

PURITY

Lesson 1

It is a very necessary thing in the life of an adept for him to adapt his mind and body to the spiritual life. In other words, it is necessary for a man to become his natural self before he begins his journey on a spiritual path. It is this naturalness that is called by the orthodox purity. For pure water, or pure milk, means water or milk in its own essence; when another element is mixed with it, then the purity is lost.

To become spiritual means to purify one's spirit from the foreign elements which take away the natural feeling of the spirit. Concentration, meditation, all these help to make the spirit its natural self again, but the vehicles that the spirit uses in order to experience life must help the spirit to become natural. These vehicles are the mind and the body. However great the musician, if the instrument is out of tune he can do nothing with it. To say that only the spirit matters, the body does not count, is not right. Therefore it is necessary that both mind and body be made fit vehicles first for the spirit to use.

The difference between a pious person and a spiritual person is this, that the pious person makes his mind and body ready for his own spirit to use, and the spiritual person, after making them ready, gives them to God. Piety is the first step and spirituality the next. There is no exaggeration in the saying that cleanliness is next to godliness. The body must be considered as the temple of God, and this sacred house of God must be made pure in every way; then the light of God is reflected in it. Beasts and birds all have a tendency to be clean and pure, and for man it is necessary that he should develop this tendency. It helps, not only on the spiritual path, but also in the development of the mind. To the artist in his art, to the scientist in his science, in all aspects of life it gives happiness. When man neglects it, that does not mean that he does not like it, it is only out of negligence that he overlooks things that are of the first importance.

One's body is of all things in the world the closest to oneself, and its influence has a great effect, and an immediate effect, upon one's mind and soul. A great many illnesses are caused by lack of consideration of the necessary cleanliness of the body, which is a science and an art in itself. On the soul and mind one's own body makes the first impression; all other things come afterwards.

Yes, there are souls that have arrived at such a plane of spirituality that the condition of the body does not matter to them. But they are not to be followed as examples. It is the normal path which is safe and is for all. The question, "Would this not give one too much the thought of self?" may be answered thus: The thought of oneself exists when the light of God is absent, in the presence of every beautiful object man forgets himself.

Lesson 2

The body is an instrument for experiencing life; both the worlds, that within and that without, are reflected in this instrument. Therefore purity of the body is the first essential thing, and the most essential, in the path of spiritual attainment. Every civilization has a peculiar method of cleanliness, but the mystic is not satisfied with the customary manner.

Mystics have two views: one view is that external cleanliness matters nothing to them, and the other that it is most important. As the work of an astronomer depends upon a telescope, and as it is necessary for him to keep the telescope as clean as possible, so it is necessary in the life of the mystic to keep the body in a fit condition.

All the passages in the body are connected with the centers, which are most important in spiritual development, and it is upon the cleanliness and purity of these passages that spiritual development depends. Besides these nine passages it is necessary to keep the skin in a proper condition for spiritual purposes. It is from the mystical conception that humanity first learned the idea of clothes. There have been times when certain races painted their skin, and by certain yogis the body was covered with ashes; in ancient times the body was covered with the bark of trees.

But behind all this there was always an inclination to keep the skin in a proper condition. It is upon the cleanliness of the body that sensitiveness depends; therefore people who have no regard to the cleanliness of the body are less sensitive than those who have regard to it.

Besides the cleanliness of the outer part of the body it is equally important, perhaps more important, to consider the cleanliness of the inner part of the body. Mystics, therefore take precaution about whatever they eat and drink, and have methods of cleansing the inner part of the body also. No mystic in the East guides a pupil who has not first prepared his body for the spiritual purpose. Cleanliness of the body, besides its importance for spiritual and moral development, also prevents serious disease

Lesson 3

It is necessary that the breath should flow freely through the lungs, tubes, and veins of the body, and things that one eats and drinks often block the channels through which the breath passes, invigorating and revivifying every particle of the body. All skin diseases are caused by want of breath in the skin. The mystic feels not only the vibrations of music but even the vibrations of the breath of another. Music, so to speak, touches every particle of his being.

Breathing exercises will not give proper results if the channels of the breath are not cleared. The spine, the lungs, the tubes and veins of the body, the intestines should be kept clear. When the channels of the breath are blocked man feels heavy, depressed, lazy, drowsy, and confused, the expression becomes dull and the voice harsh; then the movements become void of grace and beauty when sitting, or standing, or walking, or moving; in every action one expresses a weakness, a lack of spirit. Feebleness is different from lack of spirit. A person may be strong bodily but may lack spirit, and the teaching of Christ is that "it is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing."

Lesson 4

The vehicle which is made of earth can be cleansed with water and by air. Therefore, besides external ablutions, inner ablutions are necessary to make the body a proper vehicle for the working of the spirit. In many different religions different ways of ablutions are taught. They are not only for the cleanliness of the body, but are also helpful in making the body a fitting instrument for the spirit to experience life.

The external organs of the body are used for external activities, but the inner ones are the instruments of the mind. The factors which are closer to the mind and which are more important for man than the physical organs are the centers which are located in the body, and the cleaner the channels of the breath are, the more active do the centers become. The breath is to these centers as the air is to the plants. Besides inner ablutions, the breathing practice itself cleanses the channels of the body.

