

INSIGHT

Lesson 1: Safa

It is the faculty of the soul to see, and the eyes are its instruments. It is not the instrument that sees, but it is the soul that uses the instrument to see. The eyes I have given as an example, but really the whole body is the instrument of the soul, to get the experience of life. The seeing of the soul through the ears is called hearing, through the tongue, tasting. It is the knowing by the soul of the external life — the soul uses different instruments to obtain different experiences.

Between the body and the soul there is another instrument which is recognized by scientists and mystics as inexplicable. That is the mind. The scientists call it the brain, but the brain is but the instrument of the mind, and the mind goes beyond it. Plainly speaking, it may be said that the mind is the instrument of the soul and the body is the instrument of the mind, but both mind and body are the instruments of the soul. Although these instruments give the soul knowledge of things clearly, these instruments at the same time limit the power of the soul.

There are two aspects of sight: one is penetration and the other expansion. These are the length and width of the range of sight. Through the eyes of the body one can see a short or long distance, or have a wide or narrow horizon. But by using the mind as its instrument, the soul sees through another mind in the same way as the eye sees across the length and breadth of its range of sight. When the mind takes the body in order to experience life, it limits the experience, for the body is not sufficient. If the mind were free, it would see further. But, as from childhood man has the habit of using the body as the instrument of the mind, hardly anyone knows how to make use of the mind without the body. And as the soul has always taken the mind as its instrument, it also limits its sight and experience. If the soul could see independently of mind and body, it would see infinitely more. As it is difficult for the mind to see independently of the body, it is more difficult for the soul to see independently of the mind. Therefore, the Sufi tries to make his mind independent of the body and his soul independent of mind and body. In order to accomplish this, different concentrations and practices are given. It is like effacing the external form from the mind, and erasing from the soul the form of the mind. It is this experience which is called Safa.

Lesson 2: Tat Tvam Asi

There are three aspects of life, and by seeing the oneness of these three one comes to divine knowledge. To the mystic, therefore, the idea of the Trinity suggests this philosophy. This idea also exists in the Hindu religion, and is known as Trimurti. They have a religious instrument with three points (a kind of fork with three points) as a symbol of this — the idea being that it is the three different aspects of the one life which confuse man and prevent him from realizing the one life beneath these three aspects.

The first aspect is the knower, the second is the known, and the third is the knowing. In other words they may be called the seer, the seen or that which appears, and the sight. These three are three turnings on the same road, which hide it and divide it into three aspects. Therefore, in the spiritual

path this puzzle must be solved as the first and last thing. If the barriers which divide these three aspects are removed, then the mystic realizes one life and not three.

Occult power is the power of knowing or seeing, the faculty of knowing or seeing. The seer is the greatest of these aspects, the second is that which is seen (appears), the seeing power is the third. The reason of this is that the seer is the source and origin of what is seen and of the seeing power.

Therefore, Jesus Christ called Him 'Father.' That which is seen has in it the light inherited from the seer. Whether flower or fruit, it has radiance in it which makes it appear. There is a verse of a Persian poet, which explains this: "The nightingale has borrowed from Thee his beautiful song, and the rose has borrowed from Thee its color and fragrance." But the means that the seer takes as his instrument is the mind, which is the instrument of the soul, and the body, the instrument of the mind.

Therefore, the first lesson the mystic has to learn is to know the relation between himself and the thing he sees. As soon as a mystic sees life from this point of view, that he connects himself with the thing he sees, he can understand it much better than the average person can. Sufism is not a religion, because it does not give any doctrine or principle, but it is a point of view. The ancient Vedantists adopted their point of view in teaching the sacred words Tat Tvam Asi : "As Thou art, so I am." With this point of view, when the sight becomes keen, even objects become clear to the seer and speak to him, and what is called psychometry, or such phenomena, become as a play to the seer. The whole of life is as an open book. But there is nothing so interesting for the seer to see or know as human nature, and it is the seer who can see and know another person.

Ordinarily there exist many barriers between one person and another, such as prejudice, hatred, reserve, remoteness and all aspects of duality. A person considers another his greatest friend in the world if he realizes that the other understands him. There is nothing that brings two people closer together than understanding. And what is this comprehension? It is trinity with unity. Often one wonders, "Why do I not understand this person?" But one does not realize that one creates oneself the barriers which separate one person from another. If these barriers are not created, the soul has freedom to see and nothing can stand in its way. Do you think the sages and saints try to see the thoughts of other people? Not at all; that does not concern them. But the thoughts of another person manifest themselves to the saint. Why? Because there is no barrier. This barrier creates duality. The idea of the Sufi is to uncover himself, and this he can accomplish by contemplation upon the idea of God, which is the Absolute Oneness. When one realizes this in its immensity, all such sciences as physiognomy or phrenology begin to become like play, because by these sciences one sees a part, but by the light of the soul one sees the whole.

Lesson 3: The Glance of the Seer

The glance of the seer is penetrating, and in this it differs from the glance of an ordinary man. It has three characteristics (qualities). The first is that it penetrates through the body, mind, and soul. The second quality of this glance is that it opens, unlocks and unfolds things; it also possesses the power of seeking and finding. The third characteristic of the glance of the seer is more wonderful. It is this: as it falls upon a thing, it makes that thing as it wants to make it. This is not actually creating, but it is awakening that particular quality, which was perhaps asleep.

This is quite natural, as we see in the ordinary course of life that by fear we create in others dreadful qualities, and when we love, we create kindness. It is possible to turn a friend into an enemy by thinking that he is an enemy, and also it is possible to change an enemy into a friend by expecting

him to be a friend. Therefore, the tendency of the mystic is to turn everything into that which he wishes it to be. To turn what is ugly into beauty, and beauty into ugliness, this is what the vision can accomplish. This proves to a deep thinker that things are not what they appear to be, but we make them as they are. The whole life may be made into a thing of complete ugliness or it may be made into a sublime vision of perfect beauty. The lord of the yogis, Shiva, is pictured with a cobra on his neck, which means that death, which frightens everyone else, is accepted by him as life. That shows that even death can be made into life, and it is only the difference of the point of view that makes life death.

The first characteristic of the glance of the seer, penetration, depends upon clearness of vision. The second characteristic, the uncovering of objects, depends upon the illumination of the soul. But the third, the greatest, comes from confidence in the self, called Iman.

Lesson 4: Divine Evidence

The first thing in the study of human nature is observation of the external part of man. This has two aspects: one is the head of man, and the other is his form. And this can be seen from two points of view: the first is the analytical point of view, and the second is the synthetic. The former is understanding of the character of each organ and the meaning of its form, and the latter is the harmony of the different organs. And a person understands half if he considers one organ only and not its combination with other organs.

