

HUMAN COMPLETION AND FULFILLMENT

*'When you do meet yourself, you come into a permanent endowment
and bequest of knowledge that is like no other experience on earth.'*
Tariqavi

'In the World, But Not Of the World'

The spiritual life can be lived at any time, in any place or circumstance, and does not require withdrawal from the world. "Enlightenment is not confined to hermitages in remote mountains; it transcends all customs, all sects, all life, all places, and all time, it is as applicable in a busy city as in a quiet village."

The man who has realized his true nature continues to face all his obligations, to live in society. Simply he is no longer a party to the activities of a society whose only aim is to satisfy the ego. Unbridled accumulation and ambition, inordinate desire to develop one's individuality, the need to intensify one's personal qualities with an aim in view, all that this implies no longer concerns this man. He is still in the world, but he is not of the world. (1)

The physical body should not be neglected or abused as it performs an essential role in the process of spiritual development. The importance of the body in the spiritual life is emphasized by the classical Sufi teacher Attar: "The body is not different from the soul, for it is part of it; and both are part of the whole."

By all means, use your body to work in the world but understand what it is. The body is only an instrument to be used; you are not the body. You are the everlasting, timeless, spaceless principle which gives sentience to this body. (2)

A natural balance can be achieved between inner development and self-expression in the normal everyday world, by the practice of simultaneous detachment and engagement with life. A Chinese Zen master told his students: "Do not permit the events of your daily life to bind you, *but never withdraw yourself from them.*"

The individual must be 'in the world but not of the world,' that is to say he must co-exist harmoniously in the society to which he happens to belong but he must be free of all worldly ties that condition and limit his development. In order to achieve real development, he has to detach himself from personal, material things. But he cannot withdraw from the world, like an ascetic, because if he did this he would be separating himself from reality and avoiding his duty as a human being. (3)

Inner tranquility is largely an attitude of mind and can be achieved in all conditions of life through awareness and detachment. In the words of the great Indian sage Ramana Maharshi: "That man who is active in the world and yet remains desireless, without losing sight of his own essential nature, is alone a true man."

Solitude is in the mind of man. One might be in the thick of the world and maintain serenity of mind; such a one is in solitude. Another may stay in a forest, but still be unable to control his mind. A man attached to desire cannot get solitude wherever he may be; a detached man is always in solitude. Work performed with attachment is a shackle, whereas work performed with detachment does not affect the doer. He is, even while working, in solitude. (4)

Inner spiritual development can harmoniously co-exist with the reality of everyday life in a reciprocal relationship which honours the importance of both aspects of existence:

If, as an analogy, you were a baker and learning to become a candlestick-maker, you would continue your baking and practise, in your available time, candlestick-making. You would, of course, not try to make candlesticks with the skills and materials used in baking, except for employing a few correspondences, like the capacity to coordinate. Al-Ghazali, the Persian, in his *Alchemy of Happiness*, tells how a scavenger collapsed from the unfamiliarity of the scent when he was walking in the Street of the Perfumers; and how it took a former scavenger to discern his state and its remedy so that he could apply the indicated procedure of holding something filthy under the scavenger's nose until he revived. Like the scavenger, people in the ordinary world become bemused and ineffective if they are exposed to things from another dimension. They are brought back to 'reality' by returning to customary patterns. If the scavenger wants to become, say, a perfumer, he has to be exposed by degrees to sweet odours. At some point he will be able to operate in both 'worlds,' having learned through practice how to discern both 'smells.' (5)

A correspondence exists between life in the ordinary world and life in higher dimensions. An analogy of the relationship between the 'two worlds' (the physical and the metaphysical) points to the effect which moving has on your shadow:

Take this world as the shadow, and the next one as the sun, for the purpose of the analogy. Now note that if you move towards your shadow (the world) it recedes, and if pursued cannot be caught. If, however, you move towards the sun (the other world) your shadow will follow you. (6)

The full development of the human being is distinguished, following the experience of higher consciousness, by a 'return to the world' and engagement with active life. There is an adage: *'If one were to wake up and still remain in bed, then what is the use of awakening?'*

Mysticism is unclouded perception, and so practical that it can be lived every moment of life and expressed in everyday duties; its connection with experience is so deep that it is the final understanding of all experience. If the soul loses its connection with experience and the different phases of life, there is a neurotic reaction, which is far from being a spiritual experience – for this not only involves the realization of the soul on higher planes, but a right attitude to worldly duties and everyday life. (7)

Spiritual illumination is of value to others only with a return to everyday life in order to guide others on the path to enlightenment: "to inject back into the stream of life the direction which humanity needs in order to fulfil itself."

The guide teaches from a position which is at times 'in the world' because he has to maintain contact with his environment. He follows the 'arc of ascent' to learn; and when he has completed the 'arc of descent' he is among the people. He is now transmuted. This means that although his outward form and even a part of his essence may be visible, his whole depth only unfolds to those who are developed enough to understand and perceive it. (8)

At certain times, for a limited period and for a specific purpose, withdrawal from worldly activities or 'leaving the world' may be appropriate:

The inner work is done in the ordinary world – but it cannot be done by anyone who is merely attracted to this idea and who cannot really withdraw from the world, as well as participate in it. Withdrawal from the world is useless to those who are attracted by withdrawal and solitude. There are hardly any real monks. These have to be people who are equally at home in solitude and in company. (9)

Vocational Achievement and Excellence

The realized human being is found in every department of life, is as common in the West as the East, may be rich or poor, and may have any type of outward appearance or behaviour. The occupations of enlightened people vary widely and can range from scientists, philosophers, teachers, administrators, merchants or soldiers to poets, artisans, musicians and architects to auto mechanics, farmers, housewives, the next door neighbour, or anything. The way of earning a living in the world follows no predictable or stereotypical pattern:

After self-realization, any behaviour or actions expressed through the body of a sage are spontaneous and totally unconditioned. They cannot be bound to any disciplines. A realized sage may be discovered in an unkempt person reclining in the ashes of a cremation ground, or on the cushioned bed in a

palace as a king. He may be a butcher by vocation or a successful businessman. Nevertheless, a realized one, abides in the Eternal Absolute. (10)

Achievement in the world is marked by excelling in one's chosen vocation, thereby becoming more valuable to the human community. A realized person becomes more practical, efficient, and effective in all kinds of ways. "A watchmaker becomes a better watchmaker, a housewife becomes a better housewife."

Q: How is it possible to become selfless while leading a life of worldly activity?

A: There is no conflict between work and wisdom.

Q: Do you mean that one can continue all the old activities in one's profession, for instance, and at the same time get enlightened?

A: Why not? But in that case one will not think that it is the old personality which is doing the work, because one's consciousness will gradually become transformed until it is centered in that which is beyond the little self.

Q: If a person is engaged in work, there will be little time left for him to meditate.