Lesson 5

Besides making ablutions it is necessary that the channels of the breath be kept clean, and for this, consideration is necessary about what one eats and drinks. Food that is raw and indigestible, and stale food, stale and decayed vegetables, rotten fruits, and meat that has been preserved for a long time, and all such things not only block the channels of the breath, but their influence on the breath makes it impure. Naturally when a person cannot digest food or when his lungs are not open and free the breath is not pure. The Sufi takes care in his life about what he should eat and what he should drink. Alcoholic drinks and drinks made from decayed fruits, naturally make the breath impure; even smoking tobacco has a bad effect on the breath. Those who observe the mystical rules carefully refrain from all flesh food, even from eggs. White meat is preferable to red meat, for red meat has particles which block the channels of the breath. This was the reason why the eating of pork was prohibited by the prophets of Beni Israel. No doubt the pure all things are pure, but in order to become pure it is necessary to observe the rules of purity.

One must not judge another person's spiritual evolution by seeing what he eats and drinks, because this has nothing to do with a man's evolution, for Shiva, the great Lord of the Yogis, had fish for his food, and wine was given in the church of Christ as a sacrament. Therefore no one has the power to estimate his fellow men from what they eat and drink. But everyone who wishes to tread the spiritual path may observe the mystical law, which certainly enables one to progress speedily. It must be remembered that it is the spiritual ideal which is the first thing to be held fast; what to eat and drink is a secondary thing. Any dispute about this proves to be unnecessary.

Lesson 6

The question of vegetarian diet is often discussed among seekers after philosophical truth. Some people give no importance to what they eat or drink, and there are some who give more importance to it than necessary.

There are two things which speak against flesh-eating: one thing is that meat, as a substance, hinders spiritual progress, and the other is that the unkindness toward the animals is a breach of moral law. Speaking about the first question, it is no doubt true that meat causes two kinds of harm to an adept. One is that it produces in man to a certain extent the animal nature; also it has an influence on the character of man. The nature of the animal he eats certainly has an influence upon a man's character. It was therefore that the prophets of Beni Israel forbade their followers to eat the flesh of certain kinds of animals and birds.

Mystically speaking, it clogs the channels of the breath and the important psychical centers which work in man as the instruments of wireless telegraphy. Morally, there is no doubt that it has a hardening effect upon the heart of man, which is meant to sympathize, not only with his fellow man, but with every living creature. There is no doubt that if all the people in the world became vegetarians, there would be no more wars. A person who refrained from killing the lower creatures would surely not be inclined to kill his fellow man.

Of course, there is another side to the question: life exists in all aspects of the creation, even in plants; and if one does not see the harm done to the plant, it is because they cannot express. And, looking from this point of view, one can observe that life lives on life.

At the same time, the creation is a process by which the lower form of life evolves to a higher form, and the life used in this process of evolution is not really lost; on the contrary it is raised to a higher consciousness. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the animal which is used as the food of man has been transformed from the animal kingdom to the human, which is really a natural process of evolution, the human kingdom being the goal of the lower evolution. However, this point of view does not help man, morally or physically, in his individual evolution; he has not gained by eating flesh, on the contrary he has allowed himself to evolve more slowly than he could have otherwise evolved.

The impression on the consciousness of man of having done harm to another creature which can feel pain as he himself can, is not a good one; it blunts the fine, tender and sympathetic feeling towards all living beings. At the same time not every person who eats meat is capable of considering the subject philosophically, and therefore of giving an answer to his conscience or to another one, as an explanation of having caused harm to a living creature for his enjoyment.

For many thousands of years the human race has lived on flesh food, especially in the cold countries, and the bodies made with that essence for thousands of years are so dependent upon flesh food that they cannot abstain from it without causing some harm to their health. Man feeds on things of which he is made, and it is not, in every case, easy for a man to give up flesh food, even if he realizes its disadvantages.

There are countries where there are deserts — no trees to be found for miles — and the inhabitants could not live if they did not live on flesh food. For the evolution of humanity in general uniformity is necessary. If some ate flesh and others lived on vegetables, it would be as if carnivorous and herbivorous animals were living in the same forest. Certainly people living different lives cannot live together harmoniously, and the strong must in every case have the upper hand.

Tenderness of heart will not answer the same purpose as strength and power. Therefore it is a question how vegetarian diet can be introduced in the world.

There is another side to this question: if the animals were left alone they would multiply and the herbivorous would become a prey to the carnivorous animals. The tigers and lions and bears and wolves would increase, and would be in search of man; so the human kingdom would diminish and the animals increase.

For those who strive in the spiritual path it is most essential to be thoughtful and considerate, and to be kind to the whole creation, and if they can manage to live a vegetarian life, it is no doubt very helpful to them. It is not right, however, for a vegetarian to look at the flesh-eater with contempt and regard his own harmless attitude with pride. There are many vegetarians who will prove selfish and unkind to their fellow man, whereas there are many non-vegetarians who will prove to be otherwise. Verily, charity of heart must begin at home, and then expand so that it may reach the very lowest of the creation.

Lesson 7

The body is made of five elements, according to the mystical view – earth, water, fire, air and ether. Yet these terms must not be compared with the scientific terms: these are mystical conceptions and they should be understood in a mystical sense. These five elements form the sustenance of the body; at the same time these elements purify the body.

For instance, no ablution with water only is sufficient, earth is required also. In the East the Brahmins used pure earth, some used ashes; in the East graham flour is still used in place of soap. The scientist can never deny the fact that there is no better disinfectant than earth itself. The use of water for every kind of ablution has been taught by all religions in some form or other. That shows that it is not only of use for cleanliness, but it helps in spiritual development. The scientist today admits that there is no better tonic than pure water; this has always been held to be so by the mystic, who called the rivers sacred rivers and gave water in healing.

