

HARMONIZATION WITH THE TEACHING

'The Path does exist, it exists everywhere and in every age, yet it hides itself from the unready, the sensation seekers and the self-indulgent.'

Receptivity and Response to the 'Call'

The perception of a higher teaching of human transformation, and the subsequent harmonization with it, occurs on a more subtle level of reality than the intellectual or emotional plane. "The inner current, the 'call' as it is termed, is shut out of one's awareness by coarser ambitions and preoccupations." It is believed that a promising potential student is attracted to a spiritual teacher or teaching by an intuitive recognition of truth which is perceived by a subtle 'inner organ' of sensitivity:

The beginner is saved from complete insensitivity because within him or her there is a vestigial capacity to react to "true gold." And the teacher, recognizing the innate capacity, will be able to use it as a receiving apparatus for his signals. True, in the earlier stages, the signals transmitted by the teacher will have to be arranged in such a way as to be perceptible to the inefficient and possibly distorted mechanism of the receiver. But the combination of the two elements provides a basis for a working arrangement. (1)

Certain feelings and sensations, which are different from ordinary ones, are indicative of an affinity or responsiveness to the higher Teaching. A student can tell whether a teaching is the right one for them "by sensations and reactions which differ completely from customary ones, indications which one does not experience through contact with anything else, including established 'religious' or other experiences." At a certain point an individual may develop a sensitivity to the activity of an inner teaching which signals the growing capacity to learn effectively. In the words of Sufi teacher Idries Shah:

He (or she) *is* able to observe and to feel the special function of the Sufi impact, on himself, on his fellows, in literature and in other areas. He can detect, and profit from, this activity in many different ways, without being imprisoned by method or associations. It is this last response which, for the Sufi teacher, signals the emergence of the learning function, the enlightenment, without which no further progress is made. It is at this stage that the student can at last 'make sense' of all that has gone before, can profit from his past efforts. If he can anticipate that this is the true sequence of events, he will, even before he reaches it, gain the confidence and stability to continue without constantly trying to 'get paid as he goes along.' In many systems, there is an anxiety to cash in, to get something, to feel, to know, to be, to experience, to attain certitude: this is what we call getting paid as you go along. With the Sufi, you do not, however, get paid

twice. There is a choice open to all: choose the Sufi opportunity if it comes your way, but at the expense of using it as a source of emotional stimulus. Alternatively, choose a system which promises thrills, chills and spills, stimuli as you go along – and find nothing else. (2)

There are a number of ways, related to the presence of an inner spark or ‘blessing,’ in which a seeker can sense the truth of a spiritual teaching. The ability to perceive real spiritual teachings is said to be analogous to the ability of bees to distinguish between artificial and real scents. Sometimes a potential student of higher learning must rely on intuition, even inspired guess-work, in choosing a suitable spiritual guide and mentor:

Q: Does the would-be Sufi have to take a great deal on trust?

A: In theory, everything. In practice, nothing. This is because no genuine applicant will seek enrollment until he is convinced that Sufism is what he needs.

Q: How does this happen?

A: A sense of certainty piles up within him, until he knows by an inner sense of conviction that Sufism will lead him in the direction he is seeking. This may happen in more than one way. It may come through meeting Sufis and feeling that they have some indefinable quality that calls to something similar within him. It may come from lighting upon something in a book, it may come through a sudden experience or recognition of something that leads to becoming a Sufi. And there are other ways which cannot be described. (3)

Gurdjieff emphasized that the spiritual path begins on a higher level than ordinary life and is dependent on the power of two types of influences: “The first kind are influences created *in life itself* or by life itself -- influences of race, nation, country, climate, family, education, society, profession, manners and customs, wealth, poverty, current ideas, and so on. The second kind of influences are created *outside this life*, influences of the inner circle, or esoteric influences.”

