

SPIRIT

Lesson 1: The Secret Of Spirit, Part I

There are four different explanations of the word "Spirit". One meaning is essence. Spirit of camphor means the essence of camphor. The second meaning of spirit is what is understood by those who call the soul spirit when it has left the body on earth and has passed to the other side. The third meaning of spirit is that of the soul and mind working together. It is used in this sense when one says that a man seems to be in low spirits; this means that both his mind and soul are depressed, although one may not always define it in this way. And the fourth meaning of spirit is the soul of all souls, the source and goal of all things and all beings, from which all comes and to which all returns.

The first meaning of the word spirit is, as I have said, essence. The essence of flowers is honey, the essence of milk is butter, the essence of grapes is wine, and the essence of learning is wisdom.

Therefore wisdom is as sweet as honey, as nourishing as butter, and as exalting as wine.

To rise above things in life one must try to get to the essence. In other words, there is one way of listening to a musician and that is to consider the form, the technique; and the other way is to grasp the feeling, the sense that the music suggests. So it is with life: we can look at life in one way and see it in different forms and make a rigid concept of it, or we can see it so that we get the suggestion of its essence. For instance, a person may come to us and express a thousand false feelings. And then we go over it in our mind and realize it was all false because it could not reasonably be true; this is one way. The other way is to see immediately that it is false from first to last, without going into details. This is quite sufficient, and because we have immediately seen it we have saved our mind a great deal of trouble.

Sometimes a person says to another, "You say you are my friend; all right, I am going to find out what you are like, how you work." That is one way of looking at it. But the other way is to look only once at that person and, by that one glance, to know what he is worth; that is all. If one can do this it will make one brave, venturesome, and will bring one nearer to the essence. It will impart generosity and liberality; otherwise one remains narrow and small and confused, and in this way thousands and millions of souls are buffeted along on the sea of life, not knowing where they are going, because they are not sure of themselves. If a person says, "I don't know you, but perhaps I will know you some day," that person will never know anyone, for all his life he will be unsure.

As to the second meaning of the word spirit, this mechanism of the physical body, which works from morning until evening without winding like a machine, and which stands up to all the turmoil of life, encounters all difficulties, and endures everything that comes to it, one day falls flat. It is just like when the steam or electricity, or whatever it was that kept the machine going, suddenly gives out. A physician says that the man's heart failed, or his blood pressure was too high, or something like that as an explanation of death. It means that a person who was active and sensitive is no longer active nor sensitive. That which was most important in him has left, so much the physician can tell you; but what was there he does not know.

From the point of view of a mystic, however, what has left the body is the person. This body was not the person. This body was a mask which covered that person; and, when this mask is cast off that visible person becomes invisible. Not he himself but only the mask has been thrown away. He is what he already was. If death comes it is the removing of the mask.

A question arises: How does this take place, how does it happen? And the answer is that there is a magnetic action between the person and the mask. It is the strength of the physical body which holds the spirit, and it is the strength of the spirit which holds the body. The physical body holds on to the spirit because it only lives by the life of the spirit, and without the spirit it is dead. And as every being, however small, struggles for life, this physical body tries to hold on to the spirit; and it does so to the last, as someone who is on the point of losing his gold might hold it tightly in his hand until his hand is paralyzed, and he can no longer hold it and so lets it drop. It does not mean he does not want it; it only means he cannot hold it any longer. And so it is with the spirit; as long as the spirit is interested in the physical body it holds it, permeates it, and embraces it. But as soon as it feels that it does not want it any more, that it no longer has any use for the body, it drops it. Both these tendencies can be seen in people when they are studied by those who understand. There are people who have reached old age and who are no longer doing anything in the world, yet each atom of their body is consciously or unconsciously holding on to the spirit in order to live every moment they can possibly prolong their life. And as long as their strength allows them to hold on to the spirit they live; and they may live to a very great age. But one can also notice another tendency, and that is that there are some who are tired of life. They no longer attach any importance to this life on earth. The value of things has diminished in their eyes; they are disappointed by these transitory and changeable conditions. In their spirit they are feeling something quite different from the other type of person. Their tendency is to give up the physical bondage of the body, and they would be glad if the spirit were separated from it; and yet their body unconsciously clings to the spirit just the same and keeps them alive as long as it can hold on. Thus the unwilling spirit is held by the body. In conclusion, death means a separation from the body which is nothing but a garb covering the spirit. And what follows after the separation? The body which is left on the earth by the spirit is no longer living in the sense we understand life; yet it is living. It is as if there had been a fire in the stove, and even after the fire was extinguished the warmth remained there. There is only the smallest degree of spirit but there is life in it. Where there is no life, life cannot be created; life must come out of life. Life cannot come out of death. Living creatures such as worms and germs come out of a dead body, and how could life come out if there were no life there? There is life; not in the sense we generally understand it, but it is living just the same. There is nothing in this world of which we can say that it is without life, or dead. Everything, every object that seems without life, has some life somewhere. And even after it is destroyed it is still living. When germs and worms manifest out of the dead body we think that it means it is finished. On the contrary it goes on, life is continued in various forms. It has never ended. What has ended is this imprisonment which we recognize as such and such a person; but the existence is still going on, even the mortal existence, even the mask which in reality was nothing.

The living part was the spirit and it goes on living. When we say, "He has gone to the other world," the other world is only our conception, though it is a beautiful conception. If one says, for instance, that a great revolution is taking place in the scientific world, it does not mean that the scientific world is outside the earth. When we have experienced a great development in the mystical world, this does not mean that we live outside this planet. It is a conception; it is a beautiful way of putting it, and it is the best we can find. "In the other world" means in a world which is veiled from our eyes, our physical eyes; but it does not mean a world far away from us beyond our reach. Both the living and the dead inhabit the same space; we all live together. Only a veil separates us, the veil of this physical body. Separation means being unable to see one another; there is no other separation. One need not attain to the seventh heaven in order to reach those who have passed. When one really cares for them, that bond of love and sympathy in itself makes us close to, them. Two people may be

living in the same house, working together, seeing each other every day, every hour, and yet they may be as far apart as the North Pole from the South Pole. There are people thrown miles apart by destiny so that they cannot reach one another because of life's difficult circumstances, and yet they can be closer to each other than anyone else. If this is true, it proves that those united in spirit may be thrown far apart in the world and yet be so close together that nothing stands between them. Therefore if those who have departed from this earth have a connection with someone on earth, they are close to him just the same. Nearness means nearness of the spirit, not of the physical body. In India there used to be a custom called Sati, by which a wife who was devoted to her husband was cremated with him. Some people felt a great horror at the idea, but others thought differently. I would say in regard to this question that when two souls have become one, whether they are both on earth or whether one of them has gone to another plane, they are still united. If one of them remains living then that living person is as though dead here, for he only lives there where there is real unity. There is no separation. Nothing can separate two souls if they are really united.

Lesson 2: The Secret Of Spirit, Part II

The third meaning of the spirit is that it is the mind and the soul together. One might ask if the mind and the soul together, that is to say the spirit, is that part of one's being which lives. It is not a part, but all. Our overcoat is not a part of our being; it is something extraneous. It becomes temporarily a part, but it is not essentially a part. The real being is the spirit, the mind and the soul together.

One might think it uninteresting to live as spirit and not as body. It might seem uninteresting to one who has not experienced on this earth how to be able to live independently of the physical body. All mysticism has been based on this: how to be able to live independently of the physical body, how to live on earth as spirit, even for five minutes a day. This gives a conviction of being able to live and yet be independent of the physical body. It is an experience in life, an education in the highest knowledge. Once a person has realized how he can exist without the physical body it produces a faith that gives an ultimate conviction which nothing can damage.

It is not only a matter of existing, but of existing completely, fully. The soul is not dependent upon the eyes to see. It is not dependent upon the ears; it hears more than the ears can hear. Therefore he who knows spirit receives far greater inspiration from being able to exist independently of the physical body. It is very easy for a person with material knowledge to call those people fanatics who retire to the mountains or wander about thinking of spiritual things, who seem to live in a dream. They might appear to do so, but actually they only do not conform to what everyone else does. They left the life of business and profession and politics, all social life, for the sake of deeper experience. It is not necessary for everyone to follow their example, but one may benefit by what they have brought to us.

At this time West and East are coming closer together. What is needed now is that we should awaken and benefit by the fruits of the lives of people in both East and West. There is much that the West can give to the East. It has labored along certain lines, and the fruits of this work can be of use to the East, while there are fruits which Eastern people have gathered for years and years which will be of great use to the West, once people have realized this. And the particular lesson which can be learned from the experience of those in the East who have investigated life's secret, is the way of becoming conscious of one's spirit, of realizing spirit. No doubt those who wish to mystify others make

complexities out of simple things. But those who wish to serve the world in the path of truth reduce complex things to simple ones. It is in a simple form that we have to realize the truth.