As the use of earth and water cleanses and purifies the body externally, so it has a purifying influence on the internal part of the body. By eating wholesome food and drinking pure water not only does one receive nourishment, but this cleanses and purifies every particle of the body. It is therefore that an adept must avoid eating and drinking anything unwholesome. This does not mean an absolute restriction to certain food and drink, but just that care in eating and drinking is necessary.

Once a person has advanced in spirituality nothing matters to him, neither what he eats and drinks; for he lives in the spirit the most part of his life. For him the body is a coat and he does not care if it is full of holes or if it is patched. But for a person who has yet to develop spiritually and who follows a process, consideration is necessary; it is most necessary that the body should be kept pure, outwardly and inwardly, that it may become a suitable vehicle for the manifestation of the spirit.

Lesson 8

Man's health and inspiration both depend upon purity of breath, and to preserve this purity the nostrils and all the tubes of the breath must be kept clear. They can be kept clear by proper breathing and by proper ablutions. If one cleanses the nostrils twice or oftener during twenty-four hours it is not too much, for a Moslem is taught to make this ablution five times, before each prayer.

The cleansing, not only of the nostrils, but also of the ears is necessary, for part of the breath works through the ears, and if the ears are not protected and cleansed sometimes one hears a sound, which often is that of the breath which does not find its way through the regions of the ear.

The throat and palate are also important factors for the flow of the breath. The palate and throat are kept clean by the adept by gargling. The adepts drink water at fixed hours for the purpose of cleansing the veins and tubes in the chest, so that the breath may find pure channels for its passage. An adept drinks water before going to bed and after rising from sleep.

It is necessary that these laws of ablutions should be practiced by the student of thought first, in order that others may follow. Hygienic consideration is the first principle which is necessary for the health and happiness of the generality.

Lesson 9

Sobriety is most necessary in the path of spiritual evolution, especially in the first stage, when the body must be made pure for spiritual revelation. Everything intoxicating deadens the nerves more or less, and the centers, which are the factors for spiritual realization, become dead. Although at times they may seem more active, too abnormal an activity is always exhausting. The centers which show sensitiveness during the time of intoxication, after its influence become weary and lifeless. Fakirs or yogis who take intoxicants in order to excite the centers become dependent for their spiritual experience on material objects; in the end they find their seeming advancement fatal.

Even hard smoking may block, not only the channels of the breath, but even the centers, and thereby intuition is confused. No doubt smoking gives a momentary comfort, because it brings a kind of repose to the smoker, but it is only a passing comfort. Smoking not only has an effect upon the throat or lungs but by it the two most important centers, the heart and the brain, upon which the whole spiritual progress depends, will become blocked.

The principal thing in spiritual attainment is to be self-sufficient, and the first step to self-sufficiency is to make one's body independent of all such things upon which its comfort and enjoyment depend. The sages of all times and the mystics of every cult have observed the value of continence and fasting, for the very reason that the body, upon which the experience of the whole life depends, must first be made fit by purity.

Lesson 10

The object with which fasting is practiced by those who live in retirement is to let the breath pass through every vein and tube of the body, which can be made possible only when there is no foreign substance, such as food or even drink, in the body to block the channels. When the breath has touched every particle of the body, the body naturally becomes more sensitive and the pores of the skin open, making the centers transparent, so as to feel, outwardly and inwardly, all that is to be felt. This can be understood by seeing the difference between the intelligence and the intuitive faculty of a fine person and of a dense person.

Continence helps also, not only to keep the channels clear, but it conserves all the energy in every particle of the body and especially in the centers where it is most needed. Another thing is that continence keeps every outer element away. By this the adept is better able to keep his body and centers free from every foreign element, becoming at the same time a reservoir of energy, which expresses itself as radiating magnetism.

Professed celibacy is an assumption of chastity which must sooner or later break by nature, together with man's profession of the same. The true continence, therefore, can be practiced without profession and without any outward appearance or the attributing of it to any religious rank, only for a certain time and for a certain purpose

Lesson 11

Purity of body is more desirable than bodily strength. Purity of body consists in three things: pure blood, sound muscles and skin in proper condition. One might ask, "How can one be strong without a pure body?" But I should say, "One can be." There are many strong and vigorous looking people with something wrong in their flesh, blood or skin. Health, from the spiritual point of view, does not necessarily mean a strong body; health means a body sound in all its aspects. The standard of normal health is different for a mystic from what a scientist today thinks it to be. To the scientist the emotional side of man is not of interest; if the body is perfect according to his idea, he thinks man is healthy. But from a mystical point of view, if a man is strong bodily but his emotional nature is buried beneath, he is not healthy; there is something wrong with him. Therefore, a physician will find many not in proper health, but a mystic will find still more not in proper health. The person who is healthy to the physician's point of view is not necessarily healthy before the view of a mystic. The illness that humanity has today is lack of that emotional nature which is productive of sentiment. In the East, though times have changed, still there is a recognition of that healthiness which is recognized by the mystic. They name these qualities of health beautiful names, such as consideration, thoughtfulness, mildness, gentleness, sympathy, harmoniousness, selflessness. When these things are lacking in a person, the mystic considers that lack of health. Even an animal can be materially strong. If man is simply strong, he is no better than an animal. It is purity which is necessary, in the body first, in the mind afterwards, which produces in a person a state of health which alone can be called good health.

