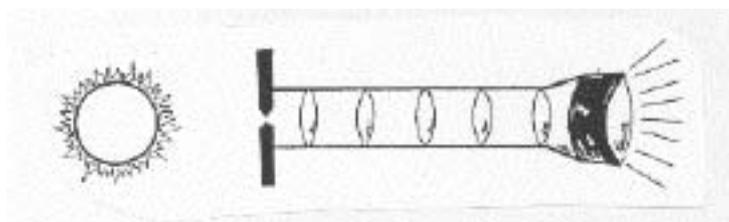


Diagram No.19

THE PERSONALITY FILTERS

This diagram is similar to diagram No.12 in chapter V. We'll refer to it again for further clarification concerning the various personality filters.

We imagine that Pure Consciousness is like an ever-shining light of infinite intensity. This is the Real Self - our true identity. However, when it expresses itself into the physical world, it passes through an aperture which limits the amount of light coming out in the form of the actions, words, thoughts and the characteristic vibrational presence of that particular human being.

The aperture opens at the moment called birth and closes at the moment called death. Thus Consciousness appears to be born and die but in reality it has remained unchanged throughout the whole process. The aperture has opened and closed but no change whatsoever has taken place in the light itself.

At the same time, there is a lens with many filters in front of the aperture. These filters represent the various conditionings of the individual. The more ego-centered the individual, the darker the lens, and less light can shine through. As the individual evolves in love, wisdom and ability, these lenses become cleaned and perfected so that more and more light shines through.

In the case of perfected beings, such as great saints or a God-person, there is no ego at all limiting the flow of this light. They manifest the greatest possible amount of pure light which can shine through a human vehicle through their miracles, unconditional universal love and wisdom. In the case of such beings, the aperture is wide open.

We each have the potential to purify and perfect our personalities so that more and more of this Pure Consciousness will shine through in the form of universal love, power and wisdom. The true Self, who is Pure Consciousness, has not changed in any way but rather, the vehicles through which it expresses It-Self have been perfected.

THE THREE SELVES

Another argument for the existence of this Pure Consciousness has to do with the three states of consciousness:

1) The **dream-self** believes that the dream-reality is real. But the waking-self knows that the dream world is not real.

2) The **waking-self** believes that the waking world is real. But the Real Self knows that it is not real.

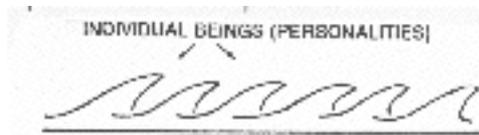
3) The **Real Self** knows It-Self to be one with God. It knows the waking and dream world to be temporary.

Just as the waking-self realizes the temporary reality of the dream world upon waking, the Real Self realizes the temporary reality of the waking world upon waking up from it through enlightenment or in some cases, through the death of the physical body.

It's the Real Self which witnesses all the other realities, such as dreaming, waking and deep sleep. The fact of deep sleep, in which the mind has no awareness of itself, is proof enough of our existence beyond the mind. If it was not so, we would cease to exist in deep sleep.

Recent scientific studies on people who've been declared clinically dead, (which means that there is no heart or brain activity) support this. Those people who returned to life after some time were able to describe even minute details of events and conversations which occurred while they were supposedly dead (that is, while they had no brain function). This shows that consciousness is independent of the brain, the body and independent of waking, dreaming and deep sleep since the person was obviously in none of these states. Science will soon be forced to alter its perception of consciousness.

The three states of consciousness are linked to the wave and sea example that we used in chapter four.



Ocean - Real Unchanging Self

Diagram No.20. **THE OCEAN, WAVE AND FOAM**

The ocean is the real Self. The wave is the personality self. The foam is the dream self. The wave is a product of the ocean. The foam is a product of the wave. The foam (dream self) is very short lived. The wave (personality) has a longer duration. The ocean is immortal (for all practical purposes). Both the wave and foam are made up of the same essence as the ocean. They're temporary projections of the ocean. The ocean creates and sustains their existence.

The real Self creates and sustains the waking and dream selves. The wave and foam merge again into the ocean. The waking and dream selves merge back into the real Self. The purpose of life is to realize and experience this reunion before the death of the body and personality. This can be done only in the incarnated state.

WE ARE ONE WITH GOD

Thus we see that the individual is really an expression of that one Universal Consciousness which we call God. We are one with God. Our true identity is eternal existence, unlimited Consciousness and unending bliss. There are four great Vedic statements that affirm this fact. (The Vedas are ancient Indian scriptures.)

- 1) *That you are.* (That referring to the unmanifest God).
- 2) *I am God.*
- 3) *This spirit is God.*
- 4) *Pure Consciousness is God.*

This concept may seem strange to the average westerner. But such statements are not uncommon in the Christian Bible:

- 1) *The kingdom of God does not come in such a way as to be seen... The kingdom of God is within you.* (Luke 17.20)
- 2) *Surely you know that you are God's temple and that God's spirit lives in you.* (I Corinthians 3.16)

3) *Christ is in you, which means that you will share in the glory of God. (Colossians 1.27)*

4) *Jesus answered: It is written on your own law that God said you are Gods. We know that what the scripture says is true for ever; and God called the people Gods... (John 10.33)*

Obviously our relationship to God is much closer than we are aware of. We are inherently divine but are ignorant of the fact. Sathya Sai Baba explains it in this way:

You are the Infinite come in the role of the finite, the formless Infinite appearing as the formful, infinitesimal, the Absolute pretending to be relative, the Spirit behaving as the Body, the Metaphysical masquerading as the merely Physical. The Universal Spirit is the Basis of all being. The sky was there before houses were built under it; it penetrated and pervaded them for some time; then, the houses crumbled and became heaps and mounds; but, the sky was not affected at all. So too, the spirit pervades the body and subsists even when the body is reduced to dust.

Some examples may help us to understand this more clearly.

Imagine a ball of red-hot iron. The heat in this ball seems to be indistinguishable from the ball. The heat itself seems to have a superficial form. But if the iron were a long rod, then it would seem that the heat was in the form of a long rod. If the iron was shaped into a human form, it would seem that the heat had a human form. But heat has no form. It just appears to have the form of the body it's occupying. The heat will leave the iron and the iron will be black lifeless again. The heat is an entirely separate reality from the iron. The heat is the Spirit and the iron is the body. The Spirit appears to have the form of the body. But it can, and will, leave the body and eventually take another form. It can also exist without a form.

Take the example of milk. We know that there is butter in the milk but we cannot see it. Nor can we say where it is exactly because it's everywhere. But we can separate the butter (the Spirit) from the

milk (the body) by churning it. The purpose of life is to be able to separate and free the Spirit Consciousness from its identification with the body. The churning represents the various spiritual practices which help to cultivate this spiritual discrimination.

A similar example is that of the sesame seed. We know that there is oil in the seed. We don't see the oil. We know that there is life force or spirit in the body but we don't see it. We can press the sesame seeds and separate the oil from the pulp. With spiritual disciplines we can separate the Pure Consciousness from the body.

Fire is in wood. But we cannot see it. It is latent in every piece of wood but needs the right stimulus to bring it forth. Spirit is in the body but requires spiritual practices and spiritual discrimination to bring it forth.

An example used in an ancient Indian text is that of two birds. One (the soul or Higher Self) is sitting on the top of the tree totally content with itself. The other (the personality) hops from branch to branch of the tree (life) searching for fruit. It eats fruit after fruit enjoying this abundance. Gradually this bird gets bored having tried out all the fruits of the tree. It has exhausted all the possibilities for happiness and fulfillment. It's miserable, depressed. Suddenly the bird remembers its friend (the Spirit) sitting on the top of the tree. It makes attempts to fly higher to the top of the tree. When finally the bird makes it, it feels total fulfillment through being in the presence of the friend, the Spirit, who is the only lasting source of fulfillment.

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNIVERSAL

Most of these texts and examples are trying to help us understand that we're not separate from God and not separate from the universe. We are one with all. Few people feel this way however. Most of us feel separate from God. There are three stages in our relationship with God.

1. *In the first stage we feel very far away from God. We feel Him*

like a **distant monarch** who will punish us if we don't act properly. Our relationship is basically one of **fear**.

2. In the second stage we feel closer to God. We feel Him like a **father, mother, friend, guide**. We feel that He cares for us and that we are protected by Him. We feel gratitude and **love**.

3. In the third stage we realize our **oneness** with God. We are not these bodies but we are actually the Universal Consciousness expressing itself through these bodies. We feel **unity** with God and all of creation. (This last stage is experienced by very few and is not an intellectual realization but an experiential one.)

