

THE BEACON

CHITRABHANU

(Munishree Chandraprabhsagarji)

DIVINE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY
BOMBAY

© AUTHOR

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By the same Author

FOUNTAIN OF INSPIRATION
BONDAGE AND FREEDOM
TO THE CITIZENS OF TO-MORROW
LOTUS BLOOM

Soon to follow

INSPIRING ANECDOTES

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To
My Father
Pujya Munishree Chandrakant Sagarji
who really lit
This Beacon
To guide Storm-tossed Voyagers
on
Perilous Seas forlorn.

The Immortal Song

- (1) *May the sacred stream of amity flow forever in my heart.
May the universe prosper, such is my cherished desire.*
- (2) *May my heart sing with ecstasy at the sight of the virtuous,
And may my life be an offering at their feet.*
- (3) *May my heart bleed at the sight of the wretched, the cruel,
the irreligious,
And may tears of compassion flow from my eyes.*
- (4) *May I always be there to show the path to the pathless
wanderers of life,
Yet if they should not hearken to me, may I bide in patience.*
- (5) *May the spirit of goodwill enter all our hearts.
May we all sing in chorus the immortal song of human
concord.*

—Chitrabhanu

Munishri Chitrabhanu has been giving enlightened discourses on different occasions which by their very nature can reach a limited audience only. Yet, the circle of Muniji's audience is widening day by day to include larger and larger numbers who can read only the English language. It has, therefore, been the proud privilege of the Divine Knowledge Society in recent years to publish the English version of selected discourses to make them available to this wider public.

The present collection of such discourses—(i) The Beacon, (ii) "Instincts, Intellect and Moral Force", (iii) "I am", "I am not", "i am HE" and (iv) "Vision, Knowledge and Character"—is one more effort in this direction. All care is taken to preserve the original spirit in the English version.

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THE BEACON

THE BEACON

पूर्णता या परोपाधेः सा याचितकमण्डनम् ।
या तु स्वाभाविकी सैव जात्यरत्नविभानिभा ॥

This ancient Sanskrit couplet points out that the man who feels he has attained perfection and deludes others into believing so, because he possesses the externals of material wealth, is like a man who decks himself out in borrowed garments. On a festive occasion, such as a wedding, many people make an outer show of pomp and splendour through borrowed clothes and jewellery and ornaments. And among the guests are seated the real owners of these clothes and jewellery and ornaments and surely they look upon the pomp with a mocking eye and say to themselves: "Look at this fool, he is trying to cut a fine figure in front of his guests in borrowed silks and all the homage and adoration he receives from his guests gives him a sense of completeness, of perfection; but how well we know that it is only a 'borrowed perfection'!"

As for the borrower, is he really satisfied and happy? Does he not suffer from a constant anxiety

for the safety of all this borrowed paraphernalia: Does he not feel a non-payable obligation, nay, even a sense of degradation and humiliation at this pretence, this deceit? These borrowed robes may make him appear resplendent on the outside, but with each passing moment, at the core of his being his loneliness, his humiliation increases.

Gradually, his inner glow, his true self, that which is most important in him, disintegrates.

Thus a man, who goes around in borrowed trappings may seem to exude well-being, but in truth it reveals his inner weakness. He is like a man who is being ravaged by a terrible fever. His face is flushed and to the casual observer it might even seem like ruddiness of complexion, but in reality his flushed face is a sign of ill-health and weakness. So too, the man or woman who lacks inner firmness and independence of mind and spirit may seem prosperous from without with all this borrowed finery, but so long as he lacks inner contentment and self-sufficiency, he suffers from a terrible disease and his face will not show that zest, that liveliness, that healthy bloom of the cheek which can come only with a serene contentment.

We all know the principle of the steam engine. As long as there is a high pressure of steam in the boiler, the engine will merrily pull along thousands of tons of load. But if there should be a leakage, if the steam should escape, if the pressure should fall, the engine, with its scores of wagons trailing behind, will crash to a standstill.

The mind of the tranquil man is like this steam. He will merrily chug through life, no matter how heavy the load, how dire the calamity, how bitter the envy or malice of others. His self-reliance has given him such inner strength that he never falls into the trough of despondency, never wallows in the carrion comfort of despair or self-pity.

Can history give us one example of a saint or a seer who had not been visited by calamities, who had not been the target of the envious and the malicious? It is precisely because they suffered that they became saints. It was suffering that brought enlightenment. With every additional ounce of fortitude that you gain, you are one step closer to being a saint or seer.

Many devotees and religious minded people would probably find an echo of their own feelings of injustice in the cry of the poet, Hopkins:

“Why must sinners’ ways prosper? and why must Disappointment all I endeavour end?”

But unlike Hopkins, not many of them ultimately seem to realise the purpose behind this seeming injustice. These calamities, these disappointments which are showered upon you in spite of your devotion are truly a means to test the strength and the purity of your devotion. It is a trial by ordeal, to separate the chaff from the grain, to ensure that only the most utterly devoted can enter the sanctum sanctorum of the true devotees. Does not the goldsmith use the acid test to separate the base metals from pure gold? Is it not because the base metal tries to pass itself off as gold? If brass were to say, “I am brass,” what goldsmith would waste his time and money giving it the acid test? It is only when a piece of metal or an ornament declares itself made of true gold that the goldsmith takes the trouble to put it to the acid test.

This is a fairly common feature of life. We wish to become saints, seers, yet when the time comes to bear hardships with fortitude, we complain to the Lord and petition him: “O Lord, why dost Thou make me suffer?” But I tell you, you should rather say to the Lord, “My Lord, I have accepted Thee as my

refuge, my help, Thou art now by my side; then let misfortune pour down on me, I shall not lose heart, nor complain. All I ask of Thee is to increase my strength and fortitude!"

Rabindranath Tagore puts it thus:

"Let me not pray to be sheltered from dangers but be fearless in facing them.

Let me not beg for the stilling of my pain but for the heart to conquer it.

Let me not look for allies in life's battlefield but to my own strength.

Let me not crave in anxious fear to be saved but hope for the patience to win my freedom.

Grant me that I may not be a coward, feeling your mercy in my success alone; but let me find the grasp of your hand in my failure."

The true devotee not only accepts calamities without grumbling or quaking, but is actually eager to meet them half way and bear them, for he has nourished and developed within himself a special kind of strength. And of what is this special strength the fruit, if not of a self-reliant and balanced mind?

You might have observed that when you are physically healthy, suffering from no illness, there is

a natural bloom on your cheeks and you are in high spirits; your very steps as you walk or even climb up a hill have a natural springy bounce in them and when you speak, you express yourself vigorously. These are all symptoms of an inner glow of good health. But what happens when this is replaced by some bodily illness? Your work becomes unsprightly, if you have to climb up a hill you soon become breathless, and limp on with a hand at the waist, your words lack sparkle, your entire attitude becomes lackadaisical.

The “borrowed perfection” or completeness I mentioned earlier, is a kind of disease; whether it be the perfection you feel you have attained through power and prestige, or through material prosperity or through your status in society.

Then what lies within? Within yourself you are the King of kings, the supreme judge and law-giver. But most people have never known or have forgotten the very existence of this supreme law-giver within themselves. The very aim of this discourse is to make you aware of or make you feel anew, the presence of this being within yourselves. I would go a step further and say that this is the ultimate aim of all the sermons and discourses of all the saints and sages

and seers. And the extent to which they succeed in making you conscious of your inner self is a measure of their success and of the perceptivity with which you listen to them.

The politician who is elected to office is pleased with himself and feels proud that he has achieved his aim. Yes, he has — for five years. But look at his misery, at his down-cast face when his term is over and once again he comes with abject humility on his face, begging for votes, asking people to use their good offices to get him re-elected so that he may once again get this feeling of perfection — till next election-time! When you look at all this, when you see his dog-like pleading eyes, when you see the wretchedness on his face, do you not sense the debasement of his soul? For five years his authority, his position, had made him important, had made him great in his own eyes, but now, when that position is precarious, he goes around begging for votes with even more humility and wretchedness written on his face than on that of a common beggar begging for alms!

Therefore, those possessions which sap your inner strength, whose acquisition instead of bringing you true wealth brings you misery and spiritual poverty,

are indeed, superficial possessions. In acquiring them, you acquire anxiety. If only men were to realise this through learning and experience, then the attraction which power and money wield over human beings would be utterly routed.