Lesson 12

The nature of the memory is to hold an impression, agreeable or disagreeable, and therefore a person holds a thought in the mind, whether it is beneficial to him or not, without knowing the result which will come from it. This is like a child who holds a rattle in his hand and hits his head with the rattle and cries with the pain, and yet does not throw the rattle away. There are many who keep in their mind a thought of illness or a thought of unkindness done to them by someone and suffer from it, yet not knowing that it makes them suffer, nor understanding the reason of their suffering. They go on suffering and yet hold on in memory the very source of their suffering. Memory must be one's obedient servant; when it is a master then life becomes difficult. A person who cannot throw away from his memory what he does not desire to keep in mind, is like a person who has a safe but the key to that safe he has lost. He can put in money but he cannot take it out. All faculties in man become invaluable when a person is able to use them at will, but when the faculties use the person, then he is no longer the master of himself.

Concentration is taught by the mystics in order to exercise the will, making it capable of using all the faculties. A person with will power can remember what he wishes to remember and can forget what he wishes to forget. All things which deprive one of one's freedom in life are undesirable. The mind must be free from all bad impressions of life, which take away one's rest and peace. By concentration one is able to hold a certain thought one desires and to keep away all other thoughts, and when one is able to keep away all the thoughts one does not want to think about, it becomes easier to throw away the impressions of years, if one wishes to forget them. Bad impressions, however old and intimate, are like rubbish accumulated, which should be removed in order to make the house clean. The human heart is the home of the soul, and upon this home the comfort and peace of the soul depend.

Lesson 13

Purity of mind requires the destroying of all bad impressions collected there or received at present. One can destroy these impressions by five methods, and the method is chosen according to the impression one has to destroy. Some impressions need to be washed off from the mind; some require to be erased from the surface of the mind; some have to be shaken off like dust from the clothes; some need to be burnt like the wood in the fire, which after its test by fire turns into ashes; and some impressions must be drowned, so that they will never come up again. Bury certain impressions like a corpse, find every way of annihilation that is suited to each impression, so that your mind may be clear. The mind is not only a means of thinking or reasoning, but the king of one's being; and upon the condition of the mind one's health, happiness, and peace in life depend.

Now the question is what to destroy and what to keep in the mind. Collect and keep all that is beautiful, and destroy all that is void of beauty. Collect and keep all that is agreeable, and destroy all that has a disagreeable effect upon you. Collect and keep all that is harmonious, and destroy all that creates disharmony in yourself. Collect and keep all that is restful, and destroy all that disturbs the peace of your life.

As dust gets into the works of a clock and stops the clock, so the effect produced by all impressions that are void of beauty and harmony and which disturb your peace keeps you from progress. The mind cannot act properly when it is hindered by impressions which have a paralyzing effect upon it. Life is progress, and stopping from progress is death. Failure does not matter in life. To a progressive person even a thousand failures do not matter. He has before his view success, and success is his, even after a thousand failures. The greatest pity in life is the standstill when life does not move farther. A sensible person prefers death to such a life as that. It is a paralysis of the soul, of the spirit, which is always caused by holding bad impressions in mind. No soul is deprived of happiness in reality; the soul's very being is happiness. Man brings unhappiness upon himself by holding in his hands the clouds of bad impressions, which fall as a shadow upon his soul.

Once a person is able to clear from his mind, by whatever process, the undesirable impressions, a new power begins to spring from his heart, opening a way before him, attracting to him all he requires, clearing from his path all obstacles, and making his atmosphere clear for him to live and move and to accomplish all he wishes to accomplish.

Lesson 14

It is upon the purity of the mind that the health, both of body and of mind, chiefly depends. The process of purifying the mind does not differ very much from the process of cleaning or washing any object. Water poured upon any object washes it, and if there is a spot which cannot be washed away by the water, some substance which can take away that spot is applied, to wash it thoroughly. The water which washes the heart is the continual running of the love-stream. When that stream is stopped, when its way is blocked by some object which closes the heart, and when the love-stream is no longer running, then the mind cannot keep pure.

As water is the cleansing and purifying substance in the physical world, so love is on the higher plane. Sometimes when it is difficult for love to take away some impressions that are disagreeable, which block the way of the love-stream, they may be washed away by some element that can destroy them. The whole life is a chemical process, and knowledge of its chemistry helps man to make life happy. An unhappy person, being unhappy himself, cannot make others happy. It is a wealthy person who can help the one who is hard-up, not a poor person, however much desire he may have to help. It is the same with happiness, which is a great wealth; and a happy person can take away the unhappiness of another, for he has enough for himself and more besides for the others. Earthly pleasures are the shadows of happiness, because of their transitoriness. True happiness is in love, which is the stream that springs from one's soul, and he who will allow this stream to run continually in all conditions of life, in all situations, however difficult, will have a happiness which truly belongs to him, whose source is not without, but within. If there is a constant outpouring of love, one becomes a divine fountain, for from the depth of the fountain a stream rises, and on its return it pours upon the fountain, bathing it continually. It is a divine bath, the true bath in the Ganges, the sacred river. When once one has the key of this fountain one is always purified, every moment of one's life; nothing can stay in the mind causing unhappiness. Happiness alone is natural, and it is attained by knowing and by living naturally.

Lesson 15

The principal thing necessary for attaining happiness is to purify one's mind from all things that disturb it and create disharmony. There are not only bad impressions which disturb the tranquility of the mind, but many feelings of resentment and resistance against things which do not agree with one's own idea that disturb one's mind. For the person who has some business to carry on or some profession requires a tranquil mind, but the one who journeys on the spiritual path most needs tranquility of mind. Prayers, concentrations, meditations have no effect if the mind is not purified from all disturbances. Therefore for an adept no cost and no sacrifice is too great for keeping harmony within himself.