The well-known and respected philosopher-poet Khalil Gibran expresses this process of perceiving God all the more clearly in this poem which follows. It appears that he believed in reincarnation as he describes this process as taking three thousand years.

In the ancient days, when the first quiver of speech came to my lips, I ascended the holy mountain and spoke unto God, saying: "Master, I am Thy slave. Thy hidden will is my law and I shall obey Thee forevermore".

But God made no answer and like a mighty tempest passed away.

And after a thousand years, I ascended the holy mountain and again spoke unto God, saying: "Creator, I am Thy creation. Out of clay Thou hast fashioned me and to Thee I owe mine all".

And God made no answer but like a thousand swift wings passed away.

And after a thousand years I climbed the holy mountain and spoke unto God again, saying: "Father, I am Thy son. In pity and love Thou hast given me birth and through love and worship I shall inherit Thy Kingdom".

And God made no answer and like the mist that veils the distant hills, He passed away.

And after a thousand years I climbed the sacred mountain and again spoke unto God, saying: "My God, my aim and my fulfillment; I am Thy yesterday and Thou art my tomorrow. I am Thy root in the earth and Thou art my flower in the sky and together we grow before the face of the sun.

Then God leaned over me, and in my ears whispered words of sweetness, and even as the sea that enfolds a brook that runs down to her, He enfolded me.

And when I descended to the valleys and the plains God was there also.

(From the MADMAN by Khalil Gibran)

Notice how God's answer or rather, our perception of His response gets increasingly more gentle and subtle: a tempest, a thousand swift wings, to a mist that veils the distant hills, and finally words of sweetness.

Notice too, the statement, "*I am Thy yesterday and Thou art my tomorrow*". In other words, "*I am in the process of becoming what You are.*" Perhaps even more accurate would be, "*I am in the process of re-becoming what we are.*"

This message from Sathya Sai Baba rather summarizes the whole process:

After long searches here and there, in temples and in churches, in earth and heavens, at last you come back, completing the circle from where you started, to your own soul and find that He, for whom you have been seeking all over the world, for whom you have been weeping and praying in churches and temples, on whom you were looking as the mystery of all mysteries shrouded in the clouds, is actually the nearest of the near, in your own self, the reality of your life, body and soul. That is your own nature. Assert it, manifest it. It is truth and truth alone; that is one's real friend, relative. Abide by truth, tread the path of righteousness and not a hair of your body will ever be injured.

All of these teachings can help us and inspire us. They will open the way towards the direct experience. And only this direct experience will enable us to really transform our lives.

Self-study then proceeds in various stages:

- 1. Observation and analysis of the personality.*
- 2. Harmonization of the various aspects of the personality with the environment.*
- 3. Study of the teachings concerning our real Self.*
- 4. Observations about life and conclusions about the real Self.*
- 5. Direct experience of the real Self through meditation, creative expression, love and wisdom.*

CHAPTER XVIII

FINDING OUR ROLE IN LIFE

This chapter is also found in the book **THE PSYCHOLOGY OF HAPPINESS**. I've included it here because I believe that it's especially important and relative to what we're discussing.

Many of us are discontented with our lives, or work, our way of living. But few of us know what it is that we really want to do, and fewer still have the courage to do what they really want in order to find happiness and fulfillment.

Why is there such a crisis of unhappiness today when we have so much more than we have ever had in the way of material security and various comforts? The average person today lives with the comfort only kings enjoyed hundreds of years ago. Yet statistics show that more and more people are disillusioned with the old recipes for happiness. They have money and material security but their jobs have no meaning for them. It's as if they've sold their souls for the comforts of the material world. Many are now beginning to realize this fact.

I, for one, experienced this crisis at the age of 22 having worked for a year as a chemical engineer in a large industrial chemical plant. I had everything which society said I needed to have to be happy. But I was miserable. I decided to find something more meaningful to me. This is not to say that such a job could not be meaningful to someone else or that it doesn't have value. Such jobs obviously have

great value for society and are interesting to many people if that's what they came to do. It simply was not what I came to do on this earth. **What may be the perfect role for one person may be boring and meaningless for another.** It is well that the world is organized in this way, otherwise everyone would want to do the same job and the world would fall apart.

The search for our role in life is the search for the part which we, as unique individuals, have come to play. We, who find it and play it with all our heart, find contentment and happiness. Those who do not find it or do not have the courage to play it, live in discontentment and a type of superficial emptiness. There's little real joy or meaningfulness in their lives. Their lives are often mechanical and lacking in essence until they find their proper role.

Have you ever walked into a room to get something but arriving in the room, forgot what you came to get? I have. I have also found that when I turn and start heading in the direction I was coming from, I remember what it was I was searching for. This is true of our lives here on earth. We are immortal souls who have come here for a short time to learn certain lessons and offer certain services to the overall evolution. But upon arriving here, we forget why we came and waste our lives occupying ourselves with various superficial pleasures and material pursuits. Eventually, through some series of events, often in the form of problems and difficulties, we are forced to look inward and remember why it was that we incarnated on the Earth at this time.

THE EARTH SYMPHONY

We, upon the earth, are like members of a great universal orchestra. Each of us have our part to play. The harmony of the universal piece (called life) we are playing depends on two basic requirements from each member of the orchestra. Each of us must first **know our part** and, secondly, must be **capable of playing it**. All the other beings in nature (the unconscious members of this symphony orchestra) know automatically their parts and play them with the help of the cosmic conductor called Nature or God.

Humans, however, the most advanced aspect of nature, have a new quality called **free will** and have separated themselves from nature and its laws. We have the choice to play our part or not. We also have the new responsibility to develop the inner qualities necessary to play the part.

At the present time we may say that the Earth Symphony Orchestra is considerably off key and its sound is quite discordant. We're each playing our own song, each trying to sing or play louder than the others, and the result is competition, aggression, strikes, violence, famine, poverty and war. This is happening because few have found their real part in this symphony and out of discontent are competing rather than cooperating with the others. **Finding our role in life is not only imperative for our own happiness but also for social and world harmony.**

Each of us has the choice to make between **money** and **meaningfulness**, between **comfort** and **creativity**, between **security** and **evolution**, between **satisfying** the expectations of **others** and **following** our **own inner voice** of wisdom, between **social success** and **social responsibility**, between **superficial happiness** and real **inner contentment**. Let us choose wisely.

TUNING UP OUR LIVES

Let's examine what we can do to regain contact with our real purpose for being here on the earth, that purpose which will bring us and society so many benefits.

1. We must get free from our social conditioning concerning what kind of work has value. Society puts a certain value on each profession. This is usually based on the amount of money that one makes and how much prestige one gains. This money and prestige, however, may not make us happy. Society's formula for success is based on a very superficial view of our human nature. We're programmed as young children concerning our insecurity in this world and how we must strive and struggle for economic security. We're also programmed concerning how important the opinion of others is. We believe that we must do

everything we can to make the others think that we're important, to envy us, to admire us, so that we can believe in ourselves.

As many people are beginning to realize, this is all a big mistake which not only doesn't lead to happiness but most often leads to anxiety, fear, nervous tension, and illness.

In order to find our real role in life, we must liberate ourselves from the programming that we've received from society defining happiness, survival and success. We'll also have to face the criticism of family and relatives who may feel intimidated by our changes in life style. Our changes may cause them to either doubt their presumptions about life or reject us. The second is easier for them. In such cases we'll need plenty of inner strength so as to not be affected by their reactions but at the same time, to have enough love to forgive them and try to help them to understand that we're not running away from them or from life but just **asking for the freedom to be who we really are.**

After passing through a period of self-examination, we may find that we've been doing all our lives that which we were born to do but that we just cannot accept it. The simplest role can offer us the greatest spiritual lessons. Take for example, the roles of motherhood or fatherhood. Not much importance is given to them today, most feeling that working in an office has more prestige. But there is no more important role than that of motherhood. The future of the world depends on the quality of today's children. Their inner world and quality of being and behavior are clearly a product of how much attention and love they receive as children. Many parents believe that they can offer their children more by working more so as to offer them a better education. This is a great mistake. **A person becomes great not because of education but because of character.**

OVERCOMING FEAR

2. *We will need to overcome our fears.* Our fear of being unable to accomplish what we came to do. Our fears of what others might think. Our fears that we may not make it financially. We have

a guarantee from God that if we do His work, our needs will be taken care of, as are those of the birds and flowers. It must be His work (which is the same as our **real role**) and not the role our ego wants to play. We need to overcome the fear of not being perfect in what we do, the fear of making a mistake. We're all in a process of evolution. If we were perfect, we would not have incarnated, we would have no need to come to Earth. Thus, our existence here verifies that we're not perfect. Let's accept it and accept that we are okay and lovable even though we're not perfect and that we have every right to make mistakes as we learn to do something new in our lives.