A: Setting apart time for meditation is only for the merest spiritual novices. A man who is advancing will begin to enjoy the deepest beatitude whether he is at work or not. While his hands are in society, he keeps his head cool in solitude. (11)

In many traditional spiritual teachings work and the tasks of daily life are an integral component of spiritual practice:

In Zen everything one does becomes a potential vehicle for self-realization. Every act, every movement, done wholeheartedly, with nothing left over, is an "expression of Buddha," and the greater the pure mindedness and unself-consciousness of the doing, the closer we are to this realization. For what else is there but the pure act itself – the lifting of the hammer, the washing of the dish, the movement of the hands on the typewriter, the pulling of the weed? Everything else, such as thoughts of the past, fantasies about the future, judgments and evaluations concerning the work itself, what are these but shadows and ghosts flickering about in our minds? Right before us is life itself. To enter into the awareness of Zen, to "wake up," means to free the mind of its habitual disease of uncontrolled thought and to return to its original purity and clarity. In Zen it is said that much more power is generated by the ability to practice awareness in the midst of the world than by just sitting alone and shunning activity. Thus one's daily work becomes one's meditation room, the task at hand one's practice. (12)

Success and achievement in the material world are based on qualities such as common sense, observation, versatility and creativity. The goal is to do everything well and to the best of one's ability. "If you are writing a letter, write it as if the whole world will judge you by this letter alone."

Many people develop a negative attitude towards work due to their identification with their roles, job activities and expectations. Work and the obstacles it imposes can be consciously used in the process of self-development instead of being a source of stress and negativity. Gurdjieff spoke of the need for patience and perseverance, in small things and large: "If you can do small things well, you will do big things well."

When you work in your office and you finish work and go home and say, "I am disgusted with all these activities," it means quite simply that you have established a personal relationship with these activities. Tiredness and disgust come only when you are completely identified with your personality. It is the person, the object, which is tired and disgusted, not the "I." In any case you have to earn your living, face your financial problems. You cannot refuse it. It belongs to your life. But work is only function. There is only functioning. Don't create a personal relation. This creates fatigue. There is, of course, such a thing as muscular fatigue, but generally what we call being tired is psychological. So go to the office, see the job to be done. See what it needs in order to be realized, but don't establish a personal relationship with it. Then you are witness to your activities, they function, they are done; but you are not drowned, not implicated, not identified with them. In this dis-identification, you will find joy, because you will be outside all the activities. (13)

When everyday work is done with mindfulness and right attitude it becomes a vehicle for spiritual transformation:

A: Would you please comment on our daily work as part of practice?

A: Work is the best part of Zen practice and training. No matter what the work is, it should be done with effort and total attention to what's in front of our nose. If we are cleaning the oven, we should just totally do that and also be aware of any thoughts that interrupt the work. "I hate to clean the oven. With all my education I shouldn't have to do this." All those are extra thoughts that have nothing to do with cleaning the oven. If the mind drifts in any way, return it to the work. There is the actual task we are doing and then there are all the considerations we have about it. Work is just taking care of what needs to be done right now, but very few of us work that way. When we practice patiently, eventually work begins to flow. We just do whatever needs to be done. (14)

Mastery and achievement in the world are said to be the outward expression of inner development. When properly performed, work is an expression of spiritual depth and wisdom.

“Where there is a real, significant inner content to anything, it is capable of a powerful contemporary and effective manifestation.”

Work has a far deeper purpose than simply turning out a product or rendering a service useful to society. Rightly regarded, it is a vehicle for Self-realization. But if work is to serve that function, workers must train themselves not to evaluate their jobs as boring or enjoyable, for one can only make such judgments by “stepping back,” thus separating oneself from one’s work. They must also learn to relate to their jobs single-mindedly, with nothing held back – in other words, with no “thought gaps” between themselves and their work. Performed this way, work acts as a cleanser, flushing away random, irrelevant thoughts, which are as polluting to the mind as physical contaminants are to the body. Thus work becomes an expression of True-mind, creative and energizing. This is the true nobility of labour. (15)

The way in which work is performed can have a profound effect on everyone around us, reflecting the principle of the inter-relatedness of all life:

In truth we are not separate from each other, or from the world, from the whole earth, the sun or moon or billions of stars, not separate from the entire universe. Listening silently in quiet wonderment, without knowing anything, there is just one mysterious palpating aliveness. When our habitual ideas and feelings of separation begin to abate in silent questioning, listening, and understanding, then right livelihood is no longer a problem. Whatever we may be doing during the twenty-four hours a day, be it working for money or working for fun or service, whether cleaning or just sitting quietly – the doing *now*, in this moment of no separation, is the fulfilment, and it affects everyone and everything everywhere. Everyone and everything is inextricably inter-woven in this mysterious fabric called life. (16)

Attitude to Money and Possessions

Authentic spiritual paths avoid the extremes of denying the value of things ‘of the world’ or promising an abundance of material and financial benefits. Money and possessions have their proper place in the scheme of things: “A person may legitimately enjoy the things of the world, provided that they have learnt humility in their application.”

There are certain attitudes floating around concerning money and earning a living. By background, conditioning and other things, everyone has their own attitude towards money, its value and importance and so forth. Money is not by definition a dirty thing. It has its correct place in life. It is a fuel, like gasoline.

One works, one earns it, one uses it to dress oneself, to eat, to make oneself comfortable. It only becomes a dominating factor if it becomes the aim of life. (17)

Fixation on money and material possessions can effectively act as a debilitating barrier to spiritual growth:

Q: We often hear, "First I will make money and then I will retire and devote myself to truth-seeking."

A: This comes from the calculating mind. It is a statement from complete ignorance. There is nothing functional in this reasoning. It is only a postponing. The right moment does not come from the mind. When you feel the urge to leave the competitive world, the desire is very strong. You don't, of course, avoid your family responsibilities, but you see them in a different way. The reasoning to make enough money to retire on is an escape from what belongs to the immediate moment. (18)

Possessing money or material things or not is irrelevant. What matters is what effect they have on a person, how they are used, and whether they are a shackle. The attitude of the realized person toward money and the way it is used is a special one, and may be incomprehensible to those conditioned by the values of contemporary culture. "Money is looked upon by the Sufis as an active factor in the relationship between people, and between people and their environment. Since the ordinary perception of reality is short-sighted, it is not surprising that the normal human use of money is equally limited in perspective."

An individual's inner realization and evolution may be outwardly reflected by attainments and successes in the material world, since there is a relationship between the physical realm and the metaphysical realm: "The material and the metaphysical are linked in a form best regarded as a continuum." According to spiritual tradition, a person may gain monetary and material advantages from the Way if it is to the benefit of the Way, as well as the person. These gifts are given in accordance with the capacity to use them in the right way.