A Sufi tries to keep harmony in his surroundings, the harmony which demands many sacrifices. It makes one endure what one is not willing to endure, it makes one overlook what one is not inclined to overlook, it makes one tolerate what one is not accustomed to tolerate, and it makes one forgive what one would never have forgotten if it had not been for the sake of harmony. But at whatever cost harmony is attained it is a good bargain, for harmony is the secret of happiness, and in the absence of this a person living in palaces and rolling in gold can be most unhappy.

Harmony is brought about by attuning oneself to all beings, to all things, to all conditions, to all situations; and he who cannot tune himself tries to tune others, and in setting about tuning others he breaks the string. It is as if a person with a violin in his hands tried to tune the cello. If he wishes to be in tune with the cellist he must tune his violin to the cellist's pitch. Every soul, as is its nature, constantly seeks harmony, but rarely is there to be found a soul who really knows how to create it. If someone says, "This noise which goes on always close to my ears drives me mad," he cannot stop the noise. He must know how to close himself to that noise...to accustom himself to that noise so as to be able to bear it and eventually rise above it, that it may no longer create disharmony.

It is very difficult to evolve oneself and at the same time to keep in tune with the unevolved one through life. It is like being drawn from above and at the same time being pulled from below. And if

there is anything that can save man from being torn to pieces in life there is only one way, and that is to respond, to respond to all that is asked of man. It is this principle that is taught by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount may seem to teach willing surrender to all, but that is not the way to look at it. The real lesson that one can learn from it is to try and harmonize with all instead of one note. Every note is fixed in its place, so is every man fixed in his ideas and ways. But the one who treads the spiritual path, he is all notes and he is no note in particular. Therefore he may rightly be called the keynote, the note which makes a consonant chord with every note that is played with it. There is no beauty where there is no harmony. Harmony is the fruit of love; therefore by attaining harmony in life one reaches the perfection of all three: love, harmony, and beauty.

Lesson 16

Anything that weighs upon the mind, such as a worry, a fear or a feeling of remorse, keeps the mind below the pitch at which it is meant to be. When the mind is weighed down by anything, however learned a man may be, however capable and efficient, he can work very little. Learning does not help the mind which is not in its right place. So it is seen to be with many learned people, most capable and efficient; and yet incapable of accomplishing anything important in life. This is mostly found in life, and rare is the case where it is not so.

All the affairs of life are accomplished by the power of mind. External conditions are nothing but mechanisms which with the mind works as an engineer, producing from life all that is desired.

Therefore, whatever be the condition in life, the principal thing is to shake off all things that weigh upon the mind, thus making the mind free to fulfill its task through life.

Often people find themselves helpless before a difficult situation, but very few stop to think that it is not only the situation that is difficult, but there is some difficulty in one's own mind. One hardly gives a thought to this question, for every man's eyes are fixed upon the difficulty of the situation alone. It is like seeing a wall standing before one and yet not realizing if one has a hammer in one's hand. If one realized the power that the mind has, not only the wall but even mountains, if they were standing before one, could be removed. Many seek for a power from without, ignorant of the fact that all power is hidden within. When, by freeing his own mind from all that weighs it down, man realizes the power he inherits from the source of all beings, he will realize in himself an enormous power. The mastermind is the master of life.

Lesson 17

Every mind has its particular standard of good and bad and of right and wrong. This standard is made of what one has experienced through life, by what one has seen or heard; it also depends upon one's belief in a certain religion, one's birth in a certain nation and origin from a certain race. But what can really be called good or bad, or right or wrong is what comforts the mind and what causes it discomfort. It is not true, although it appears to be, that it is discomfort that causes wrongdoing. In reality it is wrongdoing which causes discomfort and it is right doing which gives comfort. And for the very reason that a certain thing gives comfort it is right, and what causes discomfort is wrong.

Very few in the world look at it in this way. If one who does well all his life is unhappy, I would rather he did not do well. His well-doing is neither well for him nor for another. The standard of right or wrong and good or bad made rigidly on the action is the artificial standard which seems outwardly a moral law, but causes degeneration in the end. The standard of action must be made natural, not artificial. The curse of the present day is the artificiality of life today. Man must be taught to consult his own spirit and from his own feeling to find out and make a distinction between right and wrong and good and bad. When this natural principle is adopted by humanity the greater part of the world misery will come to an end. This wrong and artificial standard is taught today to children at home and to young people at school. They begin to learn that that is wrong which they have heard others call wrong, that is right which they have read in a book that it is right; something is good because their parents have said it is good, something is bad because their friends have told them it is. An artificial standard made in this way buries the spirit, which alone has the right to discern between right and wrong and good and bad. On that day when people will arrive at the freedom of making their own standard by their own feelings a better condition will come. For those searching after truth, journeying through the spiritual path, this is the first thing to learn, to find out for themselves under all conditions in life what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong, not from what they are taught or told, but from their own feelings, which can be perceived by a delicate sense of realizing through life what really gives comfort and what causes discomfort. Life is not made to be good and unhappy, life is made to be happy and therefore one has to be good. No happiness is to be sacrificed to goodness, but that goodness must be considered the real goodness which in its result is happiness.

Lesson 18

The action of every illness or weakness is more manifest in its impression on the mind. There are many people who after an illness that has lasted some time become so much impressed by it that even after their cure the impression remains. Therefore to those who suffer for many years from an illness, their illness becomes natural, becomes a part of themselves, and the obstacle to their cure is not the illness, but the impression engraved on their mind.

