

## THE PATH: INITIAL STEPS, PREPARATION, AND DECISIONS

Greetings in the name of God and Jesus Christ. I bring blessings for all of you, my friends. From all my preceding lectures you will have understood one thing clearly: the necessity for self-development on this earth plane which exists for that very purpose. No matter how difficult life may be at times, only those who fulfill this purpose can find peace in their souls. I have promised to start this course on development so that each one of you can find your way by learning how to go about it, where to begin, and what is involved in doing the work. Moreover, I want to tell you before I begin that many of the words I shall give you in these particular lectures can be treated as a meditation. You should retain these words and not just read them once, for that will not be enough. You should meditate on these teachings, so that this knowledge may eventually grow from being superficial and intellectual to reaching the deeper regions of your being. Only then will they be really beneficial to you.

Everybody knows that it is important to be a decent person, not to commit so-called sins, to give love, to have faith, and to be kind to others. However, this is not enough. In the first place, knowing all this and actually being able to act on it are two different stories. You may be able by voluntary action to refrain from committing a crime such as stealing or killing, but you cannot possibly force yourself to feel that you do not want to harm anybody, ever. You may act kindly toward another, but you cannot force yourself to feel kindly. Neither can you force yourself to have love in your heart or to have real faith in God. Whatever pertains to emotions is not dependent upon your direct actions or even on your thoughts. Changing your feelings requires the slow process of self-development and self-recognition.

You may realize that you do not have enough faith, but realizing this and trying to force yourself to have it by telling yourself, "I must have faith," will not bring you one step closer: quite the contrary. Superficially you may be able to talk yourself into it, but this does not mean your faith or your ability to love is real. It is already a great accomplishment for people of lower spiritual development if they can be brought to not committing wrong deeds, but this is certainly not sufficient for any one of you here. More is expected of you.

Primarily this path is about changing your innermost feelings. How to go about that is the question that we have to begin with. There I can show you the way. In the first place, my friends, you cannot change anything as long as you do not know what is really in you. The greatest difficulty on this path is that people tend to fool themselves about who they really are. Now I am not only talking about the subconscious mind which you all know exists. I will not even go as far as that. Between the conscious and the subconscious mind there is another layer which is much closer to the conscious mind. However, you are still unaware of this layer because you want to be unaware. You escape from it although its symptoms and signs may be right under your nose. People flee from such awareness because they mistakenly think that what they do not know does not exist. You may

not think so in exactly these words, but feelings of this sort go on in you without your quite realizing them. However, these hidden feelings exist. Even if you turn away from your own inner reality -- your temporary reality of this present time -- this layer is still part of the reality of your life and your present state of development.

You may all remember the lecture I gave some time ago about the higher self, the lower self, and the mask self. What I have explained is part of the mask self, but it is not only a mask. I may call it the exterior self which does not always correspond to the inner person. All of you know that it is wrong to do or think or feel certain things. If these feelings still exist in your lower self, you turn away from them, thinking you have thereby eliminated what you recognize as wrong. Avoidance or denial is the greatest mistake a human being can make, for it causes infinitely more trouble, more problems, and more inner and outer conflicts than anything you know in your conscious mind.

I have often mentioned the various spiritual laws which are constantly being violated by human beings. The process I have just described violates one of these laws. It is the law of facing life. To face life's reality means to be able to face yourself as you are with all your imperfections. If you do not face life first, you can never develop. No system trying to teach ways to jump over this hurdle can ever be really successful, for seeking such shortcuts violates a spiritual law.

All of you are unconsciously following this harmful process all the time, even though some of you may have already gained a certain amount of self-knowledge. There is not a single one of you who has not had at least one realization about an inner trend that has made this trend really conscious. Nevertheless, in many other areas your conscious mind still flees from facing the inner truth. You may even know your shortcomings, but you certainly do not know all your real motives. You do not understand why you have certain opinions, tastes, or idiosyncrasies; even your good qualities may be partly influenced by an unconscious fault or wrong inner current. These trends and tendencies about which you have hitherto deceived yourself have to be understood with respect to the influences and connections they have.