Money may be used in charitable work and human service. It may be distributed, based on an inner perception of true need, to those who are deserving, thereby "entering the realm of truly important operations and releasing, in turn, something for the giver."

Q: Have you any remarks on the giving of charity among Sufis?

A: One commanding principle of all Sufis, binding upon them, is secret charity. Charity takes many forms. As to monetary charity: If money is given with a sense of joy, that joy is 'payment' for the charity, and the good which comes to the giver is restricted to that emotion. Although this kind of giving is familiar to most people, it nevertheless remains the minor form of charity. The second part of the

minor form of charity is to give in order that the person may help themselves. Thus a person might buy a tool for a carpenter, so that he could earn his living. This may not be emotional, but could still be 'calculated' charity. Its limitations make it less than true charity. Money or valuables are given by Sufis, or those who desire to be counted among them, in accordance with the principle: "*Let your left hand not know what your right hand does.*" A Sufi will:
Give before being asked;
Give whatever he has, without counting it;
Give when asked;
Give no emotional or calculated charity unless he can give true charity. (19)

Integration Into the Everyday World

The process of self-development must take place within normal society, with no separation from the reality of everyday life. The Path can be followed by living an ordinary life in harmony and rhythm with the life-current of the community in which one is living. A dervish saying echoes this contention: '*When it is time for stillness, stillness; in the time of companionship, companionship; at the place of effort, effort. And in the time and place of anything, anything.*'

It is fundamental that every Sufi must devote his life to some useful occupation. His aim being to become an ideal member of society, it naturally follows that he cannot cut himself off from the world. In the words of one authority: 'Man is destined to live a social life. His part is to be with other people. In serving Sufism he is serving the Infinite, serving himself, and serving society. He cannot cut himself off from any one of these obligations and remain a Sufi. The only discipline worthwhile is that which is achieved in the midst of temptation. A man who, like the anchorite, abandons the world and cuts himself off from temptations and distractions cannot achieve power. For power is that which is won through being wrested from the midst of weakness and uncertainty. The ascetic living a wholly monastic life is deluding himself. (20)

Living skilfully in the everyday world implies an ability to deal with negative situations and people. There is a proverb: '*Among roses, be a rose, among thorns, be a thorn.*'

Far too many people seem to equate metaphysical progress with withdrawal from the contamination of the world. You need not be contaminated by the world provided you adhere to certain basic values and beliefs. You can associate with the most terrible and depraved people and be exposed to all influences and not suffer. You have a place in your family and in society which you cannot escape in order to sit in a cave and meditate. You have responsibilities which you cannot slough off. (21)

With the proper understanding and attitude, the experiences of life can be used as a school for inner development. This was a prominent theme in Gurdjieff's teachings:

He constantly reminded us that we must do everything well, that we must always be ready to adapt ourselves to changing circumstances, to be resourceful, and to learn to be able always to turn a set-back or a disadvantage to our own use – to regard life as a gymnasium in which one could use conditions for the development of will, consciousness, and individuality, to learn to be not ordinary, but extraordinary. "The extraordinary man," he said, "is just and indulgent to the weaknesses of others; and he depends on the resources of his own mind, which he has acquired by his own efforts." (22)

The conditions of the everyday world can provide a climate and the opportunities for learning how to 'live in the present,' to experience the feeling of concentration and total involvement in the moment. In the words of Gurdjieff:

"When you do one thing," he said once, "do it with the whole self. *One thing at a time*. Now I sit here and I eat. For me nothing exists in the world except this food, this table. I eat with the whole attention. So *you* must do – in everything. When you write a letter, do not at the same time think what will be the cost of laundering that shirt; when you compute laundering costs, do not think about the letter you must write. Everything has its time. To be able to do *one* thing at a time . . . this is a property of Man, not man in quotation marks." (23)

When we approach life without preconceptions and with an attitude of openness, every moment is new and full of myriad possibilities:

When you are free from end-gaining, free from striving, free from expectation, then you are open, open to all possible facts. Otherwise, you are only open to the past, and that means to repetition. When you are open to all the facts, there is no repetition. Every moment is new. Life is never repetitious. It is because of our way of looking and acting from the "I-concept" that there appears to be repetition. Because we superimpose old ideas on the situation, we are not open to the newness, open to the unknown. This openness with your surroundings is harmonious living. In openness there is love. (24)

Skilful and Effective Behaviour

The human being who is independent of desire for gain or fear of loss (the 'carrot' and the 'stick') has wider, freer choices of behaviour and action and can discharge functions in the

world that are beyond the ability of the ordinary person. The egoless person is capable of using their assets, resources and abilities in a far more effective way than the average person:

You are born with a certain energy capital. You can augment this capital, it is true. You can organize, you can re-orchestrate your capital. You can administer it wisely or unwisely, but you are born with a certain capital and it is important that you come to know it and administer it well. But you can only become a good administrator when you are completely detached, when your ego is not involved. When you administrate with psychological distance, you use your capital in the right way – all your capital, your energy, your intelligence, your sensitivity, your money, and so on. (25)

Many spiritual traditions stress the importance of acting skilfully in the world without attachment to the outcome:

Do not be concerned with the fruit of your action – just give attention to the action itself. The fruit will come of its own accord. This is a powerful spiritual practice. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, one of the oldest and most beautiful spiritual teachings in existence, non-attachment to the fruit of your action is called Karma yoga. It is described as the path of “consecrated action.” When the compulsive striving away from the Now ceases, the joy of Being flows into everything you do. The moment your attention turns to the Now, you feel a presence, a stillness, a peace. You no longer depend on the future for fulfillment and satisfaction – you don’t look to it for salvation. Therefore, you are not attached to the results. Neither failure nor success has the power to change your inner state of Being. You have found the life beneath your life situation. (26)

By not identifying with the various roles one is required to play in life, the realized individual is untouched by the uncertainty and unpredictability of life events. People who are free from psychological involvement in a situation are naturally effective and can act skilfully and more efficiently:

When you are free of wasting energy on psychological reactions of like and dislike, criticism, comparison, anger, depression, etc., when there is no longer any psychological involvement, you will be awake to the moment, receptive to all that comes to you. Then you will come to an economy in your doing. Effort and expenditure of energy will be greatly reduced. You simply function, doing things that have to be done. You don’t take yourself for a doer. You are simply present and then there is joy in the doing, in all your living. It is a play, not a chore. (27)

Rightly understood, surrender is not a fatalistic or passive acceptance of life but rather an attitude of openness and welcoming without the resistance of the personal ego:

Surrender is the simple but profound wisdom of *yielding to* rather than *opposing* the flow of life. The only place where you can experience the flow of life is the Now, so to surrender is to accept the present moment unconditionally and without reservation. It is to relinquish inner resistance to what *is*. Inner resistance is to say “no” to what *is*, through mental judgment and emotional negativity. It becomes particularly pronounced when things “go wrong,” which means there is a gap between the demands or rigid expectations of your mind and what *is*. There is something within you that remains unaffected by the transient circumstances that make up your life situation, and only through surrender do you have access to it. It is your life, your very Being – which exists eternally in the timeless realm of the present. (28)

Appropriate actions emerge from our innate holistic intelligence free from conditioning and personal choice. “All responses from the whole must be right, effortless and instantaneous. Thought, feeling and action must be one and simultaneous with the situation that calls for them.”