The fourth meaning of spirit is the source and the goal of all things, something towards which all are bound, to which all will return. It is that spirit which in religion is called God. And the best way of explaining this meaning of spirit is that it is like the sun, the center of all life, the divine spark in us. But the sun is not as small as it appears to be. Then what is the sun? The sun is all. The part of the sun that we recognize as the sun is the center of it, but the sun is in reality as large as its light reaches. The real sun is light itself. But as there is a point which is the central focus of light, we call that point the sun.

The light has centralized itself there; but the sun has other aspects such as rays, which are not different from the sun but which are the sun itself. And what are we? Our souls are the rays of the sun. In our inner being we are both source and goal itself. It is only our ignorance of this which keeps us ignorant of our own being.

Every atom of the universe, having come from the sun, from the divine sun, makes every effort to return to it. The tendency of the waves is to reach upward, of the mountains to point upward, of the birds to fly upward. The tendency of animals is to stand on their hind legs. The tendency of man is to stand upright, ready to soar upward. An angel is pictured as a man with two wings ready to fly upward. Science has discovered the law of gravitation, but the mystic knows the other law, which is also a law of gravitation but in the opposite direction.

Thus not only is every soul attracted in that direction, but also every atom of this world, going through all the different processes known to biology in order to reach that state, to return to the spirit. Therefore it is not necessary to be frightened by going towards God, or by trying to attain the spirit by losing one's identity, one's individuality. A fear like this is the same as the experience of someone on the top of a mountain. A kind of terror overwhelms a person when he is looking at the immensity of the view; and in the same way a soul is frightened of spiritual attainment because of the immensity, of the largeness and depth it has. It frightens the soul which fears to lose itself, because it has this false conception of its smaller self. The mystic says, "Try to die before death"; and to die before death is to play death. That means to get above this fright, which only comes from the false conception of self.

The one who has died before death has no longer desire; he is above desire. This is shown by the picture of the God Vishnu sitting upon the lotus. The lotus represents desire: every petal is a desire. Sitting upon the lotus means that the desire is under him instead of being above his head, To some extent there is a relationship between life in the spiritual world and life on earth, for that which is collected here on earth indicates the task one has to perform here. The only condition is that the one who has stayed a shorter while here must work more for his spiritual accomplishment than the one who has stayed longer on earth. When someone has achieved spirituality here, it is not necessary for him to stay longer unless it is his desire. And the day the false conception of self is removed from his eyes he begins to see the immensity of God's majesty.

Lesson 3: Spirit Within and Without

The spirit of everything and of every being is to be found both within and without. Be it a metal, a stone, a fruit, or a flower, everything has its spirit within it, even if it be in a hidden form; and this spirit continues to exist even after the object has lost its apparent life. Sandalwood keeps its perfume

even when dry; the ashes of pearls still preserve that essence which is so powerful. In the stone, which is cold, a spark of fire is hidden. In fruit there is a seed which contains its essence; and in some fruit there is a space, a vacuum which is not devoid of spirit either.

Not many are able to find the spirit in the vacuum, yet in the vacuum a phenomenon can be observed; for instance, in the vacuum of an apple is to be found the essence of the whole fruit. It was not, therefore, only imagination when ancient peoples believed in the spirits of trees and plants, in the spirits of the mountains and hills; for there is nothing existing which has no spirit, although that side of the object is veiled and we cannot see it. We see only the outside, but there is a spirit behind it just the same, and by tracking it we shall find it one day.

The qualities of all things are to be found in their spirit rather than in the things themselves. Ancient physicians, knowing this, tried to extract the essence from certain things by grinding, by burning, or by washing them a great number of times. By doing this they were able to bring out the spirit of the object, and that spirit became a thousand times more powerful than the object itself. Those who are acquainted with alchemy know how to bring out the living part hidden within every substance, every object, and even to some extent their essence; and when this essence is extracted, then all the benefit that can be derived from the object is derived.

Alchemists at one time used a process by which they produced metal out of herbs, and another process by which they extracted the essence of flowers in such a way that one drop of it spread its perfume for miles around. That art seems to have been lost; yet what we can learn from it is that in everything that exists there is a spirit, and that spirit has all the qualities which the outside of that thing shows least.

Astronomers regard the planets they know as accommodations, as worlds, and scientists have considered space to contain certain recognized substances; but if there is one source of all life, then there cannot be an empty space. There must be life, and there is life. Space is not only full of substance, but also full of spirit. In other words, life is one and life represents many; and thus there is not only one life in space, but there are many lives. Since our senses are so limited that we can see no farther than a certain distance, and since we can hear no better than our ears permit, our senses cannot perceive all things and beings, which nevertheless exist. Those who have seen or otherwise perceived such things and beings have described them to us in the form of legends. They have called them fairies and spirits and djinns and by many other names, and artists have also helped people to form a certain idea of such beings. But this does not mean that it is all imagination and that nothing exists save that which we can perceive through our organs of sense. Everything shows itself by its own light. Our eyes are capable of seeing certain forms, and there are other forms which our eyes cannot see; but this does not mean that there are no forms except those which we can see with our eyes.

Ideas, such as that of the other world and of different planes, are taught by philosophers in order to give people some notion of the inner world; but in point of fact there is not one inch of space where no beings exist, beings with a form, even if it is a form that our limited sight cannot see. The reason is that the light with which an object, a form, shows itself is dim in these other forms. It is more clear to our inner perception and it is more dim to our outer sight.

What we see before our eyes is not so clear as the things we see in our thoughts. Only, the sphere of thought is different; it belongs to a different dimension. Our thoughts are clearer to us than what we see with our eyes, for we see our thoughts in detail, and every little detail is clear, whereas what we see with our eyes is mostly only the outline. This is also the reason why one can more easily idealize someone at a distance: the eyes of the heart are more capable of seeing clearly than the physical eyes.

Naturally when we are thinking and seeing at the same time, neither what we see nor what we think is clear to us.

What is it that makes man limited and debars him from the vision of objects and beings in the unseen world? In the first place the unseen world is a name invented for our convenience. The seen world is the unseen world, and the unseen world is the seen world; the next world is the same world as this, and this world is the same as the next; only, what is veiled from our eyes, we say is a next step, and we call it the unseen world. But insofar as man is capable of seeing the seen world, to that extent he is also capable of observing the unseen world, on condition that he first sees and observes his own unseen world. And why a person does not observe the unseen world is that he is accustomed to observe only what is before him; he never turns within to see what is within him.

Those whose sympathy is awakened, those who have fine feelings, those whose thoughts are deep, those whose imagination rises high, will never deny the fact that thought reaches beyond all boundaries of land and water, that feelings are reflected from thousands of miles away. Two souls can communicate, wherever they may be, in one instant. If this is true then the next world is not very far away; the unseen world has not been drowned, it is there, it is before us, and we live and move and make our life in it.

Then after death do we not depart from here? It is a poetic thought to think that there is a next world, it is a beautiful fancy, yet are we not a world within ourselves? Every next experience is a next world; besides every day is a new world. We need not wait for death to see the next world; every new experience brings a next world into our lives. In order to get an insight into the unseen world the first thing is to open our own sight to the unseen being that is within us. It only means opening the third eye, as it is called in occult terms. Why is it called the third eye? Because it is not two eyes, it is one, it is sight itself. It is in order to look outward that we need two eyes; to look inward we need one eye, and that is sight.

In the unseen world we human beings are as fine as the unseen beings, in the outer world we are as dense as the visible beings. When we are conscious of the physical part of our being, and when we identify ourselves with that part, naturally the other part of our being, which is unseen and similar to all unseen beings, is unknown to us. But that does not mean that we are not unseen beings; we are unseen beings just the same. The subtlety of human nature, the fine perception, the deep feeling, the high imagination, is it not all unseen, is it not our own being? Our being reaches further than birds can fly; our own being is finer than the moth and brighter than the flame. For anything to be visible to human eyes there is a condition: that its form must have a certain degree of radiance; and if it is not radiant enough or if its radiance is of a different character, then human eyes cannot see it. But this does not mean that what human eyes cannot see a human being cannot see; for the real eye is the being, and that is why man calls himself "I", saying, "I am." It is not necessary to develop insight into nature in order to experience the phenomena of a finer world, but one must see with one's eyes and perceive with one's insight in order to live a fuller life, a life of greater perfection.

Lesson 4: Blessed are the Poor in Spirit

The words "poor in spirit" are an unsatisfactory translation, and do not convey the real meaning of the text. There are certain words in the original which cannot be accurately translated. In Sufi terms this pooriness of spirit is called Halim Taba, and means mild-spirited. The more true meaning of the words is: "Blessed are the mild in ego," and this is the teaching of Jesus throughout. He himself is

spoken of in the Bible as "the Lamb of God," conveying the meaning of the mild in ego, like a lamb. The ego is seen in the animal creation, but much more strongly in the carnivorous than in the herbivorous animals. It is very strong in the lion, and in the dog which will not suffer the presence of another dog when it is eating a bone. Elephants, on the contrary, the largest of all animals, are docile and harmless, and obey the commands of men. They live together in herds, and seldom fight. The same is the case with horses and sheep.