There is nothing in the human soul that comes entirely from the higher self or the lower self, because everything mixes constantly. Purification means to separate, understand, and rearrange in conscious understanding all these various trends, thus purifying the basic good trends from all masks of self-deception and from influences caused by character weaknesses. The higher self in you says, "I want to be perfect. I know this is the will of God." But it is the ignorance of the lower self that makes you think perfection can be attained by turning away from your imperfections and disregarding them. It is also the lower self that always wants to have everything so comfortable. The lower self wants to be in a high position, but for different reasons than the higher self. Your higher self seeks to advance for the love of God by way of recognition and enlightenment, aware that only when you are perfect will you be truly capable of loving your fellow creatures. But your lower self wants to be perfect in order to have more ego-gratification and to swell its head, to be admired. All of you, without exception, also feel this way. Here is an example where both the higher and the lower self want the same thing, but their motives are entirely different. It is of utmost importance for the purification of your personality and for the sake of a healthy and harmonious soul to separate these motives and to recognize their voices. Do not feel I am blaming you, nor should you blame yourself when you begin to recognize these trends in you. I am stating a fact, and one of the basic requirements for your path is that you accept the fact of many negative

trends still existing in yourself. Only from this premise can you go on and change the impurity of your motives.

You must also recognize the reasons why your lower self turns you away from facing yourself. One reason is that to recognize yourself as imperfect is unpleasant. The other is that the lower self is lazy and never wants to work. Yet it requires work to face what is in you, especially when it comes to facing the unpleasant things. So the first step, my friends, in your decision to walk the path of self-development and purification is to become clear about this. It is the greatest decision a human being can ever make. It is the noblest of all fights humanity can ever engage in. But you must do so with open eyes; therefore realize what you ought to expect and what you have to search for. Do not start to search for perfection immediately. This again would be unrealistic because you cannot attain perfection quickly without having spent much time and effort. This search is the first and most important half of the truth of the path. If you proceed well on this part of the path, you have won half the battle already, and even more, my friends! If you realize this, you will not be discouraged when you are busy on this first half of the work that is necessary. You can reach perfection only by going through your imperfections, not by going around them. You should meditate on this daily until such knowledge becomes part of you and until you are imbued with this truth.

Furthermore, prepare yourself that going on this path does not mean a constant and smooth improvement of yourself and your life conditions. This again is completely unrealistic. It is necessary for you to face the fact that the path is long and that repercussions and times of testing will not cease as quickly as you would like to believe. I might say at this point that a great deal of harm is being done when people are led to understand that by following certain rules of metaphysical teachings their problems will altogether cease, or that if they appear to cease for a time, that will prove a sign of success. There are many people who appear to have no outer problems whatsoever. Such people are certainly not on this path. They may be entities of lower development of whom less is expected in this incarnation and who have been given a chance to prove what they can do with an easy life. If they do not do their best now, they will have more difficult times in a future incarnation, perhaps so they can prove themselves. But to imagine that going on this path of purification will immediately lessen your troubles or problems is very immature and childish. Certainly your outer and inner problems will lessen and finally cease, but only after a long time, after you have first thoroughly understood your inner makeup and rearranged your inner currents. In this way you will dissolve inner images that are directly responsible for your conflicts. Once you have attained some victories over yourself you will fully realize this truth, but it will take a long time and years of work. Then very gradually the times of trial will lessen in impact and frequency, as harmony grows in your soul and as you take charge of yourself and become aware of who you are. When I say "aware of yourself," I mean knowing your lower self utterly and completely, which does not have to mean that you have overcome it completely.