The study of physiognomy can help one as an interesting study, but one must have intuition also to help and guide him who wishes to judge. Nothing in life is so interesting as the study of human nature, and in attaining to knowledge of God, knowledge of human nature is the beginning. Therefore, in occult study one must begin by studying human beings, and the first lesson is to study their form.

The prominence of particular organs and muscles shows the vitality which exists in these organs, and the lack of it is lack of energy in these organs. Therefore, the straightness of any organ suggests straightness in the nature, and curve, where it is natural, shows subtlety of nature, a point, wherever it is natural shows sharpness of nature, roundness makes for subtlety, and the oval form shows acute intelligence. Proportion of head and body and of each part of the head and body shows balance, and lack of it shows lack of balance. Every organ represents a certain part of man's nature that may have no connection with that organ. A particular mode of standing or sitting denotes a certain nature. Crookedness where there should be straightness shows lack of straightness in the nature. Organs which should be symmetrical and are not show lack of balance.

In every face and form there is always some resemblance to the lower creation, and a person with keen insight can recognize it, and intuition helps us to understand it. Sometimes in face or form, sometimes in movements, we show a sign of one or the other of the lower creatures, and this signifies some resemblance with the nature of that particular creature.

The more one observes from this point of view, the clearer the view becomes, and it shows the marvel of the Creator. It makes one tolerant and forgiving to everyone, by reason of understanding that none can act against his nature. Also he who looks at this marvel begins to see the divine evidence in every face, as a person can see the painter in his painting. And it is only natural to wish to study this part of occultism, in order to recognize the divine part in the creature and worship Him.

Lesson 5: Openness

Every atom of man's body expresses his past, present, and future. The reason is that, in the first place, every impulse creates its vibrations and takes a particular direction of activity. This influences the heart, whence the blood is circulated through the whole body. In this way the thought is, so to speak, written on man's face. Man's continual agitation in regard to others, his satisfaction or dissatisfaction, his love or hatred, all shows in his appearance. Everyone can know it more or less, but the seer can read more correctly. It is difficult to tell definitely the marks of a person's thoughts and feelings that are shown in his appearance. Nevertheless, partly by intuition and partly by experience, man reads them. There are some in whom self-control is developed, who are capable of hiding their thoughts and emotions, and yet it is impossible to feel deeply and to hide one's feelings from the eyes of others.

No doubt form and movement speak aloud of one's condition, but the expression of a man's face speaks louder still. There come distinct changes at every impulse, at every change of emotion, making distinct marks which are an open book to a seer. The word *Kashf* means "opening", and it is used by the Sufis with the meaning that the heart is, as a rule, a closed book and the one to whom it becomes open can read it like an open book. No doubt reading man's condition of mind from his appearance is not such a difficult thing. Even dogs and cats can know this, and sometimes they know better than man does. What gives one insight into another is, in the first place, his sympathy. The seer first develops the quality of love. He whose heart is kindled with the love of God is capable of the love of humanity. The heart thus kindled with love becomes a lighted lantern, which throws its light on every person the seer meets, and as this light falls upon the person he meets, all things about that person — his body, heart, and soul — become clear to him. Love is a torch that illuminates all that come within its light, but it is the knowledge of God which is the key that opens the hearts of men.

Lesson 6: Movement (1)

Every movement that one makes suggests to the seer some meaning. A person is not always conscious of his movements, and not every movement is made intentionally; but many movements that man makes unconsciously and thinks nothing of mean something to the seer.

The seer notices them from two points, the beginning and the end. No motion, to a seer, is without direction; in other words every movement is directed by a precedent cause. And no motion, to him, is without a certain result. The purpose seems to be in the cause, but in reality it is in the effect. It is born in the cause, but it is finished in the effect.

The first thing that the mystic understands by a movement that a person makes is the nature of the person, and the next thing that he understands is about the person's affairs. And the law holds good about straightness suggesting straightness, and crookedness suggesting crookedness, grace of movement suggesting beauty and lack of grace the lack of that element. Rhythm of movement suggests balance, lack of rhythm suggests lack of balance. The upward tendency of movement suggests rise, the downward tendency fall, and the horizontal spreading. The movement inward and outward are suggestive of within and without. Also the law of tendency of the five elements to

different directions helps the seer to recognize the different elements working in man's nature. The movement can be recognized in sitting, walking, lying, and in laughter or in crying. The study of these laws of movement and direction is helpful only when the intuitive faculty is developed. If the study is intellectual, it is limited and rigid, and one cannot probe the depths of human nature far enough by intellectual study alone.

Lesson 7: Movement (2)

The condition of the mind is expressed not only in the countenance but also in the movements. Every movement denotes a certain change of thought and feeling. The more one understands the language of movements the more one comprehends this. In every thought and feeling the waves of the mind, so to speak, rise and fall, and as by seeing the waves one can notice whether the sea is rough or calm, so by noticing the movements of a person one can read the condition of his mind. Upward movement suggests wrath, revenge, conceit, or pride; downward movement depression, helplessness, or meekness. Movements towards the left and right also have their significance. To the right show struggle and power, to the left art and skill. A contracting tendency suggests fear, indifference and coldness. A stretching tendency shows desire for action, strength and power. A tendency to turn shows confusion. A tendency to pinch and press shows uneasiness and agony of mind. Expansion and ease of movement show joy and happiness, and stillness without stiffness is expressive of calm and peace.

Lesson 8: The Study of the Whole

Man's form can be divided into two parts: the head and the body. One part is for action, the other for thought. Therefore, the face can explain the attitude of mind and depict the nature and character more fully than the body and its movements. Every little movement of the eyes, the movements of the lips in smiling or in laughter, the movements of the eyebrows or of the head itself explain the condition of the mind.

The ends of the eyebrows turning upwards suggests egoism and shrewdness. The puckering of the lips suggests pleasure, as the twitching of the lips shows a tendency to humor or indicates pleasure. The rolling of the eyes towards the outer corners denotes a clever brain. The puffing of the cheeks denotes joy, the drawing in, sorrow.

One can get a full conception of the character by studying the full countenance and not a part only. The study of a part always gives only partial knowledge. Complete knowledge is gained only by a study of the whole. Keen observation with the desire to understand helps a person to read the condition of man's mind, his nature and character, yet the view is often colored by the personality of the one who sees. His favor or disfavor, his liking or dislike, stands between the eyes of the one who sees and the one who is seen. Therefore, sometimes, innocent people have a better understanding of a person than clever people with deceitful minds do. There is a saying of Sa'di, "O my subtle cleverness, Thou often becomest my greatest deceiver

Lesson 9: The Mystery of Expression

Man's expression is more indicative of his nature and character than his form or features. In the Qur'an it is said that man's eyes and gestures will confess what he tries to hide in his heart. The strength, the weakness, the power, the fear, the happiness, the joy, the uneasiness, the praise or blame, the love or hatred — all these are shown by the expression. The more capable one becomes of reading the expression, the more clearly one can read character.