Every situation has a solution. It is only the person, the mind, which finds no solution. It finds no solution which suits it. A fraction can never find a solution. The solution appears in your totality. It does not come from the discriminating mind, through analysis. Magically it appears out of intelligence which arises when you are open to all possibilities. Then you really act appropriately. You are not psychologically involved in the situation and all your capacities are freed to function. When you are not a doer you are a most efficient channel for doing, a channel for functioning. There is no actor, doer, thinker. There is only acting, doing, thinking. In this openness you find peace and joy in living. There is real relationship. There is love. (29)

When action radiates from a centre of presence and awareness it is non-reactive, unpredictable and appropriate to the situation:

In Taoism, there is a term called *wu wei*, which is usually translated as “actionless activity” or “sitting quietly doing nothing.” In ancient China, this was regarded as one of the highest achievements or virtues. It is radically different from inactivity in the ordinary state of consciousness, which stems from fear, inertia, or indecision. The real “doing nothing” implies inner non-resistance and intense alertness. On the other hand, if action is required, you will no longer react from your conditioned mind, but you will respond to the situation out of your conscious presence. In that state, your mind is free of concepts, including the concept of nonviolence. So who can predict what you will do? (30)

The behaviour of the enlightened individual may appear, at times, to be odd or unusual. This may be the result of ‘acting a part’ in order to teach a lesson, or because the primary, imme-

diate objective is more important than the secondary need for public approval or reputation. In some cases, skilful action based on foresight and knowledge of human behaviour may even be required to protect oneself from undesirable elements and situations:

The realized person has to be protected in the world, to an extent, by his own awareness: 'like the camel in the desert' as the phrase has it, indicating adjustment to the environment. There is a tale connected with this in the ancient classic *Laila and Majnun* of Nizami:

There was once a king, who took as a boon companion a certain youth, and was most attached to him. Now the youth, in spite of all the protestations of the king, realized that he was not trustworthy. He used to go every day and feed the royal dogs, a pack of savage brutes. One day the king became enraged at the young man, and ordered him to be thrown to the dogs. But they, because they knew him so well, refused to do him any harm. (31)

When the inner being is purified of egotistical motivations, functioning becomes free and spontaneous, guided by wisdom and intelligence. "Intimacy with the true mind opens up possibilities of perception, thought and feeling in new dimensions, more accurately and more comprehensive than ever before, more perfectly and completely than what is facilitated by rigidly held conventions and subjective proclivities."

What you do is of no importance whatsoever; what matters is the way in which you do it, your inner attitude. The role you play on the world's stage has no meaning other than the clear-sightedness with which you play it. Don't lose yourself in your performance – this only blurs the vision of your inner being. Disinterested action does not bind you but, on the contrary, leaves you entirely free. Live in the moment, simply be. Making a choice depends on memory and easily becomes slavery. Live as being and you will awaken to bliss. (32)

Real capacity and the true expression of inner development may, at times, be hidden or even projected as the opposite, in order to be effective and avoid challenge and opposition. There is a saying: '*In an upside-down world, the genuine person must masquerade.*' It may be necessary to hide one's level of inner development from the majority of people in order to fulfil a higher purpose:

Gurdjieff insisted that it was necessary to live one's life fully – within the framework of society – and that in order to do this and not be conspicuous, one had to subscribe, in public at least, to the prevailing social morality – in other words it was necessary to "act" out one's role on the stage of life, but always to be able to differentiate between the outer "acting" man and the inner "real" man. He said that it was extremely difficult for anyone to do this properly, since the differentiation was often difficult to make – most people "acted" out their lives under the impression that they were living, when they were in fact, only reacting to life as it happened to them. It was necessary to "hide one's light" from the

ignorant and uninitiated as they would only, quite automatically, attempt to destroy such "light" or "knowledge." However, it was equally important not to hide that same knowledge or "light" from oneself or from others who were working seriously and honestly towards the same goals of self-development and proper growth. (33)

Hidden or Invisible Spirituality

The anonymous nature of much spiritual work is based on the fact that real knowledge and enlightened action are undermined by prominence and fame. The contribution to human wellbeing of true altruistic activity is often unknown and unsuspected by the vast majority of humanity. There is a saying: *'Not the person, not the means, but the work.'*

A person may have a real spiritual experience without necessarily showing any manifestation of spirituality:

A person can have a spiritual experience by putting themselves in tune with something by harmonizing with a place, a circumstance, or with what they are doing, and thus have a spiritual experience which can pass almost without conventional notice. You don't have a blank sheet which leaves a thumbprint every time you have a spiritual experience. By definition, spiritual experiences are of a personal nature. It doesn't affect everybody the same way. (34)

Those who appear normal and speak and act in an ordinary fashion are most likely to have been the recipients of real higher experiences. The awakened mind is perfectly natural and grounded in simplicity. Zen master Rinzai: "When hungry I eat; when tired I sleep. Fools laugh at me, but the wise understand."

A simple mind is not mysterious. In a simple mind, awareness just is. It's open, transparent. There's nothing complicated about it. For most of us most of the time, however, it is largely unavailable. But the more we have contact with a simple mind, the more we sense that everything is ourselves, and the more we feel responsibility for everything. When we sense our connectedness, we have to act differently. (35)

Enlightened beings often appear to be very ordinary as they move within the fabric of life quietly helping others as needed:

Dr. Albert Schweitzer gave up fame as a musician to become a doctor in a small African village that was rife with disease. Without fear, he worked for many years among sick people, saving many lives without falling ill himself. Similarly, an enlightened person can mingle at all levels of society, able to help

them without being influenced by them. There is a Chinese proverb: "If you find yourself on a pirate ship, it is best to become a pirate." The way of enlightened people is somewhat like this. Finding themselves on a pirate ship, they will become like pirates and gain their trust. Eventually they will turn those pirates into good people . . . Enlightened people are very ordinary and will adapt to other people's situations, mingling freely without hindrance. Through their way of being they gain other people's trust and are thus able to help them by touching their hearts. (36)

According to some traditional spiritual teachings there are 'invisible saints' on earth who possess an innate goodness and love of humanity and who quietly spread happiness and joy to others:

A very remarkable doctrine is that of unrecognized saints. There are always on earth persons who are, so to speak, saints without knowing it. These are they who are born with a natural goodness, which lifts them without effort to a point that most labor to reach in vain – loyal, gentle, unselfish souls, endowed with a natural intuition of good and a natural inclination to pursue it, the stay and comfort of those who enjoy the blessing of their society, and, when they have passed away, perhaps canonized in the hearts of one or two who loved them. Spontaneous goodness of this sort is not to be submitted to rules or forms; the inward inclination, not the outer ordinances, is the source of their goodness. 'Against such there is no law.' They have a standard of thought and character of their own, quite independent of the praise or blame of 'men of externals.' (37)

Self-realized beings may emanate blessings and healing energies to the world in a manner completely unknown to others:

Once you reach your destination and know your real nature, your existence becomes a blessing to all. You may not know, nor will the world know, yet the help radiates. There are people in the world who do more good than all the statesmen and philanthropists put together. They radiate light and peace with no intention or knowledge. When others tell them about the miracles they worked, they are wonderstruck. Yet, taking nothing as their own, they are neither proud nor do they crave for reputation. (38)

Many of the greatest spiritual figures are anonymous and may be imperceptible to the ordinary person. Their spiritual activity in the service of humankind is private rather than public, partly because they do not wish to draw attention to themselves. Most enlightened spiritual teachers appear perfectly ordinary and normal without any display of external spirituality or religiosity: "The Zen master is a most ordinary man with no mysteries, with no miracles about him; he is not distinguishable from a man in the street. He talks conventionally, acts like a sensible man, and eats and drinks like ordinary human beings."

Those truly enlightened do not boast of their enlightenment. Just as a truly generous person doesn't say, "I am a generous person, you know," so one who has integrated into life what he or she has realized in awakening will not wear enlightenment as a badge and shield. The fully awakened are modest and self-effacing. While they do not hide their light under a bushel basket, as the saying goes, all the same time they are not pushy or aggressively self-assertive. They know that in truth there's nowhere to go; they are already there. (39)

Truly wise people are often unknown since they teach and influence others in a manner which is not generally recognized as teaching by most people. The benefit of a realized teaching master to the world and to his or her students may not be readily apparent:

What the master is doing for the world and for its people, great and small, is often not seen by the observer. A teacher uses his powers to teach, to heal, to make man happy and so on according to the best reasons for using the powers. If he shows you no miracles, this does not mean that he is not doing them. If he declines to benefit you in the way you wish, it is not because he cannot. He benefits you in accordance with your merit, not in response to a demand by you. He has a higher duty; this is what he is fulfilling. Many among you have had your lives transformed, have been rescued from perils, have been given chances – none of which you have recognized as benefits. But you have had these benefits just the same. (40)

Higher Understanding of Life

It is possible to attain a more comprehensive and extra-dimensional understanding of life and the meaning of existence. "There is far more objective knowledge and reality than usually imagined. It is when the knowledge has been gained that the problems and purport of human life are understood."

There is a deeper truth, and a wider dimension, in which man already partly lives, though he is ordinarily indifferent to it. There is the hope that he can become as aware of it as he is of the familiar world. The self-realization of this dimension enables a man or woman to attain heights of achievement in the easily-perceptible world and in other areas; and prevents him from becoming the tool of a mere conditioned existence, with all its anxieties and ultimate meaninglessness. Man tends to be unhappy not because of what he knows, but because of what he does not know. (41)

By understanding successive layers of reality, an objective knowledge of the world and the relative value of things is gained that puts everything into perspective. There is an adage: *'Experience without understanding is water without wetness.'*

The Sufi has an extra dimension of being, which operates parallel to the lesser cognition of the ordinary man. Mulla Nasrudin sums this up neatly in another saying:

"I can see in the dark."

"That may be so, Mulla. But if it is true, why do you sometimes carry a candle at night?"

"To prevent other people from bumping into me."

The light carried by the Sufi may be his conforming with the ways of the people among whom he is cast, after his 'return' from being transmuted into a wider perception. (42)

When one is able to perceive an underlying pattern and meaning in life, it becomes possible to consciously participate in the creative unfolding of a higher spiritual impulse and energy:

Behind the sometimes seemingly random or even chaotic succession of events in our lives as well as in the world lies concealed the unfolding of a higher order and purpose. This is beautifully expressed in the Zen saying: "The snow falls, each flake in its appropriate place." We can never understand this higher order through thinking about it because whatever we think about is content; whereas, the higher order emanates from the formless realm of consciousness, from universal intelligence. But we can glimpse it, and more than that, align ourselves with it, which means be conscious participants in the unfolding of that higher purpose. (43)

When we harmonize with life we can learn from anything and everything. "By letting go our fascination with the extraordinary and spectacular, we can allow ourselves to recognize the simple wonder that lies within the ordinary. For life has its own purpose and doesn't need a reason to be. That is its beauty."

There is no static point in life. Life is infinite motion. Life is eternal dynamism; and to live is to be free to move with the movement of life spontaneously without any inhibition, without any fear. So, one cannot get stuck in destinations, in arrivals, in protections, in guidance . . . You learn from life at large, from birds, from trees, from plants, from children, from every individual and especially from those who have had the courage to transcend the frontiers of this limited human brain, who are living in a state of consciousness where there is no center and no periphery. They emanate peace, love and joy. (44)

The difference between an ordinary person and one who has awakened to their true nature is one of perspective and the depth of understanding of Reality. An ancient proverb encapsulates this truth: '*The world is a fashioning instrument which polishes mankind.*'

Q: Does not the realized man continue to live just like a non-realized being?

A: Yes, with this difference: that the realized being does not see the world as being apart from the Self; he possesses true knowledge and the internal happiness of being perfect, whereas the other person sees the world apart, feels imperfections and is miserable. Otherwise their physical actions are similar.

Q: You say that in our real being we are all equal. How is it that your experience is so different from ours?

A: My actual experience is not different. It is my evaluation and attitude that differ. I see the same world as you do, but not the same way. There is nothing mysterious about it. Everybody sees the world through the idea he has of himself. As you think yourself to be, so you think the world to be. If you imagine yourself as separate from the world, the world will appear as separate from you and you will experience desire and fear. I do not see the world as separate from me and so there is nothing for me to desire, or fear. (45)

The realized human being, having transcended all identification with culturally and subjectively conditioned personality, abides in their original essential nature. "When we realize that we have no ego, then we are open to the dimension of the cosmos; we can receive its energy and we can create. Open your hands and you will receive everything, even material things. Don't be afraid."

If you seek reality you must set yourself free of all backgrounds, of all cultures, of all patterns of thinking and feeling. Even the idea of being a man or woman, or even human should be disregarded. The ocean of life contains all, not only humans. So, first of all abandon all self-identification, stop thinking of yourself as such-and-such, so-and-so, this or that. Abandon all self-concern, worry not about your welfare, material or spiritual, abandon every desire, gross or subtle, stop thinking of achievement of any kind. You are complete here and now, you need absolutely nothing. Live in tune with things as they are and not as they are imagined. (46)

The true spiritual nature of existence is perceived when it is no longer viewed through the conceptual filter of thought. "Your consciousness is raised to a higher dimension, from which you see everything much clearer and with greater intensity."