I would have a man go through his life like a mirror. What is the characteristic of a mirror? It welcomes all, but it embraces none. With severe detachment it reflects the object placed before it, but the moment that object is moved away, the mirror resumes its tranquillity and purity. Thus give a courteous reception to everything, but do not embrace and clutch tightly anything. If honour and glory come your way, welcome them, but accord the same welcome to insults and calumny. If life offers you happiness, welcome it; but if it brings you pain and suffering accept them with the same equanimity. Thus does your looking-glass offer you an insight into life.

The saints and seers of all ages and of all countries have set this ideal before us. They welcomed joy and sorrow with the same imperturbability.

I am reminded of an incident in the life of Bhagwan Mahavir. The time was drawing nigh when he

would be deluged by misfortunes and suffering because of his *Karma*. This difficult period would last for twelve and a half years. Just before it began, Indra, the King of the Gods, came to him and said, "My Lord, for the next twelve and a half years your path will be a very thorny one. The ominous clouds have already begun to darken the horizon. Grant me leave to stand by you and relieve your burden."

And what answer did Bhagwan Mahavir make?

"Indra, no man can attain salvation by leaning on another. Such a salvation is no true salvation. If a man cannot attain salvation by means of his own inner strength, he can never hope to attain it. For true salvation can come only through self-reliance. That is precisely why I do not want you to intervene when I come face to face with my *Karma*."

Does not the potter bake his pots in the intense heat of the oven before he displays them for sale? He knows full well that his reputation depends on the durability of his pots. He subjects the pot which is his own creation to the scorching heat of the oven and when it is ready, he holds it forth proudly and challenges you to test its strength, for it has passed through fire and can now withstand a great deal of

stress. So, too, the true devotee strengthens his endurance and resilience by passing through the white hot furnace of suffering. As the potter uses fire to harden his pots, so does the true aspirant use suffering and hardship to cleanse his soul of *Karma* and to restore it to its pristine purity.

And what, after all, is death? It is merely a change of clothes. And surely, it should make us happy to shed old clothes! Why should there be long faces and wringing of hands at the thought of shedding this old, tattered, worn-out rag which is our body? Death, like marriage, should be celebrated with rejoicing and festivities; celebrate it as a valediction. And if one asks you: "Whither do you go?" then say: "I go to the abode of God." For death is merely a phase of life. But your feebleness, your thirst for material possessions have made you forget this and have planted in you the fear of death, and given death a terrifying aspect. As youth is a phase in life, as old age is a phase in life, so, too is death a phase. The essence, the core remains eternal; it is the outer form or shape which is transient, mutable. Before death there is life and after death life continues, and one of the profoundest truths is that death cannot put an end to life, for life itself is imperishable, eternal; and

childhood and youth and age and death are merely stages, changing forms of that which is itself formless and permanent.

Why is it that today in India, where this philosophy should be most deeply ingrained, death holds such terror? It is because in the name of religion we have erected impenetrable walls, walls which segregate us from one another, walls which prevent us from catching a glimpse of the eternity which lies beyond. One can accept physical blindness and can overcome the handicaps which it levies, but spiritual blindness is disastrous. Physical blindness disables us from seeing physical objects, but usually it is compensated by a sharpening of the sensibilities which enable the afflicted one to apprehend more subtle experiences. But one who is afflicted with mental blindness becomes impervious to all subtleties. If we lose our spiritual insight and allow ourselves to be lost in this labyrinth erected in the name of religion, we can never hope to catch even a glimmer of the eternal truth. Only when we pull down these walls, can we come close to one another and can experience a vision of the soul that is within us. Sectarianism is a barrier which must instantly be demolished in the search for the eternal truth.

Man does not have to become great; rather, he must become aware of his own potentiality for greatness; he does not have to search for it without, it must grow nourished from within him.

The King of Vaishali had an only son. One night, a gang of dacoits raided his palace and when they left they kidnapped the five year old prince. The leader of the dacoits brought up the prince as his own son. Fifteen years passed by. The leader of the dacoits was now an old man and so the leadership passed into the hands of the twenty year old youth. One day the King was out hunting in the forest when he came face to face with the young chieftain. The King looked at him with a steady eye and was strangely moved. At first he could not understand what drew him to this young stranger. He looked carefully again and now he saw a prominent mole on the other's forehead. His heart skipped a beat and past memories came flooding into his mind. Had not his beloved child an identical mole? That was fifteen years ago and his son had been five years old then. This young man could not be more than twenty. It all seemed to click. Barely able to control the tremor in his voice he asked, "Who are you?"

"I am the Chieftain of my band of robbers," was the bold reply

"Where is your father?"

"He is old and past his prime now, therefore, I bid him rest in our hideout."

"Will you take me to him?"

The young man looked at the old King with an amused glint in his eye and then said "Why not? Follow me."

The King stood face to face with his old enemy. Pointing towards the youth he asked, "Whose son is he?"

"He's mine."

"You claim he is your son, but I have a strange instinctive feeling that he is mine."

"And who are you?"

"I am the King of Vaishali."

The old chieftain cast down his eyes and for some moments did not speak. Then in a voice choked with

emotion he said: "Your instinct does not deceive you. Fifteen years ago, almost to the day, my men and I raided your castle. As we were decamping I saw this lovely child. I set him on my saddle and galloped away. I had no child of my own and so I brought him up as my own son. I have showered on him all this lavish love and care of a father and he has always been devoted to me like a true son for till this moment he did not know the truth; but today he has met his real father."

The King said with great gentleness and humility: "My throne will soon be empty. It needs an heir. I should like to take him with me now. Would it not please you more if he became King of all this land instead of the leader of a band of dacoits?"

The old chief slowly nodded his assent, and soon the King and his long-lost son rode away to the palace. Amid great pomp and jubilation the King made a proclamation that thenceforth he would spend his old age in quiet retirement and his son would be the new King.

Now let us consider what happens here. The young prince does not have to become a prince, he is a prince; but he is not aware of it. When he learns of

his royal descent; he gives up being a dacoit. He no longer steals into the homes of the villagers under cover of darkness. He knows that he is lord and master of all. With this knowledge comes a realisation of his responsibility. He is now aware of his true identity, his real self and with that comes a sense of dignity. The man who stealthily or forcibly used to enter the homes of his countrymen, no longer needs to do so, for now his word is law.

Know then, that you are the lord of your being, you are an incarnation of the godhead, you are the supreme soul. Once you realise this wonderful truth, you will no longer stumble into the quagmire of sensual cravings. But if you persist in considering yourself a sinner, surely you will lead the life of a sinner. As long as that prince thought himself to be a dacoit, he led the life of a dacoit, but the moment enlightenment of his true identity dawned on him, he gave up his old life and became a great king.

I am often asked what is wrong with humanity, especially in our own times. My answer is very simple. Man has forgotten his true identity. He has forgotten that "trailing clouds of glory do we come." It is this forgetting of his true identity that is res-

possible for man's fall. And, indeed, he has fallen so low, that he who is truly an emperor, behaves like a base thief.

Queen Madalasa as she rocked her infant's cradle and sang a lullaby, told him: "You are perfect, you are enlightened, you are pure. You will not be enmeshed by the sensuality of the world." Those were the days in our country when mothers nourished their infants with spiritual enlightenment even as they nursed them at their breast. And the children grew up to be pure and courageous. Today many mothers plant fear in the minds of their little-ones, threatening them with the bogey-man or with God's ire. When the infant grows up it becomes a weakling, always in dread of something or the other.

What a weak, womanish creature is man! The very sight of an officer of the law makes most men give a guilty start.

When I see a man displaying his opulence, dressed in finery and travelling in a flashy limousine, I say to myself "And what would become of all this hauteur if an income-tax officer were to start questioning him right now? Would it not disintegrate into servile humility and base fawnings?" Such a

man may seem to all appearances a masterful man, but within himself he is nervous and edgy like a stealthy thief. A thief may acquire the external trappings of a wealthy man, but within himself he is still a thief, all his reflexes and reactions are of a thief.

Therefore, so long as you remain unaware of your true identity, no matter what ceremonies and rituals you practise, no matter what external tokens and symbols of religion you display, it will all be a mere show; like the borrowed jewellery and finery, they are not your own and your mind will never be at ease. Like the unhealthy, bloated flesh of a sick man, they are signs of an inner canker. Endeavour, therefore, to cultivate this inner strength. A lean physique is more powerful, more healthy than a fat, bloated one.

Once a very lean and fragile-looking man approached me and said: "I am prepared to work for you eighteen hours a day. I weigh only ninety-eight pounds, but my physique is not soft like a ball of cotton wool; it is lean, but hard and compressed like the cotton wick of an oil lamp." If you put a ball of cotton wool in a vessel of oil, it will soon be saturated and become soft and pulpy and will sink to the

bottom; but if you roll a wick from the same cotton wool it will stand erect in the oil and when you strike a match to it, it will shine out bravely.