If a man in receiving these influences begins to discriminate between them and put on one side those which are not created in life itself, then gradually discrimination becomes easier and after a certain time a man can no longer confuse them with the ordinary influences of life . . . The results of these influences collect together within him and after a certain time they form within him a kind of *magnetic centre*, which begins to attract to itself kindred influences and in this manner it grows. If the magnetic centre receives sufficient nourishment, and if there is no strong resistance on the part of the other sides of a man’s personality which are the result of influences created in life, the magnetic centre begins to influence a man’s orientation, obliging him to turn round and even to move in a certain direction. When the magnetic centre attains sufficient force and development, a man already understands the idea of the way and he begins to look for the way. The

search for the way may take many years and may lead to nothing. This depends upon conditions, upon circumstances, upon the power of the magnetic centre, upon the power and direction of inner tendencies which are not concerned with this search and which may divert a man at the very moment when the possibility of finding the way appears. (4)

In some instances a spiritual teacher may publicly present certain aspects of a comprehensive teaching in order to attract those who can benefit from the more esoteric inner developmental content of the teaching:

In answer to a question I asked about the purpose of Gurdjieff's visit to America, he said, "The demonstrations, the meetings and talks, are a kind of net thrown out. Of the hundreds of people who see and hear, only a few, in a state of dissatisfaction with themselves and with life, will feel that we have something they are looking for. It does not necessarily mean that these few will be 'unhappy' people. They may be leading an active life, be well off and comfortably situated, but they will feel that there is something else besides the round of ordinary existence. In other words, there are certain people who possess a magnetic centre, or the beginning of one; these are the people who have the possibility of working on themselves. The rest of humanity, not feeling the need, will do nothing. We are, in fact, offering people an opportunity of having a purpose in life, of using their suffering – the dissatisfaction they feel – for their own good. How many will take it? We shall see." (5)

One important indication of higher developmental potential in a student is his or her ability to distinguish a source of authentic spirituality regardless of outer appearance, customary associations or apparent format. In fact, certain organizations and groups which do not appear spiritual or esoteric in nature, exist for the purpose of attracting people who can perceive the actual inner content of such bodies:

The Sufis have, and apparently have had for centuries, organizations and individuals, both in the East and the West, which exist partly for the purpose of attracting people who already feel some kind of harmony with the 'inner sense' of the Sufi. These organizations are usually not put forward as 'spiritual schools' at all, but much more often seem to be mundane associations of people. Someone may even be a member of one or more of such bodies for years before realizing that it has an inner, spiritual core . . . Sufis who feel that an individual may be a candidate for study will often contrive to get to know such people, and see whether a social as well as a more subtle harmonization is possible. In such cases, the people being approached will not necessarily be introduced to the typical Sufi literature. This is because Sufis may teach within any framework and the frameworks and literature which are generally considered to be essential to the Sufi are in fact only those which form a single facet of their activities. (6)

Approaching the Path

Success in finding an authentic spiritual teaching corresponds with an aspirant's degree of inner sincerity. Sincerity and willingness to align oneself with truth form the basis of entry to the Path. "Where there is a genuine aspiration towards truth, and when the aspiration is directed towards a source of it, there must be a corresponding effective result." The very idea of enlightenment is of utmost importance in the spiritual journey. Just to know the existence of such a possibility, changes the seeker's entire outlook and approach to truth.

The desire for truth is the fire that fuels the transmutation of the conditioned self or ego. "Once you say, 'I want to find Truth,' all your life will be deeply affected by it. All your mental and physical habits, feelings and emotions, desires and fears, plans and decisions will undergo a most radical transformation."

Q: What is the source of earnestness?

A: It is the homing instinct, which makes the bird return to its nest and the fish to the mountain stream where it was born. The seed returns to the earth when the fruit is ripe. Ripeness is all.

Q: And what will ripen me? Do I need experience?