The awakened man lives in the world of things like everyone else. When he sees a rose he knows that it is a rose, like everyone else. But the difference is that he is neither conditioned nor imprisoned by concepts. Concepts now become marvellous "skillful means" in his possession. The awakened man looks, listens, and distinguishes things, all the while being perfectly aware of the presence that is the perfect and non-discriminative nature of everything. He sees things perfectly in their interdependent relational nature. (47)

The enlightened person is attuned to the purpose of life and to the whole of existence, and understands and participates in the higher evolution of humanity. A parable aptly conveys the meaning of a higher design or plan for the world that is unseen by the normal human being but is revealed in states of higher consciousness and understanding:

Imagine a garden which has been made ready for flowers and vegetables. This garden just didn't happen. It was designed, and it is subject to certain laws. All that grows, and all that happens there, stems from this design. Everything must be in conformity with the laws inherent in the design. From time to time there are interventions by the gardener because something has begun to grow not as it should or where it shouldn't. The many forms of life in this garden are its inhabitants. Now imagine from their perspective what kind of opinions and beliefs they will hold about what the garden is for, how the various parts of it relate, what it is all about. Will they understand why the garden is there, or how all its systems work? Or even dismiss the idea of a design because it does not suit what they imagine to be their individual needs? Of all the difficulties in our terrestrial garden, the greatest is trying to make sense for its people, of many things which are not in line with their desires. Unless you speak to them in their own language, they will not accept what you say. But, in their language, many facts about the garden would be disconcerting, because their language is much rooted in selfish attitudes or lack of a certain kind of experience. (48)

An enlarged understanding gives a panoramic view of life, leading to an understanding of both the physical world and its relationship with Ultimate Reality. There is an ability to see the cause-and-effect relationship between people, things and events which appear separate:

The understanding of true meanings behind inexplicable worldly happenings is another consequence of higher development. Rumi illustrates the experiencing of this special dimension in life which veils the complete workings of actuality, giving us an unsatisfactory view of the whole. Two beggars, he said, came to the door of a house. One was immediately satisfied, and given a piece of bread. He went away. The second was kept waiting for his morsel. Why? The first beggar was not greatly liked; he was given stale bread. The second was made to wait until a fresh loaf was baked for him. This story illustrates a theme which recurs frequently in spiritual teachings – that there is often one element in a happening which we do not know. Yet we base our opinions upon material which is incomplete. "You belong," sings Rumi in one verse, "to the world of dimension. But you come from non-dimension. Close the first 'shop,' open the second." (49)

One of the consequences of spiritual enlightenment is that life is seen in a new and comprehensive form. "The most ordinary things in our daily life hide some deep meaning that is yet most plain and explicit; only your eyes need to see where there is meaning."

There is a hidden trend in events which alone would enable one to make full use of life. Those who can see this trend are termed the Wise. The contention is that certain human beings can actually 'sensitize' themselves for the perception of this hidden trend. (50)

An enlightened person is aware of a spiritual energy that transcends the apparent world of time and space, body and mind. "A self-realized being cannot help benefiting the world. His very existence is the highest good."

As our spiritual knowledge grows, our identification with the individual body-mind diminishes, and our consciousness expands into universal consciousness. The life force continues to act, but its thoughts and actions are no longer limited to an individual. They become the total manifestation. It is like the action of the wind – the wind doesn't blow for any particular individual, but for the total manifestation. (51)

Underlying the world of form and sense impressions is the fundamental basis of Reality – Awareness, Consciousness, Being. "It is wrong to imagine that there is the world, that there is a body in it and that you dwell in the body. If the Truth is known, the universe and what is beyond it will be found to be only in the Self."

Pure awareness is the essence of what we truly are. We are not the different states and feelings, moods and tempers, succeeding one another. All of this comes and goes lightly, cloudlike, without leaving a trace, when thought doesn't identify with any of it. One is not being *this* or *that* – that's something extra, added on by thought. One is not becoming entangled in the extras. There is just experiencing the pureness of being. Awake. Heart beating, voice sounding, leg aching, breathing in, out, in, out, body moving gently with the breathing. It's all *here*. Directly, immediately here. One is not separate from awareness. Nothing is separate. Awareness is all. (52)

When the impermanent nature of phenomenal existence is realized, the fear of death vanishes:

The enlightened know the true nature of existence, that everything is impermanent, never the same from one moment to the next, that things are constantly arising and disappearing according to causes and conditions. The fully awakened know that life and death are like the waves of the ocean, waxing and waning, and that underlying all phenomenal existence is That Which Never Dies because it was never born. Thus they have no anxiety about death, their own or others. (53)

Higher Qualities and Virtues

The realized person is characterized by the presence of positive, virtuous qualities such as honesty, generosity, loyalty, honour, charity, patience, compassion and by the absence of such negative qualities as envy, greed, enmity and intellectual pride:

Q: In what ways is an enlightened person different from one who isn't?

A: One who has thoroughly mastered Zen is totally involved in whatever he or she does. Such a one is, in the words of the Zen master Dogen, 'not bound nor does he bind,' a statement often misunderstood. That doesn't mean that an enlightened person simply acts as he or she pleases, indifferent to the consequences of those actions on others. Nor does he or she deliberately flout conventional laws in the name of freedom. Rather by identifying with them completely, such a person transcends them and thus is no longer obstructed by them. Although they may ignore conventionality, the awakened do not flaunt their behavior. Neither do they put people into a bind by imposing shoulds and oughts on them. Their lives are simple and unpretentious. They are full of gratitude and compassion. (54)

Those who have attained a state of enlightenment are beyond preferences, desires, likes and dislikes. They are able to view the world impartially and objectively. It was in this spirit that Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, the great Indian master, answered a question from a follower:

Q: You seem to be so very indifferent to everything!

A: I am not indifferent. I am impartial. I give no preference to the me and the mine. A basket of earth and a basket of jewels are both unwanted. Life and death are all the same to me.

Q: Impartiality makes you indifferent.

A: On the contrary, compassion and love are my very core. Void of all predilections, I am free to love. (55)

The outward behaviour of a realized being follows no recognizable pattern since it is based on a spontaneous response to the needs of the moment. "Freedom lies in being free to fulfil the need of the moment, to obey the necessity of the situation. Freedom to do what one likes is really bondage, while being free to do what one must, what is right, is real freedom."

One who has reached full maturity, who knows himself in consciousness will not necessarily conform with social convention. Such a one will act at the right moment as the situation dictates, without anybody being hindered in any way.