So it is with weakness or a defect of any sort. Very often a person confesses, "This is my defect, but I cannot help it." If there is any weakness or defect, it is merely in the impression. When a person says, "There are moments when I lose my temper," or when a person says, "I would like to tolerate, but I cannot stand that person," his weakness in this is nowhere but in the impression he has in his mind. Therefore, the best cure for every illness and weakness is denial of the same. Affirmation deepens the impression, and contemplation of it makes it worse. There is no harm in denying one's illness or weakness, for that is not telling a lie, as it does not exist in reality, it is merely a shadow. Truthful confession of something which is unreal is worse than a lie. One must first deny that to oneself, and then to others.

The Sufi, whose ideal through life is the realization of God and His perfection, after realizing his ideal cannot say, "I cannot tolerate, or endure or stand anybody," and he cannot say that he cannot think, act or feel as he thinks right. The idea of the Sufi is always to suggest to oneself that which one wishes to be, that which one would like to be. And when he finds he failed to think, speak or act as he wishes to, he must think the condition of the process is to fall several times before one gets one's balance, instead of thinking, "It is my weakness, I cannot do otherwise." Those who walk toward the

perfection of power and wisdom take every step forward with a new hope and new courage, and weakness to them is a story of the past; it does not exist any more, they don't recognize such a thing as existing. They can't accept themselves being what they don't wish to. They picture themselves as their ideal, what they would like to be. Some time or other in their lives, if not sooner, later, they certainly succeed in molding their life to their ideal.

Lesson 19

All that exists lives on its own element, springs from its own element, and returns to its own element. So earth to earth, water to water, fire to fire and air to air. Purification means to make a certain object itself, nothing added, nothing foreign attached to it which does not belong to it. These two rules make one understand the process by which the mind could be nourished and purified. The mind is nourished by thoughts and impressions that are harmonious and productive of beauty and which result in satisfaction, for harmony is the nature of the soul, beauty is its source and goal, and by harmony and beauty the mind is nourished as it is made of harmony and beauty. And the same elements are needed to purify the mind of all undesirable thoughts and impressions, harmony as water and beauty as soap, purifying the mind of all thoughts which are void of harmony and beauty. The first thing in purifying the mind is to be able to discern the foreign element there. As all that is foreign to the body does not agree with the body, making it ill, so all that is foreign to the mind disturbs the peace of the mind, and it is that which proves that it does not belong to the mind. Such things are worry, anxiety, fear, sorrow, or any sort of disturbance that takes away the tranquility of the mind, preventing it from experiencing that joy and peace for which it longs and in which alone is its satisfaction.

There are many who do not know the importance of keeping the mind in a pure and harmonious condition, and the few who know it find it difficult to bring about better conditions in practical life. In the first place it is difficult to accomplish outward duties, to answer the demands of life, and yet to keep the mind in perfect tranquility. It needs the knowledge of purifying the mind of all external influences. And the way one can manage it can be said in a few words: to throw away disharmony by the power of harmony and to wash away all that lacks beauty by preserving the great power of beauty within oneself.

Lesson 20

The best way of keeping the mind free from all undesirable impressions is not to partake them at the moment when they fall upon the mind. For instance, if someone is disagreeable, instantly his influence produces the same thing in another person with whom he is disagreeable. The best way to avoid it would be to stand on one's guard that one may not catch his infectious disagreeableness. All such things as pride, prejudice, jealousy, intolerance, coldness have a great influence upon a person. When speaking, working or walking with someone, one can easily partake one's companion's disagreeable impulses, because as a rule a person thinks there is justification for giving it back, a word for a word, a frown for a frown. A person feels satisfied in boasting, "He said two words to me, but I gave him back the same in four words." He feels very glad for the moment thinking, "I have given

back what I had received," but he does not know that if he had not given it back, the same that the other person had thrown upon him would have returned to that person a thousandfold.

The psychological point of view, therefore, differs from the ordinary point of view, for in the psychological point of view there is a science, it teaches one not to take in one's mind what is disagreeable, inharmonious. By understanding this one can maintain the purity of mind, and it requires fortifying oneself with willpower making the heart as a stone wall, for all that is thrown at it not to pierce through but to fall down.

The psychological effect of every impression is such that each impression has a tendency to be held by the mind, all we see during the day, consciously or unconsciously, an influence upon our life. All good or bad things or things with beauty or ugliness, they remain with us and flourish in our minds. If it was an impression of beauty, that would flourish; if it was an impression of ugliness, that would flourish. This is the principal reason why dreams have effect upon our lives. It is the impression that the dream has made upon us which works out its destiny in the waking state. Therefore, if by being on one's guard, instead of resisting evil one would only slide it over, it would run away by its own force.

However good a person, if he easily partakes impressions, he cannot be trustworthy. The one who has no willpower cannot even trust himself. There is no willpower in fighting with another, one shows willpower in fighting with self. The one who is strong enough to keep away from his mind all undesirable impressions will in time radiate harmony and will create the atmosphere of peace; thus making himself happy, he will bring happiness to others.

Lesson 21

The real purity is experienced not by means of the outer ablutions nor by keeping away evil thoughts, but by keeping the heart pure from feelings which disturb the rhythm of the mind and thus upset the whole spirit. Feelings have a greater power than thoughts. If evil thoughts are monsters, evil feelings are as demons. Such feelings as the desire of robbing someone of his rights or his belongings have a very disturbing effect upon the spirit. Before such a feeling is put into action, the effect is even more, while it is being put into action it is less, but afterwards the effect is most. Life rightly and honestly lived has inner struggles, but by adding to it feelings that disturb life's tranquility one only adds to one's troubles in life, which then become endless.