This shows that there is a mystery that lies behind movement. There are certain vibrations which take a particular direction under certain conditions, and the visible signs of all vibrations can be seen either in man's movements or in the expression of his countenance. It does not take one moment for the expression to change from pleasure to pain, from calm to horror, from love to hate. That shows that all the atoms of man's body — the veins, tubes and muscles, and the lines formed by their movements — are under the control of the heart. And every change that takes place in the heart shows on man's face, so that one who knows the language can read it. People who see each other often can read such changes from the expression, because each grows accustomed to know and to recognize the changes of facial expression in the others. But it is the development of intuition which gives the clearness of vision by which one can see more completely.

The eyes are more expressive of thought and feeling than anything else. A person who can read the language of the eyes, their appearance and their movement, has the key to character. The eyes can ask and answer questions, and it is in the grade of speed and direction of the glance that the mystery of expression lies.

Lesson 10: Different Qualities of Mind

As there are different qualities of the sight, such as long and short sight, so there are different qualities of mind. There are minds which can see a certain distance and no further, and others that can see a longer distance. And what is called foresight is not a supernatural, superhuman faculty, but a long range of sight. When a person can see the action of another person, the seer can see the reason of the action too, and if the sight is keener still, he can see the reason of the reason. One cannot give one's sight to another. He can tell what he sees, but that is not sufficient, for in order to be sure every soul wants its own experience.

The faculty of seeing through life can be developed by observation, which is called study. And the focusing of the mind upon the object of study is called concentration. As by making a habit of lifting one thing, a person can learn to lift several weighty things, so by observing one object of study a man becomes capable of observing any object in the same way. Keeness of observation is a phenomenon in itself. In the first place, the sight penetrates, so to speak, the object one sees. And the next thing is that as the light of the sun has the power to open the buds, so the power of keen observation commands the objects observed to unfold themselves and to reveal their secrets.

Every object has a soul in it, which may be called its spirit. In ancient times the seers recognized the spirit of all things — the spirit of mountains, trees, stars and planets, of the rivers, lakes, pools and seas. And penetrating through objects means touching their spirit. No doubt it is easier to touch the spirit of man than to touch the spirit of the objects, for the very reason that man is more living than any other form of creation.

The person whose eyes are not steady cannot observe fully. So also, the mind that is not steady cannot observe things well. Therefore, the mystics prescribe certain postures in order to make the

body stable. And steadiness of body and mind react on each other. So a self-mastered person who has control over his body and mind has balance and wisdom. Wisdom comes from steadiness and insight follows wisdom.

Lesson 11: The Reproduction of the Mental Record

Every line which is deeply engraved on the surface of the mind may be likened to a vein through which the blood runs, keeping it alive, and while the blood is running it is productive of offshoots of that deep-set line. There are moments when a kind of congestion comes in a line where the blood is not running, and there are no offshoots. This congestion can be broken by some outer influence; and when the congested line is touched by an outer influence related to that line, then this sets the blood running again and offshoots arising, expressing themselves in thoughts. It is just like a waking or sleeping state of the lines. As one note of music can be fully audible at a time, so one lone offshoot can be intelligible at a time, and it is the warmth of interest that keeps the blood running in that particular line. There may be other lines where the blood is alive also. Still, if they are not kept warm by one's interest they become congested and thus paralyzed. And yet, the blood is there, the life is there; it awaits the moment to awaken. The sorrows of the past, the fears of the past, the joys of the past, can be brought to life after ages, and could give exactly the same sensation that one had experienced formerly.

The more one knows the mystery of this phenomenon, the more one learns to understand that there is a world in one's self, that in one's mind there is the source of happiness and unhappiness, the source of health and illness, the source of light and darkness, and that it can be awakened, either mechanically or at will, if only one knew how to do it. Then one does not blame others for his ill fortune nor complain of his fellow man. He becomes more tolerant, more joyful and more loving toward his neighbor, because he knows the cause of every thought and action, and he sees it all as the effect of a certain cause. A physician would not revenge himself on a patient in an asylum, even if the patient hit him, for he knows the cause. Psychology is the higher alchemy, and one must not study it only, without practicing it. Practice and study must go together, which opens the door to happiness for every soul

Lesson 12: Impression

The mind can be likened to a record of the talking-machine. But, as it is a living mechanism, it does not only reproduce what is impressed on it, but it creates as well as reproduces. There are five different actions of the mind which can be distinguished:

1) Creating of thoughts; 2) the sense of discrimination; 3) memory; 4) the factor of feeling; 5) the principal faculty, the feeling of I-ness, or ego. Every thought which mind creates has some connection with some idea already recorded, not exactly similar, but akin to it. For instance, one deeply engraved line on the mind may have several small lines shooting out from it like branches from the trunk of a tree.

The Sufi, therefore, learns and practices to discern the more deeply engraved lines by the observation of their offshoots. Therefore, he is able to learn more from a person's thought than anybody else, just

as by looking at a leaf of a tree one can find out what kind of tree it is. As a rule, every thought a person expresses has at bottom a connection with some deep feeling. The reading of the deep-set line is like reading the cause of the person's thought. The knowledge of the cause can give greater understanding than knowing only the thought. It is just like standing on the other side of the wall. Thought is like a wall; behind it — the cause. Often the difference between cause and effect is like that between sour and sweet. It is often confusing, yet simple, that the same fruit may be sour when unripe and sweet when ripe. When one begins to understand life from this point of view, the opinion one forms of thought becomes different. There is a great difference between reading a thought externally and reading it from the inside, the source. The one who forms an opinion of the shade has not seen the reality. The effect of a thought is but a shade; the reality is the cause, the source.

What are these deep lines from which offshoots come? These deep lines are the deep impressions which man gets in the first part of his life. In the East, considering this theory, they observe certain rules in the family concerning the expectant mother and the child to be, so that no undesirable impressions may touch their minds. This shows how important it is that this question must be studied. The word "man" comes from the Sanskrit Manas, which means mind. This shows that man is principally his mind, rather than his body. And as mind is naturally impressionable, that means that man is naturally impressionable too. Most often his illness, health, prosperity, failure — all depend upon the impressions on his mind. They say "Lines of fate and death are on the head and palm," but I would say that it is the impressions man has on his mind which decide his destiny. The lines on head and palm are but re-impressions of the mind; there is no need of the lines on hand or face.

Can this language be learned like shorthand? No, the method is different. The method is that, whereas to understand a person every man in his reasoning goes forward from the thought of another, the Sufi goes backward. All impressions of joy, sorrow, fear and disappointment become engraved on the mind. This means that they have become man's self. In other words, man is the record of man's actions which will be reproduced on the Last Day, and that angels write down all the good and ill done by each one. What we learn from this allegorical expression is that all is impressed on the mind; although forgotten, it is always there and will one day show up.