When we consider the ego in connection with the whole consciousness, we first look at the earth and rocks, the lowest form of life, and find how stiff and hard, how unmovable and unbendable they are. When we come to the water element, we find that it is pliable, and can be poured from one vessel to another. The course of a river or a stream may be diverted and made to go in another direction. It is poorer in spirit than the earth, for it is a higher element. A more exalted state of consciousness belongs to the poorer in spirit, the pliable and serviceable, than to the stiff and set. When we come to the fire element, we find that it is still more pliable. It can be taken from the rock and from the atmosphere, and it is more serviceable and more pliant. Air is still more pliable and is everywhere, and man cannot live without it. Ether is the highest element, and is nearest to us, for it surrounds us and is within us.

We frequently say, "I dislike him," "I wish to avoid her;" but if we examine this carefully we find that it is the same element in all that we dislike: the ego. And when we turn to ourselves to see if we have it in us, we find it there too. We should forget it, therefore, in other people, and first turn our attention to crushing it within ourselves. We should determine to have our house clean even if other people neglect theirs. We should be careful to take away from ourselves any thorns that prick us in the personality of others. There is a verse in the Qur'ân which says, "Arise in the midst of the night, and commune with thy Lord ... Bear patiently what others say." This is not only a command to arise in the night and pray, but it also means that by rising in the night we crush the ego, for the ego demands its rest and comfort, and when denied, is crushed. The mystics fast for the same reason. The Sufis base the whole of their teaching on the crushing of the ego, which they term Nafs-kushi, for therein lies all magnetism and power. Jesus Christ meant this power of magnetism when He told His disciples that they would become the fishers of men. This can be acquired by developing the personality in poorness of spirit.

Lesson 5: Spirit and Matter

From the scientific standpoint, spirit and matter are quite different from each other, but according to the philosophical point of view they are one.

Spirit and matter are different, just as water is different from snow; yet again they are not different, for snow is nothing other than water. When spiritual vibrations become more dense they turn into matter, and when material vibrations become finer they develop into spirit.

For a Sufi, at the beginning of his training the spiritual life is desirable, but after mastering it, material and spiritual lives become the same to him, and he is master of both.

Lesson 6: The Experience of the Soul through the Spirit

The soul has two different sides and two different experiences. One side is the experience with the mind and body, the other side is the experience of the spirit. The former is called the outer experience, the latter the inner experience.. The nature of the soul is like glass, transparent; and when one side of the glass is covered it becomes a mirror. So the soul becomes a mirror in which the outer experiences are reflected when the other side is covered.

That is why, however greatly blessed a person may be with outer knowledge, he is not necessarily gifted with inner knowledge. In order to attain to inner knowledge the Sufi covers the other side of the soul, so that its mirror part may face the spirit instead of the outer world. As soon as he is able to accomplish this he receives inspirations and revelations.

There are people who are by nature intuitive; they are sometimes called psychic or clairvoyant. It is accounted for by the other side of their soul naturally facing the spirit within. One may call them extraordinary or exceptional, but not mystical; for the mystic does not desire that position. By concentration and meditation he gains such a mastery that he can cover the soul from without to take reflection within, and he can cover the soul from within when he requires the reflection from the outer world to its full extent. Balance is desirable, and mastery is the goal to be attained.

Lesson 7: The Experience of the Soul through the Spirit of Another

The soul experiences life through one's own spirit and also through the spirit of another, sometimes consciously, but mostly unconsciously.

It is not only in obsession that the soul experiences through the spirit of another; on the contrary it is the spirit of another that experiences through one's own spirit in obsession. Thought-reading, knowing the feeling of another, receiving sympathetic impressions upon oneself, all these things are the experiences of our soul through the spirit of another.

Then there are dreams of strange character, thoughts that do not belong to us, and different feelings that come for no reason. These are nothing but the experiences of our soul through the spirit of another. It is difficult to achieve such an experience consciously, though one often has it unconsciously. The man who can experience consciously through another person's spirit has solved one of life's great problems, for to do this he must have been able to efface his limited individuality from his soul. He is already on the journey to perfection, for in time his soul becomes the soul of all.

Lesson 8: Spirit and Matter, Part I

We often use the words spirit and matter in our everyday speech, but their meaning is not understood by everyone in the same way. There is the man who says, "Spirit is one thing and matter is another thing; matter is not spirit, neither is spirit matter." This is a religiously inclined person. There is another, a materialist, who says, "There is no such thing as spirit; all that is there is matter." And then a third person comes along who says, "Do not mention the word matter to me; there is no matter. It is only an illusion; only spirit exists."

One is free to believe what one wishes to believe, but when it comes to reasoning and looking deeply into life one sees it in quite a different way. Just as ice and water are two things and yet in their real nature they are one, so it is with spirit and matter. Water turns into ice for a certain time, and when

this ice is melted it will again turn into water. Thus matter is a passing state of the spirit; only, it does not melt immediately as ice melts into water, and therefore man doubts if matter, which takes a thousand forms, ever really turns into spirit. In reality, matter comes from spirit; matter in its true nature is spirit; matter is an action of spirit which has materialized and has become intelligible to our senses of perception, and has thus become a reality to our senses, hiding spirit under it. It has covered the existence of the spirit from the eyes of those who look at life from the outside.

We read in the Qur'ân that all comes from God and all returns to Him. In philosophical terms one can simply say that all comes from spirit and will return to it. No substance can exist without spirit. Although there is a war between spirit and substance, although they are opposed to each other, at the same time no substance can ever exist without spirit. Throughout this battle between substance and spirit the substance will resist spirit and outwardly drive it away, resisting surrender or diminution by the power of the spirit. But there will come a day when it will be diminished; in other words there is no mountain which will not one day crumble.

What is death to the spirit? As spirit is nothing to matter, so is matter nothing to the spirit; it does not miss it because it is self-sufficient. Spirit misses matter only in its limited, active condition. When the spirit is acting in a process towards manifestation, then it needs a capacity. Through that capacity it experiences life in a limited way, but in its true nature it is self-sufficient. It stands in no need of any experience. It is itself all experience, all knowledge; nothing is wanting in it.

One may call matter positive and spirit negative, or spirit positive and matter negative; there is a reason for it in each case. If one calls matter positive it is true, because matter shows itself as the picture while spirit is the background, and we are always inclined to call the picture part positive, not the background. But if we call the spirit positive that is true too, because matter has come from the spirit and spirit will consume it one day.

It is through vibration, through motion, that spirit turns into matter. Hindus call it Nada, and they always combine this word with Brahma; together this means God-vibration. They never call it vibration alone; they always call it divine vibration. By vibration spirit arrives at two experiences: the first is that it becomes audible to itself, and the next that it becomes visible to itself. In the Bible we read that first was the Word and the word was God, and then came light, visible life. This means that the first experience of the spirit is that life is audible and that the next experience is that life is visible. And now coming to the idea of spirit: What is it? How do we define it? The answer is: if we define spirit it cannot be spirit; the spirit that can be defined cannot be spirit. The best definition of spirit is "that which is not matter." The chemical world has applied the word spirit to the essence taken from anything; symbolically this expresses the same meaning, though in this way spirit is brought into matter. When one takes a bottle of essence and says, "There is spirit," it is true symbolically; but in reality spirit means something that our senses cannot perceive. It is spirit in the sense that it is essence, but in the sense that it is perceived it cannot be spirit.

Then spiritualistic people have given this name to the souls which have passed. Symbolically it is true that the body representing the material part of man has disappeared, and that the personality has gone towards the spirit; and yet as long as the personality is perceptible and has its own particular qualities, as long as it still retains its individuality, it cannot be spirit.

Lesson 9: Spirit And Matter, Part I, (continued)

If we really want to define spirit, the best definition is pure intelligence. Because, occupied as we are with this world of illusion, we retain in our mind impressions and knowledge of the material world, we are not always able to experience that part of our being which is pure intelligence. We generally use the word intelligence in quite a different sense; when we say that someone is intelligent we mean that he is clever. But pure intelligence has nothing to do with cleverness; nor can one call pure intelligence the knowing quality, for it is above this. We know intelligence as a faculty, but in reality it is spirit itself. No doubt science today may not accept this argument, as the idea of the modern scientist is rather that what we call intelligence is an outcome of matter, that matter has evolved during thousands of years through different aspects, and has culminated in man as a wonderful phenomenon in the form of intelligence. He traces the origin of intelligence to matter. But the mystic holds, as in the past all prophets, saints, and sages have known, that it is spirit which through a gradual action has become denser and has materialized itself into what we call matter or substance; and through this substance it gradually unfolds itself, for it cannot rest in it. It is caught in this denseness, gradually making its way out through a process taking thousands of years, until in man it develops itself as intelligence.