When you start on this path, my friends, you ought to meditate every day before you do anything further. Meditate on the fact that you can expect to find aspects of yourself you may be shocked about. Expect this and meet it halfway instead of hiding and escaping from it. Expect that just as you have had tests before you even started on this direct path, tests will still come your way for quite a time. The only difference is that a person who is on the path will, after some successful work, understand that each testing and each time of woe means something very specific. A particular message that there is something quite special to learn about the self is conveyed by each

difficult period and every hardship. Only after a considerable time will your mind be trained in this direction so that you will find out faster and faster what the lesson is. The moment you will understand the significance of these periods, this particular testing will cease. As long as you have not understood it, the testing will be there. It may recede after a while, but it will come back in the same or similar form until you have learned the lesson. Those who have experienced what it means to understand the message of a particular hardship, to really understand it to its core, will realize what a blessing it is! Then what I am saying here will not merely be words, but a deep experience.

Meanwhile, the person who is not on this path or who has perhaps not completely found his or her way to the path and is still in the first stages, will be at a loss. Not knowing why he or she has to go through all this makes the hardships infinitely more difficult to bear. Before you can come to the point in your development when testing periods and times of trouble will cease, you must first go through the stage of completely understanding these periods of difficulty, and then meet them in a spirit of courage and wisdom. When you can do all this, the transition period will begin and outer conflicts and problems will no longer touch you to the quick. You will remain quite calm and serene inside during outer hardships. Only after this condition has been reached can hardship begin to cease altogether. You ought to be clear about the timing and the stages. So prepare yourself that these trials will not cease. Your life will outwardly continue for a while as before, until you learn from it that which is so necessary for you to know. If you expect it to be this way and if you go on the path in this frame of mind, you will not be disappointed.

If you go on it like a blindfolded child, full of wishful thinking, then you will be disappointed - not only in God and in what you have somehow unconsciously expected from Him when you chose to follow this path, but also disappointed in yourself and in your endeavors. This path is not a fairy tale; it is reality of the crassest sort, my friends. It is utter reality. Reality is not only hard and difficult and dark, but is also more beautiful than anything else. The beauty of reality is beyond all comparison superior to the puny beauty the escapist imagination concocts to get away from unpleasant reality. Remember that!

Another thought for meditation: when you go on this path, you must also prepare yourself to abide by another of the spiritual laws, which says that there is a price to be paid for everything. Whoever tries to avoid this will finally pay a much heavier price. Every single person is doing this constantly in one way or another; some do it more obviously, others more subtly and secretly. Many people are not doing it outwardly, but psychologically you are all doing it, particularly when you approach this path with only half-open eyes. Realize that there is a price, but the price is well worth it! When you buy a house and you want a beautiful mansion, you are reconciled to paying an adequate price. You will not expect a mansion or a palace for the price of a shack. On the material level, you have no quarrel with this truth, but on the emotional, psychological, and spiritual levels you wish for a palace for the price of a hut -- and sometimes you do not want to pay any price at all.

That is part of your sick soul. The price you pay by going on this path of development is certainly a high one, but there is absolutely no other means on earth or in heaven to gain harmony, love, happiness, and complete inner security where nothing evil can ever touch you or throw you off balance. The price is: no self-pity, no self-delusion, utter severance with the little ego, time, effort, patience, perseverance, and courage. What you will receive for this price is indeed a hundred times worth it, but do not expect to see the reward right after you start. By start I mean a period of at

least two years of work in this manner, provided you do not work half-heartedly. In other words, and speaking symbolically, your money must first be paid in full.

I know, my friends, that my words are not what a self-indulgent person likes to hear. There is no easy method and no magic formula by which you can obtain the happiness you all seek. I cannot promise you the precious gifts of heaven on earth and in the spiritual world if you merely do certain prayer exercises. If I were to tell you such things, you would be well justified in being suspicious and doubtful, even though you might undoubtedly prefer to hear this. What I am offering you is real and true. Each one of you has the chance to find out for yourself by trying and by following my advice.