Lesson 13: The Balance of Life

Every habit makes a line in man's mind, and the continuation of that habit wakens that line from sleep. In other words it gives the line sensitiveness, which is the feeling of life, and in time man indulges in his habit. If a person takes a liking to a certain phrase of music, its every repetition gives him a renewed joy. When someone enjoys certain poetry it cannot be repeated to him too often. If anyone likes a certain dish, in time he has a craving for it. Not only praise or flattery does man enjoy, but even insults, if they have made a deep line on his mind. He will try to tease others or offend somebody, in order to receive an insult. He may not outwardly seem to enjoy it, and yet he will revel in it. If a person becomes accustomed to sit on a certain rock in a garden he forms a habit of going and seeking the same rock every day. If someone has a liking for the scenery of a certain place he longs to see it every day. Of course it depends upon the depth of the line. The deeper the line, the more one lives in it. When talking, a businessman explains things in terms of his compass and tools.

Every person has his own language and that language is made of his words, which come from the deeply engraved line of his mind.

Therefore, the work of the mystic is to be able to read the language of the mind. As the clerk in the telegraph office reads letters from the ticks, so the Sufi gets behind every word spoken to him and discovers what has prompted the word to come out. He therefore reads the lines which are behind man's thought, speech and action. He also understands that every kind of longing and craving in life, good or bad, has its source in deep impression. By knowing this root of the disease he is easily able to find out its cure. No impression is such that it cannot be erased.

The mystics have two processes in dealing with these lines. One process is to renew this line by putting in some other color and therefore changing one impression into another impression. No doubt this needs great knowledge of mental chemistry. Another way that the mystic takes is to rub out the line from the surface. But often, when the line is deep, it takes the rubbing out of a great portion of the mind to destroy one line.

Naturally, the mystic becomes tolerant of every sort of dealing of others with him, as he sees not only the dealing as it appears, thoughtful or thoughtless, cold or warm, but the cause that is at the back of it.

By reading the human mind a mystic gets insight into human nature, and to him the life of human beings begin to appear as a mechanism working. The mystic learns from this that life is give and take. It is not only that one receives what one gives but also one gives what one receives. In this way the mystic begins to see the balance of life. He realizes that life is a balance, and if the gain or loss, the joy or pain of one outweighs that of another, it is for the moment, but in time it all sums up in a balance, and without balance there is no existence possible.

Lesson 14: The Language of the Mind

Everything one expresses in his art, painting, verse and music is the reproduction of the mind. Not only that, but his choice, his likes and dislikes, his habits, all show what is the state of his mind.

Everything man says or does shows the lines already traced in his mind. There is no exaggeration in the saying that man's face is the mirror of his heart. It seems as if the mind begins to speak through every particle of the body. Since the head is the more predominant factor, the expression of man tells most about the condition of his mind.

No doubt it is difficult to give a certain rule of reading this language expressed in the face, form or movements, but two things can help one to understand it: keen observation to study human nature, and developed intuition. Then one begins to have a sort of key to this language. But if you ask him, he cannot express it. From different compositions of composers one can imagine their character, their life and state of mind. As in the science of sound there is a tone and an overtone, so in the music of a certain composer there is a sense which stands together with the music. The one who hears the notes only enjoys the music. The one who understands the sense knows the mind of the composer. So the verse is the soul of the poet. The poetry is not only poetry, for it has its music behind. The one who reads the verse only enjoys the poetry. But the one who comprehends the sense in it enjoys the music of this poetry. One who asks a question of himself on hearing a certain word, on seeing a certain movement, on observing a certain expression in a face, must receive an answer from his intuition, telling him the cause of this effect which manifests outwardly. In this way the Sufi makes his way for his journey in the inner world.

Lesson 15: The Influence of Experience

Beneath the five senses there is one principal sense that works through the others. It is through this sense that one feels deeply, and distinguishes between the impressions which come from outside. Every impression and experience gained by this sense is recorded on the mind. This record is made up of deep lines, and the nature of these lines deeply set in the mind is to want the same thing that has already been recorded, according to the depth of the line. And it is according to the depth of the line that one needs the thing that one has once experienced. For instance, the liking for salt, sour, or pepper are acquired tastes, and the sign of this acquisition is the deep line that is on the mind. Each line so produced wishes to live upon its impression, and the lack of that experience is like death to that line. Unpleasant flavors such as fish, or vinegar, or cheese, become pleasant after the line is formed. Tastes even more unpalatable than these may become excessively agreeable once the line is well engraved on the mind.

The same rule is applicable to notes of music. A certain combination of notes, or a certain arrangement, when once impressed upon the mind, may become very agreeable to it. The more one hears the music which has once been impressed on our mind, the more one wants to hear it. And one never becomes tired of it, unless another, deeper line is formed. Then the first line may be neglected and become a dead line. It is for that reason that the music that belongs to a certain people, whether evolved or unevolved, is their ideal music. Therefore, it is not the music written without; it is the music written within the mind that has influence. This is the reason why composers resemble each other in their music, for the lines that are impressed upon their minds have been created by what they have heard; and as the first lines are inherited from other composers, there is a resemblance in their music. In this way the music of every people forms its own character.

The same law works in poetry. One enjoys poetry from one's previous impressions. If the poetry that one reads is not in harmony with the first impressions, one will not enjoy it so much. The more one reads a certain poetry the more one enjoys it, because of the deep impression on the mind.

From this we learn that not only what is desirable but also what is undesirable may become a favorite thing. Even things that one would never like to have, such as pain, illness, worry or death, if they are deeply impressed on one's mind, one unconsciously longs to experience them again.

It is very interesting to find that if a man has formed an opinion about a certain thing or person and after a time there has been everything to disprove that opinion, he will still hold on to his impression and will not like to change his opinions. This is because of the deep lines impressed on his mind.

How true is what the mystic says, that the true ego of man is his mind! And it is still more amusing to find that after spending his life under the influence of the deep impressions on his mind, man still boasts of what he calls free will.

Lesson 16: Intuition

The modern psychologist adopts a system of psychoanalysis in order to investigate the state of mind of his patient, and the barrister in the law court cross-examines in order to investigate the truth of the case. All these methods are more or less useful when they are rightly practiced. But the chief

thing for getting to the mind of a person is to see the person — in his form, in his expression, in his movements, in his words, in his imagination and in the way of his action. The principal thing which helps in seeing the mind of another person is the light of intuition. Nothing else — neither the rules, nor studies, nor standard of understanding — can help, without the development of intuition. But one thing must be remembered: that man shows the line engraved upon his mind in his form, his expression, in his movements, in his words, in his imagination and action. And it is possible to detect a man from his word before his action, or from his movement before his action, or from his expression before his words, or from his form before even he had time to imagine. Therefore, the knowledge of this can save a great deal of trouble in life, if man only knows beforehand how to act with different people.