Many biologists have said that animals have no mind, but it is only a difference of words. Mind is merely a vehicle of intelligence. It is intelligence which has manifested as matter, and it is the same intelligence which gradually develops through different aspects into a clearer and purer intelligence. Therefore the lower creatures may not have that mind which a scientist perhaps sees in man; nevertheless we find a vehicle of intelligence in all, and, not only in animals and birds, but even in substance we can find intelligence.

It is not only due to chemical action that a flower fades in the hand of one person and keeps fresh in the hand of another; it is not automatic when a plant grows under the care of a certain person but wilts if tended by someone else. And a still deeper study will reveal that the color and the brilliance of precious stones change in every person's hand; pearls too change their light when they go from hand to hand. The more deeply we study matter, the more proofs shall we find of intelligence working through the whole process of continual unfoldment.

What is the reason that flowers fade when touched by some people? It is the same reason as with us. The presence of one person annoys us, we cannot tolerate it; the presence of another person brings us closer. It is the same with flowers. But the phenomenon behind it all is love. Whatever is touched by a person who lacks that element becomes dead; whether he touches a flower or whether he touches an affair or whether he touches a child, whatever he touches is destroyed. For love is in itself an essence, the essence; it is the sign of spirit. All that a person touches with love will be given light and life; and lack of love causes all death and decay. Glasses will break and saucers will crack when a loveless person touches them. One may not yet have had this experience, but one day one will see, that when an inharmonious person enters the house things begin to break, accidents happen, pet animals such as dogs and cats become restless.

But what is most interesting in the study of spirit and matter is the nature of vacuum and substance. Substance has a tendency to add substance to itself and to turn all that it attracts into the same substance, and vacuum has a tendency to make a greater vacuum. This shows that there is a continual struggle between substance and vacuum. Where vacuum can get hold of substance it will turn the substance into vacuum, and where substance is stronger it will turn out vacuum and make substance. The idea behind this is not what we might think. We think of vacuum as being nothing; we recognize vacuum by contrasting it with substance. If we want to explain what a vacuum is we call it absence of substance, but in reality substance has arisen from vacuum; vacuum is the womb of substance. Substance has been composed in vacuum and has developed in it; it has formed itself, it

has constructed itself, and it will again be dissolved in the vacuum, There can be no form without a vacuum, visible or invisible. Everywhere there is a vacuum, but we see only what our eyes can see, and we cannot recognize as a vacuum that which our eyes cannot see. Even the pores of the body are a vacuum, although we do not always see them.

The difference between the nature of vacuum and the nature of substance is that vacuum is knowing. Therefore the prophets have called it the Omniscient God, not in the sense of a person who is knowing but of the Whole Being, the All-knowing Being. Man is so limited, he is limited because his knowledge is limited, and so he thinks, "I alone know. The vacuum which is meaningless to me, which gives no sign of life to me, is nothing." But if he goes further in investigating the nature of vacuum he will find that he himself is nothing, his body, eyes, head, bones, and skin. If there is anything in him which makes him a knowing being, it is the vacuum.

In the mineral kingdom the stone is dense; it does not know much. The reason is that it has little vacuum. The tree feels more than the stone because it has more vacuum, as the Indian scientist Jagarji Chandra Bose has pointed out. He tried to prove to the scientific world that trees breathe. Animals and birds show greater signs of life and a more pronounced knowing quality because the vacuum in them is greater still; and in man it is even more so. What makes one part of substance knowing and keeps another part without this faculty is the vacuum in one object and the denseness in another.

There is a third thing we should understand concerning this subject which is of great importance: that which stands between vacuum and substance is capacity. When we look at the sky we feel that it is a vacuum; it seems to be nothing, but in reality it is not nothing, it is capacity. Vacuum is all-knowing, but it is capacity which enables vacuum to know. And as the sky is a capacity for the vacuum to be all-knowing, so every being and every thing is a capacity, greater or lesser, which supplies a body or a vehicle for pure intelligence to work through. There is nothing in this world, whether a stone, a tree, a mountain or a river, water or fire, earth, air, anything, which is not in itself a capacity; it cannot exist without being a capacity. Therefore all that exists, whether living or not living, is a capacity. We read in the scriptures that every atom moves by the command of God. In other words, behind everything that exists, be it large or small, in every motion it makes, even the slightest, there is the hand of the Spirit. It cannot act or move otherwise. Jelal-ud-din Rumi describes this in his Masnavi, where he says that fire, water, air, and earth all seem to man to be dead things, but before God they are living beings, ready to answer His call.

Capacity is all-accommodating. All that we can know is known through some capacity — higher things through a higher capacity and ordinary things through an ordinary capacity. Even when we hear a voice it is through a capacity. A house is a capacity which helps us to hear it more clearly; the ears are a capacity in which it becomes audible; the mouth is a capacity in which the word is formed; the mind is a capacity in which we perceive it. The nature of every capacity is different, but the whole phenomenon is that of capacity.

Among Sufis there is a spiritual culture, a culture which recognizes four centers, each center being a vacuum, or a capacity, for pure intelligence to function in. This shows that man has the greatest possibility of knowing all that is knowable, and he has an even greater capacity than that: to realize all that can be known. If he only knew how he could achieve it! But, one may say, why must substance, coming from vacuum learn to know, when vacuum is already the all-knowing state? The all-knowing state is not the same as a limited knowing state. To look at all is one thing, and to look at a flower with a little instrument is another thing. The conductor of an orchestra may hear the whole orchestra at the same time, and yet he may want to hear one instrument alone to know in how far it is correct.

It is not enough for us to see and to hear, to feel and to touch all these experiences going on at the same time; we like to experience through every sense singly in order to get a definite experience. That is the nature of the spirit.

Lesson 10: Spirit And Matter, Part II

Spirit and matter are the two names of one life. The primal aspect of life developing into denseness remains spirit, and its development into dense form is called matter. It is like water turning into snow: it is liquid, but it develops into a harder substance; it loses its fineness.

There is a conflict between spirit and matter. The matter absorbs the spirit in order to exist, and the spirit assimilates matter, for it is its own property. The whole of manifestation may thus be regarded as a continual conflict between spirit and matter; the spirit developing into matter on the one hand and assimilating matter on the other: the former being called activity and the latter silence, or construction and destruction, or life and death. When one realizes that the source of both spirit and matter is life, then one will see that there is no such thing as death; but this one can only recognize when one knows the distinction between the life which may be called the source and the life which is momentary, the life which matter shows by absorbing spirit.

Vacuum or space consumes substance; and when substance absorbs life from space, the space opens up within the substance. For instance, trees and plants absorb more from space than do rocks, and animals absorb still more from space than do trees and plants. Man absorbs the most spirit from space and therefore man represents both matter and spirit in himself.

What is absorbed from space has the effect upon that which absorbs it, of opening it up and of forming a vacuum. That is why the stone, which has very little vacuum in it, appears to be lifeless. Plant life shows some sign of life because it absorbs more from space. In the atoms of plant life there is an opening, for by absorbing all that it can absorb from space the plant opens within itself a space to accommodate also the spirit that it absorbs. We see a further development of the same phenomenon in animal life, which, through breathing, absorbs more of the spirit which is in space and therefore becomes more intelligent. This shows that although intelligence manifests through living beings, yet it is absorbed from space. We only know intelligence as something that belongs to man, to the mind or to the heart; but whence is intelligence attracted? It is attracted from space. We recognize intelligence in its manifestation, but we do not know it in its essence. In its essence it is all-pervading, and that is why philosophically minded people have called God omniscient.

All that is constructed is subject to destruction; all that is composed must be decomposed; all that is formed must be destroyed; that which has birth has death. But all this belongs to matter; the spirit which is absorbed by this formation of matter or by its mechanism lives, for spirit cannot die. What we call life is an absorption of spirit by matter. As long as the matter is strong and energetic enough to absorb life or spirit from space, it continues to live and move and be in good condition, but when it has lost its grip on the spirit, when it cannot absorb the spirit as it ought to, then it cannot live, for the substance of matter is spirit.

The Bible says, "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." But, one will say, does not the dense matter depend for its maintenance upon dense food? Yes, but at the same time the appetite is not satisfied by eating stones; man eats vegetable or animal food because he not only gets a substance from it but also the spirit it has absorbed. In other words, even in eating dense food one is absorbing spirit from space.

Some people will call spirit energy, or a scientist will give it the name of some form or force, but it is never called a person or a being. Then what is it that makes us call God spirit, or why do we call that which is really spirit God? If it is the very same spirit which we breathe from space that makes man an intelligent being, capable of thinking and feeling; the same spirit that gives him the power of perception and conception and develops in him that feeling which one calls ego, "I," if this is the phenomenon that the spirit shows by being absorbed by the material body, how much more capable of perception and conception, of thought and feeling, must the spirit be in itself! Only, because we are limited by our physical frame we are not able to experience fully its perfect life and its perfect personality.