When will that day dawn when man realises that it is better to be lean but hardy than be fat and bloated and make himself a prey to disease and ill health? And you can rest assured that that day will dawn only when man becomes conscious of his godhead; when he deems precious only those things which are precious to God. Man's desire to acquire and amass those things which God would consider baubles, is a sure symptom of a disease within him. Hence the truth of that familiar saying: "You are always sure when you are pure." What is the essence of such familiar comparisons and sayings as: "Doth not the vast ocean consist of drops of water"? or "To love Life is to love God?" Have you ever thought of the significance of the common etymological roots of these words: Khud (Self), Khuda (God), Atma (Self), Parmatma (The Supreme One)? Do not all these prove to you the truth of what I have been saying? The moment you realise this latent greatness and strength in you, you realise your true dignity and responsibility like the prince in the anecdote and you cease to have the guilty feelings of a thief. Without

this sense of dignity and inner strength, the perfection which you believe you have acquired is like borrowed ornaments. Inner perfection, the knowledge of your true self, the awareness of your real identity, this is like a real gem. If you cut a real diamond into no matter how many smaller ones, each small diamond will have the same sparkle, the same brilliance, because that is its intrinsic quality. So, too, every atom of our soul is replete with the supreme strength of joy which is the characteristic of the Supreme Soul. To realise this strength of joy is the ultimate aim of life. Then should we not equip ourselves to attain this position? If our mind becomes enfeebled it will be like the railway engine which has exhausted all its supply of steam and thus does not have the power to pull the long line of wagons behind it.

I recall an incident which took place twenty-two years ago and which made a very deep impression on me. A certain doctor used to visit me often for religious discussions. He used to work in a mental hospital and one day he asked me if I would like to pay a visit. I laughed and said: "Isn't the world itself enough of a madhouse? Does one need to visit an actual mental asylum to be convinced of the existence of lunacy?"

“There is a difference,” he answered: “In the world people cannot always act the way they want to, there are certain inhibitions, whereas the inmates of our mental home suffer from no such inhibitions.”

By this time he had managed to arouse my interest and so one day I went along with him. On our way my friend explained to me that many of the cases were far from incurable and that in these cases the main hurdle was an inability on the part of the patient to adjust his thought processes to certain situations. So the chief task of the attending doctors was to help the patient to develop the power of concentration. In spite of this explanation, I could not quite comprehend the activity which I saw in the garden of the home as we walked around. There was a deep well and the patient was busy drawing a bucketful of water from it. At first I took this to be some form of occupational therapy, where the patient was made to do some useful but mentally not very strenuous work such as gardening. But then I noticed something very peculiar. After a great deal of physical effort, the patient would have the bucket pulled right up to the parapet of the well, but by that time the bucket would be empty for the simple reason that there were five neat holes punched in the bottom.

Quite bemused, the poor fellow would lower the bucket once again, let the water gurgle into it and pull it out again, only to find it empty. This went on for some time and I thought it was rather a mean trick to play on the poor simpleton and was about to protest to my friend, particularly when I saw an attendant threaten the patient with a cane after the fourth or fifth attempt. But my friend gestured me to silence and then I saw a marvellous thing. Under the threat of the caning, the patient was forced to think, to concentrate on this strange phenomenon of an empty bucket. Suddenly his face lit up as he saw the holes in the bucket. I said to myself, thus must have Archimedes looked as he jumped out of the bath-tub shouting 'Eureka,' or Sir Isaac Newton as he felt the apple bounce on his venerable head. There were some rags left conveniently at hand near the well. Slowly the man picked them up and after a little more reflection and a little fumbling he stuffed them into the holes. The next time the bucket came up it was brimming with water and the man turned to his attendant and smiled, pleased as Punch and got a pat of approval.

Many years have passed since this incident, but it has often come to my mind when reflecting over

spiritual matters. Are not so many human beings in the same predicament as this poor simpleton with his bucket full of holes? Their attempts at gaining spiritual salvation through ceremonies and rituals are like the attempts of the *simpleton to draw water* with the leaking bucket. They are vain, futile attempts because their minds are riddled with holes like the bucket. They make a strenuous effort, but to what avail? Everything leaks out and their minds, like the bucket, come out empty and the entire rigmarole is unfruitful when they leave the temple. Isn't the spiritual vacuum which you came to fill in, still as it was? Then is it not time that you filled in these outlets as the simpleton filled in the holes in his bucket? Else not all your rituals nor all the sermons you have heard will avail aught to you.

These holes will be permanently sealed when you come to realise that you are the Supreme Self; when, like the drop of water which claims to have the characteristics of the vast ocean, you recognise that your soul too, has all the characteristics of the Supreme Soul. Then will come that moment when your true identity shines clear like a burning torch, the beacon.

II

INSTINCTS, INTELLECT AND MORAL FORCE

What is the ultimate test of a man's life? Is the life spent in accumulation of material things a fruitful one? Or is that a fruitful life which is spent in quest of the divine spark which animates it? The elements which constitute human life are three, and a man's development can be judged by the extent to which one of these three dominates.

Some men are governed purely by their instincts, others by thought and yet others by their sense of judgment, their power to discriminate between right and wrong, and to act accordingly,—what we might call, moral force; but a moral force which is dynamic.

Those who are governed by their instincts, live only to gratify their instincts—food, sleep, fear, sex. They have no thought or consideration for anything apart from these. Under the motivating force of these instincts a man forgets his very nature. He is dragged along by the powerful current of his instincts and is least bothered in what direction it takes him. Having become a slave to his instincts, he believes he has

attained supreme happiness when he has gratified every whim and caprice to which his instincts guide him.

This purely instinctual life is the life of an animal. An animal lives according to its instincts—eats according to them, sleeps according to them and mates according to them. Its behaviour is a series of impulses dictated by one or other of its instincts. Hence men who behave thus, belong to the class which is governed by animality.

The next class is of those who are governed by thought processes. Theirs is a nature which is a mingling of mind and instincts; but they are weak and indecisive. The man who belongs to this category is, at times, tempted to follow the dictates of an instinct; his intellect warns him of the dangers which beset this contemplated course of action, and his behaviour in any given situation depends on whether his instincts triumph or his intellect; but he is torn in the conflict. However, in him we see at least the shadow of humanity. Even when he gives way to his instincts where he should not, his intellect tells him that what he has done is wrong. He lies, but feels that it is wrong to do so. Such a man, if he is a drunkard, may himself too often succumb to the temptation,

but he hopes that his son will not inherit it from him. His instinct draws him to the bottle, his mind tells him it is wrong. In the conflict which ensues he exhales a breath of humanity, but his instinct does not let him be.

In society we often come across a man who, by suppressing his instincts has climbed a step upwards, yet within him there is always a weakness which leaves him indecisive. At times he lifts himself up to the level of humanity, at times he sinks into the quagmire of bestiality. He often supplicates God: "Lord, enlighten me, lead me along the path of truth, raise me to a higher level!" But what we have here is prayer without endeavour. His is a fluid state; it takes the path of least resistance, flowing into whatever mould seems more attractive.

Then there is the third group of men in whom it is neither instinct nor intellect, but moral judgment which dominates. When your actions are guided by the light of moral judgment, then know that you are treading the path of divinity, and that you are close to God.

Truly did the sage say: "This world is entangled in the fine meshes of woman and gold." But the man

whose moral judgment has enabled him to detach himself from these two, is a divinity on earth. He who has this moral force, who does not bow to temptation, whose heart is free from greed, whose thoughts have no instability, surely such a man is divinity incarnate. A god sitting on his throne in Olympian majesty may be a concept some may find difficult to comprehend, and others, difficult to accept; but here is a god on earth, for he has reached up to that state of divine detachment through his dynamic moral force.

Thus the man who allows his activities to be guided by his instincts leads the life of an animal; the one whose activities are guided by the mind, but who is also frequently pulled by instincts, leads the life of a human being, but still a partial slave to the animal within him; but it is in the man whose conduct is shaped by moral force that the spark of divinity glows brightly.

Once I was asked by a man how he could set about to get a vision of God. I replied: "By conquering your instincts and mind and allowing your moral force to guide all your actions." He asked me for an example. I said: "Write 'God' on this piece of paper." He wrote it.

“Do you have anything in your pocket?”

He took out a guinea.

“Now put it on the word you’ve written. Now then, can you read God? Can you see Him? You have obscured your vision of Him. If you want to see Him, all you have to do is sweep away that guinea.”