My advice to begin with is: Meditate upon the words I have given you here. Consider what the price must be, and what you must expect. Then make your decision. Are you willing to take this path? Oh, you may say, "It may take a few more lives. I am too tired." I can only answer that this again is very shortsighted; if you are tired or weak, it is because your inner forces exhaust themselves in the wrong channels so that your strength cannot organically renew itself as it does in a soul that functions well. If you would only start and not be dismayed by the first struggles, you would finally succeed in setting the inner current right. By doing so, you would set free in yourself a wonderful life force and a spark that will change your life completely.

I cannot promise you that all your problems will cease, for they are a necessary part of your path to begin with, a challenge you can learn from if you meet them maturely. However, I can promise you that after you have fulfilled certain fundamental conditions, you will not be depressed any more by your life and your difficulties. I can promise you that your tiredness will cease, and that you will have the strength to go through your difficulties and to bear your cross in the right way, knowing why and what it is all about.

The most difficult thing for you and the most weakening aspect of your life is that you cannot see the reason for anything that happens to you. Only on a path into yourself will you find out the reason, and this alone will give you the strength you need. Furthermore, I can promise you that after a certain time on the path you will enjoy life in spite of your difficulties even before they have actually begun to cease. You will come to relish life in a way you have never been able to do before. I can promise that you will be vibrantly alive -- first at intervals, and later more consistently. To the extent you understand yourself and begin to put order into your soul, this vibrant life force will fill you. Life will be beautiful to you in all its reality. So I say to you truly, do not postpone this work for another life. It will not be easier for you then, and you can never get away with not doing the work, for it has to be done. No matter how late you think it is, it is never too late. Whatever you accomplish on this earth will have an eternal value. And when I speak of accomplishment, I do mean the conquering of your lower self.

Here is another thought, my friends, for this initial decision which you must approach with open eyes: distinguish the three necessary types of work involved in purifying yourself on this path. One is your outer behavior, the recognition of your apparent faults and qualities, as well as every occurrence that is on the surface. The next phase -- and these phases often overlap -- is tackling that layer of yourself that does not belong directly to your subconscious, but which you are unaware of because you are deliberately escaping it. This layer has to be treated in a different manner which I will show you. The third and equally important layer is your subconscious mind. Do not believe

that what is in the subconscious is so far away that it has no effect on you. You are constantly dominated by your subconscious without knowing it. It is very possible to find out, slowly but surely, what is in your subconscious, at least to some extent.

Distinguish the trends in you which stand in direct relationship to your conscious will and are thus directly controlled through an act of will. You will also discover trends in you which are connected with your emotions and cannot be directly forced to respond to your wishes. The world of emotion can only change by organic growth, not by pressure and voluntary action, except in an indirect way. Let us assume you find out that deep down you are lacking faith or love. You cannot force yourself to have faith or love, no matter how hard you try directly. But what you can make yourself do is to walk this path, to follow these steps, to overcome perhaps a lack of discipline that makes it so hard for you to work diligently on your path, or tackle whatever else stands in your way quite directly, for instance to work daily on your quota of self-observation and meditation in a detached way. By doing so, you will not work directly on your lack of love or faith, for instance, but you will simply get to know yourself and find out why you lack these attributes. When you gradually understand this without forcing yourself directly to have love or faith, eventually the life force will fill you and will automatically generate these feelings without any direct endeavor on your part. If your emotions begin to change after a few years, you can consider it a wonderful success. The change will happen so naturally that you may not even be fully aware of it at first.

Study these words now; think about them deeply. Take them to God and ask Him, if you have doubts. He will answer you provided your heart is really open. Believe me, my friends, all this is neither as difficult as it may seem to you now, nor is the path a miracle that will procure happiness for you without demanding from you all you have in honesty, willpower, and effort.