Where there is a hole this hole has a tendency to become larger, and where there is a little substance there is a tendency for that substance to increase; this shows the tendencies of spirit and matter, the continual conflict that exists between spirit and matter. On the part of matter there is always a tendency to absorb, and on the part of spirit there is always a tendency to assimilate. Mortality, therefore, belongs to substance, not to spirit; immortality belongs to the spirit.

What is it that makes man spiritual? Spirit-consciousness. If a person is not conscious of what he absorbs, he is not conscious of that which makes him more than the dense part of his being. It is not the dense substance which has formed his body that makes him capable of thinking, that gives him the faculty of feeling, of experiencing, of knowing; it is the spirit which this dense substance has absorbed. And if one asks whether this spirit which belongs to man, which may be called an individual spirit, is to be found within or without, the answer is that man himself is the individual spirit. The body is something which the spirit has taken for its use. Therefore just as man is dependent upon this vehicle, which one calls the body, for experiencing the outer life, to the same extent or even more is he independent of the outer body in order to exist for ever.

The dependence of man and the independence of man depend upon what he wishes to experience. If he wishes to experience the dense earth, he depends upon the dense body. If he wishes to live the life of the spirit, he need not depend upon anything. The spirit is living, the spirit is life itself; it only depends upon matter for its experience and not for its life. For the spirit itself is life, though a life which is different from the life we generally recognize as such. What we call living is the matter which has absorbed spirit; and what we call life is that which is moving, acting through and by that spirit. In reality life is that which matter has absorbed. Life passes away from matter and remains; life cannot be destroyed. It is in the understanding of this that lies the secret of immortality.

Lesson 11: Spirit And Matter, Part III

Spirit and matter are not two things; they are one, seen by us as two. The reason is that the former is not distinguishable while the latter is distinct; the former is not evident while the latter is. The spirit is man's own being, his real being; the spirit is his knowing faculty, his intelligence. The very intelligence that distinguishes all things is man's real being.

How can this intelligence see itself? It is the task of the spirit to feel matter, and at the same time it is the work of the spirit to feel itself. Matter cannot feel the spirit; the spirit has to feel itself in order to be evident. What happens when the spirit cannot feel itself is shown in the story of the twenty peasants who went on a journey, and after crossing a river, they wanted to know if everyone was there. Each counted and said, "There are nineteen," because each forgot to count himself. It is the same with the spirit: the spirit distinguishes everything except itself just as the eyes can not see

themselves. The eyes see all things; but no one has ever seen his own eyes except as a reflection in a mirror.

Another and most important fact is that no matter can exist without spirit. Spirit is its existence, and spirit is its life. With any object, sweet or sour, fragrant, hot or cold, whatever be its quality, it is the phenomenon of spirit working through that object which makes it distinguishable in one way or another. And if one were to ask whether there is a link between spirit and matter, the answer would be that there is none; there is no gap between the two because, as has been said, they are not two things; they are one and the same. It is simply that the distinguishable aspect of the spirit we call matter, and its finer aspect which cannot be distinguished we call spirit.

People use the word spirit in different senses. Spiritualists have called spirit the soul that has departed from the earth; religious people have called spirit the being of God. And both are right, although both explanations are limited. It is not only spirit that is the being of God; matter is the being of God too. I once met a young man who said to me, "I do not believe in God, the hereafter, or the soul." I told him that I did not wish to make him believe in these things, that this was not my intention at all; but then the young man asked me what I believed, for he wanted to continue our conversation. I said, "It is very difficult to put one's belief into words, but I would very much like you to tell me first what you believe." He said very easily, "I believe in eternal matter." I said, "My belief is not very far from yours, for the very same thing that you call eternal matter I call eternal spirit. It is a difference of words — we really believe the same thing." Matter cannot be eternal, but if the young man wished to call that which is eternal, matter, I had no objection; I was quite willing to call it matter too.

The difference between what we call an object and a living being is the difference in the degree of spirit they absorb. Darwin died without finding the missing link. But there is no missing link; if there were any link which was missing it would have been found. There is a constant outpouring of spirit on matter, which is its own substance; and according to the degree in which the spirit touches matter, the matter forms into an object or into a being. Thus the difference between the lower creation and the higher creation is also that of the degree of the spirit which they are capable of absorbing; and there is the same difference between a material person and a spiritual person.

The question arises why, if spirit and matter are one and the same, is there then a need for anything or anyone to absorb spirit? Matter is something which is ever changing; it is continually going through a process of change; and we call this change destruction or death, or we say of matter that it is decomposed or destroyed. In reality it has taken another form, but this form is also changed by spirit and made into something else. Only, in order to distinguish it we give the first aspect of the same one name, and the next aspect of the same thing another name. For instance in one condition a substance is called coal, and in another condition it is called diamond. It has gone through a change. The value is different, the name is different, the appearance is different. The spirit has changed it in one condition to a certain degree, and in another condition to a different degree.

When we study the lower creation — insects, birds, and beasts — and when we study their instincts, the intelligence they show, the sympathy to which they respond, we can clearly notice that they are awakened to life according to the spirit they are capable of absorbing. We see among human beings how one man is standing in the midst of all that is good and beautiful, his eyes open but his heart closed. He does not see anything, although happiness is at hand, he does not know it. And there is another person, awakened to all that is good and beautiful, ready to appreciate it and to be grateful for everything good that comes his way. There is one man whose thought reaches the highest level that thought can reach, and there is another who thinks, but his thoughts

can rise no higher. What is the reason for these differences? They all come from the varying ability of these people to absorb the spirit.

The soul is likened to a ray of the sun. And what is the ray of the sun, what causes it? It is the motion of the sun, the motion of the light. The light waves cause a space between one wave and another wave, just as in the sea a gap is formed between one wave and the next. There is no gap in reality; it is only a temporary condition of the rising of the water that makes a space between two waves; these two waves are a temporary condition of the water of the sea. The water of the sea remains, but these waves formed for a moment rise and fall again. If we say that five waves are coming it is our conception that they are five, but the phenomenon is only momentary; they are and they are not. And so it is with souls. If we say that there are many souls, it is true, just as there are many waves or many rays of the sun; but if we say that there is one spirit, it is truer still, just as there is one sea and one sun. The waves are an action of the sea; the rays are a manifestation of the sun; the souls are a phenomenon of the spirit. They are and they are not. They are because we see them, and they are not because there is only one Being.

Those who separate soul from body are looking from the same point of view as the one who sees spirit and matter as two different things. The sight has made the eyes in order to see, but in making the eyes the sight has become limited; the sight had a much greater power before it had eyes. By limiting itself to the eyes the sight's power has become less. So it is with the soul. The soul manifesting as a body has diminished its power considerably, even to the extent that it is not capable of imagining for one moment the greater power, life, and light it has in itself. Once the soul realizes itself by becoming independent of the body that surrounds it, the soul naturally begins to see in itself the being of the spirit.

What is consciousness? Consciousness is the knowing faculty, but it is the knowing faculty when it has some knowledge; it is only then that we call it consciousness. One is conscious of something; consciousness must always be conscious of something. When consciousness is not conscious of anything it is pure intelligence. It is in this realization that the greatest secret of life can be revealed. One might say that the experience of pure intelligence is possible only for the only Being, for God, but no one can stand outside of the only Being, and therefore each and everyone is in the only Being. The only Being includes all. And undoubtedly there is a certain process by which one can attain to this pure intelligence. Man is not conscious of it anymore; he has lost the habit of experiencing what pure intelligence is; but all the meditations and concentrations, the whole process by which the mystic treads the spiritual path, bring us finally to the realization of that pure intelligence. And if one asks what benefit one derives from it, the answer is that since all that benefits us comes from one source, that source must be perfect; it must be all-beneficial. It is beyond our limited imagination, but it is the greatest thing one can attain in one's life.

Lesson 12: Spirit

There is a part of one's life which can only be called life. There is no other name appropriate for it, and the English phrase, "To pull oneself together," means to set that part of oneself to work. It might be called spirit, as this part in itself is both intelligence and power. It is intelligence because any part of the body and mind or every part of both in which it dwells, it makes sensitive; and it is powerful because whatever part of the body and mind it touches, it strengthens that part.