The person who acts in the same manner with every person, however good or kind he may be, must always meet with disappointments. As the direction of the fire is upwards and that of the water is downwards, so the direction of one person is different from that of the other. Therefore, if you expect a person who is going to the south to take your message to the north, you will find yourself mistaken in the end. Generally a person dealing with others thinks of the affair more than of the person. Really the person must be the chief object of study, not the affair, for the affair depends upon the person. In the East there is a superstition of a dog or cat or horse being lucky or unlucky for the person who possesses it, but the reality of this idea can be most seen in every human being with whom one comes in contact through one's everyday life. He must surely bring something with him, pleasure, and displeasure, and happiness, good or bad influence. Every man in himself is a world. Every new contact is a New World opened before us.

Lesson 17: Evidence of the Thought

When a person is thinking, you can see his thought in his eyes, in his expression, in his movements. Things such as: opening or closing the eyes, looking up or looking down, looking out the corners of the eyes, turning the head to the right or left, raising it or bowing it, scratching the fingers, rubbing the hands, turning the thumbs, a half-smile, puckering the face or the forehead, sitting stiffly or at ease, sitting upright or leaning back, or leaning to one side or to the other — all show to the seer the line of thought. Especially when a person is asked a question, before he answers the seer knows what will be his answer from his attitude.

The Hindus believe that the creation is Brahma's dream, which means the Creator's dream — in plain words, what the Creator has thought, He has made. So, in proportion to his might, man makes what he thinks. What materializes, we call happening, but what has not been materialized we don't know, and what we don't know still exists in the thought-world. In the Qur'an it is said, "The organs of your body will give evidence of your action on the Last Day." Really speaking, not of the action only but evidence even of the thought is given by every atom of the body immediately. The nature of the manifestation is such that there is nothing hidden except that which one cannot see, and what one cannot see is not hidden in itself, but from one's eyes.

The aim of the Sufi, therefore, is to see and yet not be interested. Suppose you were climbing Mount Everest and were interested in a certain place, which you liked, to admire it, or in the part which you disliked, to break it. In both cases you have allowed your feet to be chained to that place for more or less time, and by that, have lost time and opportunity. Whereas you could have gone on forever and perhaps seen and learned more than by stopping there. Those who trouble about others' thoughts

and interest themselves in others' actions most often lose their time and blunt their inner sight. Those who go farther, their moral is to overlook all they see on their way, as their mind is fixed on the goal. It is not a sin to know anybody's thought, but it is a fault no doubt if one professes to do so. To try to know the thought of another for one's own interest is neither just nor beneficial. At the same time, to sit with closed eyes is not good either. The best thing is to see and rise above, never to halt on the way, and it is this attitude that, if constantly practiced, will lead one safely to his soul's desired goal.

Lesson 18: The Activity of the Mind

The activity of mind can be recognized in three different aspects: mobile, rhythmic, and chaotic. And the activity of mind can be seen by the speech and action of a person. If, in speech and action a person shows a friendly attitude, love and kindness, the activity is mobile, and every impulse prompted by this activity will manifest in the form of gentleness, generosity, gratitude and goodwill. If the activity of mind is rhythmic it will make a person more reasoning. He will be exacting, weighing, measuring, loving and hating. Liking and dislike will be balanced. This is not an easygoing person. This person will be more businesslike. All that manifests from him in speech or action will be more substantial, reasonable, also progressive in a worldly sense. But the person the activity of whose mind is chaotic will be agitated, confused, suspicious, horrified, and all that will manifest in his speech and action will be anger, passion, intolerance, imprudence, and will be difficult for himself and for others.

No soul is by nature fixed to any of these three aspects of activity. It is what he allows himself to be or what the condition of his life makes him to be. Therefore, the principle of Sufi teaching is to regulate the rhythm of one's mind. Then the Sufi becomes his instrument. He can play on it any music of any rhythm and nothing will affect it, for he is no longer in the hand of his mind; his mind is in his hand.

Lesson 19: Likes and Dislikes

What one dislikes in line, form, color, smell, taste, or sound, or in sense or idea, is not disliked because it deserves to be so, but because it is foreign to one's nature. Once a person becomes accustomed to anything he develops love for it in himself. Therefore, often some people have a liking for certain things which many others dislike, or a dislike of certain things which many others like. Often when traveling in the train a person feels more comfortable if no one else comes into his compartment, but once someone has come and sat there, if they have spoken together and become acquainted, then they wish to travel together. All things have their beauty, and so has every person his goodness, and one's dislike of a person very often comes from lack of knowing that person or from lack of familiarity with him. What makes one dislike things and despise men is a certain barrier, which very often the one who dislikes does not know and also the one who is disliked does not know.

The work of the Sufi is therefore, to investigate the truth about all the things or persons whom he likes or dislikes. By a keen observation of life he gets to that barrier and understands what it is that

makes him disliked or makes him dislike others. All fear, doubt, suspicion, misunderstanding, bitterness and spite become cleared as soon as one touches that barrier which keeps souls apart. It is true that one need not force one's nature. It is not necessary to dislike what one likes or to take a liking to something that by nature one dislikes. Only one must know why one likes if one likes a certain thing, and the reason why one dislikes if one takes a dislike to a certain thing. After observation one will come to understand. "All I like in the world is what I have always liked, and all I dislike is what I have always disliked in life." It can be said in other words, "What I know to be loveable I have always loved and all that I don't know I cannot love at once." This shows that ignorance becomes a cover over all that is beautiful and ugly, and knowledge uncovers it. Liking comes from knowledge and dislike from ignorance, although both are necessary. Also it is possible that through ignorance one may like a certain thing and by knowledge one may rise above that liking. However, the higher knowledge must always give liking for all things. And things that do not deserve liking, above them a soul will rise by the help of knowledge.

Lesson 20: Viprit Karnai

In man's speech and in his action the seer sees designs: a straight line, a round, a crooked line, zigzag, oval, square, a triangle. For instance there is a person who speaks straight to the face of all he feels. There is another person who proceeds in a roundabout way. There is a person who has a crooked way of mentioning a thing. There is a person who will touch two opposite angles before he will arrive at a desired point. There is another person who will go about in a zigzag way, you can't know whether he is going to the south or to the north until he has arrived at a certain point. These figures represent the lines on the mind of man. Man does not feel comfortable in acting differently from the lines already engraved upon his mind. Therefore, a crooked person enjoys his crookedness as much as a straightforward person enjoys his straightforwardness.

A most interesting study of this subject can be made by studying the art of different ages and of different nations. Every nation has its typical lines and typical forms. Every period shows the peculiarity of expression of the art of that period. So one finds in the imagery of poets and in the theme of musicians. If you study one musician and his lifelong work you will find that his whole work is developed on a certain line as the basis of his work. Also by studying the biography of great people you will find how one thing has led to another, different but of similar kind. Therefore, it is natural that a thief in time becomes a greater thief. So the righteous after some time may become a saint.