If your acts are dictated by your desires, you have no freedom whatsoever. On the other hand, if you do what the situation calls for, you do what is right and you and your surroundings are free. (56)

One of the hallmarks of real spiritual development is freedom from attachment to pleasure or worldly things. The ability to detach from life, to be calm and balanced, allows a fuller and deeper understanding of reality. This is echoed in the saying, *'He is able to swim in the middle of the ocean without wetting his garments.'*

Following enlightenment there is a dramatic shift in one's relationships with other people as there is a recognition of the inherent goodness of humanity underlying our general collective dysfunction, conditioned behaviour and negativity:

Our true self is nothing other than this spontaneous goodness, this vastly compassionate nature that always wants to help all beings. We carry it around with us all the time. My self and all beings are not different and never separate. We all have the same substance: since I certainly don't like to suffer, I also don't want others to suffer. If you completely realize this point, you can see why goodness is realized in companionship, because it is mainly through our actions with other beings that we realize this goodness that we already have inside us, all the time. Other people become a mirror of our actions. (57)

Humility and freedom from the self-centered ego is an important quality of enlightenment. There is an adage which speaks to this: *'Great men are great until they know it. Saints are holy until they know it.'*

Q: Does a realized person ever think 'I am realized'? Is he not astonished when people make much of him? Does he not take himself to be an ordinary human being?

A: Neither ordinary nor extraordinary. Just being aware and affectionate – intensely. He looks at himself without indulging in self-definitions and self-identifications. He does not know himself as anything apart from the world. He is the world. He is completely rid of himself, like a man who is very rich, but continually gives away his riches. He is not rich, for he has nothing; he is not poor, for he gives abundantly. He is just property-less. Similarly, the realized man is egoless; he has lost the capacity of identifying himself with anything. He is without location, placeless, beyond space and time, beyond the world. (58)

Respect and love for all creation is a natural consequence of spiritual awakening, as all things are seen in their essential interdependence within the Whole:

The aware person sees the indivisibility of existence, the deep complexity and interrelationship of all life, and this creates in them a deep respect for the absolute value of things. It is out of this respect for the worth of every single object, animate as well as inanimate, that comes the desire to see things used properly, and not to be heedless or wasteful or destructive. (59)

One of the enduring attributes of self-realization is an immense gratitude for the very fact of existence, for the reality of simply being alive.

Everything is seen to be perfect, just the way it is. Earth turned out to be the heaven I was longing for. There's such abundance here, now, always . . . I could go on and on celebrating the world I live in. It would take a lifetime to describe this moment, this now. The wonderful thing about knowing who you are is that you're always in a state of grace, a state of gratitude for the abundance of the apparent world. I overflow with the splendor, the generosity of it all. And I didn't do anything for it but notice. The litmus test for self-realization is a constant state of gratitude. This gratitude is not something that you can look for or find. It comes from another direction, and it takes you over completely. It's so vast that it can't be dimmed or overlaid. When you live your life from that place of gratitude, you've come home. (60)

Altruism and Human Service

It is the duty of the mature human being to serve humanity, to act as a 'yeast' or positive influence on the human community, and to be the greatest possible value to others. One of the forms of service is the preservation and dissemination of spiritual knowledge into human communities based on need and capacity to benefit. In this sense, the acquisition of higher knowledge is determined by its *value* to the human race and in accordance with the perception of an overarching cosmic design.

Spirituality can be projected through ordinary activities in the world, by working with people and sharing attitudes and experiences. "Those who have developed certain inner qualities have a far greater effect upon society than those who try to act on moral principles alone."

The humanitarian activities of realized human beings cover a wide and varied range, from alleviating social ills, aiding recovery from natural disasters, helping victims of oppression, teaching people to make the most of their endowment and possibilities, to medical, scientific, religious and educational work. One of the guiding principles in humanitarian work is to cooperate not so much with official bodies and institutions, but with decent human beings. "We work with whatever constructive desirable tendency there is, wherever it may be found."

Human service is best accomplished “behind the scenes” without seeking acknowledgment or recognition. Much of this effort is done quietly and anonymously since ‘identification excites opposition.’ An historical example of such silent altruism is the work of the Brethren of Sincerity nearly 1000 years ago in the Middle East:

The Brethren were a society of savants who prepared recensions of available knowledge and published them anonymously, in the cause of education, none desirous of increasing his own repute through this dedication. Because they were a secret society, little was known about them. A wise man was asked about the Brethren of Sincerity, and replied that “even the least among them honours the wishes of his companions above his own.” As the wise say: ‘*A man engrossed in himself is neither brother nor kinsman.*’ (61)

In the Buddhist tradition *Bodhisattvas* are those who through their self-mastery, wisdom and compassion, selflessly serve other human beings and dedicate themselves to helping others attain spiritual realization:

Bodhisattvas are individuals who exhibit an unusually strong and instinctive tendency to relinquish their own apparent gain and self-interest in order to help others, even if it requires a great deal of effort or abandonment of their own personal agenda. Sometimes they act with exceptional generosity. Other times they demonstrate great patience, profound wisdom, or unimpeachable moral character and ethical integrity. Sometimes it can be just a little unexpected kindness, a helpful word, or a smile that expresses the hidden Bodhisattva deep within, coming at precisely the right time and place when one is truly in need of a boost. In every case, they inspire us by the extent to which they apply these qualities for the benefit of others rather than themselves . . . These individuals radiate a sense of peace, joy, fulfillment, and naturalness in accomplishing the good things they do. Whatever their external appearance or life situation may be, they seem more deeply in touch with, and empowered by, universal values than their more self-oriented peers are. Doing the right thing is the only reward they need. (62)

True giving and service is egoless and devoid of all subjective motives for helping others:

Q: Can we come to freedom and peace through helping others as Christianity teaches?

A: You are not the doer of your acts, you are the awareness from which all action stems. In relationships between personalities, between objects, there is only looking for security, there’s only asking. Even so-called giving is with a view to getting. Pure giving is your true nature, it is love. When the occasion asks you for help you will spontaneously help, and the help coming from wholeness, from love, will be highly effective. But when you are a professional helper

acting on an idea you have of yourself or the world your help will always remain fractional. (63)

There is a finer conception of service beyond fear and punishment, desire for reward or temporary pleasure. True service is a voluntary task, not imposed, and based on freedom and choice in both the external and interior sense:

If you give charity and know that the person to whom you give knows, you risk his feeling obligated to you. It is bad enough, surely, to be in the position of giving at all, and realize that you may merely be giving because it makes you feel happy. You are being rewarded for your action, instead of helping others without any reward. I call public giving, or even giving which is recorded anywhere, as a shameful and degenerate thing. Giving makes a man to be called "good." No man is "good" in that sense. If you want to be good, first find out whether you can be good without emotion. Then find out if you can be good without others knowing that you are good. If people think you are good, they are judging, you are making them judge you. This in itself is wrong. (64)

In order to truly alleviate suffering in the world a certain degree of understanding and wisdom is required. A person will then act or not act according to the essential requirements of the situation, and not for emotional or intellectual reasons:

Q: How can I find peace when the world suffers?