What was it that suppressed God from this man? His guinea, his gold. Such men aspire to divinity and think that they can attain it by prayers, while all the time they bury it under the pressure of gold. Merely to pray, without making an earnest endeavour, is futile. If you want to see God, hear God, if you want to fill your being with Him, then make the effort and cast aside this layer of gold. When your heart is empty of gold, of the greed for gold, it will soon be filled with divinity. After all, what is charity? It is freeing your heart of the burden of this worthless metal. I truly believe that you are all deeply indebted to Sadhus, for they, by teaching you to give away in charity, help you to lighten this burden. Yet there are so many, even in this gathering, who refuse to become burdenless. They cling to this burden, no matter if it weigh them down and bend them double spiritually. And then they pray to God and call upon

Him to lift them up. But how can He? If He were to stretch out His hand to lift them up, and they did not make any effort, they might pull Him down, even as the drowning man will often clutch his would-be rescuer and pull him down with himself to the bottomless ocean.

What is the ultimate purpose of your pilgrimage to this earth? Is it not that you may aspire to a higher level of divinity? And in order to experience that supreme rapture, surely it is not too much to ask that you make efforts to lighten this burden! When the final reckoning comes, you will feel that the spiritual contentment on your credit side far outweighs the paltry material "loss" on your debit side.

I am reminded of an incident which, I feel, has a deep significance. A certain family had migrated from Delhi to Bombay. Now, after many years they were returning to the city of their origin. As they were seated in the train, waiting for it to start, the wife asked: After all these years, do you think we shall be able to settle down comfortably in Delhi?"

Her husband said: "Why should we have any difficulty? You wait and see how simple it will all be. After we came to Bombay we made our fortune,

but we never forgot our old friends. We always remembered them in our letters and shared our good fortune with them, even from such a distance. We shall be made as happy and comfortable there as we were in Bombay.”

A fellow passenger who had been sitting with a morose face heard their conversation. Hoping to unburden his grief by talking about it, he said: “I, too, am on my way back to Delhi. But how I wish I could look forward to it with the anticipation you have shown! When I migrated to Bombay and soon made my fortune, I gave myself up completely to the gay life of this city and never once thought of the place of my birth or of my friends of old. Now that I am in difficulties, I have thought of it and of them for the first time. Although I am going back, I really don’t know where I shall stay on an empty purse, and to whom I can turn for aid.”

At that moment, a man who was handcuffed and was accompanied by two policemen, entered the compartment. When questioned by the other passengers, one of the constables said: “We are on our way to Delhi. This man is from there. He escaped to Bombay some years ago and continued his nefarious

activities as a confidence trickster, defrauding many. At last he has been caught and is being taken back to be tried for his early crimes.”

In the journey of our life, too, we come across these three types of passengers. The first type is like the passenger who did not forget his old friends. This type is governed by moral force. Such a man, when he comes to this earth will never forget his origin, as that man who made his fortune in Bombay, but did not forget Delhi or his old friends. Such a man does not fear or tremble or have any regrets when the time comes for him to part from this world. For all through his sojourn here below, he has constantly kept alive the spark of divinity with which he had come down. To him it is a moment of rejoicing, a pleasant home-coming, and thus at the moment of parting his face shines with happiness; there is no nervous twitch as on the face of the man of the second type. This second passenger symbolises the man who suppresses his conscience and pursues a life of material pleasure. Admittedly, he has not reached the lowest level; every once in a while he tells himself that he must not, in his wild pursuit, forget his origin; but always he is overcome by temptation. He thinks of his old friends occasionally,

but makes no effort to continue their friendship. Though he has not committed any grievous sin, neither has he done anything fruitful. He has spent his life oscillating between instinct and thought. Then dawns the day he has to return, and that day finds him unprepared, remorseful and doubtful of his welcome.

The handcuffed gentleman represents the man who gives heed to naught but his animal instincts. He lives at the most degraded level of life. Nay, he does not live; he exists. He has never bothered to distinguish between truth and falsehood; between humaneness and cruelty. As he passes through life, he leaves a ghastly trail behind him.

Each of us must ask himself: "Where am I? Why have I come here? What is the ultimate purpose of my life?" That is precisely what Lord Mahavir meant when he said: "Ask thyself what thou art and why thou hast come here."

"What am I? Why have I come here?" How many of us present here today, can answer these questions! We are not inclined even to find out what we are, let alone finding out for what purpose we are here.

We feel we cannot spare the time to ask ourselves these questions. But the answer will come to that man in whom the lamp of conscience is ever-burning and who has realised the divinity within himself.

One cannot acquire this experience all of a sudden. It requires a period of utter tranquillity, when one can enter into a deep introspection and can ask oneself: "Do I allow myself to be governed by my instincts only, by my intellect only, or by my conscience? Is the motivating force behind my actions instinctual, intellectual or moral?"

When a man learns to question himself along these lines, he will come to the realisation that in every individual, divinity lies dormant. It merely requires some effort to awaken it, and in the dawn of that awakening he will realise God.

III

“I am”, “I am not”, “i am HE”

I ask you, “If happiness is inherent in the soul, why does not man experience it?” Science has provided us with ample means of material comfort yet do we come across a single man who can say with his hand on his heart, “Behold! I am supremely happy?” Why is this so?

We cannot say that because life is full of pain and sorrow, it is impossible to attain supreme happiness and therefore it is man’s lot to suffer. For if this were so then saints and seers would not have attained the supreme bliss that they did. The reason why man cannot be happy is that he does not know where happiness lies.

The functioning of a democracy depends on the opinion of the majority; but if we were to give credence to the opinion of the majority then we would have to believe that there is only unhappiness in this world, for the saints and sages such as Mahavir, Parshvanath and Rama who have preached the gospel of happiness are very much in the minority. It is only

once in a millennium that sweetness and light descend upon this mortal world in the form of such blissful, enlightened souls. If you ask the majority of people about happiness they will take it as an occasion to let off steam and inform you in no uncertain terms the foolishness of presuming to be happy here below. And so all-pervasive is this cynicism that under its influence one sometimes wonders if even the great ones were speaking the truth when they talked of the happiness they had attained.

In spite of this, the truth is that the world is filled with happiness. The reason why man seems to live under the perpetual shadow of suffering is that he lives in a state of tension under the burden of his ego—this is what suffering really is. You come across a man who seems to have all the means of material well-being—a car, a fine house, good clothes, plenty to eat—there seems a complete absence of anything that might cause him misery. You say to yourself: “Here is a man with whom I should like to change places!” You tell him you envy him for being so happy, and he will say: “My friend, the less said about it, the better!”

You might say that a man may be materially well-off, but he may have some other cause for complaint.

Well, consider a man who is not only materially well-off, but is healthy, has a faithful wife and a loving family and loyal friends. Why does he seem morose so often? Why is he in such drooping spirits? Why does he complain so often of not being in the right mood?

Unhappiness, therefore, is not the result of lack of means towards gaining happiness. It is the result of man's ego which throws him off-centre and un-stabilises him. He searches everywhere to satisfy his ego. It is difficult to define this ego; it defies definition. All we can say is that though it does not exist physically, it can be experienced. It is an illusion, a mirage, and man's attempts to satisfy it are like the vain attempts of the thirsty traveller in the desert to reach the mirage and slake his thirst.

To the jaundiced eye, even the pure whiteness of the moon seems yellow. So, too, the man who follows the dictates of his ego sees everything coloured through it, is deluded into the pursuit of that which is a mere chimera and which leaves him restless and discontented.

A man who has had a very modest beginning in life may become the owner of a mill. You are sure

that this must be the fulfilment of his dreams and you congratulate him. He will tell you in a disgruntled way: "What's there in having one mill? I am not yet a big industrialist." To such a man you can never preach satisfaction or contentment. His god is his ego and he will sacrifice everything to propitiate him; that is his mental attitude and he will never find happiness as long as he continues to worship this god.

Rabindranath Tagore relates a very interesting anecdote about himself. Once, on a night of the full-moon, finding himself all alone in the house, he took up a book to read. After a few hours his eyes were fatigued so he put aside the book and shut his eyes for a few minutes. But the light from his reading-lamp disturbed him, so he switched it off. And behold! the moonlight came streaming into his room. As long as his reading-lamp had been on he had not noticed the light of the moon; but the moment he switched off that artificial light, nature's light flooded his room and filled his very being. He wondered why he had not noticed this beautiful soft light so far, and he realised that it was because the harsh glare of the artificial light had obscured the cool light of the moon. Our ego is like the harsh glare of the artificial light, it dazzles us and as long as it is kept on it pre-

vents us from experiencing the gentle, soothing light of the soul.