It is not difficult to slide on the line already made on one's mind; the difficulty is to act contrary to the line which is engraved there, especially in the case when it happens to be an undesirable line. Shiva, the great Lord of Yogis, has given a special teaching on the subject, which he calls Viprit Karnai: "Acting contrary to one's nature". And he gives great importance to this method of working with oneself, that by this method in the end one arrives at mastery.

Lesson 21: Reason Is Earth-born

Mind is most capable of expressing itself in a fitting form. Very often man expresses his thought in any conversation that may be going on, which perhaps has nothing to do with his thought. And as his nature is, man looks for a scope for expression of his thought, and he easily gets it. In a serious conversation one can find scope for a joke. Even in tragedy one can find comedy, and in comedy one can find tragedy, if one's mind happens to dwell on sad thoughts. This shows that the mind always seeks for a scope for expression, and situations outside generously offer the scope.

The same thing one finds with the mind. In every situation, every condition, man easily finds out a reason for it from the mind. The one who does right and the one who does wrong both find the reason for their action. Two people disputing against each other both have reason at the back of their discussion. This shows that the mind provides reason, as the sun shines and the rain falls, for the sinner as well as for the virtuous. Not knowing this fact, man always reasons with another. But it is not a dispute between reason and no reason, it is a dispute between two reasons contrary to one another. This shows that reason has not sprung on the soil of heaven; reason is earth-born, upon which man so confidently fixes his argument.

Therefore, every conversation is not always on a pre-designed plan. Most often it is an outcome of instantaneously arising impulses. It is most interesting when one can get to the back of a conversation and find out what it is founded upon. And it is still more interesting to find what a very obedient servant reason is, which is ready to respond to the call of its master, although the truth is coined by itself. It is when the seer begins to look behind reason that he begins to get a glimpse of truth upon which he can depend. Insight makes life interesting. One who drifts along with the waves of insight will not enjoy life so much as one who has insight into life and yet stands firm on his own feet.

Lesson 22: The Word and the Idea

The word is a body of the idea and the idea is the soul of the word. As the body represents the soul so the word represents the idea. The idea can only be expressed in the word, so the soul can only be seen in the body. And those who deny the existence of the soul must also deny the existence of the idea. They must say that only the word exists, without an idea, which in reality is impossible. Behind every word there is an idea veiled in one or a thousand veils, or clearly represented by the word. However, the word is a key to the idea, not the idea itself. It is not the word, which is in itself an idea, but only an expression of it. The ears hear the word, the mind perceives the idea. If the idea were not there, the word would not convey anything to the listener. If one said to a child, "Sarcasm is an abuse of the intellect," what will the innocent child understand by it? The word "sarcasm" will be known by the one who is capable of being sarcastic. This opens up another idea, that those who accuse others with authority of some fault must necessarily know the fault themselves. Man, however evolved, will now and then show childishness in expressing his opinion about another, prove thereby guilty of the same fault in some proportion. No one can tell another, "You told a lie," who did not tell a lie himself once at least in his life.

No doubt the idea is vaster than the word, as the soul is wider than the body. Every idea has its breadth, length, height, and depth. Therefore, as a world is hidden in a planet, so a world of idea is hidden in a word. Think, therefore, how interesting life must become for the one who can see behind every word that is spoken to him its length, breadth, height and depth. He is an engineer of the human mind. He then does not know only what is spoken to him, but he knows what is meant by it.

By knowing words you do not know the language. What you know is the outside language; the inner language is known by knowing the language of ideas. So the language of ideas cannot be heard by the ears alone, the hearing of the heart must be open for it. The seer must understand from a word spoken to him what even the one who speaks does not know, for every human being thinks, speaks, and acts mechanically, subject to the condition of his body, mind and situation in life. Therefore, as a physician finds out more about a complaint than the patient himself, so the mystic must comprehend the idea behind every word that is spoken to him. One might think with the continual growth of such a perception the life of a Sufi must become very much troubled, for when the average person would be seeing a yard's distance a Sufi may be seeing the distance of a mile. Yes, there is no doubt it could be troublesome if the mystic did not develop all around. The elephant's strength is required to carry the load of an elephant. It is not enough to become a seer alone, but what is needed is to develop that strength which takes all things easily, the power that endures all things, and the might which enables one to surmount all difficulties in life.

Lesson 23: The Expression and the Idea

Actions such as a smile, or staring, or frowning, or nodding, or moving the eyes or the head, have ideas behind them. Externally it is a light movement; behind it there is a mountain of thought. No movement is possible without a thought at the back of it. Sometimes it is known to the person and sometimes the person himself does not know why he smiled. The eyes express more than anything else does, by their movements, the ideas behind them. Very often intuitive people say, "I perceived from that person's look pleasure," or "displeasure," or "his favorable — or unfavorable — attitude." And yet many do not know what movement, what expression, suggested to them what they perceived. Every expression of the eyes — the eyes, which change their expression so many times in one minute — suggests the idea behind. This shows that the mind is an engineer and the body is a mechanism which it works. If the engineer becomes conscious of his working the engineer also becomes a mechanism.

There used to be courtiers in the ancient times in India who at every moment would know the state of mind and the attitude of the king, even to such an extent that very often everything was arranged as the king liked without him having uttered one word about it. There were nine courtiers attached to the court of Akbar. Every one of them knew the state of mind of the Emperor at every moment. The Sufi, whose duty in the world is to live in the presence of God and who recognizes His presence in all His creatures, His personality especially in man, he fulfills his duty of a courtier with every man. A person who lives as dead as a stone among his surroundings does not know whom he has pleased, whom he has displeased, who expects of him thought, consideration, who asks of him sympathy or service, who needs him in his trouble or difficulty. People think insight comes by psychic development. Yes, it does come, but it comes most by the development of the heart quality. A loving person is a living person. No doubt the more living one is, the more difficult it is to live, and yet no difficulty is too great a price for living a real life.

The method which a mystic takes to perceive the mentality of another is that he takes the movement of the person and his expression as a guide to arrive at his thought, and he takes his thought as a guide to his nature. By realizing the nature of man, he comes to know about the very depth of his being, and instead of having a part of the knowledge about a person he gets to know that one is wise or foolish is not sufficient. To have a complete knowledge of a person one must know if he does right

why he does right, and if he does wrong, why he does wrong. If he is wise, what makes him wise, if he is foolish what is the reason of his being foolish. Not only this, but also if there were a possibility of making the best of what the person is and trying to improve the person without him knowing it. A foolish person cannot get along with his own friend whereas a wise person can get on even with his enemy. The difference is that one knows life, understands human nature and acts according to it, whereas the other, even if he wanted to act rightly, always fails and becomes disappointed in the end.