We'll also need to overcome various fears for specific objects and situations such as airplanes, elevators, boats, hospitals, dust, microbes, certain kinds of people, certain animals, etc. These are obstacles to the fulfillment of our roles here on the earth. We want to become **effective instruments of the Divine Will**, able to play any part which the Cosmic Conductor asks us to play. Our fears are an obstacle to that effectiveness.

SUCCESS IS NOT REQUIRED

3. We will also need to free ourselves from our excessive concentration on success as a measure of our self-worth and effectiveness. It is **not** important to succeed. It **is** important to have pure motives and to try to the best of our ability. The results of any task do not depend only on our efforts. They depend also on many other factors which have to do with our past and the general situation in society and the world itself.

Think of the greatest examples of courage in history. Did they succeed in our terms? Did Jesus succeed? How many have lived their lives according to His messages throughout the last two thousand years? He was omniscient. He knew that few would really be able to live as He asked us. Yet He gave all of His life and finally His body itself to His purpose, to His role. Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Socrates, did they succeed? They were all killed by the societies in which they lived.

Success is not required of us. We must only ask ourselves whether we believe that what we want to do will offer something, however small, to the welfare and evolution of all. This offering may occur in many ways such as building houses for people to live in, cleaning the streets, raising children, educating people, creating beauty through art, music and dance, cooking wholesome food, putting order and cleanliness into an environment, or listening to someone's problems. The list is endless.

It might be useful here to discuss the Sanskrit word **dharma**. It's an interesting term that encompasses many concepts simultaneously. A dharmic act is one that is in harmony with the laws of the universe, meaning that it offers something to the whole and doesn't harm anyone. It follows the law, "*do not do to others what you would not like others to do to you*", and on the other hand more positively, actively, "*do to others that which you would like others to do to you*". All roles that are in harmony with the universe will be in harmony with these two guidelines.

No job, however, is inherently dharmic or in harmony with the universe. **What makes an act or role dharmic is whether or not our motive is selfless and whether we are detached from the result.** This is true even if the result is something we desire for another. We often have anxiety concerning certain results for others because we're lost in the belief that they are those bodies and personalities that we see and experience. We forget that we are all universal spirits who temporarily take on bodies for the purpose of learning lessons on this earth. Often we must pass through certain situations in order to effectively learn those lessons.

A dharmic act is one in which we are free from attachment to personal gain or any specific result. We would even be willing to perform the act or service without any form of reward. We know that we have found our dharmic role in life when the reward is the joy of performing the action itself. We might accept a certain amount of payment in order to live and to provide for those who depend on us for a living. But most people take much more than they need for survival and evolution. This creates a lack in other parts of the body of humanity and also disharmony in the

symphony of the earth. Our role in life is something we would be happy to do even if we were not paid, although we may accept payment if we need such for our survival and evolution.

WE OF LITTLE FAITH

Those who believe that they have the obligation to leave large amounts of money and belongings for their children are, in my opinion, mistaken. In my personal experience, this passing on of inheritances only undermines the child's inner resources and often creates negative situations among the various inheritors. It would be better for us to will to our children self-confidence, love, dedication to the needs of the whole and a feeling of interest in the welfare of humankind, rather than houses, money and furniture. The psychology of the average person is based on a psychology of lack and the idea that we're incapable of surviving on the earth without help from parents.

God has promised us that He will provide. We have little faith. The money and time saved for inheritances would be better directed towards social work to better the condition of society as a whole.

This type of thinking is all based on a very limited concept of family; that only those who are products of my own physical body are my family. This is a very superficial view. We're all one universal spiritual family and if we don't start thinking in this way, we won't exist at all on the earth in a short time.

CONTACT WITH OUR INNER VOICE

4. We will need to develop a deeper contact with our inner voice through prayer, silence, and meditation. We need to quiet our minds from all the various voices that occupy them so that we can hear the small voice of **inner wisdom** which seeks to be heard. We know within ourselves the role that we've come to play but we're too full of the other's opinions to hear ourselves. Each would do well to take a few days a year and go off alone. The others will survive without you, and you without them.

By retreating inwardly for a few days, in order to get in touch with our real Self, we can then offer much more to those around us. Daily meditation in the morning and evening will also help us to develop and maintain contact with this inner voice.

TUNING UP OUR INSTRUMENT

5. We mentioned that the second prerequisite for playing our part in the earth symphony is to be **capable** at playing the part. ***This requires that we tune up our instruments of expression here on the earth, that is, the body and the mind.*** If we're constantly ill, tired, nervous, fearful or upset, even if we know our role, we won't be able to play it effectively. We can employ various effective techniques for the purpose of developing a healthy body and clear mind such as exercises, breathing techniques, healthy natural food, deep relaxation and positive thinking. With daily practice of these techniques, our bodies and minds will be capable of expressing that beautifully harmonious symphony called **life**.

Our first responsibility is to tune up our own instruments. No musician would dare start playing his part without tuning up his instrument and harmonizing it with the others. We must realize that exercises, breathing, relaxation and meditation are not a waste of time. They're essential steps that must be taken if we want to play our roles harmoniously.

I often wonder how it's possible for people to ignore such an easy way to develop health and harmony in their lives. It's as if they're each holding an unlit flashlight and calling out simultaneously, "Help, I cannot see in the dark". If they themselves are not willing to employ a little discipline in order to create health and harmony in their lives, they should at least not burden others with their complaints about problems which are totally within their own hands to overcome.

SURRENDER TO THE DIVINE

6. ***An instrument must surrender completely to its player.*** We are instruments of the Divine Flautist. If we say to the Cosmic Musician, "No, I don't want to play that melody, I don't like it, I want a better part, a lead role," then we're not much use to that

Cosmic Maestro who needs co-operative and selfless instruments in order to create harmony among so many different instruments. Finding our role in life means being open to what role is useful to the universe at this place and time. We must let go of ego needs and realize that, at times, we'll be called upon to do great works and at other times, simple tasks which seem unimportant to us. But all are important to the harmony of the whole.

We must pass through the **test of humility** and surrender to the Divine in the search for our role. Jesus washed the feet of His disciples as an example that humility is absolutely necessary in order to enter stages of higher consciousness. The ego thrives on the three lower stages of consciousness which have to do with security, pleasure, and affirmation. When we feel our own inner worth, we're not concerned about whether we're going to find greater self recognition through our role in life.

In searching for our role in life, we must ask, "How can I improve the situation on the earth before leaving? What can I do to make life healthier, happier and more harmonious for those who live around me?" Those who are playing their own tune out of harmony with the cosmic symphony are not much use to the Cosmic Conductor.

PRAY FOR GUIDANCE

7. We can pray to become purified and remolded, guided in our role as instruments of divine harmony here on Earth. Through prayer and sincerity we can become transformers of spiritual energy into material harmony. Just as plants take the light energy of the sun and use it to combine oxygen and carbon dioxide in order to create sugar, starch and other forms of food for us, we too can take spiritual energy and use it to manifest thoughts, ideas, words and actions which make this world a better place. We can meditate daily and take in spiritual energy and inner peace, and then share that with those around us in the form of love, compassion, understanding and service. This will give us much happiness and contentment. And, because life is a mirror, we'll be surrounded by love and harmony. Don't expect the mirror to start reflecting your present actions immediately. **Life is a delayed**

mirror and is now also mirroring your past actions. If, however, we keep on loving, forgiving and serving, we will at some point start experiencing the joy of love and unity here on earth.

BELIEVE IN YOUR SELF

8. Follow your intuition. We must believe in our inner feelings. We may make mistakes in the beginning. We may go down some roads that are dead ends or go to certain excesses. But there is no other way to get in touch with our inner voice than to believe it. At times it will be the voice of the ego, but gradually we'll gain discrimination and be able to tell the one voice from the other. And, eventually, there will be one voice only. We must believe that we're here to perform a certain function that will benefit ourselves and the world simultaneously. We must desire to find that role. Maybe we already have. We will know it if we're happy, fulfilled and in harmony with ourselves and our environment. This doesn't mean that everyone must love us but that we will love others and feel harmoniously towards them, regardless of their feelings towards us. The best indication as to whether we've found our role in life is whether we're happy and content and enjoy waking up each morning because what we're going to do what really has meaning for us.

USE OUR TALENTS

9. Get in touch with and develop our talents. They will guide us to what we've come to do. Our talents are the tools that we've brought into this incarnation to perform the specific tasks associated with our role. Recognizing and developing our talents will help us discover our role.