A: You already have all the experience you need, otherwise you would not have come here. You need not gather any more, rather you must go beyond experience. Whatever effort you make, whatever method you follow, will merely generate more experience, but will not take you beyond. Nor will reading books help you. They will enrich your mind, but the person you are will remain intact. If you expect any benefits from your search, material, mental or spiritual, you have missed the point. Truth gives no advantage. It gives you no higher status, no power over others; all you get is truth, and the freedom from the false. (7)

Self-knowledge and understanding emerge from an honest, non-judgemental awareness of our mental, emotional and physical functioning, and prepares the ground for further spiritual development under the guidance of a teacher. "The longing to know oneself and uncover our true nature appears when we question life and live with the question without interpretation or conclusion."

You must first begin by really facing yourself, your fears, desires and reactions. By this I mean stop superimposing your own projections and accept life as it comes to you. The surest way to discover truth is to stop resisting it. Self-awareness requires a certain degree of maturity which arises naturally when you question your motives and desires from a stance of receptivity. You await the answer. This stance is a kind of recapitulation of your whole life, without attraction-repulsion, likes and dislikes. You take stock, you look, you take note. In the moment of self-

acceptance you are still. You let your perceptions unfold, you let your pain and desires speak, the ego is absent, but *you* remain still. This is the moment to find a teacher. But the person can never *find* him. He *comes* to you, because he is waiting for you.

Q: You are saying not to seek a guru?

A: The very intention to find someone already prejudices the way you see. Seeking someone means you're not open to whatever comes to meet you from moment to moment. But if your attitude is innocent, receptive to the world, empty of reaction, you can be sure you will meet all you need to meet. (8)

The quest for higher knowledge demands a certain effort and struggle in order to reach and utilize an actual source of real teaching. Omar Ali-Shah: "The Tradition makes available to you a path and a way in which the spiritual dimension can be enhanced and positively influence the person's life. The path is a long one. It is full of hard work, but it is an investment of one's energy and feeling. Nothing the Tradition promises is beyond the reach of an average person with more than average dedication and discipline."

He who wants knowledge must himself make the initial efforts to find the source of knowledge and to approach it, taking advantage of the help and indications which are given to all, but which people, as a rule, do not want to see or recognize. Knowledge cannot come to people without effort on their own part. They understand this very well in connection with ordinary knowledge, but in the case of *great knowledge*, when they admit the possibility of its existence, they find it possible to expect something different. Everyone knows very well that if, for instance, a man wants to learn Chinese, it will take several years of intense work, everyone knows that five years are needed to grasp the principles of medicine, and perhaps twice as many years for the study of painting or music. (9)

When we inquire deeply into our own nature we come to understand the self-imposed barriers preventing the full actualization of our spiritual potential as a human being. "To receive life we must be open to it. Life can only be understood by life. This means that the being is open to life itself."

Q: This inner need, the eagerness for freedom – must it be very strong?

A: The urge to freedom must be tremendous. But it cannot be learned or acquired. It comes through self-inquiry. In self-inquiry there appears a fore-feeling, an intimation of reality, and it is this fore-feeling which brings up a tremendous ardour. When you inquire, you may first feel a lack. You may not know what kind of lack it is and you will go in many directions in the hope of filling it . . . You will travel down many of these dead-ends, like a hunting dog who cannot find the scent and runs around frantically. But these cul-de-sacs of experience bring you to a kind of matu-

rity, because inevitably you will question more deeply all the happenings and their transience. It's a process of elimination. You must inquire, inquire like a scientist, into your life. (10)

The various challenges and struggles involved in an authentic spiritual quest were allegorized by Gurdjieff as a journey through unknown lands:

Go out one clear starlit night to some open space and look up at the sky, at those millions of worlds over your head. Remember that perhaps on each of them swarm billions of beings, similar to you or perhaps superior to you in their organization. Look at the Milky Way. The earth cannot even be called a grain of sand in this infinity. It dissolves and vanishes, and with it, you. Where are you? And is what you want simply madness? Before all these worlds ask yourself what are your aims and hopes, your intentions and means of fulfilling them, the demands that may be made upon you and your preparedness to meet them. A long and difficult journey is before you, you are preparing for a strange and unknown land. The way is infinitely long. You do not know if rest will be possible on the way nor where it will be possible . . . In a green meadow covered with luxuriant flowers, in the thick grass, a deep precipice is hidden. It is very easy to stumble and fall over if your eyes are not concentrated on the step you are taking. Do not forget to concentrate all your attention on the nearest sector of the way and do not concern yourself about far aims if you do not wish to fall over the precipice. Yet do not forget your aim . . . Do not be overcurious nor waste time on things that attract your attention but are not worth it. Time is precious and should not be wasted on things which have no direct relation to your aim. Remember where you are and why you are here. Do not protect yourself and remember that no effort is made in vain. And now you can set out on the way. (11)

The seeker should approach the Teaching without preconceptions, mindless acceptance or rejection, or trying to gain or 'consume' something. Those who can share and serve, and not just take, have adopted the proper posture and attitude with respect to higher knowledge:

When people come into contact with our ideas and spread them to others in the right kind of way, (that is, not cultishly or by setting themselves up as teachers) they are sharing as well as taking something in. Such people never clamour first of all to be received, seen, taught, and so on. They cultivate a group of people, spread this knowledge as best they can, and then they ask whether they should come or whether someone might visit them. They are, in fact, in a condition to learn and to serve as well as be served. This establishes the continuum of serving and being served. Others, on the other hand, spend large amounts of money to travel, collecting it sometimes from others, and think only of themselves, even if they do not realize it. If they do not see this behaviour in themselves it is for us

to point it out to them, so that they can profit from so doing, and learn to readjust their greed by establishing the serve and be served continuum. (12)

In order for higher knowledge to be effectively unlocked and the spiritual potential of a human being to be actualized, the Teaching must be approached in the proper manner:

The receptivity of a person to [transformational ideas] is sometimes clouded by the demand for 'being given' something. I say clouded, because there are really three conditions which have to be looked at. First, there is the potential of the human being – the endowment which he or she already has; second there is the intervention of the teaching function; lastly there is the effort which the individual makes in accepting the teaching and preserving the endowment. The last item is one about which people seem to have the least idea. Human potentiality is an endowment: and one which can be preserved, enriched and also spent. (13)

Potential students of esoteric knowledge must learn to discern a source of real teaching from secondary or deteriorated projections. This requires a certain quality of discernment and flexibility of approach in order to distinguish between authentic and false or diluted teachings. "The sincere and the adequately prepared will always find the source, and ample verbal and written materials now exist to guide them. The students bear some responsibility for reaching and maintaining an adequate standard of honesty and eligibility."

Most people have the ability to develop a sense of discrimination with regard to the authenticity of supposed spiritual teachings. However, the seeker must admit some degree of responsibility in the choice and commitment to a given spiritual path. A traditional adage speaks to this point: "If there were fewer receivers of stolen goods, there would be fewer thieves; if there were no greedy people there would be no con-men."

As to the problem of recognizing a true *Sufi*, there is no problem to the true *person*. Sufis say that you will only be misled if something unworthy in yourself attracts you to an unworthy person. It is not for the Sufi to represent himself as worthy; it is not for anyone to give you a test for a Sufi. It is for whoever wants to discern truth to focus that part of himself or herself which is honest towards the supposed Sufi. Like calls to like, truth to truth and deceit to deceit. If you are not yourself deceitful, you will not be deceived. The assumption that all seekers are honest and that they only need a test to ascertain the honesty of a spiritual teacher is very much out of line with the real facts. (14)

Relationship with the Teaching

It is almost impossible to travel the path of inner development by oneself due to the many challenges, obstacles and deceptions that lie in wait. Help from others who have completed

the journey is indispensable in virtually all cases. Gurdjieff articulated this position in talks with his students:

I have already said that there are people who hunger and thirst for truth. If they examine the problems of life and are sincere with themselves, they soon become convinced that it is not possible to live as they have lived and to be what they have been until now, that a way out of this situation is essential and that a man can develop his hidden capacities and powers only by cleaning his machine of the dirt that has clogged it in the course of his life. But in order to undertake this cleaning in a rational way, he has to see what needs to be cleaned, where and how; but to see this for himself is almost impossible. In order to see anything of this one has to look from the outside; and for this mutual help is necessary . . . This briefly is the state of things in the realm of self-knowledge: in order to do you must know; but to know you must find out how to know. We cannot find this out by ourselves. (15)

The student must be open and receptive to the teachings in order for change and transformation to occur:

Just hearing words is not enough. The teaching goes beyond what could ever be said. You need to absorb it through the pores of your skin. The closer you work with a true teacher the greater the opportunity there is for this to happen. When you receive the teaching only through your head, it is obstructed by too many opinions and ideas and cannot penetrate to the heart. True Zen masters may wish to give the teaching to everyone, but not everyone is able to receive it. All students put up barriers at some point and remain attached to their own views. The more correct these views seem to be, the harder they are to let go. People who hold tight to their opinions can never attain the Way. Your capacity to receive the teaching is greatly determined by your willingness to continuously let go and open up. (16)

In general, the essence of the spiritual path can only be transmitted by working with and interacting with a teacher. Study of the higher teaching is not a do-it-yourself affair: *'Someone who is engaged in self-study should not have a fool for a teacher.'* The selection of a spiritual guide is an important stage in the process of inner development and not to be taken lightly:

It is the seeker's *particular* true guide who must be found, the right person to teach the *particular* him or her who is in need. We cannot enter into relationships at this level with just anyone, whatever their qualifications; it has to 'feel right' before we entrust ourselves and our destinies to another. Even then, how can we set about selecting our guide? Rumi tells us, 'Do not look at his figure and colour; look at his purpose and intention.' In a sense, however, this begs the question, since the novice by the nature of things has not developed the criteria by which to judge. Yet he is on the verge of making so momentous an act of self-surrender

that its consequences may stretch forward for many years. The situation is complicated by the fact that his own sincerity may manage to extract relevant truths, and thus the impetus for progress, even from a manifest charlatan. (17)

The teacher provides the support and guidance necessary for authentic spiritual work:

Q: Where do we find the integrity and energy for spiritual practice?

A: You find it in the company of the wise.

Q: How do I know who is wise and who is merely clever?

A: If your motives are pure, if you seek truth and nothing else, you will find the right people. Finding them is easy, what is difficult is to trust them and take full advantage of their advice and guidance. (18)

Trust in the teacher is essential in the spiritual journey. “The greatest Guru is helpless as long as the disciple is not eager to learn. Eagerness and earnestness are all-important. Confidence will come with experience.”

When I talk of trusting me, it is only for a short time, just enough time to start you moving. The more earnest you are, the less belief you need, for soon you will find your faith in me justified. You want me to prove to you that I am trustworthy! How can I and why should I? After all, what I am offering you is the operational approach, so current in Western science. When a scientist describes an experiment and its results, usually you accept his statements on trust and repeat his experiment as he describes it. Once you get the same or similar results, you need not trust him anymore; you trust your own experience. Encouraged, you proceed and arrive in the end at substantially identical results. (19)

A person can only attain higher knowledge with the help of those who possess it and are willing to share it with others. Gurdjieff likened this process to climbing a stairway:

The moment when the man who is looking for the way meets a man who knows the way is called the *first threshold* or the *first step*. From this first threshold the *stairway* begins. Between ‘life’ and the ‘way’ lies the ‘stairway.’ Only by passing along this ‘stairway’ can a man enter the ‘way.’ In addition, the man ascends this stairway with the help of the man who is his guide; he cannot go up the stairway by himself. The *way* begins only where the *stairway* ends, that is, after the last *threshold* on the stairway, on a level much higher than the ordinary level of life . . . Sometimes it is said: in ascending the stairway a man is not sure of anything, he may doubt everything, his own powers, whether what he is doing is right, the guide, his knowledge and his powers. At the same time, what he attains is very unstable; even if he has ascended very high on the stairway, he

may fall down at any moment and have to begin again from the beginning. But when he has passed the last threshold and enters the way, all this changes. First of all, all doubts he may have about his guide disappear and at the same time the guide becomes far less necessary to him than before. In many respects he may even be independent and know where he is going. Secondly, he can no longer lose so easily the results of his work and he cannot find himself again in ordinary life. Even if he leaves the way, he will be unable to return where he started from. (20)

Students must be prepared to study higher knowledge within the structures and propositions developed by the teachings themselves, by means of the methods which the teaching itself deems to be effective: "To get the fruits of a study one must respect, obey and follow its established patterns." A student's spiritual progress will be effective only when it is in alignment with an overall pattern and directed by a person "who knows what is possible and what is not, with an individual and a given group of people."

In both the spiritual search and in many fields of ordinary life, people need initial contact with a teaching in a form that is actually useful. Those who seek higher knowledge must be in tune with a developmental teaching that takes into account the circumstances and needs of the time: "What is suitable for one time and place is generally limited, unsuitable or a hindrance in another time and place."

The only value of a teaching to you, and to the teaching itself, is when you become attuned to it in the way, at the time and under the circumstances which are best suited to a fruitful relationship with the teaching. 'Even a fish can only drink so much of the sea.' In this respect the teaching is more subtle than, say, learning a language. You can get a book, or recordings, or a tutor, and study a language anywhere, at any time, whenever you can conveniently do so. And yet, even with learning a language, conditions must be right. You must be in a certain mental and physical state: not too tired or hungry, for instance. You must be in a comparatively comfortable place, and have the right materials at hand. The ordinary person can grasp these needs in a typical learning situation. Yet he or she does not so readily bother to think about them in respect to higher knowledge. Why not? (21)

An intact, comprehensive spiritual teaching will have its own requirements and working-frames. It cannot be approached by mixing bits and pieces from other teachings or cults. One of the requirements of higher learning is that the student harmonize with certain concepts and conditions: "This harmonization signals the entry of the individual into the learning situation."

Students must take into account the contention of the Sufis themselves when they say: 'Sufism must be studied with a certain attitude, under certain conditions, in a certain manner.' Many people, unthinkingly in too many cases, have rebelled against this dictum. But is it, after all, so very different from saying: 'Economics

must be studied with a certain attitude (the desire to understand), under certain conditions (the discipline of scholasticism and the right books) in a certain manner (following a curriculum devised by those who know the subject properly).’ (22)

Higher human development is based on the proper alignment of the teacher, the teachings and the students, as well as a harmonization with collective humanity and ultimate Reality:

Such alignment may not, and frequently does not, accord with expectations about it. Misconceptions have to be shed before alignment itself can be effective. Groupings of people, type and degree of studies, the right balance between action and inaction, these and other factors must be achieved under right direction, otherwise effort is spiritually wasted, although it may be emotionally welcomed by the participants. Such wasteful activity is well summed up by an old phrase, employed also in other connections, ‘If the young *knew*, and the old *could*.’ It is possible to achieve the alignment of thought and action which corresponds with the Ultimate Truth by the application of the right manner of order, discipline and service. (23)

The means of learning must correspond with the student’s needs and capacities. Higher studies are practical and based on actual participation and involvement. In this sense it is hands-on learning unlike an overly academic approach characterized by “gardeners who never touch a plant, or experts on government who teach it but have never been near a government, let alone having discharged any functions connected therewith.” The basic teachings are designed to instruct, regardless of their nominal appearance. People who have a true aspiration to learn may be taught by unusual methods whose bases of study are not readily apparent.

The would-be student must learn to understand their actual position in a spiritual sense, as well as the necessity of a viable teaching framework and relationship with a school. “The ‘gains’ from one’s spiritual search have no worth at all until activated by harmonization with a significant activity in the real Tradition.”