In games and sports, when people jump down from a great height, what is it that protects them from hurt? It is this spirit, and they have made it their habit to call this spirit to their aid. When people throw balls to each other, and even in boxing, the receiver of the blow awakens this spirit in that part on which he receives the blow. The sportsman does not know what this spirit is, though he takes refuge in it. The mystic understands it by his meditation, and also by his research into metaphysics. When a person awakes from a deep sleep, the first thing that rises through his mind to his body, as he twists, turns, stretches and opens his eyes, is this spirit; it rises, so to speak, and spreads. By the mastery of this spirit diseases are cured, age is mastered, even death is conquered. When this spirit is lacking, intelligence, joy and rest are lacking; and when there is this spirit, there is hope, there is joy, there is rest, because it is the nature of this spirit to hold together the body of atoms and vibrations. Comfort lies in its being held, discomfort when that spirit is not sufficient to hold the body intact. Thus it is the lack of this spirit that is the cause of a great many diseases. By the development of this spirit in himself the healer can give a part of his spirit to another, and that becomes the best source of healing.

Lesson 13: The Conservative Spirit

There are two different points of view open to one about everything in the world: liberal and conservative; and each of these points of view gives a person a sense of satisfaction, because in both there is a certain amount of virtue. When someone looks at his family from the conservative point of view he becomes conscious of family pride and acts in every way so as to keep up the honor and dignity of his ancestors. He follows the chivalry of his forefathers, and by looking at it from this point of view he defends and protects those who belong to his family, whether worthy or unworthy. In this way he helps to keep going a flame which has perhaps been alight for many years, by holding it in his hand all through life as a torch to guide his way. And when one looks at one's nation from a conservative point of view it gives one a feeling of patriotism, which is the substitute for religion in the modern world. It is no doubt a virtue, in the sense that one begins to consider one's whole nation as one family. It is not only for one's own children that one cares, but also for the children of the whole nation. Man gives his life when occasion arises to defend his nation, or the dignity, the honor, and the freedom of his people.

The conservative spirit is the individualizing spirit, which is the central theme of the whole of creation. It is the spirit which has functioned as the sun; but for this spirit there would be only the all-pervading light, and it is its power working in nature which keeps many branches together on one stem and a number of leaves together on one branch. Again, it is this spirit working in man's body which keeps man's hands and feet together, thus keeping him an individual entity. But there is always a danger that this spirit, if increased, may produce congestion. When there is too much family pride man lives only in his pride, forgetting his duty towards mankind and not recognizing anything which unites him with others beyond the limited circle of his family. When this congestion is produced in a nation it results in all kinds of disasters, such as wars and revolutions with violence and destruction. The nightmare that humanity has recently experienced has been the outcome of world-congestion produced by the extreme of this same spirit.

This shows that it is not true that virtue is one thing and sin another. The same thing which was once virtue may become sin. Virtue or sin is not any action; it is the condition, it is the attitude which prompts one to a certain action, and it is the outcome of an action which makes it a sin or a virtue.

Life is movement, death is the stopping of the movement. Congestion stops it, circulation moves it. The conservative spirit is useful insofar as it is moving; in other words, as it is broadening itself. If a person who is proud of his family, after doing his duty to his own people takes the next step which is to help his fellow-citizens, and the third step which is to defend his nation, he is progressing. Both his family pride and his patriotism are no doubt virtues, for they lead him from one thing to another which is better.

Congestion comes when a person is absorbed in his own interest. If he is so taken up with his family and its pride and interest that nobody else in the world exists to him except his own people, then his patriotism becomes a veil over his eyes, making him blind so that he is neither able to serve others nor even his own. In selfishness there is an illusion of profit, but in the end the profit attained by selfishness proves to be worthless. Life is the principal thing to consider, and true life is the inner life, the realization of God, the consciousness of one's spirit. When the human heart becomes conscious of God it is like a bubble which turns into the sea. It spreads and it extends the waves of its love to both friend and foe; and spreading further and further it attains perfection.

Lesson 14: Spiritual Circulation through the Veins of Nature

When one observes keenly the nature of this life of variety, one finds that behind the veil of variety there is only one life, the source and goal of all things. It is this life which may be called the blood of the universe, circulating through the veins of nature. It may be called either substance or spirit; it is something out of which all that is seen and all intelligence is molded and kept alive and in working order. It is this life which we know as intelligence.

Intelligence, which is often confused with intellect, is something which is to be found even in the lower creation. It can be traced in plant life, and sensed even in the heart of the rock. People often think that the intellect is a development which manifests as mind in the life of man, and that the lower animals have no mind, that mind is a development of matter depending upon the brain. But the mystics of all times, the prophets and all meditative souls, say that what was, is and will be, and as it is all the same substance, life is not subject to change, nor does it develop. It is a different grade of evolution which makes us capable of understanding, and which gives us the feeling that mind is a development proceeding from matter. The great ones, the meditative souls who dwelt in the wilderness and the forests and communicated with the life around them, realized this truth; and very often they experienced a greater harmony and peace and upliftment where there was no visible life. Life is intelligence, everywhere, and the more one communicates with life, the more one feels that even the rock is not without life, that through it pulses the blood of the universe. And when we look at life from this point of view, we see that there is no place, no object which is not sacred, that even in a rock one may find the source and goal of all things in that particular form.

Many who are experienced in plant life know how responsive plants are to the sympathy of the person who lives with them and looks after them. It has been proved that plants breathe; and if breath is to be found in plant life, certainly there is intelligence too. I once happened to see a stone whose owner called it a magic stone, but in reality it was quite ordinary; only it often changed its color and shade, especially when a particular person held it. So even a stone can respond to a person's mind, and this teaches us that there is a great deal to explore in the mineral kingdom. This is not a discovery of today; it was known to the people of ancient times. We read in the Persian poems of

Jelal-ud-din Rumi that God slept in the mineral kingdom, dreamed in the vegetable, became conscious in the animal, and realized Himself in the human being.

But this one life is to be seen in a more pronounced form in human beings, in the intellect they show, in the work they do, in the magnetizing of the atmosphere, in the thought-power they exercise, in the influence of healing. Although one person is separated from another, although there may be no outer connection, yet even at a distance the influence of thoughts and feelings is felt. There were many instances of this during the war when mothers and wives of soldiers, in times of pain, illness, or death, were conscious of their distress without any other source of communication. How often when people are in close touch do they perceive each other's condition, not only by thought-waves, but in the realm of feeling also; this shows that there is one body, and that in that body there is one life which continually circulates as the blood does in our veins.

This gives a logical explanation of the law of cause and effect. A wrong-doer may escape earthly witnesses, but he cannot escape this one life in which he lives and moves and has his being. A person who has done good to another may never see that other again; yet the good must return to him, as there is only one body and one life. Just as with the circulation in the physical body the essence of all we eat is absorbed in the blood, so our every thought, word and action affects the one life.

Often people question or ridicule certain superstitions. They ask, for instance, how past, present and future can be read from cards. But this, and also the science of astrology and crystal-gazing, may be explained by the fact that there is one life in which the circulation is always pulsing — one music, one rhythm. A person only needs to be acquainted with the theme of the music to be able to read and understand it.

Not only by cards and crystal-gazing can one read the past, present, and future, but by many other means, if we are in touch with all the veins of the universe. Some means are better, some are worse, but through any medium we can reach understanding, thus proving that there is one life behind all. Man may be taught to do good, he may learn righteousness, but this is virtue forced upon him as the result of a certain teaching. Real virtue only comes by understanding the oneness of life, thus binding man to friend and enemy alike. Jesus Christ teaches, "Love your enemies." And while it is often difficult to love our friends, we are not able to love our enemies unless we realize the secret of the one life behind everything, in spite of the world of variety which is continually creating illusion. If by religion, philosophy, or mysticism this realization is attained, then one touches the secret of life, and a mighty power is gained without any wonder-working. This lesson is easy to learn intellectually; this truth can be consumed like food in a moment, but this is not enough. To digest it, the whole of one's life is not sufficient, for truth is mixed with facts, and when truth becomes a fact it loses its importance. Absorbed in the world of variety we are apt to forget truth, for we are always engrossed in facts. That is why people who spend much time in meditation try to think of the oneness of being, and try to meditate on the ultimate truth of being. It works like the winding of a clock: it only takes a minute to wind but it goes on all day long. So in meditation the same thought goes on, and in everything one does or says one uses the same truth.

How much harm is caused by the lack of understanding of this truth! All such disasters as wars, floods, earthquakes, famines, all the dire events that cannot be controlled by man, come from disorder in the body of the universe. When the blood is disordered everything goes wrong, and though sometimes it seems that what is harmful to one part is helpful to another, yet in the long run one sees that every part suffers. The after-effect is felt by the whole world as strain and pain and all kinds of suffering.

If one raised one's eyes from this world of illusion and looked up, and asked God to tell one the secret and the mystery of His creation, one would hear in answer that every thing and being is put in

its own place, and each is busy carrying out that work which has to be done in the whole scheme of nature. Life is a symphony; and the action of every person in this symphony is the playing of his particular part in the music.