A: The world suffers for very valid reasons. If you want to help the world, you must be beyond the need of help. Then all your doing as well as not doing will help the world most effectively.

Q: How can non-action be of use where action is needed?

A: Where action is needed, action happens. Man is not the actor. He is to be aware of what is going on. His very presence is action. Be empty of all mental content, of all imagination and effort, and the very absence of obstacles will cause reality to rush in. If you are emotionally committed to helping, you will fail to help. You may be very busy and be very pleased with your charitable nature, but not much will be done. A man is really helped when he is no longer in need of help. All else is just futility.

Q: There is not enough time to sit and wait for help to happen. One must do something.

A: By all means – do. But what you can do is limited: the Self alone is unlimited. Give limitlessly – of yourself. To help is your very nature. You are pure giving, beginning-less, endless, inexhaustible. When you see sorrow and suffering, be

with it. Do not rush into activity. Neither learning nor action can really help. Be with sorrow and lay bare its roots – helping to understand is real help. (65)

The attainment of enlightenment or self-realization is a gift of inestimable value to humanity and the world. “It is inherent in the realization of one’s real nature to become completely integrated in human society and help for the love of helping without the slightest intention to help. Simply one’s presence is help.”

The effect of one person’s enlightenment on the collective world psyche is immeasurable. On the level of the unseen it unleashes a veritable stream of light and clarity into the darkness of others’ minds. On the level of the seen, the power of a disciplined, purified, and awakened mind to affect and transform others is immense. And just as lighting even a few candles in a huge, pitch-black cave lessens the darkness to some degree, hundreds of thousands of persons meditating egolessly would obviously create a tremendous force for peace and harmony in the world. (66)

It is traditionally believed that many sages act like a ‘calming wind’ and exert a hidden and beneficial influence upon the whole of humanity from wherever they are. Such an influence may be totally unperceived and unsuspected by the vast majority of humanity.

The stage of human service and concern for others is only a step and not the end point of human spiritual development. “To regard human well-being, though essential, as the highest possible, the sublime achievement of humanity, is to limit oneself so much that it is, effectively, a pessimistic and unacceptably limited stance. Again, the desire for human well-being is the minimum, not the maximum, duty of humanity.”

Ultimately, in the enlightened state, there are no perceived “others” to help as all existence is seen as one indivisible whole:

Q: Does my Realization help others?

A: Yes, it is the best help that you can possibly render to others. Those who have discovered great truths have done so in the still depths of the Self. But really there are no “others” to be helped. For the realized being sees only the Self, just as the goldsmith sees only the gold when valuing it in various jewels made of gold. When you identify yourself with the body, name and form are there. But when you transcend the body-consciousness, the “others” also disappear. The realized One does not see the world as different from himself. (67)

Love and Compassion

Love has many different levels, forms and depths of intensity. "The expressions of love can take many forms and these are never exhausted. The expressions of love are constantly new, they never come to an end." Love is the evolutionary principle of all existence, creating and sustaining life. The spirit of compassion and loving-kindness is the essence of spirituality and wisdom.

Enlightenment and love are inseparable and develop simultaneously in the realized human being. "Within mankind there is an element, activated by love, which provides the means of attaining to true reality and mystical meaning."

Love is the factor which is to carry a man, and all humanity, to fulfilment. In the words of Rumi: 'Mankind has an unfulfillment, a desire, and he struggles to fulfil it through all kinds of enterprises and ambitions. But it is only in love that he can find fulfilment.' But love is itself a serious matter; it is something which keeps pace with enlightenment. Both increase together. (68)

Universal love is the deepest form of love and is "a natural outpouring towards all creatures, great or small, and is fuelled by direct awareness of the indivisibility of all life."

Wherever there is life – beginning with plants (for they too have life), animals, in a word whatever life exists, there is love. Each life is a representative of God. Whoever can see the representative will see Him who is represented. Every life is sensitive to love. Even inanimate things such as flowers, which have no consciousness, understand whether you love them or not. Even unconscious life reacts in a corresponding way to each man, and responds to him according to his reactions. (69)

Love recognizes the inter-relatedness of all things and embraces all life forms without distinction. With the perception of the unity of life, differences and distinctions disappear and love emerges as the underlying essence of Reality:

Without love one cannot see the infinitely expanding network of relationships which is reality. Love trusts, is always affirmative and all-embracing. Love is life and therefore creative. Everything it touches is enlivened and energized for new growth. When you love an animal, it grows more intelligent; when you love a plant you see into its every need. Love is never blind; it is the reservoir of infinite light. (70)

Universal love is realized by relinquishing one's ordinary self and embracing all life without judgement, attachment or the expectation of something in return. "When you love the Self and nothing else, you go beyond the selfish and the unselfish. All distinctions lose their meaning.

Love of one and love of all merge together in love, pure and simple, addressed to none, denied to none." And in the words of Rumi: "Love is the remedy of our pride and self-conceit, the physician of all our infirmities. Only he whose garment is rent by love becomes entirely unselfish."

Self-realization removes the imaginary barrier of separation from others and allows love and compassion to flow from its inexhaustible source of Pure Being. The ability to love others and the world unconditionally begins with loving oneself. "When you know beyond all doubting that the same life flows through all that is and you are that life, you will love all naturally and spontaneously. When you realize the depth and fullness of your love of yourself, you know that every living being and the entire universe are included in your affection."

The relationship becomes possible only when there is an awareness of Being. Coming from Being, you will perceive another person's body and mind just as a screen, as it were, behind which you can feel their true reality, as you feel yours. So, when confronted with someone else's suffering or unconscious behaviour, you stay present and in touch with Being and thus are able to look beyond the form and feel the other person's radiant and pure Being through your own. At the level of Being, all suffering is recognized as an illusion. Suffering is due to identification with form. Miracles of healing sometimes occur through the realization, by awakening Being-consciousness in others – if they are ready. (71)

In order to experience and express universal love, the lower forms of love must be understood and ultimately transcended:

Q: Why is there so much suffering in love?

A: All suffering is born of desire. True love is never frustrated. How can the sense of unity be frustrated? What can be frustrated is the desire for expression.

Q: What is the place of sex in love?

A: Love is a state of being. Sex is energy. Love is wise, sex is blind. Once the true nature of love and sex is understood there will be no conflict or confusion. Love is not selective, desire is selective. In love there are no strangers. When the center of selfishness is no longer, all desire for pleasure and fear of pain ceases; one is no longer interested in being happy; beyond happiness there is pure intensity, inexhaustible energy, the ecstasy of giving from a perennial source. (72)

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