I want to say something else to you about this phase of preparation and decision: expect to have a fight with yourself. It will be the fight between the lower self and the higher self, and your conscious self will determine which side will win. It cannot win without such a fight. It must be a long fight which at first will manifest itself perhaps by preventing you from following this path at all. The lower self may send messages such as, "I do not believe in it," or, "It may not be necessary after all," or "I am too tired," or "I have no time." It is necessary for you to recognize these messages for what they are, and understand where they come from. Use them as a starting point to delve deeper into your soul. Try to see clearly what is really speaking within you when you receive these hidden excuses and pretenses. If you expect this struggle beforehand, you will be able to look and listen and will have a first victory. Also, you will have learned already to some degree the process of uncovering your masks and wrong motives, which will stand you in good stead later on when the lower self will try to obstruct your path by other means. It will simply try to hold on to individual soul-currents. By then you will already know how to deal with it a little better. Do not just put the superficial excuses aside. Test them, deal with them, examine them.

Many of you are scared of what may come out of your lower self, though you may not be conscious of that fear. It is important to learn to interpret and translate such perhaps vague feelings into concise thoughts. This fear is an important reason why a person shies away from meeting the self.

It is childish to imagine that whatever you do not cherish in you does not exist because you avoid facing it. The lower self is immature and ignorant -- its very nature is faults and distortions.

So I say to you: Do not shy away from what is in you! Many people go to psychiatrists and sometimes suffer a breakdown when they come face to face with their lower self in the course of the treatment. This cannot happen to those of you who know that your lower self is not your ultimate being. However, in psychoanalysis the mistaken idea that they are really their lower self can lead people to such self-rejection and self-disgust that they break down. All of you here know that the lower self is merely a temporary layer and does not constitute your entire personality. It is here now to be dealt with, but is not the real you -- at least not entirely.

Your higher self, which is partly free, already manifests through your good qualities, your generosity, your kindness, or whatever else there is in you that belongs to the higher self. But even where it cannot manifest as yet because it is deeply hidden behind the lower self, your higher self still exists in its shining perfection. How can you reach it unless you penetrate the lower self? So do not be afraid; do not be shocked when you first encounter your lower self where heretofore you had no idea of it. It is a necessary temporary formation, but it never, never represents the ultimate you. As a matter of fact, reaching the stage where you are shocked about some of its facets that you had not suspected, constitutes a sign of improvement. It strongly implies good progress, for without going through this stage, painful as it may be for a while, you can have no further victory and success. This is part of the path, my friends. If you meditate upon these words and at the same time try to be aware of your fear of your lower self, and your shame of it, and if you learn to live with this truth and knowledge, you will conquer. Then you will meet your fear realistically, and you will not be hiding from it as you are hiding from a few other things in you. This is what I have to say to you tonight.

And now, my dear friends, I am ready for your questions.

QUESTION: Would you mind telling us what the spirits do for recreation?

ANSWER: Well, my friends, it is extremely difficult for humans to imagine that spirits live and laugh and enjoy themselves -- and work. Spirits in the higher realms do all that, of course, in perfect harmony. What their recreation is depends entirely on their personalities, on their personal tastes, talents, and inclinations. There may be one spirit who is intensely interested in music. This one may live, at least occasionally, in a sphere where it can enjoy this particular pastime. Another may be drawn to art, another to science. Others just enjoys the beauty of Creation, still others will express themselves perhaps in dancing, or in creating certain worlds or parts of worlds, spheres, or certain forms in accordance with their own particular individuality. So there are all forms of recreation in the spirit world. There is the art of interchange through conversation and play. All that you have here is only a very crude copy of what exists in the spirit world.

As a rule, I do not like to talk about this too much, particularly because the intellectual type will not accept it easily. Such a person will say, "Oh, this is childish and primitive." But the primitive ideas some people have may be wrong too, because they see or imagine the spirit world in a way which is too human or too unreal. The primitive person who tends toward superstition is not right. Neither are the intellectual people right to deny that anything they consider concrete can exist in spirit, because they accept only what is considered abstract as being part of the spirit world. They forget that concrete and abstract are one in spirit, as everything is one in spirit, at least in the highest spheres. So I do not like to discuss this topic because the right words do not exist to express the

spirit world in all the finer shades of its reality, and this may lead to dangerous misunderstandings. I realize that my description will not really give you an adequate picture.

QUESTION: I would like to ask whether the Christ spirit is an all-pervading spirit like God or an individual spirit?