This ego is man's constant companion, whether he is praying or whether he goes on a pilgrimage. It is whispering into his ear even when he is giving in charity. It makes him keen with desire to have his name on a plaque, or have it associated with some charitable institution.

This ego is a kind of dirt which clings tenaciously to man. He can experience happiness only when he is cleansed of this dirt. A man can experience the true joy, the thrill of giving, when he gives in charity, not following the dictates of his ego, but because he wants to give. He will then add something to his spiritual dimension, instead of inflating his ego.

Even a man who gives a sermon, very often, will indirectly ask for compliments from the audience. "Well, how was my discourse today? Did it not go straight to the heart? Did it not strengthen your moral fibre?" And thus he will try to feed his ravenous ego. And the audience?—they will not let him down, they will rise to the occasion, they will praise his eloquence and his sagacity and thus nurture his ego

with their pseudo-appreciation. For the ego is not self-sufficient, it is a parasite, it demands constant attention and appreciation.

The celebrated scientist, Dr. Einstein, was once so engrossed in his search for truth that he forgot to shave for a month and a half. When his attention was drawn to it he remarked that the thing on which he had focussed all his attention was so all-absorbing that he could not afford to divert his attention to anything else. This is what is meant by the exclusion of everything extraneous. Without the exclusion or submerging of the ego a genuine act of creation is impossible.

Death holds no terror for the man who has reached out of his ego, for he has reached that stage where he no longer says, "I AM", but rather says, "i am HE". But to reach this latter stage he must first pass through the stage of "I am not".

Such a man is never torn by tensions. With the elimination of this disease, his ego, his entire attitude is changed. He will face obstacles courageously. Even if he fails in his work, he will not be dejected. Success and failure are often governed by fate, but to fight

dejection and misery is in the hands of man. Such a man may differ in opinion from others, but his own mind will always be in a state of serenity.

You will have understood now the true nature of the ego. To be free from the clutches of the ego you must firmly resolve to reach the stage of "I am not", that is, "I am not the body", which implies the distinction of the true self from the body. In the barren desert, no matter how fast you run, you will never get water to slake your thirst if your eye is fixed on the mirage. If you want water you must turn your steps towards the oasis. There you may not find a lake, but surely you will get a glass of water.

With the cultivation of "I am not", comes meekness and through meekness you attain perfection. Everyone loves an infant because it is so meek. Divinity lies in true humility. It is the arrogance of "I AM" which is so misleading and which will make you spend all your time and energy in the pursuit of a mirage. It is the state of "I am not" which is elevating and which will ultimately lead to "i am HE".

Mankind is suffering from agonies of unhappiness not because it is in want of material comforts, but

because it is in want of this power of discrimination. Man should endeavour to pass from the stage of “I AM” to “I am not” and experience the state of “i am HE”. Instead of rejoicing in the state of “i am HE” and intoxicating his soul, man rushes around proclaiming, “I AM. Look at ME. Praise ME. Appreciate ME.”

The moment you reach the stage of “i am HE”, you will throb with joy, happiness and immortality and others will look at you and say: “Behold! he is a lucky man, for happiness shines in his eyes and blossoms forth on his face.”

IV

VISION, KNOWLEDGE AND CHARACTER

Man's Life is a mine of precious stones. Vision, Knowledge and Character are the three most sparkling gems. Our purpose, in this series of lectures spread over three days, will be to consider the true worth of these three gems.

A diamond is also a stone after all. It would be fatal to eat it. While you possess it you are always in fear of its being stolen, and if you cut yourself with it, you bleed. In spite of that, people seem to think it wonderful to possess this stone; then how much more wonderful, more satisfying, it must be to possess a spiritual diamond! Why has Bhagwan Mahavir compared things of the spirit with this inanimate stone? How can precious stones stand comparison with spiritual qualities? Yet he has made this comparison. Just as in the material world a diamond or an emerald is more precious than silver or gold, so in the spiritual world, one who possesses these three gems becomes a wealthy man. His sojourn on this earth becomes worthwhile. Perfect vision, perfect knowledge and perfect character are absolute

requisites if you want to experience transcendental peace and happiness.

There are many paths that lead to salvation. Bhagwan Mahavir, who attained a state of perfection, has said that the finest among them is by the possession of the three gems — perfect vision, perfect knowledge and perfect character. By gaining these three, a man attains the purpose of life and without this precious trinity, no matter what else he might gain, his journey through life is a failure.

A thing which one has to give up after attaining, is as good as not attained.

In Burma, when the government seized the assets of the Indian settlers, they came here as refugees. Some of them had been millionaires, but of what use were their millions when they had difficulty in getting one square meal a day? No matter how much you earn, if you cannot take it away with you, it is as good as not having earned. All the accumulations of a lifetime are worthless if you cannot take them away with you. Therefore do the sages tell us to collect such things as we can carry away with us, they do not ask us to give up everything. Your religion does

not ask you to relinquish your possessions, on the contrary it tells you to accumulate them, accumulate as much as you can, for such an opportunity will not come your way again; only, accumulate such things as can be retained even when all else you possess has to be relinquished. Religion is a matter of receiving, not of relinquishing; of securing, not of renouncing.

If you wish to possess the very best, you must let go the paltry. If you want to hold a fistful of diamonds, you must first let fall the pebbles from your hands. How do you expect to attain true happiness without first setting yourself free from “Kashaya” — the vices of anger, ego, deceitfulness and covetousness? When your heart is dark with lust how can it be filled with the light of love? How can you hold diamonds without relinquishing the pebbles?

It is the means that determine the ends. When the means are pure, your mind, your spirit attain a crystal-line purity and through that purity you attain your ultimate aim.

When you wash soiled clothes with soap, they become white and sparkling. But if, in the darkness, you mistake a piece of coal for a cake of soap, then will your clothes get cleaner or dirtier? It does not

matter how often you wash them, but with what you wash them. What is taken into consideration is not your efforts, but the means you employed.

Not all your efforts are of any avail if the means you employ are second-rate and ineffectual. To attain purity one needs must use the purest means.

The spiritual field is as vast as the sky and the paths which lead to it are infinite in number and variety. But let us concentrate on the one we have selected. Salvation is our ultimate aim and perfect faith or vision, perfect knowledge and perfect character are our means.

What do we mean by perfect vision? It is an appetite, a thirst, a hunger.

Sometimes, something catches your eye, it attracts you, it clings to your mind with a leech-like tenacity, you feel a yearning for it. You are prepared to spare no pains to attain it. It might be something you have seen in a shop. You want it immediately, but you do not have enough money on you. You make the shopkeeper promise to keep it for you and you resolve to yourself that no matter what happens, you will not rest till you have acquired that thing and have satisfied your longing.

If a paltry bauble in a shop window can arouse this burning desire in you, how infinite must be the longing when it is a matter of the spirit! This spiritual longing which craves to be satisfied is what we mean by perfect vision. Once this appetite is aroused in you, you will feel that your very existence has no meaning if you cannot satisfy this inner urge, this hunger of the soul.

Once let this spiritual appetite well up in you and you will be prepared to lose the world for it. Those who have relinquished worldly happiness in the pursuit of spiritual satisfaction have done so because they have been convinced that the world is naught in comparison to this thirst which demands satisfaction. He who chooses the spiritual path, who has had a glimpse of the true vision is already on his way to the moulding of a perfect character. To him renunciation of material assets is the most natural thing, an act of little consequence. For when your heart is set on acquiring this precious asset, the true vision, then renunciation is, in fact, not renunciation at all. You do not feel the pinch of renunciation; on the contrary, you feel that you have acquired what is most worth acquiring. Everything else fades into insignificance.

If you ask a prosperous merchant to undertake a fast, he will say it is impossible for him to endure it. But what happens when his shop is chock-full of customers and he is doing rollicking business? This same man who declared his inability to forego even one meal a day will forget all about food, will forget the very existence of his stomach in his engrossment of making bumper sales! The question of endurance does not arise at all.

The man who renounces material things gains an inner satisfaction. To him self-denial is the most natural way of living. Engrossed in matters of the mind and the spirit, he does not even realise hunger.

When one endeavours something without a deep longing for it, the task will seem to be a task, and a burdensome one at that. But no sacrifice seems big enough for the attainment of something you long for. A doting mother will give up everything for her child and yet will not think it sufficient, for she feels that she has done nothing. And when the "Sacrifice" is for the soul where is the question of conceit or vanity?