There is no other more important task than this, to discover the purpose of our presence on the Earth.

Let's summarize the steps towards finding our role in life:

- 1. Free ourselves from social conditioning.***
- 2. Overcome fears and limiting beliefs.***
- 3. Let go of attachment to results.***
- 4. Develop greater contact with our inner voice.***
- 5. Develop physical and mental harmony.***
- 6. Surrender to the Divine will.***
- 7. Pray daily to become an instrument.***
- 8. Follow our intuition.***
- 9. Get in touch with and develop talents.***

I wish you health, joy and harmonious unity with the family of life.

CHAPTER XIX

DANGERS ON THE SPIRITUAL PATH

Just as in every other aspect of life, there are dangers and mistakes which we may fall into while following the spiritual path. On any journey there is the danger of diverting onto a wrong road, or having our vehicle breakdown, or stopping somewhere along the way and forgetting about our original destination. Here we'll look at some of the possible traps which spiritual aspirants may fall into.

THE GOALS OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

In Summary, some of the basic goals of spiritual life may be expressed in the following ways:

- 1. An **expansion beyond the ego and personality** into **union with the Universal, the Divine; with what we call God.***
- 2. **The development of the basic virtues** of **LOVE, PEACE, TRUTH, RIGHT ACTION AND NON VIOLENCE.***
- 3. **The manifestation of our inner spiritual potential** here on **Earth through spiritual qualities of love, service and creativity.***
- 4. **The transcendence of the veils of ignorance** into the **light of the spiritual life - wisdom.***
- 5. **The discovery of the ULTIMATE TRUTH** which is the **basis***

of the reality we experience.

*6. **The establishment of a perfect dynamic harmony** between the spiritual, mental, emotional and physical in one's life.*

*7. **The expansion of personal love into UNIVERSAL LOVE** for all beings.*

*8. **The expansion of the limited individual mind into the universal mind** which contains all knowledge.*

*9. **The development of inner spiritual peace** which remains unaffected in any situation, regardless of external events.*

*10. The ability to keep the **mind totally aware of the ONE UNIVERSAL BEING** while the eyes see a world of many different objects.*

These are only a few ways of expressing some of the basic goals of spiritual life, regardless of what religion or path we may belong to. Let's now look at some of the common mistakes we tend to make while seeking to fulfill these goals.

THE WE - THEY GAME

Throughout history there has been the unfortunate tendency among spiritual groups and religions to isolate themselves from other groups or religions and to claim that their system, or teacher, or methods, or God is the best and the **only way to salvation**. They feel alienation from the others and in many cases, even antagonism and competition.

They feel that they must convince the others that they're on the wrong road. They believe that they must force others to accept their truth which they consider to be the only truth. Many wars and atrocities have been imposed on people in the name of saving their souls.

God is not so small as to be limited to one religion, group or specific technique. God is all of life. He lives in all people and is **available**

to all through the **various ways** in which they've learned to approach their inner self throughout the ages.

This truth is humorously expressed by the following parable. There once was a village comprised entirely of blind people. (This represents all of us who are spiritually blind). One day a huge elephant came thumping into the village. The villagers all came running to find out what this incredibly huge being was. The King called for the five wise men of the village who were also blind. The King ordered the wise men to determine the nature of this obviously divine being who had entered their village.

The first wise man approached and came upon the elephant's side. Feeling it well, he declared that it was "A large moving, pulsating wall". The second wise man fell upon the elephant's trunk and refuted the first saying, "No, it's an incredibly thick self-moving hose". The third wise man stumbled onto the elephant's ear and declared, "No, it's a large leaf that moves by its own power".

The fourth wise man came upon one of the elephant's legs, and announced, "These others have no idea what they're talking about. This is a self-moving tree trunk". The last wise man went up to settle all this confusion, but alas, he grabbed onto the elephant's tail. He only created more uproar by announcing that, according to his personal experience, it was a snake.

The king, the five wise men and the villagers to this day have not been able to solve this mystery. They have divided into five camps, each claiming that only it has the truth. None of them has had the insight yet to realize that they've all touched upon a part of the same reality. They are all, in part, right but the being which they're trying to perceive is much too large to be limited into concepts and descriptions.

The analogy is clear. God is the elephant. All the religions, while perceiving, loving, worshiping the same ultimate reality, describe it in a slightly different way. (Actually if anyone really cares to look more carefully, the difference, in most cases, is only a matter of semantics).

All religions and spiritual paths are **valid for those who follow them**. They may or may not be valid for us. We don't have to change our beliefs or follow any other religion. We would do best to follow our own system while **respecting** the others.

This doesn't mean that all systems or religions can be mixed. Sweet fruit like peaches and cherries are good food. Cooked beans are also good food. But if we mix them together we'll have various problems in digesting them. The same is true with trying to mix many spiritual paths or religions together. It's true that they all have the same goal and that they lead to the same *UNIVERSAL BEING*. But they move down different roads. We cannot start out for Los Angeles via Chicago and, half way there, decide that we want to go through New Orleans and change roads; we'll waste time and might never get there.

SPIRITUAL PRIDE

People who don't have enough self-acceptance or inner affirmation tend to use the spiritual path in the same way that they use every other situation in life; to prove that they're better than others. They develop what is called spiritual pride. When the Christ was incarnated as Jesus, He refused to criticize or condemn anyone except the scribes and Pharisees who had put themselves above the common people. Thinking that one is better than others because one prays or meditates, or is vegetarian, or reads spiritual books, or is knowledgeable about philosophy or psychology, or because one does selfless service or donates money is a serious trap and a great mistake on the spiritual path. We *ARE ALL EQUAL*. We are neither superior nor inferior to any other being. All beings are equally children of God. We help ourselves to become purer expressions of divine love and wisdom through prayer, meditation, selfless service etc. But that does not make us better than others. Is the university student better than the grade school student is because he knows more?

We who have spiritual pride are no different from those who are still lost in the self-affirmation games of society. We've taken the same games with us into our spiritual life. Rather than counting

how many houses, money, cars, positions, contacts and abilities we have, we start to count how many hours we've prayed, meditated, served others; how many years we have been vegetarians, etc. The same game is being played in a different scene.

Whenever there's pride, there's also the possibility of guilt. As long as we measure our worth in terms of what we do and, even worse, in terms of what we do in comparison with what others do, we will continuously oscillate between feeling pride that we're better or guilt that we're worse than the other.

One who has true spiritual sight would never look down on any being, no matter what that person did or did not do. One would see all beings as manifestations of the one Universal Consciousness of which we ourselves are also a part.

LOSING A SENSE OF WHO WE REALLY ARE

When we're caught up in this trap of trying to appear spiritual to others, i.e., praying loudly in public or announcing our vegetarianism or days of fasting for all to know, we may also fall into another trap. We may try to appear to be something other than who we really are. We may actually fool ourselves into believing that we're not feeling anger or fear or jealousy. We believe that these are not spiritual and because we want to be 'good' or 'spiritual', we will deny to ourselves and others that we have these feelings. Of course, others see the truth and sometimes are turned away from the spiritual path which they somewhat rightly condemn, after our example of being **simply** hypocritical and self-delusional.

We would best accept ourselves exactly as we are and forgive everything that we hold against ourselves. **It is okay to be imperfect.** We are in a process of evolution from animal through human nature into our divine nature. It's only natural that we will still have some animal traits. They're the result of fear and ignorance and not evil. No one is evil. All **evil acts** are born out of ignorance and fear. We can be truthful about what's going on in us.

Then we can face our traits and overcome them, transforming them more quickly and easily. If we deny their existence in us, there's no chance of getting free from these tendencies.

We're not little children anymore who have to have our parents' approval. We are adults who have the right to live as we believe is right. God sees everything we feel and do any way. So whom are we hiding from? Are we hiding from others around us who we've put into the role of our parent so that they can accept or reject us, or tell us if we are good or bad boys and girls?

We must realize that all feelings passing through our minds are not our real and lasting nature. These are temporary movements or reactions that are passing through our being. Our real being is much greater. It is permanent. It does not change. We are not our thoughts or our emotions. They are temporary and changing states that are passing through us as a result of thousands of years of conditioning. We can watch them and accept them and let them go just as we watch a leaf coming down a river pass in front of us and continue on out of our view. When we accept our real feelings, then they too will pass on in this way. When we deny them or cover them up, they remain in us, waiting for expression or resolution.