Purity of heart must not be considered a virtue but a necessity, a necessity not only to be considered for the good of others but for one's own life. The feelings which produce that weakness in the heart take away strength from the eyelids, the glance drops instead of the eyes firmly gazing straight. Nothing in the world, however valuable or rare, can make up for this loss. The main thing that must be remembered is that the soul is pure and the lack of purity it cannot bear without feeling restless. The spirit has a tune and a rhythm. When it is out of tune and out of rhythm, if the riches of the whole world be given to it, it is worth nothing. It is purity and peace which is the soul's constant seeking.

Lesson 22

As the rust is natural to the iron and as the milk turns sour, so it is with the heart, when it becomes rusted and its feeling, which by nature is as pure as milk, turns sour. Then nothing in the world is tasteful to that person and life with all its beauty becomes worthless. It is this condition which must be avoided. An adept must keep his mind pure from rust.

The rust comes from allowing the heart to bear malice and spite against anyone, by having hatred and prejudice against anyone, by wanting to take revenge, by looking down upon another with contempt, and by the feeling of jealousy, rivalry or envy. The heart wants a constant care to keep it from getting rusted, for the nature of this life of illusion is such that some little unimportant things, which are not of the least value, coming from the outer life, the heart may be affected by, and the rust may be produced as the mere touch of water can produce rust upon the iron. Once the feeling has become soured it is difficult, if not impossible, to turn it sweet again as to make the sour milk sweet.

A soul has brought from Heaven its love for sweet. It may after coming on earth develop a taste for salt, sour, or bitter, but its innate longing is always for the sweet, and what its life needs most is not sugar, which is required in some degree for physical health, but the sweet which is the original property of his heart and which is needed most for his true happiness and real well-being.

Lesson 23

As the cleansing of a metal object produces a shine in it, so is the cleansing of the heart especially from feeling that produces humiliation. When a person thinks, "I have been wrong by acting in a certain way," "by saying a certain thing," or "by having thought something which should not have crossed my mind," he loses, so to speak, a radiance which even beams out through his countenance and which is called in Persian *Abi ruh*, meaning "the radiance of the face." Every person shows from his expression his condition of heart. Therefore the innocence of the expression is the sign of the purity of heart. Man may be clever, learned, qualified, most able, he may be strong physically or even mentally, he may be wealthy, or high rank, but none of these outside things help him to retain that glow of the countenance which depends only upon the purity of heart.

Many know and some say that the eyes can tell everything that is in the heart of man, but fewer there are who know the cause behind it. The eyes are like the thermometer of the center in the head, which is focused to the center of the heart. Every impression that the heart bears, beautiful or ugly, is mirrored upon the center of the head, and so it is reflected accordingly in man's visage, especially in his eyes, which express the most.

There are many clever people but so few there are who may be called wise. The clever ones plot and plan one against the other and exchange evil thoughts between themselves. So those deceitful and treacherous, intoxicated by their interest in life, cover their eyes with the cover of selfishness, thus keeping the heart from showing out its light, which alone illuminates the path of every achievement in life.

It might seem hard work to empty one's heart of all bad impressions and ill feelings, of all bitterness and evil thoughts, and yet it is not nearly so hard as the task of earning one's daily bread. The work in one's everyday life takes most part of the day, the emptying the heart of undesirable things takes but a few moments silence. It is the desire of erasing from the heart every undesirable impression that enables one in time to purify one's heart.

Lesson 24

Innocence is the real purity according to the mystic, for innocence is the sign of purity of heart. The intuitive faculties play a greater part in the life of the innocent. People call them simple ones, nevertheless innocence proves often more beneficial in life than worldly cleverness. The innocent are oftener blessed by Providence than those worldly-wise, always trying to get the best of everyone and to seize every opportunity that may seem to be advantageous in any way.

It is not easy for a clever person to try and become innocent; it is something natural and manifests with the blooming of the heart. Innocence is the sign of the thriving of a spiritual personality. If one can develop anything it is only this, that one may abstain from trying to be clever, and know that a selfish and clever person, with all his qualifications of getting the best of another, comes across, sooner or later, a person cleverer than he. Often a clever person finds his own chain tied around his legs.

No one has arrived at a higher degree of spirituality without innocence. Innocence does not mean not knowing; it only means knowing and yet not knowing. A stupid person must not be confused with an innocent person, for the former is blind, whereas the latter only closes his eyes when he wants to. It is the wise, really, who become innocent on arriving at a stage of perfection in wisdom. It is two kinds of persons who show childlike simplicity in their lives, the silly one who shows childish traits, and the wise one who shows innocence.

Lesson 25

There is generally a tendency seen in those treading the spiritual path to feel discouraged at having bad impressions upon their heart of their own faults and shortcomings. And they begin to feel that they are too unworthy to have anything to do with things of a sacred nature. But it is a great error, in spite of all the virtue humility has in it. When one acknowledges something wrong in oneself one gives that wrong a soul out of one's own spirit, and by withdrawing from all that is good and beautiful, spiritual and sacred, instead of developing the spirit of rejecting all errors, in time one becomes a receptacle of what is wrong. He goes on disapproving and yet collecting errors, so producing within himself a perpetual conflict that never ends. When man becomes helpless before his infirmities he becomes a slave to his errors, he feels within himself an obedient servant to his adversary.

The greater the purity developed in the heart the greater becomes the power of man. As great the power of man within himself, so great becomes his power on others. A hair's breadth can divide power from weakness, which appear to have as wide a gulf between them as between land and sky.

Lesson 26

He alone is capable of removing from the heart of another doubt, deceit, fear or malice whose heart is already pure from these things or who, at least, can empty his heart of these things. There is a

weakness of the heart and there is a strength of the heart. The heart's weakness is caused by things it contains which enfeeble it, such as doubt, deceit, fear and malice. The absence of these things produces that purity of heart which in itself is a power. This power could be increased by faith, hope and righteousness.