The temple of Ranakpur lies in the lap of nature. There, midst the lofty grandeur of the Aravalli mountains, sits this beautiful temple built by the merchant,

Dharnasha. What inner urge, what intense longing led this man to have this temple built in the forest? It cost thirteen lakhs of rupees to carry out repairs on this temple. You can well imagine what it must have cost to erect it. And yet, search as you will, nowhere in this magnificent edifice will you find inscribed the name of the man who gave to his vision a concrete shape in stone and marble. On one of the 1444 pillars of the temple there is a miniature carving of two figurines — a man and a woman, with their hands humbly folded on their breasts. Utter humility and devotion flow from their eyes, and their dumb lips seem to say, “What we have done is so insignificant compared to what we should like to do.” “What comparison can there be between what little we have done and what we have received?” says the man who longs to make his soul one with his God.

Vision is an appetite. The man who is in quest of it feels restless till he acquires it. The true devotee of God seems an eccentric in the eyes of others because he is completely absorbed in this search within himself, quite intoxicated by this search for Truth.

Knowledge and Character by themselves, without Faith or Vision, are of no use. You first need to feel the ecstasy of this vision, so that you say to yourself,

“This God is the perfection of my soul. I am imperfect because of the ‘Kashaya’ within me. There must be born in me an appetite, a longing to attain this state of perfection, through the contemplation of that which is perfect. If you want to see God, you must first create the appetite in you. The keener the appetite, the sweeter the delicacy. A dull appetite will find the most sumptuous feast tasteless.

Have you never been questioned by your soul? Have you never heard it say: “I am your soul. I have infinite strength. Why am I kept concealed, imprisoned in this little cage of a body? I, who was there before birth and will be there after death, why do you let me skulk about in fear of death?” Who dies — the body or the soul? The body dies and rots, the soul survives and ascends. This faith in the immortality of the soul is what we mean by Perfect Faith or Vision. It is this Perfect Vision which brings sweetness in life.

When Chanakya was a child, a Sadhu came to his house for alms. A beautiful smile lit up his face when he saw the child’s teeth. When questioned by the mother, the sage said that the sharpness of the child’s teeth suggested that he would be a very powerful

emperor. The mother who was a very pious woman felt that to become an emperor was something which might be of importance in the present birth of her child, but the massacres it would involve and the perilous path her son would have to tread was a matter which would affect the soul of her child in many births to come. If this was the price to be paid for an emperor's sceptre and crown, was it worthwhile? She took a file and sawed off the edges of her son's teeth. Naturally, the child suffered great pain, but for the welfare of her child's soul the mother hardened her heart. Chanakya never became an emperor, but he certainly became a maker of emperors.

If you have your child's welfare at heart then see to it that his mind is fed on beautiful stories. For a child's mind is innocent, receptive, easily moulded and by feeding it with good stories you will fill it with dreams of doing good, with beautiful ideals. If you do not present him with good ideals he will soon draw his ideals, and they will be warped ones, from the world of cheap films.

If we truly care for our dear ones, then we should be concerned not only with their welfare in this life, but with the welfare of their souls in their future

incarnations. The soil of a child's mind is very fertile and if you plant in it the seeds of good thoughts they will blossom forth into good deeds. The wealth of the mind is surely more important than worldly wealth! Unfortunately, today this is too often forgotten.

The man who has spiritual faith is unperturbed on the stormy sea of life. Whether he is lifted up by a wave of good fortune or falls into a trough of bad luck, he maintains a balanced outlook. Material prosperity does not go to his head while adversity does not leave him miserable and in despair.

Once while I was on a pilgrimage in Gujarat I met a man who had on his forehead a very prominent scar from an old wound. This man, though very rich, came from humble origins. In spite of his immense wealth he led a simple life and was known to be of a very charitable disposition. When I asked him about his scar, he said: "This scar is my 'guru,' my mentor. When I was a child we had a very wealthy family living next door. I used to play with the children whose pockets were always bulging with sweets and chocolates which they used to offer me sometimes. One day their mother saw this and forbade them. As you well know, the parents' thoughts

are reflected in their children's behaviour. From that day there was no share for me in the sweets. I went home and cried my eyes out. My mother patiently tried to console me, but I would not yield. Finally she went to the rich lady and humbly requested her to tell her children not to munch their sweets and chocolates when they came out to the streets to play. The lady was very rude and curtly told my mother that her children had every right to eat sweets wherever they wanted and that it was none of my mother's business. My mother was shown the door and she swallowed her pride and came away. But she reached the end of her tether when I, thinking all the while that she had gone to the lady's house to get me sweets, started clamouring for them. In her anger she took up a stone and flung it at me. Unfortunately the stone hit me on my forehead and I began to bleed profusely. My mother was filled with remorse and as for me, I never again asked for sweets. I grew up, made my way in the world and became a millionaire, but the scar has become a permanent part of my face. Whenever I look at myself in the mirror, I see it and am reminded of the history behind it. It always seems to be telling me: "The happiness of others left this scar on your forehead, then beware that your happiness does not leave a

scar on somebody else's forehead! My scar has taught me this very wise lesson and therefore do I consider it my 'guru'."

Each of us must consider how to pass on our spiritual happiness to our children. How should we impart this knowledge to them so that in the course of their lives they do not leave a scar on somebody else's forehead? This is a matter of great responsibility. And to do this successfully we must first have true vision of life and thus purify our soul. This soul is in every one of us. It was there before we were born and will continue to be there after our body is dead; its journey is continuous. This is the knowledge we need to gain.

Why do the sages ask you to fast, to meditate and to learn self-denial? For it is through these that you experience the purity of the mind.

The realisation of the existence of your eternal soul is the dawn of vision in you. When through your deeds, and by setting yourself free from "Kashaya," you attain the salvation of this soul, it is the final perfection of this vision.

Most people forget the soul and recognise only the body. But nothing worthwhile can be achieved as

long as you do not recognise the soul within this body. The man who does not know himself — his true self, who does not recognise the immortal flame within him, how can he realise the existence of the soul in others? If a man considers himself no more than a mere combination of the elements, to him his dear ones, too, will be just that and nothing more. The body is subject to the shocks and the repercussions of good fortune and misfortune; the man who knows himself to be a soul is free from these. To the man who recognises only his body, any bodily ailment or physical suffering seems to signify the end of the world, whereas to the man who sees himself as a soul, the whole world scintillates with kindred souls.

According to our ancient Indian traditions, a husband and wife should always remember that they were brought together not merely for the satisfaction of their physical desires, but that gradually, they must become fellow travellers on the road to salvation. If one of the partners suffers from an illness or becomes a cripple, the other should bear the burden — nay, should not even think of it as a burden.

But where there is no marriage of the souls, if one falls ill for a long time the other starts thinking in

terms of separation. It is, then, a marriage of two statues made up of the elements. Today so many young men and women come together for selfish motives. The slightest hitch, and — you go your way and I go mine.

Compare to that the classical story of Queen Anjana and her husband, Pavananjay. Because of a misunderstanding for twenty-two years Pavananjay would not even look at his wife. But in Anjana there was infinite patience and tolerance and she vowed that if she could not get her husband's physical attention, she would stay chaste, for after all, that was only a matter of the body — the outer shell; but she was confident that she would direct all her efforts to the salvation of her husband's soul. After twenty-two years, when Pavananjay realised his foolish mistake, he was full of remorse and with tears he said, "I am evil, wicked, please forgive me!" "You are not evil, if you were, these tears would not flow from your eyes. They have cleansed you," said Anjana, as if nothing had happened for twenty-two long years.

If your life is enriched by the possession of the trinity of these gems, your marriage becomes altogether different from that of the majority of human

beings today. Then you, along with your partner, will always be eagerly reaching up to the sublime.

The soul has taken the outer shell of the body as its temporary residence, but it has the privilege to leave this body whenever it wants to. The soul is the master, the body is the slave. As the master says: "This is my servant," so the soul says: "This is my body."

The very word, "my" or "mine" implies an existence independent of yours. Thus when you say, "This is *my* house, or *my* car," it automatically implies that you are not the house or the car, that you and the house or the car have different identities. Similarly the soul can exist independently of the body. There are many delicate people who complain that they cannot endure the heat of the sun on their body. Yet this same body, when discarded by the soul, will bear the heat of the funeral pyre uncomplainingly. You must try to grasp this distinction without involving the self. When you learn to observe things from this detached position, you will realise that so many things which you were accustomed to consider from the point of view of the "self," will now show themselves to you from the

point of view of the “non-self” and then you gain the tranquillity which comes from detachment. You may then see yourself suffer, but will not feel the suffering.

You will have to try this out very often. In the beginning it will not be easy, but gradually you will reach the state of non-attachment. This is the state of the man who has the true vision. His mind is well-balanced. He accepts prosperity and adversity with the same equanimity. With a serene smile he says: “No matter how high the waves, my boat is always ready, whether it meets the high tide of good fortune or the ebb tide of misfortune. There are bound to be ups and downs in life, because that is the way of the world.”