ANSWER: It is exactly the same as with God. The substance of Christ is the same as God's substance; it is all the divine substance. It is the same substance you have in yourself. Whether you call it the divine substance, God's substance, or Christ's substance makes no difference. God has given most of this substance to His first creation, the spirit of Jesus Christ. All other beings have received some of this substance and it is up to them to unfold it and enlarge it with the power given to them. Do you understand that? If you develop yourself, you make your higher self free of the shadows and layers of the lower self. That is the presence you have constantly in you if you can develop it. And this divine spark or higher self is the substance to which we are referring. The presence of God or that of Jesus Christ as a person is something else again. Christ can be felt in person as a presence, in his personification, but that is something altogether different from the divine substance in you. The presence of your own divine substance inside you can only be unfolded by following this very path onto which I am now leading you. To feel the presence of God in His personification -- which is almost never the case with a human being, but it is possible for spirits -- or to feel the presence of Jesus Christ as a person is an occasional grace that can come unexpectedly, without any knowing or understanding why. These are two entirely different things. Is that clearer now?

QUESTIONER: Yes.

QUESTION: I would like to ask something in connection with the fall of the angels. In Isaiah it is said that God created good and evil. Did God create the evil forces and the Luciferic powers too?

ANSWER: That is a great error, and you will readily understand it now when I remind you of one of the last lectures, The Fall, that explains how this error could have happened. You will remember my explaining that God created the power which He then gave to each of His created spirits. This power could be used in any way depending on the individual spirit's free will. Now that explains why or how this error could have occurred. It is technically correct to say that God created evil, but it would be more correct to say that God created the possibility for evil if with their free will people -- or spirits -- use this power against divine law. Is that clear?

QUESTION: Yes, but there is always the contrary to each extreme...

ANSWER: Certainly the opposite of divine law exists, but that does not mean that God created evil. There is a great difference between creating evil, or giving free will and power to God's creatures who can then use the power according to divine law or not. I have explained very thoroughly why God gave to all beings the possibility to choose freely. Logically, free will includes the possibility of using it wrongly. If this possibility did not exist, there would be no freedom. And if God's creatures are supposed to become godlike, they must be free, for freedom is a divine aspect. The wrong use of the power ultimately led to evil through a slow process, even if it did not become evil at the first deviation. I have explained all this very thoroughly. If you read that lecture you will

understand. There is no sense in going into this further now because I think it is clear to most of my friends here. Is it unclear to some of you?

QUESTION: No, I believe the passage in Isaiah may be a wrong translation -- that the Lord created evil. In other words, He gives the possibility for it, but He does not create it.

ANSWER: Exactly. You see, the omission of one word very often makes a great deal of difference in the meaning of a sentence. If instead of saying "God created evil," it had said, "God created the possibility of evil," the meaning would have been correct.

QUESTION: How is it possible that a person on this path can be so strongly affected by environmental influences? Can you help me in this respect?

ANSWER: Well, I can only help you by showing you how to walk the path properly, and I am doing that. The reason why environmental influences are strong can be manifold, since there are different reasons for different people. They are primarily psychological. When the soul is strongly influenced by outer happenings of whatever kind, it is a sign that the soul is not yet free from its own entanglements. If the inner forces are not used according to divine law, the soul is not free. With one person this will manifest in the way the environment affects you, with another it will be different. Whenever the soul is not healthy and mature, certain occasions will bring this out and the soul will produce definite symptoms.

QUESTION: But why do these symptoms occur, as in my case, when there is high humidity in the air?