SEEKING EXPERIENCES

The truth is unchanging. It's beyond experiences, perception and changing phenomena. Yet many spiritual aspirants get caught up in the game of searching for unusual 'spiritual' experiences. Various experiences may pass through the mind of an individual as a result of blocked energy being released through techniques such as prayer, meditation, fasting, breathing techniques, spiritual therapy, etc. But these experiences are simply the result of the stimulation of the inner sense organs by sudden flow of the blocked energy that's being released. They have little spiritual value in themselves.

Some systems encourage their students to talk about these experiences as if they had some inherent value in themselves. This may be useful in developing enthusiasm in the followers of that path but it may also develop various negative side effects. Feelings

of inferiority and jealousy may develop in those who don't have such experiences. Those who do have them may begin to think that they're somehow better, more developed spiritually than the others. They may develop an inflated ego. Spiritual aspirants may spend their time seeking after such experiences rather than concentrating on the real spiritual goals, i.e., purification of character and transcendence of identification with the mind and its contents. Thus, we may simply seek to have experiences and give up making a serious spiritual effort. Experiences can also be had with various drugs such as alcohol, hashish, LSD and tranquilizers. Does that make one spiritual?

Another problem develops when we try to have specific experiences in meditation or other spiritual techniques. We may try to **reproduce** experiences which we've had in the past or ones which we've heard others describe. This prevents the natural flow of energy and development. We may try to recreate experiences that have no usefulness for us at this particular stage of our growth.

In this way, we simply carry our need for sensual stimulation with us into the spiritual realm where such experiences replace our cigarettes, alcohol and social interaction. This might be useful as a **stage** in our development but it would be a mistake to remain in the stage rather than moving on. And, in some mysterious and yet wise way, these experiences tend to come more frequently when we first employ a new technique and they gradually diminish with time. They give way to a blending of our spiritual essence into our daily life in the form of expanding love, inner peace, clarity of mind and creativity throughout each day.

SPIRITUAL ESCAPISM

Some people enter into spiritual life as a form of escape from the material world they feel unable to cope with. In most cases, when this is the motive, very little real spiritual progress is made. It must be understood that the attempt at SELF-MASTERY and the development of spiritual qualities is the most difficult of human endeavors. The material and social world exist for the purpose of the soul's exercising of its inherent powers so that it may eventually

manifest those powers, expressing the infinite possibilities of Spirit in the material world. An individual who feels too weak or fragile to cope with the social, economic, or material world is unlikely to have the inner strength required to succeed in this most difficult of human adventures - spiritual growth.

We must not confuse, this type of escapism with the situation in which we see what the world has to offer, taste it (regardless of the length of time we may taste it) and find it not to our liking. In this case, it's not that we cannot cope or succeed in this material world, but we've simply realized that it has nothing to offer us. We've come to a state where we realize that money, possessions, or professional and social positions have no permanent happiness to offer. We're searching for something deeper, more lasting, more real; something that satisfies our higher needs.

We should check to verify that we're not entering into a spiritual path because we're trying to escape the world. We must face and master and then transcend the world. The real test of spiritual development is in our reactions to the world around us. To go into a forest and sit alone and say that we've conquered anger or fear means nothing. Can we conquer anger and fear in the midst of family, professional or social obligations and difficulties? That is the real test of our spirituality. We can use the situations which our family obligations, professional responsibilities and social contacts create as opportunities for applying the spiritual virtues which we want to develop.

It is, of course, useful to take time off to go inward so as to contact the center of peace and clarity within us. This we may do in the form of daily meditation and occasional weekends or longer retreats where we can charge our batteries and reflect on our lives, goals and attitudes more objectively. This is by no means escapism. This is tuning up the vehicles of the body and mind so that they can be more effective instruments for carrying out our worldly responsibilities to the best of our abilities. We do the same with our car and other instruments and machines.

Ultimately, there's no real conflict between spiritual life and

material life. All life is spiritual. We are spirits and as such, we are spiritual in the center of our being. Spiritual techniques and guidelines exist for us to come into contact with and manifest outwardly this already existing spirituality in our mental, emotional and physical life. Spiritual techniques offer us a way to harmonize our body, mind and intellect for more inspired, creative and harmonious functioning in the material world. Material obligations offer us a medium in which to express inherent spiritual qualities such as love, peace, truth, creativity, harmony, right action, compassion, forgiveness and nonviolence.

This may also be understood by using the example of a cassette player that's plugged into a cord connected to the main electricity line of a house. In order for the current to flow, the cord must be plugged into both the wall socket and the tape player. If it's plugged only into the wall and not into the cassette player, no current will flow. If it's plugged also into the cassette player then the current will flow. If it's plugged into the cassette player and not into the wall, the result will be the same, no current.

The current represents the spiritual energy which is always waiting within us to flow out into the physical world. The cassette player represents our creative and productive activities, our responsibilities and interactions with the world. If we have nothing to do, the energy has nowhere to go and remains stagnant within us. If, on the other hand, we're not in contact with that center of spiritual energy within us, we'll perform all these actions mechanically, without clarity or inspiration. Our creativity and productivity will be either minimal or simply ego-oriented which means that they will, sooner or later, create problems and unhappiness for us.

SPIRITUAL AMBITION

People, who have a tendency for various reasons to be ambitious, carry this quality with them into their spiritual efforts. They may be impatient to have results. If they don't have immediate results, they may become disappointed and give up the effort. They don't realize that this effort is something which takes a whole lifetime and, if you

can believe in reincarnation, many lifetimes. **PATIENCE** is an absolute must on this path. If we have patience, we will definitely succeed. In addition to patience, **practice** and **persistence** are required. If we practice daily and persist for many years, having patience about the slow changes which take place in our character and our life, then we will gradually become a very content, fulfilled, peaceful and happy individual.

Those who do not have patience often resort to shopping around in the 'spiritual supermarket' for faster systems which require no effort and give immediate results. This is, of course, a waste of time. It's like the person who wants to dig a well to find water. He may dig in one part of his field for about five meters. After doing so, he may become disappointed and move to another area to start digging. Then after not finding water quickly, he goes to another area which he hopes will give quick results. In this way he digs a total of 20 or more meters but no more than five meters deep in any one place. The water may be found at a level of 18 meters. He would have reached it by now, if he had the patience and perseverance to keep digging deeper at the first hole.

In the same way, people tend to switch from one system to another, never going deeply enough in any one system to gain real benefit before they superficially switch to some other religion, system or spiritual teacher with the hope that they'll have quicker results. And, of course, they want these results without making any serious or deep effort.

Others spread their energy by trying to follow many paths or techniques simultaneously. They don't want to leave any possibility uncovered, lest someone should proceed more quickly than they. They run after every new technique which comes into town, hoping that 'this will be the one'. They hope to find some miraculous system which requires no effort and will give them speedy results and, if possible, many spiritual powers. Such people will eventually realize that the road is long and hard and requires forbearance and serious effort. They may discover that there are some basic guidelines and techniques which are common to all the systems they've tried. They may also discover that the power and wisdom

they're searching for outside of themselves in all these systems and spiritual teachers is actually **within themselves**. In this case, they'll limit their running around, stop hoping for that new miraculous system, decide on a path and follow it in depth, employing the necessary disciplines required to make real and lasting changes in their lives.

Those who don't come to this realization will be easy prey for the various systems coming out of the vast spiritual supermarket which claim to be able to give participants fantastic powers in no time, with no effort, no sacrifice, no preparation and no change of character. The only requirement, in most cases, is money.

Some groups claim to give spiritual powers without any effort on our part.

Of course, it's unlikely that anyone could suffer any serious harm from such a system. It is, however, like paying someone to tell you that your stomach is digesting or your mind is thinking. **We are all already connected up to the divine source of cosmic energy**. We are all manifestations of cosmic energy; it is always flowing through us. The amount of cosmic energy we can pass on to others will never be dependent on some magical symbols which someone else will make upon us (unless that individual is an enlightened being). It's one thing to pass energy on to another person and another entirely to claim that we are giving him or her the power to heal others.

Spiritual powers, talents and abilities are the function of constant inner purification in conjunction with **opening** ourselves to that Cosmic Source of life and power. The ability to pass healing energy onto another person, or even onto ourselves, is already inherent in all of us. Perhaps such a seminar could be a stimulus for us to concentrate on that energy and use it. But we must not think for one moment that the energy flowing through us is a function of some initiation or magical symbols that someone has mysteriously performed over us. Our ability to channel energy is a function of five basic factors.

1. *The length of time and intensity of practice of that ability in this and previous lives.*
2. *The purity of our bodies, emotions, minds and soul which are the vehicles for the transmission of that energy.*
3. *The degree of our development of love and wisdom.*
4. *The degree of our surrender to the Divine flow.*
5. *Our ability to concentrate on this Source of higher energy and let our mind get out of the way so that the energy can flow.*

This is extremely important to remember on the spiritual path. Otherwise, we may fall subject to various people who have certain powers and claim that they can make various significant changes in our lives. Only we can make these changes; so we can stop shopping around wasting money, time and energy trying to find a system which will do the work for us.