Purity of the heart causes its expansion and the lack of purity makes it narrow. The mystic poet of Hyderabad, Asef, says, "If the heart is large, it can be largest of all things." Besides, it is purity alone which opens the doors of the heart. All that hinders that purity stands as a closed door of the heart. The pure-hearted may seem to be thinking, saying or doing simple things. And yet there is a beauty and charm in all they do, for there is nothing more attractive than light itself. All that is besides light depends upon the light to show out its beauty, light is beauty in itself. Purity of the heart is the only condition that allows the inner stream to rise. The pure-hearted see deeper, though they say little. There is no pretense about them. What they know they know; what they don't know they don't know. The pure ones make all pure, for to them all is pure. Their presence makes everyone pure. As the pure water is the best tonic so is the contact of the pure hearted person. In the spiritual path when one is able to accomplish this thing there is not much then that remains to be accomplished.

Lesson 27

Exaltation depends upon purity. The body cleansed gives an exaltation which is experienced by all living beings on the physical plane. The heart cleansed of all impurities gives a much greater exaltation, which is experienced in the inner plane and is reflected on the outer plane.

Most people little realize the meaning of exaltation. In point of fact, all things man seeks for and becomes occupied with are most often methods adopted to obtain an exaltation, through food, perfume, music, or through the beauty of color and line. No method, however, succeeds in giving the experience of a fuller exaltation in the absence of purity of heart. In plain words, it is the pure-hearted who enjoy the beauty of music, color or perfume more fully than those without purity of heart; although the pure-hearted seem to need these things which bring about exaltation less, sometimes, for the very reason that the very purity of the heart gives them that exaltation which others strive to achieve by different methods.

Amir, the mystic poet, says, "Their eyes refused the wine, her generous offer, saying, We do not need thee, we are intoxicated perpetually." The reason behind the refusal of the pious, at times, of music, art, gaiety, or merriment was that they already had the exaltation which others try to gain by these things. It does not at all mean that the pious are always against things of beauty and pleasure. It only means that they are rich by the feeling of exaltation which comes from within, without adopting for it any other methods. Nevertheless, the pious are the ones who are capable of enjoying beauty in all its aspects fully. As Hafiz says, "If the pious ones would hear the song I sing they would get up and dance unrestrainedly."

Lesson 28

To purify the mind from fear is of great importance, and this can be best done by analyzing what causes one fear. Fear is an outcome of long-collected problems unsolved. When once a person looks

his own problem in the face he gets an insight into the cause of fear, and as in the sun many germs are destroyed, so the germs of fear are destroyed by the light of intelligence. Fear comes from weakness to face the consequences of one's condition, attitude and deeds. Once a person has solved the problem how he will meet the consequences, the fear is done with. The best way of getting over the fear of swallowing a bitter pill is to swallow a bitter pill and to experience by it that it is not more bitter than it is.

Fear comes also by being too cautious for one's health, morals and reputation; also by being too considerate of the feelings of those one loves, and too regardful of those under whose influence one is; also by taking too much to heart what others say. Fear very often remains in the heart of man in the guise of virtues, and very often a timid one is taken for a righteous one. But the timorous well-doer is worse than a fearless sinner.

The best practice one can make is to speak with oneself, with one's own fear; to dispute with it, to root out the reasons on whose foundations it rests. What generally happens is that all things one fears, one fears even to think of them. But the solution of getting above fear lies in analyzing the cause of the fear and so making it nonexistent. Man by nature possesses a tremendous power hidden in his heart, the power which waits constantly to become manifest. This power is hidden by fear. The day when fear disappears this latent power manifests to view.

Lesson 29

Antipathy turns into malice, and malice culminates in bitterness. To possess it in one's heart is like possessing on one's heart a poison, a poison that clouds wit and produces obscurity. If one keeps one's heart free from malice one has accomplished a great deal, for it is in the clear heart that the light from above is reflected. Often without an intention on one's part malice enters, of which man is unconscious. Often the man who possesses malice is quite innocent, for his heart is reflecting the malice which is projected from another heart. It is therefore that care must be taken to keep one's heart free from the impressions and influences coming from others. The question, "How can one avoid this?" is answered thus, that the heart will focus itself to a person or to an influence which is akin to its own quality; that is the nature of the heart.

Therefore, even if the impression came from another, for the influence of another the man who reflects it is responsible. To make the heart reflect good qualities one must prepare it, one must train it; for it is the good quality of heart that will keep away undesirable impressions and thoughts, and will only reflect good impressions and desirable influences. As a practice of purifying one's heart repeat every morning and every evening: "My thoughtful self! Reproach no one, hold a grudge against no one, bear malice against no one; be wise, tolerant, considerate, polite and kind to all!"

Lesson 30

The real purification of mind is in purifying it from thoughts and impressions which live in it as a germ of disease. The best way of cleansing the mind from all this is to be able to empty the mind of any thought, feeling or impression. To be pure means to be natural. The spirit in man in its natural

condition is not a thought but mind, not love but heart. For as the thought is the outcome of mind, so is love the outcome of the heart.

To attain to the purity which is the seeking of the mystic one must be able to purify one's spirit from every thought and feeling, however deeply impressed or engraved in one's heart. The mystic goes as far as purifying oneself from one's identity, by removing it for a certain time and by putting something else in its place. From beginning to end the whole process of spiritual development depends upon this.

Inner Life Hazrat Inayat Khan