ANSWER: This happens because everybody's different odic forces. The odic force is composed differently in each individual and thus responds to different outer challenges. With one person, the cosmic influences affect the soul more strongly; with others, human influences will have a stronger effect, and so on. If you have this particular sensitivity, it is because in your own way there is distortion in your soul which tends, perhaps, to cause sluggishness and takes the first opportunity to make the soul react in this way. The soul is such a complicated mechanism that there are no two souls alike. Certain basic problems are alike, but how all these various trends and currents work, what plays into the lower self or what the lower self will use as an excuse to reinforce a negative trait like sluggishness, say, or where the higher self is diluted by currents of the lower self to constitute a mask or subterfuge, varies with each person. The possibilities are infinite, since no two people react the same way. But the fact remains that this is a sign of a disturbance within the soul. The only remedy is to continue this path to the very end, to follow this course I have outlined here. If you were entirely purified and healthy, you would not be sensitive to weather or anything else that might come your way from outside.

QUESTION: Then I would not be here, I suppose.

ANSWER: That is right.

QUESTION: Can you tell me if there is any spiritual significance or reason for the different races?

ANSWER: Oh yes, indeed. There is no such thing as coincidence. I should like to state briefly that human beings have to go through karmas. For instance, if a person is born into a certain race in which there is much collective suffering, it is of course due to this particular soul's karma. The more unified humanity becomes through spiritual development, the more will different races cease to exist. You can begin to see even at this time the slow but sure development in the direction of eliminating racial differences. In a few thousand years from now, perhaps in about fifteen hundred years, the effect of this development will be very noticeable; nations, religions, and races will have few of their differences left. This will be a sign of unification and spiritual improvement. However, until such time, there will be and must be differences, for only by encountering obstacles can you grow. This holds true for the individual's life, and it certainly applies also to the development of groups.

You may wonder why certain races do not suffer from being different from others. Then you might ask, "What can they learn from that?" Indeed, they, too, have something to learn. Perhaps they need to learn the responsibility that arises from being spared sufferings that other peoples may have. Besides, this angle is not the only one to be considered. A spirit can be born into a race or nation because spiritually, emotionally, characterwise and psychologically it belongs to this group and therefore has the best opportunity to unfold there. Differences will exist as long as disunity exists on earth and humanity has not learned to overcome it. As any difficulty or apparent disadvantage can be a cure, which it must be if the person is on the right path, advantage can be a cure, too. Through differences of race, religion, nationality, or various other categories, humanity can become stronger and advance faster in spiritual development precisely because frictions exist. Without friction, development can never proceed. It is only a question of how the difficulty is met, always; how is it met individually and collectively. Is that clear?

QUESTIONER: Yes, thank you.

QUESTION: But is not the variety of different races and their trends part of the beauty of life?

ANSWER: Yes, the variety is fine, but variety on your earth means friction and hostility. In spirit there is infinite variety in everything, but it is unlike that on your earth where you have what you call "better races" and "inferior races." That, of course is karmic for both groups and not only for the groups which are sometimes persecuted. That is also a thought upon which you can now meditate.

QUESTION: Is there something wrong if, working on this path of development, you find that you have one particular fault and you are trying to overcome it through meditation and prayer and yet you don't seem to get further along?

ANSWER: I will not say that there is something wrong, but I would say that some method of some key that you need is lacking. You try hard, again and again, in one particular direction perhaps too forcefully. Your lower self resists that. Maybe I can help you by saying this: My dear friend, you must realize one thing. When I spoke about the battle and said, fight, I meant just that. It takes the lower self a very long time to become ready to give up its faults, its resentments, its sluggish ways. You must realize that this lower self lives in you strongly, even though you are not aware of it consciously and do not see its significance, because consciously you only know your good will to

work in the right direction. This realization is the first essential step. Without making this realization, you can get nowhere, no matter how good the will of your conscious being is. What most people do not accept, at least not until a pretty distant point is reached on this path, is the discrepancy in themselves; how one part can want one thing, while another part wants exactly the opposite. This conflict of opposite desires, which at first is always subconscious, must be taken out and brought into the light of consciousness. Without this essential step there can be no further success.