Another point which a spiritual aspirant should be cautious about is groups or systems which charge large fees of money. Wherever there are large sums of money involved, you can be sure that sincere spiritual growth will be absent.

I say these things not to criticize any particular system. I feel it necessary, however, to point out all these facts and logical thoughts because I've been appalled by how many seemingly intelligent people do not have the logical reasoning or common sense to think of these so obvious facts and are wasting their time and energy and causing others to do the same. They would better spend their time in some sincere spiritual practice such as self-analysis, prayer, meditation, or service to society rather than running after every new product on the spiritual supermarket. This is the age of false **prophets** and one of their signs is their large **profits**.

Let's close this section with a quotation from Satya Sai Baba:
Each one's power is within. It is not possible to give such power to another person. In this manner, by allowing a weak mind to get

control over us, if we begin running from place to place (searching for spiritual powers), when are we going to get strength of mind, and control our own mind? We must be able to follow one thought, one path. One does not have to search for spiritual power, going around the world and spending a lot of money. Be in your own house, develop it in yourself. Such spiritual power is in YOU. You don't have to run for it here and there. God is not external, God is not outside you; God is inside you.

SEEKING SPIRITUAL POWERS

In the previous section we mentioned the common mistake of searching for spiritual powers and abilities outside of ourselves, especially in some techniques claiming to be easy and quick. Here we will consider whether spiritual powers are worth seeking after at all. The answer to whether the development of spiritual abilities will be beneficial or detrimental to our spiritual growth depends on the answers to the following questions.

- 1. What is our level of selflessness and feeling of unity with all?*
- 2. What is the level of development of our universal love and wisdom?*
- 3. What is our motive in developing these powers?*
- 4. What is our dharma or role in this life?*

We will use our powers and abilities in life in accordance with our level of consciousness and motives. If we're still basically identified with our separate ego and have yet to develop love for all beings, then these powers may be dangerous in our hands. We will not have the discrimination to use them properly. Just as we would not let a little child play with knives and matches which are powerful tools both for good and harm, the same is true with the various spiritual powers such as astral travel, the ability to know others' thoughts, to know the future, to see auras, and the ability to heal.

If we know the others' thoughts, are we advanced enough to love them in spite of their thoughts? If we know that some unpleasant event is waiting in the future for ourselves or our loved one, do we have the faith in the Divine Plan and in our immortality and invulnerability so as not to worry or have anxiety about the future? Do we know who should be healed and who should continue to experience the illness or problem for the sake of his or her spiritual growth?

Our level of development and our motives play an essential role in determining whether the development of spiritual powers will be beneficial or harmful to us. Is our motive to gain the others' acceptance and esteem through these abilities? Are we in secret seeking power over others? Are we getting ego-identified with these powers, so that we begin to think that we're better than others are because we have these powers? In such cases, we will not only become blocked in our spiritual growth but we will regress spiritually. Are we ready to use these powers and abilities only for the good of humanity and not for our own personal needs?

The use of spiritual powers also has other drawbacks. This spiritual energy which we use goes out in the form of actions in this world and does not then rise up onto the higher centers of consciousness of love and wisdom. It's suggested by those who have gone before us that it would be better to aim for the purification and transformation of character and development of universal love and absolute truth first; and then these powers will come as side effects.

Thus, they should never be goals in spiritual life. The goal is the realization of the real Self which is beyond all these. If, in the process of moving towards this goal, various abilities manifest themselves, then we may use them but with much discrimination and never for self-interest, reward or praise from others.

CONFUSING THE TECHNIQUE WITH THE GOAL

There is a tendency among spiritual aspirants to confuse the various techniques which they use with the goal itself. They may think that the goal is to meditate many hours or to be a perfect

vegetarian, to chant as many hours as possible, to have as few possessions as possible, or to serve as many people as possible. These are techniques or means towards a goal and not goals in themselves. We need not evaluate ourselves or others on this basis. Nor would it be wise to make a god out of these techniques. They are the various boats that we take in order to cross the sea of illusion to the shore of truth. Our goal is the realization of the ONE ABSOLUTE TRUE SELF OF ALL BEINGS - WITHIN AND WITHOUT. Everything that we employ along the way are the various boats which we may use for a period of time and then change eventually to another which is more suitable to the waters we're passing through. No religion is a goal in itself. They are means to a goal, boats which help us pass through the difficult waters of life with fewer problems and delays. The goal of all religions is one-unity with God. And God is Love.

The measurement of our spiritual growth or level is not in how many hours we meditate, pray, serve others, or how pure our diet is. The level of our spirituality is indicated in the degree of our manifestation of the divine qualities of Love, Peace, Harmony, Self-knowledge, and feeling of unity with all.

As we approach the shores of enlightenment, we will necessarily leave all techniques behind and function from within, remembering always the ultimate truth that there is only ONE CONSCIOUSNESS which is living in all the beings and inanimate objects of this world. We will gradually realize that our true SELF is this one consciousness, and that all we see is our own self, and **that we are all that we see.**

GIVING UP TECHNIQUES PREMATURELY

This too is a danger on the spiritual path. Some teachers encourage their students to give up all techniques and 'spiritual crutches' immediately. What they say may be absolutely correct for themselves and a few other souls on the earth who may also be learning this lesson. But the rest of us still need the help of these spiritual 'boats'. They help us stay afloat in the sea of illusion until we come closer to the shore of realization where the distance is

small and the water not so deep and we have developed our spiritual muscles. Those aspirants who have not yet developed clarity of mind and a certain amount of detachment and discrimination between the real and temporary will most likely suffer and progress much more slowly if they give up these useful techniques too early.

CONCLUSIONS

1. *Just as in every other aspect of life, even in the spiritual path there are detours, dead ends and stray roads where we may mistakenly find ourselves.*

2. *We cannot always avoid them and in fact they are a part of our learning process and are helpful to us, if we are clever enough to see them and learn through them.*

3. *Even though there are these various traps, the goal is worth it and in the end, we are always learning; and this is positive.*

4. *We can avoid some of the traps by following some general guidelines:*

a. *We must always **be true to our inner self**. This must be our ultimate guide. Do not accept anything from anyone, no matter how great and wise they may seem if it does not feel okay with your inner conscience and intuition. **Believe in your self and follow your inner inclinations.***

b. *Remember that **God is within you**. The spiritual path is not an outward path in which we need to change our clothing and our names and give up our belongings and worldly responsibilities. God is within us NOW. He is the consciousness which **is US**, when the body and ego fall away.*

c. ***PREFER INNER EFFORT AND CHANGE** to outer changes and external help from others. We can take advice, encouragement, love and inspiration from others. But only **we** can make the inner changes that we need to make.*

d. Remember that the **GOAL IS UNIVERSAL LOVE AND UNLIMITED WISDOM**. That means self-knowledge, not fantastic experiences or spiritual powers. The goal is transcendence of identification with the body and ego and thus, the experience of our Universal Self - God.

e. Practice **continual SELF-OBSERVATION**, always analyzing the motives, desires, attachments and programming behind every thought, word and action. This will prevent a large number of mistakes and much suffering.

f. **BE REGULAR IN PRACTICE OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES**. Persevere in the effort with ultimate patience for the results. Realize that the transformation of character is a very slow process because the tendencies constituting that character have been developed over millions of years of human development and even from the animal state. It takes time.

g. **LOVE EVERYONE - UNCONDITIONALLY - INCLUDING YOURSELF**. Love is the direct and safest path of development. Love protects us from all dangers.

h. Realize that there is **NO GROWTH WITHOUT DISCIPLINE** and continual **concentration on the ultimate truths**.

5. SPIRITUALITY MUST PERMEATE OUR DAILY LIFE. Otherwise it is just an empty meaningless game. It must be expressed as increased love, patience, understanding, compassion and peace in our human reactions.

Let's complete this chapter with the story about the spiritual aspirant who was not satisfied by the techniques which her teacher had given her. She went to the teacher and complained, "I've been practicing these techniques for ten years now and I'm not yet enlightened. You must teach me something else so that I can proceed more quickly."

The teacher smiled calmly and told her to come to the river. The student was excited because now she would be taught the technique

which would enlighten her.

When they arrived the teacher said, "Now I want you to put your face very close to the water and look at the river bed." When the student did this, the teacher placed both hands on the student's head and submerged it into the water, holding it under the water for almost a minute. The student struggled to be released but the teacher's grasp was firm.