Not everyone around us is fortunate enough to possess perfect knowledge. In fact, we are surrounded by ignorance. Very often, the most enlightened of men during their lifetime have been beyond the comprehension of those closest to them. The enlightened one feels with regret that their association with him is as casual as of travellers sojourning overnight at the same inn. If this isolation was the result of their having attained the state of non-attachment, it would be an altogether different matter, for then it would

be like the lotus which grows in a stagnant pond and yet retains its purity, untouched by the filth and the mire. But their isolation is the result of ignorance.

Even your dearest ones see you not from within but from without. They are those who have eyes but do not see. How can you expect a man who cannot see and recognise the soul within himself, to recognise the soul in others? But before you blame them for this lack of sight, or shall we say, insight, are you sure that you, too, do not suffer from this lack? How terrifying is the isolation of ignorance!

Worldly knowledge teaches you and encourages you to accumulate material things; spiritual knowledge teaches you to be free of them. The first makes you a slave to technological devices, the second frees you from their bondage. This spiritual knowledge is true or perfect knowledge.

Do you know the story of the boatman and his eight passengers? The boatman was a simple, uneducated fellow, the passengers were all educated young men. As they were crossing the river, one of the young men asked his friend what time it was. The other, thinking of having some fun at the expense of the boatman, instead of answering his

friend, turned to the former and said, "Old man, what is the time by your watch?" The boatman answered humbly, "Sir, I don't know how to read, what would I do with a watch?" Some of the others joining in the fun laughed and exclaimed: "Good heavens! you don't know how to read, then half your life is wasted!" A few minutes later they heard the chimes of a clock in the tower on the opposite shore. Another young man said to the boatman: "Look fellow, you may not know how to read, but surely you can count! Let's see, how often did the clock strike?" The boatman quietly said, "Sir, I don't know how to count either." The young men burst out laughing and said, "Three-fourths of your life is wasted." At that moment the water started becoming rather rough and the boat was tossed about alarmingly. The boatman said, "There seems to be a flood in the river; our little boat may not be able to withstand it. I hope all of you know how to swim." The young men looked at each other and were terrified. None of them knew how to swim. As the boat was about to capsize, the old man could not restrain himself. He said mockingly: "Gentlemen, you were perhaps right when you said that three-fourths of my life was wasted, but at least I shall be able to save the remaining one-fourth;

whereas you will be losing your lives completely. All your other knowledge is of no use here, if you don't know how to swim!"

This anecdote has a significance for all of us. All your much-vaunted knowledge is of little avail if you do not know how to swim across the ocean of life.

There are two types of knowledge: the knowledge of the world in its outer aspect, and the knowledge of the essence or spirit of life. The first can be bought; you can learn it in schools and colleges. Spiritual knowledge cannot be bought. If you want it, you must dive deep within yourself, question yourself, understand yourself. The man who succeeds in gaining this knowledge smiles as he passes through life and smiles as he leaves it.

As Bhagwan Mahavir's time for departure from this world drew nigh, he gave a sixty-four hour sermon to his followers, because he wanted to share with them his own spiritual knowledge. And so he gave to the world a treasure chest of knowledge in his famous "Uttaradhyayansutra"—one of the forty-five 'agamas' or gospels of Jainism. And as he de-

livered this, his last sermon, there was a look of rapture on his serene face.

He who knows how to die has indeed known how to live. Truly has the philosopher said: "Barring accidents, tell me how a man died and I shall tell you how he lived." Death is the sum-total of life.

The man who has the power to distinguish between the outer form and the essence of things, concentrates on how to make the leaving of his life beautiful. Thus after true vision, it is the turn of true knowledge. What is the soul? What is its future? How is it weighed down with *karma*? How can it be set free? What should one do to taste the divine nectar? These are the questions which the man in search of true knowledge asks himself. For as the poet has said:

*Know then thyself; presume not God to scan,
The proper study of mankind is Man.*

Yagnavalkya had two wives. When he decided to renounce the world and go into the wilderness, he started dividing his worldly possessions between the two wives. At this, one of them, Maitreyi, asked him: "Are you planning to give me only your worldly possessions? And if they are worth giving, then why do you show so much eagerness to re-

linquish them? Will they help me to get a sip of nectar? Where lies the sense in accepting things which ultimately I shall have to give up! Take away these baubles and show me the means by which you are going to learn of the immortality of the soul."

One needs peaceful atmosphere when in pursuit of this spiritual knowledge. It is only in moments of utter tranquillity that you can see what lies buried deep. In our daily lives there are so many distractions, so many pressures and worries. Even the man who seems most prosperous in the worldly sense is not free from these pressures. On the contrary, the more the means to material prosperity, the greater the bustle, the greater the worries. Such a man does not have a moment of repose even for his meals, then how can he have the time or the calm state of mind so necessary for self-introspection? Are you truly happy? What is true happiness? It is absolute peace of mind, a serene tranquillity. Do you experience this tranquillity? As long as you do not experience it, how can you possibly have a vision of the self?

If your ring slips off your finger and sinks to the bottom while you are bathing in a pond or a lake, will you be able to see it if there are ripples in the water? But if the water is clear and calm, you will

spot it immediately. So, too, when your mind is pure and calm you will be able to see within yourself. The task of the spiritually ignorant is to stir up the water, to make it muddy. The task of the spiritually enlightened is to calm the water and give it a crystal-line purity. And the more material things you possess, the greater the ripples. And sometimes the ripples become a whirlpool and the man is sucked in by it.

You must know how to make the right use of the things you possess so that they may enable you to elevate yourself. If you use them to bury yourself with, then you behave like those ignorant devotees who bury their god under flowers and lose all sight of him.

You must learn to distinguish between the means and the end, and then you will automatically ask yourself: "Am I my own master?"

Circumstances are determined by man himself. If a man is weak he is easily overwhelmed by circumstances; but if he is strong he overcomes them. Then it is not the circumstances which mould him, but it is he who shapes circumstances.

Never take any step which involves the sacrifice of your inner peace, for then you will never learn to

study yourself, to understand yourself. As your reflection is clearest in water that is calm and unruffled, so in a mind that is clean and undistracted, arises in luminous letters the answer to the question: "Who am I?"

"Who am I?" Because people do not know the answer to this question, they are trapped in the illusion of a "borrowed" name—the name which is given to them when they are born, the name by which they know themselves. They want to win honour and renown for this name. Such men, even when they go on pilgrimages or to meet a well-known sage, always have one eye on the figure they cut, the name they make. They might even arrange for a press photographer or a reporter to be present! So strong is the attachment of this name that often the eyelids of a half-unconscious man on his deathbed will flutter open when his name is called out. He may gaze with blank, unrecognising eyes at his dear ones standing at his bedside, but the magic word has opened his dull eyes for a moment. And after all, what is this name? You were not born with it. It was given to you, given by others; yet how it clings to you! How strong is one's attachment even for a "borrowed" thing! On the other hand, the man who

aspires to self-knowledge is not in the least bothered about his name. He knows that he was not born with it and he is not going to take it away with him. It was given to him by others and so it matters little if nobody knows his name. And yet how hypersensitive about unimportant things are the spiritually ignorant! They are easily irritated and feel insulted over trifles. They demand their meed of respect from others, forgetting that the man who is ignorant of his true self cannot give respect.

When somebody spreads tales about you, even if it is unjust or unpleasant, do not allow yourself to be upset by it. Just say to yourself that this is his opinion of you, not his knowledge of you. Opinions are often formed by the external eye, the eye of flesh and blood; knowledge comes through the inner eye. The vision of the inner eye which opens a window to yourself is the vision which comes with true knowledge. When the man who has developed this knowledge is asked his name he will certainly give it, but within himself he knows that he is not his name.

The man with perfect knowledge has freed himself from the petty distinctions of sect and creed. Oneness and unity are not spread through lectures and ser-

mons, they evolve through understanding. The moment you know and understand your soul the bonds of sectarianism will automatically snap. When the tree grows big, can the narrow fence which surrounded it when it was a plant, now contain it? Without knowledge of the soul, all talk of unity and equality is superficial, for then there will always be lurking underneath, the desire for fame and honour and at the slightest opportunity it will break through and make a crack in the veneer of equality. The equality preached by the spiritually ignorant is like a mud palace—either water will wash it away or the heat of the sun will crack it.

The vision which comes through perfect knowledge is unique. It brings in its wake natural harmony and pure love. Name, fame, no longer mean anything. All that matters is a world filled with love, a world which is a meeting place of pure souls. The vision of the soul is the supreme ecstasy.