Therefore, my advice is to not try for the moment to force yourself to feel what you have been so far incapable of feeling. Instead, use your efforts in the direction of making that part of you conscious that is responsible for your lack of success so far. Relax completely, not only physically but also emotionally. Then try to let your lower self come to the surface, so that you can actually become aware of it. When your enemy becomes visible, you can fight successfully: as long as your enemy is invisible, you cannot succeed. So do not be afraid to let out what is in you. Very quietly say to yourself and, in your meditations, to God: "This is the way I am now. At least a part of me is this way, the part I do not like or cherish. I want to accept this aspect as part of my being, knowing that I cannot change anything without doing so freely. I realize that what will manifest is not my whole being. But there are two contradictory forces in me, and I have to become aware of both, including the one I have so far ignored. In order to become what I would like to be, I must first, without fear or shame and vanity, face what is in me."

Ask God to help you to achieve that end, and then let the lower self come out. Listen to your feelings in connection with incidents that have always brought out this trend in you. Then try to translate these feelings into concise thoughts and words. Do this constantly and you will be successful in this respect. You will then come to the point when you can quietly realize these two contradictory currents in you: the one in which you see your imperfection, and the opposite one, where you know in theory how you would like to feel and react, even though you cannot as yet do so. First compare these two currents and learn for the time being to accept your present imperfection in comparison with the perfection you know to be right. Accept this imperfection with humility. If you do that constantly, your feelings will change.

Constant self-observation and self-honesty will have a surprising effect on you. By following this procedure, you will learn to follow the law of reality, accepting yourself as you are and thus learning true humility. This awareness will generate a new strength in you even before you have attained perfection in this respect. After a period of this kind of training, very gradually your feelings will begin to change. This is the only way, my dear.

I meant to talk about this topic in a following lecture, but since your question came up, it is good for all of you that I answered it now. I will come back to this because it constitutes the method of purification of emotions not influenced by an act of direct willpower. This cannot be emphasized enough. It often takes some time until this method is clearly understood, but once it is, it cannot fail to bring results. Some of you may get bored hearing this again and again, especially those of my friends who have heard this from me in their private sessions, but I cannot say it often enough. Many of you have understood this process only in your brain, but your inner self has not yet perceived or understood it entirely. Do you understand?

QUESTION: Yes. How do you get your inner self to understand the emotional self?

ANSWER: Do not try to make it understand to begin with. Let it out first. That is the first half of the process. You cannot educate or reeducate your emotional self before it is completely on the surface. To be in a hurry to change these emotions is not only an impossible goal and therefore your hurry is futile and unrealistic, but this period of constant self-recognition where you make comparisons between your emotions which conflict with what you have long recognized as being right teaches you humility. To accept yourself as an imperfect being is accepting yourself in the right way, without guilt feelings and self-abuse. The latter are unhealthy and unproductive. You must learn to take yourself realistically and say, "In so many respects, I am still imperfect. In so many others, I have reached perfection. If in the work on this path I should find out that I am less perfect than I thought, I will accept this too, in order to be able to change it." Realize that before your imperfections can change, you have so many other things to learn from this very imperfection in you.

Learn the proper attitude with which to meet your lower self, accept your inability to change something by a mere effort of will. All this is necessary on your path, and therefore the still existing imperfections fulfill a definite purpose. This does not mean that you should nurse them, justify their existence, or, worse, become lazy and not do anything about them. This would be the wrong opposite extreme. To find the right middle path in everything is part of the path. Learn to accept yourself without fear, without shame, and without pride. Where you still discover these trends, examine what is behind them and gain further understanding about yourself. If you follow this system for a while and ask at the same time for God's grace to help you, you will get further and further, although you will not change these currents immediately. You will grow in self-recognition and self-understanding, however. This is fundamental. The proper spirit of accepting the lower self with the necessary humility is of much greater importance than any of you realize as yet. You mistakenly want to skip this phase altogether, and by so doing you will inevitably become discouraged eventually because your endeavors will always wind up in a dead-end street.

And now I will retire, my dear friends. God's blessings go to all of my dear friends far away and to all of my dear friends in this room, as well as to those who have found their way to us for the first time tonight. May this be a turning point in their lives. Peace be with you; be in God!

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