Lesson 24: The Power of Words

There are two kinds of men, one who speaks subject to his impulse, the other who speaks just like hitting a target. This first one may strike a wrong note, and may work against his own interest, but the other one will become the master of his own destiny. The one who knows while speaking to whom he is speaking, the capacity of mind of his hearer, the lines on the mind of his hearer, he will speak the words which will pierce through the mind of the listener. It is just like looking for a track before running the cart in a given direction.

Many, content with their honesty, speak just as they like at the moment. They do not mind what effect it will produce as long as they are sure that what they say is true. The truth that strikes like a hammer on the head of the listener is not desirable; one would be better off without it. This shows that it is not only a thing to consider that what one says is true, there is another consideration which is most necessary, and that is what effect it will make on the other. The seer sees the lines made on the mind of his listener he first takes the road which is already made there, and when once he has entered the mind of his listener then he will make another road, not before. It is just like the person is going to buy something in a shop and saying before entering, "I have not got more than four pence," instead of going into the shop and finding out what he can buy with four pennies. Action is one thing, and prudence is another thing. Even the animals are active, even they work for what they need in life. What one expects in man is prudence. Man must have forethought, before he utters one word about its effect upon another. Some say spiritually wise is not worldly wise; some think that these two worlds are different. But it is not so. The worldly wise is capable of being spiritually wise, but spiritually wise is already worldly wise. He may not care for worldly things, therefore, he may be lacking in experience in worldly affairs. Yet for him, worldly wisdom is not a foreign thing, he has only to open his eyes and see. Those who know nothing of the world and those who are called spiritual are known more for their goodness than for their balance. The complete spiritual life is not a dreamy one, but wide-awake, full of thought and consideration.

The word has magic in it. It can turn friends into your enemies, and it can make your enemies your friends. The mystery of all success in every direction of life is in the word. The word has power to turn the mind of the listener warm or cold. The word can produce the effect of earth, water, fire, air, or ether. The word can produce depression or joy. The one who knows the chemistry of the word does not need drugs or herbs. He has medicine for every disease in the world — not only for bodily disease, but also for the disorders of the mind, which still remain unexplored by science. By a constant study of life, by special thought given to one's word, by careful watching of the effects of one's speech upon others, one arrives at a state of realization where one can heal hearts.

Lesson 25: The Re-echo of the Past

One can easily trace the past of man from what he says and from how he expresses it. The past is ringing in the heart of man like a bell. The heart of man is a talking-machine record, which goes on by itself or, if it has stopped, one has only to wind the machine, then it goes on again. Man's present is the re-echo of his past. If he has been through suffering, even if he is better, he will vibrate the same. Outer conditions will not change his inner being. If he has been happy, even in troublous time his heart will vibrate the past. People who have been against one another, if by chance they become friends, will still feel in themselves the beating of the pulse of hostility of the past. Great kings who have been dethroned, imprisoned — still one can feel their past vibrating in their atmosphere. The past lives, and one cannot easily destroy it, however greatly one may wish to close it. It gets hold of the human tongue to express itself. As every heart is eager to tell its story, so the past is most eager to sing its legend. It only seeks the way how it shall express itself. A Sufi, therefore, does not need spirit communication to learn the past, or astrological science to discover what has happened. To him every person explains his past without even one word spoken. But by the speech of a person about the past, the Sufi can tell what is hidden behind, what is being said and what remains unsaid. He need not trace the past in history or in traditions. He who can read has but to open his eyes and all is written before him.

Lesson 26: Interest in All Things

As there is a shadow of every form and as there is a re-echo of every sound and as there is a reflection of every light, so there is a re-impression of everything one sees, hears or perceives. But as it wants the musician's ears to sense the overtone of a sound and an artist's eyes to recognize the form from its shadow, and as it requires a keen sight to distinguish the degree of the reflection of light, so it wants the soul of a seer to see through all things in life. The seer's eye is in the heart of every soul, but it is the attitude that keeps every man looking down to the earth instead of raising his eyes upwards. The average tendency is to see on the surface.

It is not true that the average person cannot see any further. But the average man does not think that there is anything further, so he does not give himself the trouble to see any further. There are many who are intelligent enough to perceive all that is behind things, but the first thing that makes their view limited is the narrow range of their interest. They are not enough interested to take trouble about things they neither know nor believe. They would be glad to have intuition if it came without them taking any trouble. There are many who can think, but they do not wish to take the trouble of thinking.

There are two things necessary in order to perceive: one thing is openness, the other thing is effort made in that direction. When contemplating upon anything the mind must be free from all else that stands in the way; that is called openness. Also some must arrive, by the help of concentration, at focusing one's mind on a certain object. The next thing is to be interested enough in all things that one comes in contact with and one cares to know about, that one may penetrate below the surface and find out what is hidden in all things.

Lesson 27: Vairagya

The presence of man speaks of his past, present, and future. When a visitor comes to your house he brings to you either his joy or his sorrow. He brings you the effect of his good or bad deeds. He brings you the influence of his high or low mind. He tunes the vibration of the sphere of your home to his pitch. He charges the sphere with his own vibrations. If you can only perceive — he need not tell you one word about himself — you can know if he is experiencing heaven or hell. For one need not wait for heaven or hell in the hereafter. It is here also, only after death it will be more felt.

Therefore the contact of a heavenly person can bring to you the air of heaven and the contact of the other can bring you the air of the other place.

This shows that every individual is a tone, a rhythm, and a tone which draws the tone of every other person to its own pitch, a rhythm which compels every other person to follow the same rhythm.

That is where one feels the pull in life. That is what scares the sage from the life of the world and makes him feel inclined to run away from this world and take refuge in a forest or in a desert. Why the average person does not feel it is because, just like children absorbed in play, the people in the world are pulling each other's rope. Therefore they do not feel much. For they are pulled, but they also pull the rope of another. But the one who is tuned to a different pitch altogether from the average person and whose rhythm in life is quite different from the other's naturally must feel the pull too much. And the only way how the sages manage to protect themselves from this is by the practice of Vairagya (the word Vairagya means independence and indifference, both in one), which cannot be learned or taught; it comes by itself. It is not lack of love, or bitterness; it is only rising above love and hate both.