What do you see when you look at yourself in the mirror? Do you see a reflection of your soul, or of your body? What you see there is not your real self—that is invisible. You can see in the mirror only your body which contains within it your real self. What stands in front of the mirror is merely a

statue and a statue cannot look at itself. The soul has no physical shape or outline and is unaffected by time. The body has a shape which is subject to time. From childhood to manhood it grows in size and then gradually gets worn out and is finally destroyed. The fine muscular frame of youth becomes a bag of bones in old age and finally becomes a handful of dust. The body is subject to growth and decay and is, therefore, transient.

“How can one distinguish between the body and the soul?” I was once asked by a young man. This man was an amateur photographer and his camera had been his constant companion since childhood. I told him, “That which is subject to the laws of time, that which grows and finally comes to decay, is the body. That which is immortal, indestructible, is the soul. You tell me that you are fond of taking self-portraits with your camera. Well, take your photographs from childhood to the present and arrange them in a chronological order. Then ask yourself, ‘Which of these am I? This little boy or this young man?’ You will understand then that the thing which changes day by day is not your real self. This is only your outward form. Your true self is formless, it is ageless.”

It is through this knowledge that the saints and sages are in a perpetual state of spiritual intoxication. Old age comes to them, but they do not feel it. When the hour of death draws nigh, they say: "Well, let's go to our new home." When a man experiences this, his life is suffused with sweetness and light and as he lives, he spreads sweetness and light around him. It is then that his life becomes a source of inspiration to others. Of what use is it for a man to leave behind him a legacy of material wealth if it is unaccompanied by a spiritual legacy? All it means is that he could not take his money with him and so he was forced to leave it behind. It is such men who scribble their names with a pencil on the walls of the hotel room where they might pass a night. That is all that they have to offer to posterity—a name scribbled in black! It is not these names scribbled on the walls of hotel rooms that we remember in our morning prayers, but the names of those whose lives were sublime and inspiring.

Those whose lives are flooded by the light of perfect knowledge have understood the true significance of life as well as death and therefore they are unafraid. Life existed before this birth and will continue to do so after death. It is here on this shore

and will be there on the opposite shore, too. In between is the flow of birth and death. Because of *Karma* and attachments the soul has to revolve in the cycle of birth and death. If you take a vessel and cover it with mud, it will not float. But scrap off all the filth and see how merrily it floats away on the waters of the river ! The soul, too, when it is weighed down by *Karma* and attachments sinks in this river of life and death. Cleanse it of these and it will bob up to the surface. It does not then need any external help. It is its very nature to shoot up. Have you ever held a candle upside down? Does the flame burn downwards? How can it?

True vision is the appetite of the soul; true knowledge is the understanding of the soul; true character is the perfect experience of the soul. In this last stage there are no more questions, only answers; no more murmurs, only fulfilment.

In the relationship between the bee and the flower we see the embodiment of all the three stages. From a distance the bee gets the fragrance of a beautiful flower. Instinctively it knows the direction from which this fragrance comes, it knows it is there. This is vision. The bee now flies to the garden and finds

out the flower. This is knowledge. Now it alights on the flower and starts sucking from it. There is no more of flying around, there is no more of humming. There is only this intoxicated oneness with the flower. This is character.

Let us consider this from another point of view:

I am His — Vision

I am Yours— Knowledge

I am You — Character

In the first stage the aspirant has not yet seen the Supreme Soul. But faith has been aroused in him from what he has heard. He says, therefore: "I am His". He puts himself in the first person and God in the third person. He has not seen Him, but has heard about Him.

Then comes the second stage. In the first there was only vision; to that, knowledge is now added. He has seen God. God is before him and therefore he says: "I am Yours." He is in the first person and God is in the second person. He has come nearer to God.

"I am You"—this is the third stage. The man himself and the Supreme Soul are on the same status. He has a firm belief that he has within himself all the

virtues that are in God and therefore in this moment of oneness of the soul, he says: "I am You."

Let us take some examples. Say, a marriage has been arranged between a young man and a young woman who have never seen each other. Whilst talking to her friends, the young bride-to-be says: "I am his." When she meets her future husband, she says: "I am yours." After their marriage when she goes to him as his wife she says: "Now I am you."

Suppose a rich merchant has many branches in different towns. A new servant is employed by the manager of a distant branch. When asked, the servant will say: "I am my master's servant." Then one day the merchant comes on a visit and the servant meets him and says: "I am your servant". Years later the servant becomes an equal partner. There is no difference now between him and his erstwhile master and so now he says: "I am you."

True Vision is a glimpse of the soul.

True Knowledge is an understanding of the soul.

True Character is complete oneness with the soul.

I am reminded of a Persian poem. It is about a young lover. One night he goes to his beloved's house in all eagerness. In answer to his knock the

voice of his beloved is heard from within: "Who is it?" Preening himself he answers "It's I." The voice answers: "This is a very small place, here there's no room for "I and You." The door does not open. Much mortified, he goes away and sits in a nearby wood, pondering over the strange answer. In the calm atmosphere he cools down. His vanity and ego are deflated and he laughs as he realises that the answer to the situation lies within himself. Back he goes to his beloved's house and again the question is asked: "Who is it?" Humbly he answers: "It's you." The door swings open.

A drop of water is a minute thing, but in its essence it is no different from the mighty ocean. Indeed, could there be an ocean if there were no drops? It is a question of degree, not of kind. So, too, if there were no souls, how could there be a Supreme Soul? This is something which cannot be fully understood merely through a lecture or a discourse; it has to be experienced.

The mind that is entangled in the meshes of lust and indulgence cannot fully appreciate the joy of this salvation. How can such a bondsman feel or understand the wave upon wave of rapture that accompanies the liberation of the soul? To a man who

has bathed and washed himself scrupulously clean and dressed himself in spotless clothes, even a speck of dust will cause discomfort and uneasiness. But does an animal which wallows in filth ever think of bathing itself?

The man with true strength hides it in quiet self-restraint; he does not trumpet it from the house-tops. It flows calmly within him, always there to help him when necessary. It is the inner strength of character which is the true strength. As Lord Tennyson says with reference to Sir Galahad:

*My strength is as the strength of ten,
Because my heart is pure.*

When an atom explodes it produces unbelievable energy. When the shell of the ego bursts, the core which is within, which is your true self, your spirit, shines forth with a dazzling brilliance. When will this shell of the ego shatter? When you enter deep within yourself, when you reach the core of your being. But most people only care to nibble at the outer shell. The kernel of the coconut, its sweet water, can be had only when you break its outer shell.

The ego is the shell; within it is the nucleus, the essence of your real self. The ego seeks fame, it asks

to be fed on vanity; flattery is grist to its mill. The soul is self-sufficient. The ego is a shackle; the soul seeks to make you free. The ego wants to announce itself with a fanfare; the soul is quietly self-effacing.

Once three friends went together to a sage wanting to be his disciples and to imbibe his wisdom and holiness. The sage asked them: "Who are you?" The first replied: "I? I am a prince. I am the overlord of twenty towns." "Enough," said the wise man, and then turning to the second asked: "Pray, who are you?" The second replied: "I? I am the son of the richest man in this town. My father is a millionaire and I am his only son. My position in my home is incomparable." The holy man turned to the third friend and said: "And you? Who are you?" The young man humbly folded his hands and said: "My lord, if I knew who I was, would I have come to you? Won't you show me who I am? In my life of thoughtless pleasure, somewhere along the way I forgot who I really am."

Need I tell you the holy man's choice?

True character leads not to the aggrandisement of material possessions, but to inner fulfilment. When Bhagwan Mahavir was preparing to renounce the

world. Nandiprakashan asked him: "Brother, why do you want to leave your kingdom with all the honour and glory attached to it and instead hide yourself in the obscurity of the forest?"

Lifting his eyes which gleamed with fulfilment, to the sky, Bhagwan Mahavir answered: "He whose kingdom stretches beyond the sky, how can he pass his time in the dust? He who would rule over himself spiritually, how can he rule over others physically?"

From what divine depths come these words of wisdom! They rise up from a soul which is free of all illusions and attachments. When the bee has found the fragrant flower, it no longer wanders around, but is completely absorbed in sipping honey. This absorption, this oneness with the soul is supreme happiness. It is the purpose of our life, our *raison d'être*.

Bhagwan Mahavir has shown us three means to attain the ultimate aim of achieving this state of salvation—Vision, Knowledge and Character. Each of these three is important and the lack of any one, would cause a breakdown in our journey. It is, therefore, my wish today that all of you succeed in acquiring these three gems.