The assertion which we first make is that the people with whom we are dealing in trying to deliver our message are spiritually underdeveloped. There is no shame in this, and the matter is not open for discussion. All teaching begins with an assertion, such as ‘I am here to teach you, and you have to give me the minimum amount of attention.’ It then goes on to a second kind of assertion which is equivalent to saying: ‘You do not know the method by which I will teach you, say, French; you may not know how little you know. I am not going to discuss this point, but will teach such people as will go along with me on this . . . I am here to teach, not to make you feel good or bad or satisfied with what I am doing.’ (24)

An important requirement of the Path is that each seeker has an obligation to help others to ascend the ‘stairway’ of inner development. “On this way a man will not be entirely alone; at

difficult moments he will receive support and guidance, for all who follow this way are connected by an uninterrupted chain.” Gurdjieff stressed this point in his teachings:

On the fourth way there is not *one* teacher. Whoever is the elder, he is the teacher. And as the teacher is indispensable to the pupil, so also is the pupil indispensable to the teacher. The pupil cannot go on without the teacher, and the teacher cannot go on without the pupil or pupils. And this is not a general consideration but an indispensable and quite concrete rule on which is based the law of a man’s ascending. *No one can ascend onto a higher step until he places another man in his own place.* What a man has received he must immediately give back, only then can he receive more. Otherwise from him will be taken even what he has already been given. (25)

Integration with Ultimate Reality

Everyday life provides all the necessary opportunities for the flower of enlightenment to unfold. “Life itself is the Supreme Guru, be attentive to its lessons and obedient to its commands. When you personalize their source, you have an outer Guru, when you take them from life directly, the Guru is within.”

Meet your own self. Be with your own self, listen to it, obey it, cherish it, keep it in mind ceaselessly. You need no other guide. As long as your urge for truth affects your daily life, all is well with you. Live your life without hurting anybody. Harmlessness is a most powerful form of Yoga and it will take you speedily to your goal. This is what I call the ‘Natural Yoga.’ It is the art of living in peace and harmony, in friendliness and love. The fruit of it is happiness, uncaused and endless. (26)

Our true nature is revealed when all that is false and secondary is clearly seen in the light of timeless awareness. In the words of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj: “You need nothing except to be what you are. You imagine you will increase your value by acquisition. It is like gold imagining that an addition of copper will improve it. Elimination and purification, renunciation of all that is foreign to your nature is enough. All else is vanity.”

Q: How does one reach the Supreme State?

A: By renouncing all lesser desires. As long as you are pleased with the lesser, you cannot have the highest. Whatever pleases you, keeps you back. Until you realize the unsatisfactory nature of everything, its transiency and limitation, and collect your energies in one great longing, even the first step is not made. On the other hand, the integrity of the desire for the Supreme is by itself a call from

the Supreme. Nothing, physical or mental, can give you freedom. You are free once you understand that your bondage is of your own making and you cease forging the chains that bind you. (27)

Eventually the spiritual search leads to the ultimate question: 'Who am I?' 'What is my true nature?' "Nothing that can be known has existence in itself. It depends on a knower. The knower is consciousness. Only consciousness never changes." Ramana Maharshi:

When a man for the first time recognizes his true Self, then from the depths of his being arises something. And *it* takes possession of him. *It* is on the other side of the mind. *It* is infinite, divine and eternal . . . The phenomena we see are curious and surprising – but the most marvellous of all we do not realize, namely that *one* and only *one* illimitable force is responsible for all the phenomena we see, and for the *act* of seeing. Do not fix your attention on all these changing things of life, death and phenomena. Do not even think of the actual act of seeing or perceiving, but only of that which sees all these things, *that which is responsible* for it all. Try to keep the mind unshakenly fixed on *that* which Sees. It is inside yourself . . . These things which we see and sense, are only the split-up colours of the *one illimitable Spirit*. (28)

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