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

If God were separate from man, and if He rejoiced in the suffering of man, then one might blame Him. But as the Sufi realizes, He is the sufferer and the suffering; yet at the same time He is beyond all suffering. This fact can be understood by not merely believing in God, but by knowing Him. Suppose our hands dropped a heavy weight on our feet and hurt them. Are our hands to be blamed? No, for they share the pain with the feet, and although the feet seem to be hurt, yet that which feels the hurt is our being, our absolute being, and therefore the hand shares the hurt with the foot. So it is with God: all lives are His and He takes part in every feeling of joy and pain which we feel; but at the same time His perfect being keeps Him above all earthly joys and pains, whereas our imperfection limits us, so that we become subject to all joys and pains, however small they are. People often ask why should man suffer and make sacrifices for God. When his suffering and sacrifice is over he will find that though he began to do so for God, in the end it proved to be for himself. It is the foolishly selfish man who is selfish; the wisely selfish man proves to be selfless. This consciousness is attained by self-realization. First man must realize himself and find out of what he is composed. He is composed of spirit and matter. He consists, in himself, of the mineral, vegetable, and animal worlds, the jinn and the angel; and it is his task to balance all these, knowing that he has been created neither to be as spiritual as an angel, nor to be as material as an animal. When he strikes the happy medium he will certainly tread the path which is meant for a human being to tread, the path which leads straight to the goal. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way" — narrow because any step taken on either side will lead to some other path. Balance is the keynote of spiritual attainment.

The soul of the whole of creation is one, the life behind all these ever-moving phantoms is one. Meditation on this truth and the awakening to it will harmonize the condition of the world. And when the soul begins to see the truth it is born again. To such a soul all that seems truth to an average person appears false, and what seems truth to this soul means nothing to the average person. All that seems to the average person to be important and precious in life has no value nor importance at all for this soul. Thus he naturally finds himself alone in a crowd which lives in a world quite different from that in which he lives. Imagine living in a world where nobody speaks our language. Yet he can live in the world, for he knows its language, although life in the world is as unprofitable to him as the world of children playing with their toys is to a grown-up person.

Prophets and great mystics have come to the world from time to time, as the physician comes to help the patient whose health is disordered; and when the great ones have come they have brought a new life to the world, given to the organism of the universe to help it to run smoothly. The Sufis have always existed as mystics, and their lives have been devoted to meditation and spiritual practices. What have they learnt from these meditations? They have learnt the essence of everything, the

oneness or unity; and it is by thinking about unity, by realizing it, and by living it that man fulfills the purpose of life.

Lesson 15: Manifestation

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

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

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

Out of these forms the vegetable kingdom came gradually from the mineral, and from the animal came the human race. This provided for the divine Spirit the Ajsam, the bodies which it has needed from the time it centered itself in one point, and from there spread its rays as various souls.

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

There is also the phenomenon of four elements, besides one which is the source and goal of all elements: Nur, the ether; this makes them five. Baad, the air, Aetsh, the fire, Aab, the water, Khaak, the earth. These elements have worked in consonance with one another in order to bring about the results desired by the divine wisdom working behind them. In every Akasha or Asman they have been present either more or less; one without the other did not exist; the four together brought the fifth. In this way the whole manifestation has taken place through a gradual process of development. Manifestation finished half its task in the creation of man, in whom is born the wisdom of controlling and using all that is on the earth to its best advantage. And in man the purpose of manifestation is fully accomplished, especially in the man who has on his return journey become more and more conscious of the purpose, by widening his outlook and by living a fuller life, the man who has reached that stage of realization which is called divinity, in which is the fulfillment of the purpose of this whole manifestation.

Lesson 16: The Spirit of Christ

The belief in Christ is in the Church, the book of Christ is with the clergy, the spirit of Christ is in the illuminated soul. The spirit of Christ can be traced in Christ's own words where he said, "I am Alpha and Omega, I am first and last." By this he meant, "I was before Jesus was born, and I shall be after Jesus has gone."

"I am Christ" means "I am now, and I shall be till the end." In this the Master identifies himself with that light of which we read in the Vedanta, and which existed thousands of years before Christ, the divine light which is recognized by the Sufis as the Spirit of Guidance, and which is also mentioned in the Qur'ân. This light of Christ is symbolized by the lantern in the story of Aladdin, in *The Thousand and One Nights*. And it is this same light which the Hindu legend speaks of when it says that there exists a cobra with a light in its head, and when it searches for food it takes that light in its mouth and by its illumination it can go about in the forest. It is the light of life of all men and all beings, seen and unseen. In reality it is the essence of light.

Where is this light to be found? It is to be found in the sun and in the higher intelligence; but this phenomenon of light occurs in all different forms. Even the spark that comes from the heart of the stone when it is struck represents the same light; also the light that manifests in the blossoming of plants, in the ripening of fruit, in the light that we see on a moonlit night, and in the rising and the setting of the sun. It is all one and the same light manifesting from the unseen to the seen, yet existing in the unseen to a much greater extent than can be seen with our eyes.

One might ask why, if God is all sufficient, should He have made the Christ Spirit? An example will explain this. A farmer wanted to go to a place which was at great distance from his farm. And he thought how during nights with storms and winds and fogs one very often loses the way. Therefore he made a lantern to light him in case there should be a dark night, so that it could guide him on the path. It was his creation; he made, he prepared the lantern for himself in order to be guided by it. This creation is nothing but the manifestation of God, and man is the culmination of that manifestation. God did not make man as a carpenter makes a chair, for the carpenter uses wood, something different from himself, in order to make the chair. But God made man out of Himself; in other words God manifested as man, and in His manifestation the One has become many, the unity has become variety and has become a puzzle. Thus life on earth for man is in the first place a puzzle: he does not know where to go and where not to go, he does not know what to do and what not to do. From the beginning until the end he is puzzled as to what is right and what is wrong. The wiser a man becomes the more difficulties there are. This shows that there are storms and winds, mists and fogs on this life's path which his eyes do not see but which the soul experiences. And in order to make these difficult times easier, a lantern is given which is God's own spirit, and which He made for His creation in order that man may take this lantern to guide him on his path.

Not only human beings have this lantern, even beasts and birds have it. In herds of animals there is always one that guides them; in flocks of birds there is one that guides and sees from which way the wind blows. The one that leads knows which way to go and the other birds follow him. In India a beautiful story is told about elephants by those who live in the forest, They say that in a herd of elephants there is one which is the leader and takes the branch of a tree in its trunk and goes ahead examining the ground where it walks in order that those which follow may not fall into a ditch. It is also alert to the sound of gun and arrow, and detects any atmosphere which may be unwholesome for elephants. But sometimes there is an unwilling elephant; it goes astray and is lost, and in order to

catch it men dig pits in the ground so that when this lost elephant goes near one it may fall into it. And after two or three days they come and capture him.

This is a beautiful picture of the work of the Christ spirit. When one understands this one cannot blame those who say, "Christ is our Savior" or "Christ is our God." They may not see what the Spirit of God is in our interpretation, but there is nothing wrong about it except that they do not know themselves what they are saying. If one sees divinity in Christ, there is nothing wrong about it. If divinity does not manifest through man, then where is it to be found? Is divinity to be found in the heavens alone? And if on the other hand someone else calls Christ man, he only raises the standard of man to the highest point; and in this there is truth also. Only, the two do not understand each other's meaning, and they each say that the other is wrong; and this arises because they do not believe that he who is often called Christ the Savior is in reality the savior spirit. With elephants that savior spirit is the one who guides the herd; and a loving father, a kind mother, an innocent child, a helpful friend, and an inspiring teacher — all represent to a greater or lesser degree that savior spirit. The one who saves a man's life by jumping into the water does not do such a great work as the one who saves a soul who was groping in the darkness.

But then one might say, what about the whole world, the whole of humanity? Each soul is connected with the other, and there is not one soul which does not undergo the influence of the whole cosmos, consciously or unconsciously. Every cell sooner or later has an effect upon the whole body. Therefore if one looks at it rightly, there is no exaggeration in calling a liberated soul the Savior of the world; but if one only holds it as a belief, one does not know what it really means.

Naturally the liberated soul is like the living drop of blood. Scientists have discovered that blood transfusions can give new life. A soul who has risen to great illumination can inspire and invigorate the whole of humanity, just as one powerful man can influence a whole nation. He is then called the man of the day, and he may have an influence which can raise man to the height of heaven. If a material man can do this to the whole nation, why then should not a spiritual man have such an influence upon the whole world? Whether we recognize it or not, it does not matter; but there are souls in the world whose influence is greater than that of the so-called man of the day about whom so much is written in the newspapers.

If Christ existed before he was known as Christ, what was he? And if Christ will be after he has been known as Christ, what will he be? We are too limited as human beings to determine this; to try to do so would be nothing but folly. But at the same time, have we not known inspirers of humanity before Jesus? Have there not been prophets like Moses and Abraham and Zarathushtra, inspirers like Krishna and Buddha, whose influence has been felt all over the world? What were they? If the truth is one, if wisdom is one, if human personality is one, if God is one, then what are they if not the same spirit? Those who saw them have called them Buddha or Krishna; but they were all one and the same, the same lantern, the same light although in different globes.