Finally at the last moment the teacher released the student's head and she came up gasping for air. The student looked wildly at the teacher wondering why this had happened. With the same calm smile the teacher asked, "What were you thinking about down there?"

The student blurted out, "About getting free, of course, so that I could breathe."

The teacher asked, "You had no other thoughts? No other desires?"

"No", answered the student, "how could I, I just wanted desperately to get free, to live."

"Yes," answered the teacher, "you see, when you desire enlightenment this desperately and have no other desires, then you will become enlightened."

From this story we understand that our growth is not dependent upon the techniques we use or the system which we follow but on the degree of our desire to really free ourselves from our ignorance and limitations.

CHAPTER XX

UNIVERSAL PHILOSOPHY IN ACTION

THE KEY TO REAL HAPPINESS

We all try very hard to be happy. It's the main goal of every human life. Happiness has some prerequisites such as security, safety, contentment, acceptance and love, among others. All day long and even during our dreams, we work hard trying to find these very illusive and rare states of mind. Do you know many people who feel enough security, contentment, acceptance and love in order to feel really happy most of the time? What's wrong then? Why are we not able to succeed in this effort?

SOME BASIC MISCONCEPTIONS

We've arrived at this sad state of discontentment because of some basic misconceptions about the nature of life and even of our own being. Let's examine them.

1. *The belief that there are not enough resources for all of us to be content* is one major obstacle to human happiness. Because we believe that there's not enough for everyone, we seek to take care of ourselves and our close circle often at the expense of others. This leads to competition, aggression, hoarding, selfishness, greed, accumulating food and money, and possessiveness while others have nothing.

The truth is that there are plenty of resources on the earth for everyone to be happy but they are not distributed properly. They accumulate in some areas and are lacking in others. The result is similar to what would happen to a human body if the blood started to accumulate in one part of the body and consequently was not able to reach other parts of that body. Both the oversupplied and undersupplied parts of the body would be damaged and in serious danger.

That's what has happened on the Earth today. Some areas of society are suffering spiritually from having too much while others are suffering physically and mentally from having too little. In the end, neither are happy.

2. We feel like an empty vessel which needs to be filled.

Because we feel empty, lacking in inner happiness, security, contentment and peace, we're motivated by the need to take, to accumulate, to fill ourself in some way with whatever we presently believe may **ease the feeling of emptiness.** What we believe will fulfill us gradually changes in life from dolls, games and toys to motorcycles, to the opposite sex, to marriage, children, to success in a profession, to money and plenty of objects, to social status, to...**what then?** The common recipes for happiness have failed us. We've done it all. We should be happy now. But we're not. The body is ill, plenty of problems, no real communication, no peace, no contentment, no understanding, no love. Perhaps we've been trying to find happiness in the wrong way?

Perhaps our basic assumption about the nature of life was wrong? Maybe we're not empty vessels but really **empty pipes through which life is flowing.** In that case, we cannot expect to be able to create a static state in which we fill something and expect it to remain full. We hoped that we could put something in our empty vessel, i.e., a new job, enough money, a pleasurable experience, acceptance or love from the others; and it would remain there and we would always be happy after that. But it doesn't work that way. Life is growth, change, and evolution. Static water begins to stagnate; fungus grows; illness takes over. The empty vessel approach is a denial of the flow of life. It is living death. **Holding**

on to the past is not trusting in life. Not allowing life to flow through us is a result of not having faith in life, in the Divine Plan, in Christ's promise that our needs will be met, if we live in harmony with the will of God.

If we can imagine that we are, instead, an empty pipe through which life and Divine Plan are flowing, then we will understand that security, contentment, and affirmation are dynamic processes in which **the causes for these feelings continually change.** We can then let go of the need to hold on, to accumulate, to try to control situations and people. Just because last year we felt secure or happy with some particular experience or situation, doesn't mean that we must fight tooth and nail to hold on to this past source. The evolution of humans requires an evolution too in the objects that give us the feeling of security and happiness. Why should we believe that we cannot now be happy with something new which we've never even heard of or experienced before?

The object which we allow to be the key to our happiness and contentment continuously evolves until it becomes our relationship with God or with our own Higher Self. Then, our sense of security, contentment and happiness can never be extinguished for they don't depend on any temporary or changing stimulus.

KEEPING THE FLOW GOING

Let's assume that, in fact, we are really empty pipes that are connected at one end to the Cosmic Source of life and at the other to the physical reality we experience around us. Let's examine what we can do to keep this cosmic energy flowing efficiently so that we can always be receiving abundantly from the Source of all Good and Goodness. The answer is simple, **keep emptying the lower end of the pipe.** The more we give, the emptier the pipe is and the more able we're to receive. **We create an internal vacuum by giving all we have to those around us.** This vacuum then draws down **more grace** from the Cosmic Source and we experience a continual state of abundance without anxiety, fear, worry, competition, antagonism and the feeling of separateness which pervades society today.

This may seem at first to be an illogical train of thought; that we actually can gain much more by giving than taking. We're not talking about taking only spiritually, we're also including money, security, food, safety, acceptance, knowledge, self-esteem, contentment, love and happiness. This is not a new thought. Every religion has informed us of this truth. But few have yet to believe it. We call ourselves Christians but we believe very few, if any, of the truths which Christ gave us. The same statement can be made for the majority of Buddhists, Jews, Hindus, Moslems and all other religions. We don't believe it. We don't believe in the Divine Flow; in the reality that we will gain much more by giving than taking. It's too good to be true.

Some people are turned off by such talk which reminds them of religion. They consider themselves intellectuals or scientists, beyond such simplistic types of thinking. I can understand those people and their way of thinking, because as a chemical engineer, I too once thought in that way. But **the true scientist experiments**. He or she doesn't reject concepts and techniques without putting them to the test. So I suggest that those who really value the truth continue to explore, examine, research, test and prove for themselves whether the ideas they hear are valid or not. If we haven't tried a concept out, the most we can say is, "I don't know, I haven't tried it" or "I don't want to try it". That would be truthful, scientific.

For the last 200 years, we've been experimenting with the belief that affluence brings happiness. We see clearly now that this is not true. Ask our children if they believe that we've succeeded with our formulas for happiness. We've succeeded in becoming parasites on the earth, consuming inconceivable proportions of the earth's natural resources of oil, food and minerals, only to leave tremendous amounts of pollution and waste which are destroying forests, seas and whole species of animals endangering harmony and life on the Earth. And, in spite of all this, we are not happy. Rather we are more discontent. The family has disintegrated, marriage is a failure, love is scarce and mistrust, fear, discontent and anger are rampant in every level of society. Ask your children what they see and wonder why they have rejected this society and

its ways. Why they don't study, why they don't show respect to their elders and to society. What is there to respect? Where is there an example, a politician, a doctor, a lawyer, a teacher, a priest, a man or woman about whom the child can say, "I want to be like him or her"?

Perhaps I'm getting carried away but the time has come for drastic changes in our way of thinking and acting. Otherwise the future of humans is very dim. Let's now consider what we have to gain by adopting this different concept for obtaining happiness through giving.

GAINING BY GIVING

Let's examine here some of the ways in which our lives are enriched through our living more for others. *Giving to others* includes many types and levels of giving. This might include money, clothing, food, books, furniture or other objects, or time, compassion, ideas, love, friendship, work energy, prayers, positive thoughts, joy, a smile or any other type of physical, emotional, mental or spiritual offering.

The recipient of our giving may be an orphan, the poor, the rich, the elderly, the handicapped, the blind, the deaf or dumb, the seriously ill, the lonely, the distressed or any other person or group which may need help from others. How do we gain by giving in this way?

1. We diminish our concentration on the ego. The more we are a servant to the ego needs, the more unhappy we are and the more we are held back in our spiritual evolution. The ego must serve the soul, but, in most cases, the soul serves the ego. We are souls incarnated in these bodies, and our egos exist for us to communicate with the world around us. When we're forced to have to run after the various ego needs for affirmation, pleasures and security, then we're not free beings. **We are imprisoned by our needs.**

By sacrificing a few hours each week for others, we begin to put the ego in its proper place, saying, "Stop being a spoiled brat and wanting all the attention, time and energy for yourself. Begin to

think about others". We start to let go and energy starts going outward towards others rather than always towards our personal satisfaction.

2. We overcome the power which attachments and desires have over us. Our attachments and desires rule our lives, forcing us to waste most of our hours **chasing** after them. We also waste other hours **worrying** about whether we'll achieve them or be able to hold onto them; or perhaps feeling bitter towards those who are obstacles to our fulfilling our attachments. How much waste of time, energy, money, thought and human potential! And with no results, no happiness, no contentment.