Lesson 28: A Silent Music

Every soul radiates an influence which charges the atmosphere all around. The more powerful the influence the wider it spreads, forcing its way even through the walls. There is no barrier of water or space which can keep that influence from spreading. The stronger the influence the longer it lasts. It is not difficult for a sensitive person to perceive, on coming into a room or a house, what influence it has, or to perceive, on sitting on a chair, who was sitting there before him. The character of this influence is just like light or heat, which silently spreads its warmth according to its power of radiance. It is not that man's influence is felt in his presence only, but even after he has left the place it remains. The influence of some persons can remain for hours, of some for days, of some for weeks or months or even years. Atmosphere is a silent music. It has its effect upon the listener, exciting or peaceful, whatever it may be. The atmosphere remains not only in the place but also in objects, such as a chair, or a sofa, or a cushion, or a carpet or a mat. An influence can remain with the clothes that one has worn in one's life. It is something real, not tangible but perceptible. Music comes through the ears to the heart, but atmosphere comes direct. A walking stick can have the atmosphere of the person who held it. A rosary, a necklace, brooch, or a ring can have atmosphere. A pen or an inkstand can have an atmosphere of the person who has used it. Everybody perceives it, consciously or unconsciously, but the more sensitive a person, the more he can realize it.

It is not easy for everybody to break anybody's influence, although it is possible to rise above it. A person who is fine of nature and sensitive, pure and good, for him the influence from all around in this world can become so troublesome that he would always find himself in the midst of the battle

going on constantly around him. Therefore, it will not do for a person to become fine and sensitive, and yet not learn how to combat all influences around him. The more one studies this question the more one comes to realize that life is not only a battle outwardly but also inwardly. And there are two things that can be done for self-defense: either to become a most well-equipped fighter, to fight out all influences attacking one with the power of one's own influence; or to rise above all influences, which means to live and not live, to be and not be, to come down to act and to rise up to keep in security.

Lesson 29: Three Ways to Develop Insight

There are three important things to be considered in the development of insight. The steady gaze of the eyes and of the mind, which helps one in penetration. Another thing is losing everything else from one's sight except the object through which one wishes to penetrate. And that comes by sufficient interest in penetration. But the third thing, which helps most is losing for the moment the thought of one's self. When one's body and mind are not before one, it is then that one has the proper insight into things one wishes to know and understand. Sufis therefore have different concentrations by which they are helped not only in keeping their gaze steady, but standing firm upon one thought. When a person cannot take interest in any object or being, then his mind is not steady, for there is nothing that it takes interest in. It is the interest which makes the mind steady. A certain thought which is inspiring or helpful in some way, or a certain form which is inspiring when once one has concentrated upon it — then the mind becomes steady also, then it can easily hold an object before it without wavering.

The character of the mind is as the character of the eyes, the eyes which take in all that comes under their horizon. So the mind jumps from one thing to another, upon all thoughts which may be standing within its horizon. And as it is not always easy to keep the gaze steady so it is with the mind. To keep the mind firm upon one thought, form or image is not easy. But the third thing is the most difficult, and that is to lose oneself in the thought of the object that is before one. In this way the self, which stands in the way between the soul and its object of penetration, is lost from view for the time being. Thus the person is able to penetrate through all things, knowing thereby the nature, character and secret of all things.

There is no other cause of all depression and despair than the inability of seeing through life. There may be many reasons apparently seeming to be the different causes of unhappiness, but this one is the greatest reason, the reason of all reasons. Even animals in whose nature the tendency of fighting is pronounced become friends when they come to know one another by association. Many troubles in the life of individuals and of the multitude might be avoided if keen insight were developed, for all confusion is caused by misunderstanding. Not only human beings, but all things of this world which seem of use or of no use, which seem to be easy or difficult to obtain, all are for the use of man. Therefore, penetration into things is the secret of the success of science, art, philosophy and religion, all.

Questions and Answers

Question: Suppose a person had for years some interest very near to his heart which had developed his power of concentration, and that interest ceased. Is that person more capable of strong concentration on a new interest, because of his previous experience?

Answer: Yes, certainly. All our experiences are nothing but preparation for something else. Nothing that belongs to this world, however precious, must hinder one's path of progress. For every step in the direction to that spiritual gain must be the aim of every soul. And the concentration upon the object is just a step.

Q: A feeling of deadness seems to come. . . ?

A: Here is the question of concentration, and not of its effect. The question of effect is quite a different subject again. Then the question comes: of what object? Something to steady the mind. It may be a tree, a flower, the sun or a star. Of course, according to the object a reaction is produced. And according to the reaction an object is produced. Every belief and every experience for a wise person is a step of a staircase. He has taken this step, there is another step for him to take. The steps of the staircase are not made for one to stand there. They are just made for one to pass, to go further. Because life is progress. Where there is no progress there is no life. One should go on. Death and disappointment — two things are one. And if there is a hereafter, then the death was a passing stage, and so is disappointment. Two things are one. And if there is a hereafter, then the death was a passing stage, and so is the disappointment. It only has made one more steady, more wise, more. . .

Q: Does the staircase never end?

A: The end is not very desirable. The interest is in the staircase, in going on.

Q: . . .when a soul has reached perfection?

A: After perfection there is no interest. If there is no self, there is no interest, there is perfection.

Lesson 30: Tranquility

The most important thing in life is the opening of that clear vision which is opened by the help of insight. The effect of every emotion covers the insight, just as clouds cover the sun. It is therefore that most clever and qualified people often do things, especially at the moment of passion or anger, which they would not have done otherwise. The reason is that the mind loses its rhythm under the strain of passion or emotion, and so it upsets the rhythm of the body. It makes one perplexed and unable to see any condition or situation clearly.

It is therefore that the seers, the sages, try to keep their tranquility at every cost, for life in the world brings up many things every day and hour to disturb that tranquility which is the secret of insight. Every little noise or disturbance in oneself and outside can upset a person who keeps the rhythm of his whole being in the proper order. It is therefore that the sages have chosen solitude and a life away from the world. But the best way of keeping one's tranquility is to keep one's rhythm under the control of one's own will. By doing this one preserves one's tranquillity in the midst of life's greatest turmoil. In the terms of Vedanta life is likened to the sea, where there is a continual rising and falling of the waves. Everyone by nature seeks peace and in peace alone is their satisfaction. But often one seeks it wrongly; therefore instead of producing peace one creates more struggle in life. The secret of peace is in the will power. Instead of resisting the forces which jar and disturb one's life, if one would only stand firm against them, then one can attain to that tranquillity which is most necessary to have a greater insight into life.

Man is made of atoms gathered together around the intelligence, physical atoms and mental atoms which make his body and mind. The power which has gathered them and which controls them and which uses them for their best purpose is the will power. When this power is absent the body and mind both go to pieces, broken by every jarring effect coming from whatever direction. This is the reason hidden under most of the illnesses and weaknesses. Every mistake, failure and disappointment in life has this reason behind it: the lack of control, the lack of steadiness and strength against the disturbing influences, which come from within and without.

The great lesson which one learns, which helps one most in keeping that tranquillity in life which helps insight, is to be able to become like the ebb and flow. When the first is needed then to become the ebb, when the next thing is needed then to make oneself in that way. When it is necessary to express then to express, when it is necessary to respond, then to respond, at will. In this manner one will always manage to preserve tranquillity in life.

The Inner Life Hazrat Inayat Khan