After they have gone the light comes in another form to illuminate humanity. Does not that light work in our everyday life? In our deepest distress, in our greatest confusion, a friend, a relation, or a teacher comes and tells us something he himself does not know to be the message of wisdom. And sometimes it comes in such a queer way; perhaps in the form of a change, and we do not understand from whence it comes, so that we do not even believe it. But at the same time the inner guidance comes just at the moment when we have need for it. It comes perhaps from an innocent child, the word that is a message of God. For the light is hidden.

Those who say that after Jesus Christ they have not seen the light being kindled any more, limit Christ. Those who see the Christ spirit in all the various globes which are the light, they are the ones who really see Christ.

Christ identified himself with the Spirit of Guidance instead of with the personality which was known as Jesus. And people have limited that divine wisdom, that Spirit of Guidance, to the personality which came as Jesus. And they forgot that he himself said, "I am Alpha and Omega," which means all prophets and seers who came before Jesus whether it were Abraham or Zarathushtra or Buddha or Krishna. He identified himself with them. That is why he said he had not come to give a new law, but to fulfill the law, by which he also indicated that the guidance would continue afterwards. It was really a declaration of that identity in which Jesus lived, but not that in which the people recognized him.

Jesus Christ also said to some, "I will come," and to others, "The son of man will come." It was one answer to two mentalities: to the souls who would recognize his identity he said, "I will come," and to those who could not realize his real identity he said, "Someone else will come; whenever wisdom is lost, Christ will come." The real meaning of this is "I will come in another form, which is myself just the same." It is a puzzle of words only for those who want to puzzle themselves. For those who wish to get out of the maze it is easy and simple; but human nature enjoys complexities and prefers to make the truth as difficult as possible.

Lesson 17: The Tuning of the Spirit

There are two sides to which one can look: one of these is before us and the other side is within us. The first step of the mystic is to see the side which is before him, and his second step is to look at the side which is within him. The first view, which is the minor development, is the view of the adept; and the other, the major development or stage, is the view of the mystic.

When people take the spiritual path they begin to interest themselves in psychology, occultism, or some other exciting subject, believing that it is the same as mysticism or esotericism; but real mysticism or esotericism begins simply with the first step, with looking outside. And at what does one look outside? At two things. One thing is that a person asks himself how all he sees affects him and what is his reaction to it all. How does his spirit react to the objects or the conditions he encounters, to the sounds he hears, to the words that people speak to him? And the second thing is to see what effect he himself has on objects, conditions, and individuals when he comes in contact with them.

One must be just to be able to analyze these things; if not, one may always look at them in a light which is favorable to oneself and unfavorable to others. We hear many people say, "That person has a bad influence upon me." But no one says, "I have a bad influence upon that person." Most people think that everybody else is wrong and bad, and that everything undesirable is in everybody except in themselves, but to become just is the process of becoming an adept, an adept who is developing into a mystic.

After this comes the inner process, looking within; and this is a most wonderful process. As soon as a person is able to look at his spirit, he is born again; it is a new life. By looking at one's spirit one can analyze how all that one says, thinks, and feels acts upon one's spirit, and also how the spirit reacts. In this way one's life is analyzed more and more; it seems like churning one's spirit, and by this churning one brings out the cream of the spirit, and that cream is wisdom. The difference between the wise and the foolish is only this, that the foolish looks at another whereas the wise looks at himself. Besides it is most wonderful to see how the person who is most at fault sees many faults in others. Because he looks at others he has not yet been able to look at himself, but the moment he

begins to look at himself he does not look at others any more; he then has so much to look at in himself that both his hands are full.

Innumerable souls die without ever coming to this experience; they never even think about it. At the same time there are fine souls who may be quite young and yet have that perception; and wherever this perception is there is the living spirit, even if one finds it in a little child. That child is then as old as its grandfather; it is an "old soul," as a child which shows wisdom, depth, and subtlety is called in the East. By "old" is meant that it shows more experience; it does not take a long time to make a person old in this sense. Many become old in a very short time. There are people who from their childhood show that they are old souls; they make utterances of great wisdom, as if they had experience on earth for hundreds of years. And sometimes people of a very advanced age may think and feel and say and do things just like a child. This shows that the age of the soul does not correspond with the time since the birth of the person on this plane.

The soul which can analyze its own spirit is sparkling, for it is that soul which will train itself and train others; but the soul which cannot analyze its own spirit cannot train others. To keep the spirit in proper condition is as difficult or even more difficult than cultivating a delicate plant in a greenhouse, where a little more sun may spoil it, a little more water may destroy it, a little more air may be bad for it. The spirit is even more delicate than that. A slight shadow of deception, a mere feeling of dishonesty, a little touch of hypocrisy can spoil it. If fear touches it, if doubt shakes it, if anger strikes deep into its root, it is spoiled. And the more delicate the spirit, the more delicate the care it needs; it must be carefully guarded in the greenhouse. A slight sense of dishonor, the least insult coming from any side, can kill it. Apart from man, the spirit of a horse can die the day that it feels the whip; once the whip has fallen upon it its spirit may be gone. No doubt, "killing the spirit" is only a way of speaking; spirit is never killed, and yet for the spirit that is killed in the meaning of this expression it is worse than death. Death is preferable; life loses all its interest once the spirit is dead. It is better that a person should die than that his spirit should.

Nevertheless, spirit is divine and spirit is eternal, and it can always be restored if one only knows the key to it. And what is this key? If this were told, then what remains? It is not an easy thing to find this key; it is not easy to mend the broken spirit; not everybody can raise his spirit when once it is fallen, for then it is heavier to lift than a mountain. But what one can say is that there is only one key, the first and the last, and that is found in seeking for the kingdom of God. It works as an antidote, and it helps one by tuning the spirit, by harmonizing one and putting one into rhythm. If this is combined with wisdom it is better still; that is why a person looks for a teacher on the path of wisdom, in order that the teacher may guide him to find the key.

There is a delicacy in friendship, in all kinds of relationship; there is delicacy in meeting people. If that delicate thread is damaged or moved out of place something goes wrong. There is no more delicate machinery than the spirit of man. How careful man is with his electrical machinery! Every little wire is looked at with a magnifying glass, and every little part of it is guarded so carefully and kept so clean that no rust can come on it, no one may touch it.

At the same time man has no regard for his spirit, which is the most delicate machinery of all. Once it goes wrong it may never get right again; and it is very easy for it to go wrong, while it is most difficult to repair it. For other machinery we can get spare parts, but not for this machinery, when once it is broken, when once something of it is lost. And when one thinks of all the illnesses and disagreeable experiences of the outer life, what about the spirit? When once the spirit is disturbed then the whole universe is disturbed for that person.

What happens, very often unconsciously, is that there are friends who are very devoted to each other, and then there is something in the machinery that goes wrong. Perhaps neither of them knows this,

but unconsciously the spirit of their friendship is destroyed, and it is most difficult to mend it. Then there is no joy of friendship any more. Friendship lasts only as long as that delicate thread exists, as long as the machinery is in proper order. Besides, all the external things of life — money, power, position, or comfort — are nothing in comparison with the condition of one's spirit. If the spirit is disturbed none of these things has any value whatever; it is all lost.

There is a story of a king who one day called a porter and gave him a command, and after having given that command he went into his room and signed his abdication of the throne. His wazirs asked him why he did this, what had gone wrong. He said, "When I was giving that porter a command I saw by his expression that it was not received in the same way as he had received my orders up until now. So something must have gone wrong in my spirit. I should no more handle the affairs of the state." It takes a long time to become fit, and it does not take a minute to become unfit. It is most difficult to collect the spirit and make it work as it ought to; the least little thing can upset it. Think of how many different parts must be made in order to make a watch go regularly, and how easy it is to drop the watch and destroy it.

There are some people who have no spirit; that is to say, whose spirit is still buried. They do not care, they are quite happy, although they do not know what true happiness means. But for others who are very much aware of their spirit there is nothing more difficult than to keep it in the right condition. Yet no sacrifice is too great, and nothing we can do is too much to keep the spirit in tune. The mystic trains his spirit. It is the training of his own spirit that enables a man to help the souls who come to him.

The story of Ayaz gives us an example of this. That is the way to tune the spirit: to cleanse it, to purify it, to humble it, to mold it, to efface whatever may have clouded it, and to raise it high. Everything that is necessary should be done with it. And it is not easy to handle the spirit. Many who do not know how to handle it break it, just as children break their toys, and when once the spirit is destroyed then what is left? It should be remembered that greatness and smallness, happiness and wretchedness, are all effects coming from the condition of the spirit. We are as great as our spirit, we are as wide as our spirit, we are as low as our spirit, we are as small as our spirit; spirit can make us all that we are.

Verily if there is anything that is more necessary than all else, it is to be able to tune one's spirit.