Try this new formula for happiness. See which gives you deeper and more lasting happiness, watching your television or giving a few hours to a lonely person or orphan who needs help with school lessons or simply needs a little love and affection. Do you really think that going to a restaurant will bring you more happiness than giving aid to an ill person or reading to the blind? Do you think that a new dress is more important than the money which you could give to save the lives of some of the forty thousand children who die **everyday** because of lack of food and medicine? Which will give you more contentment, that new piece of clothing, or that contribution to life on the earth?

We must begin to understand the difference between the means to happiness and happiness itself. We confuse them. A new dress is not happiness. Neither is food or sex, or a movie on TV, or a new job, or a love relationship. We **allow** these experiences to stimulate the feeling of happiness in us. We could allow other stimuli to create that same feeling. Let's not get stuck on old worn out means of gratification because they simply will not give us the happiness they used to.

3. We develop a feeling of oneness and love with others. We all want love. It makes us happy to be loved. We demand love from others and complain when they don't love us. **But have we tried the surest way of getting love? Giving it!** Yes, it is 100% sure that those who give more love will receive more love. That is, if

we're really giving love 'without strings attached'. Because if there are strings attached, like wanting love back, wanting favors, needing the other for security or pleasure, wanting gratitude or the other to fulfill certain expectations, we may not get love back. **The love is taken and we are given the strings back so that we can see them and let go of them and eventually give real love without strings attached.**

In giving we begin to learn to love, to feel close to others, to be concerned about their needs, their feelings, their happiness. We begin to feel a close relationship with them, like brothers and sisters living together on the earth helping each other. We begin to feel like cells living in the body of humanity, as parts of the whole. Our feeling of separateness gradually diminishes along with our feeling of loneliness. We begin to feel **unity** with others which is a sign of advanced spiritual growth.

Many lonely people sit in their homes and cry that they're alone and no one loves them. They could easily solve that problem by seeing what they could do for all the other lonely people who are also sitting in their homes feeling unhappy.

4. We begin to feel useful; our life has a new meaning.

When we begin to serve others, we become filled with a new inspiration for life. We realize that **we have something to offer**, that our existence has some purpose; that we can contribute in our small way towards a better Earth. What each can do alone is limited but if more and more people started to offer just a few hours a week, the whole world would be transformed. This would happen not only through the work which would be offered but through the love that would be expressed and the new feeling of trust which would develop among people. All would be more relaxed, less fearful, more at peace with themselves and others. All of man's wars thrive on fear and mistrust.

With this new purpose in life, we then become less dependent on old roles and relationships which we thought were absolutely necessary for our happiness and security. We begin to realize that even if we lose all our friends and family and all our possessions, we

would be able to continue because we're a part of the family of humanity and we still have a role and purpose to play.

5. We begin to discover where we are holding on and where we are still attached. Performing selfless service helps us to understand just how selfless or selfish our service is. When most of us start out this type of activity, we do much more for ourselves than for others. Many criticize selfless service just for this reason. But the only way to learn to swim is to jump in the water. In the same way, we'll learn where we are attached or where our giving is conditional or egotistical by passing through the various tests of selfless service.

When we are in reality giving in order to make others love us, they may treat us very badly so that we can discover that we're giving with expectations. They won't do this consciously. Life will use them to teach us this lesson. When we're using this activity to boost our image in front of others, to gain approval and respect from others, it may backfire in our face; our goal may not be achieved. If we believe that the other should have gratitude for what we've done, he or she may show us exactly the opposite so that we let go of this motive. When we're attached to getting specific results from our efforts, life will teach us very quickly to let go of this attachment and to perform this action simply because we believe that it must be done.

In this way, we'll gradually learn to give in a truly selfless manner, seeking nothing, not even specific results or success in our effort. The apple tree doesn't ask for any reward for giving us its apple. Neither does it have an inflated ego because it has done so. Neither is it concerned about what will happen to the apple; whether it will become a new tree, eaten by a person or an animal, become juice or vinegar or simply rot as compost on the earth. **It has done its duty. It has performed its role on Earth. That is sufficient.** This is the way in which we must perform our service; as a role which we've come to play. We do what we feel we must do and enjoy doing it. That's our reward, the joy of doing.

6. We get into the cosmic flow of goodness on the Earth.

The more we give and let go, the more everything comes to us. Life begins to give us the money, clothes, food, pleasures, wisdom, acceptance, friendship and love that we need to be really happy. All this comes to us not through our seeking to get but through our seeking to give to others and to be useful.

We begin to feel like instruments of a Higher Power which is working through us in order to fulfill its purpose here on the earth. We begin to feel a relationship with that Higher Power in our quiet moments of meditation, prayer and eventually even in our moments of activity. We feel it as an ever present presence that is always supplying our needs, giving us what we need in order to do our work and fulfill our purpose in creating a better, more harmonious world.

We become transformers of spiritual energy. A transformer changes one type of energy into another. Plants take the energy of sunlight and make it into something useful, such as the chemical bond which makes food possible. We can take spiritual energy and make it into ideas, thoughts, words and actions which bring abundance, contentment, health, happiness and harmony to all.

When we dedicate more and more hours and energy towards selfless service, we get into this blissful flow of energy in which we're continually taking from a vertical spiritual source within us and giving out horizontally to those around us who have need. We go beyond the need for much help from other humans. Our help and sense of security start to come from higher levels. We become lights of love and peace in a society that's suffering and afraid of the darkness settling in all around.

We begin to offer up every act and effort to that Divine Power. The results are His responsibility, not ours. **We are instruments, not doers**, not the planners. The screwdriver and hammer are not concerned about how the building is going along. They just allow themselves to be used for the projects that must be executed. Neither are we to worry about whether our effort will bring results. **The results are dependent on many other factors beside our tiny little effort.** We can only ask ourselves whether what we

are doing feels right and important to do. If so, we do it and forget about the results.

7. We come into contact with the real source of happiness.

Real happiness comes with the dissolution of ignorance. No person living in ignorance can experience real happiness. Ignorance is the feeling and belief that we're all separate beings. This feeling of separateness is the major source of unhappiness and tension in the world today. All religions and spiritual philosophies affirm that the truth is exactly the opposite, that we are all projections of the one Universal Being called God. **There is, in fact, only one Spirit, which is projecting itself as all these beings and objects which we see around us**, in the same way that the sun reflects as the thousands of different images on thousand of bodies of water. All these images seem different and separate. But there's only one sun. There is, in the same way, only one Spirit.

Real happiness comes when we start to feel close to those around us, when the sense of separateness begins to dissolve and we feel the underlying unity between ourselves and others. This is why the experience of sexual orgasm is so bliss-giving to people. Because for a moment, they lose the feeling of being separate and unite physically, emotionally and mentally and sometimes spiritually with another being. This feeling of inner happiness begins to pervade our life, as we begin to feel a spiritual oneness with all beings independent of their political, religious or social beliefs or affiliations, regardless of their appearance, age or sex, independent of their attitudes or habits. We begin to feel for the first time in our life **unconditional love which is real happiness.**

We need nothing else anymore. Our needs have become very simple. We spend little time in satisfying our personal needs, for our needs are always satisfied by Life itself. We are in the flow, enjoying always. We are a part of life, not cut off from it in our limited circle of identification. **All beings belong to our family, all are His. We have found happiness at last.**

EPILOGUE

I remember a saying that I saw once on an office desk, which read, "When all is said and done, more will be said than done." I hope this will not be true concerning these spiritual truths. They are virtually useless if not employed.

It is extremely important to align our thoughts, words and actions with these basic universal truths. Only then will we be able to experience them in our daily lives. I would like to once again emphasize the importance of spiritual practices such as prayer and meditation and even more importantly, the expression of our inner spiritual nature through love for and service to our fellow beings on this planet.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

American born, Robert Elias Najemy is presently living in Athens Greece, where he has founded and is directing the **Center for Harmonious Living** since 1976 which serves 3500 members with classes and workshops designed to aid each in the improvement of his or her body, mind, relationships and life in general.

Robert has 20 books published in Greek, which have sold over 100,000 copies.

He is the author of hundreds of articles published in magazines in England, Australia, India and Greece.

He has developed a program of seminars for Self-Analysis, Self-Discovery, Self-Knowledge, Self-Improvement, Self-Transformation and Self-Realization. He has trained over 300 Life Coaches and does so now over the internet.

This system combines a wide variety of well-tested ancient and modern techniques and concepts

His teachings come from what he calls "Universal Philosophy" which is the basis of all religions and yet beyond and not limited by religions.

His seminars include a variety of experiences including:

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