

The Lectures
of
Irina Tweedie

The Empty Bell
Volume 5

German Lectures:

Hamburg, Germany
Aug 20, 1987;

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Translated and Compiled
by Harvey L. Stahl



Make your heart
Like an empty bell,
And wait...
In stillness.

During the time that Mrs. Tweedie was with her teacher, she was ordered by him to write a book based on the daily experiences of her training. That book, "Daughter of Fire" and its abridgement "Chasm of Fire" has since proved an invaluable help to many people at all stages of the spiritual journey. Since that time, Mrs. Tweedie has clearly and repeatedly refused to write anything more, saying that her duty to write was fulfilled with this one book.

And yet, those of us who have had the privilege to spend time with Mrs. Tweedie in her group in London, know that over the years she has spoken on many themes that are not in her book. It is to make some of this material available to others that I have compiled dialogues based on her lectures. I have focused on her German lectures because these have been especially inaccessible to the English reader.

I wish to make it clear that although these pages are based on Mrs. Tweedie's lectures, and that I have tried to convey this material in something of her own style, that ultimately they are my own words, and alas, are limited by my own understanding.

I would like to thank the many people who have given me support and encouragement in this undertaking, especially those German speakers who took the time and care to meticulously review the translations for content and context and to correct my limited German:
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And lastly and most of all,
I wish to express my deepest respect and gratitude
to my teacher.

Cover Photograph: Chinese Bell, Chou Dynast, 5th century BC. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

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The Lectures of Irina Tweedie

The Feminine Path of Suffering

Based on a Lecture given
in Hamburg, Germany
August 20, 1987

Today I would like to speak on a theme that one does not find in books. I would like to speak about the suffering of women, and whether women suffer more than men. I have not brought many notes with me, and I hope that you will have many questions. It is an important theme: it is the feminine path of suffering.

People have often asked me if the spiritual path of women is the same as the path of men. In many ways it is quite different, because women differ from men both physically and psychologically. In some areas, the paths are the same, for on the level of the soul we are completely the same. On this level, here, we are quite different, and the path is quite different; but at the level of the soul, there is no difference. Today I want to speak about the differences and similarities of the spiritual paths of men and women.

My teacher, Bhai Sahib, once said to me, "Men need many practices, because energy works very differently in men from the way it works in women." That is why I give men a great many exercises. Women need almost none, because they are able to reach reality through their feminine being. That is a very important statement. You can imagine how excited I was when I heard that! I thought, "Aha! How wonderful;" but I didn't say anything. Suddenly, he turned to me and said, "Oh no! That is no reason to be happy. The way is equally difficult for everyone! Women are different and have other difficulties, that is all."

Look! A woman is closer to the material level than a man. We are created differently. We have to produce children in our bodies, and for that reason, our body and our psychology, even our chakras, and everything else, are completely different from those of men. Yesterday, or the day before, we spoke of what someone asked me at Schnader, a spiritual community. "Why are most spiritual teachers men?" I had to think about it, but now it is clear to me that the man is freer than we are. When we, I mean most women, look at our lives, we see that the first thing our family does is to get us married. And then we have children, and the children always come first. Men are free. A man has a child, and he can leave it with the woman and go out into the world and teach or do whatever else he wants. He can work or travel as he likes. Can we do that so easily?

When a woman is completely alone, or not married, then it is very much easier. In one of the minor Upanishads – there are many Upanishads; there are those that are very important, and others that are ... less important, of minor interest – it is said that for a woman to reach reality, she should never marry, and never have a partner. But the Sufis have another view. My teacher married and had six children. Sufis do marry, and they do not find that it is an obstacle. One day Guruji said to us, "We must live in this world, and we must behave exactly as other people do." It is difficult, because the world puts pressure on us from all sides, and there are many temptations. And the more and greater the temptations, the more one gains from overcoming them, and the closer one comes to reality. Now, the

Upanishads say that one must be free, and the Sufis say you should not be free. Most Sufis are, of course, from Islam, and the women are not as free as they are here.

There is also a quality that is quite notable in our character as women: we tend to stay more in the background. A woman does not step forward as easily as a man. You see, even love has two aspects. Everything in this world has two aspects: the masculine and the feminine. The masculine of love is, "I love you," and the feminine is, "I am waiting for you." The woman stays in the background; it is the woman's character. Of course there are exceptions, but the exceptions only prove the rule, as we already know from the rules of grammar. One shouldn't even need to say it.

Ibn El-Arabi, the great Sufi, who was born in Mortsia, Spain, had a Murshida – a Murshida is a Sufi teacher who is a woman – as his teacher. When he met her, she was about ninety years old, and she died six years later. Anna Marie Schimmel, in her famous – and large – book, 'Sufism, the Mysticism of Islam' described this relationship. She wrote that the teacher of Ibn Arabi was ninety-six when she died, but looked fourteen. I believe that that is a bit exaggerated; (*General amusement...*) but, perhaps she did appear to be quite young. (*More laughter.*) Yes, OK, it was a bit exaggerated.

Our teacher, Bhai Sahib, said to us, "We Sufis die young." That means that youthful energy remains in the body right up to the time of death. Of course the body gets older, that is the law of nature. No one can remain eternally young, but the energy remains. And we die with our boots on, like soldiers; we die while we are working and in service. That is why he said that we Sufis remain young.

There was also Rabia, a great Sufi woman who is very well known. In our line of Sufism – the line to which our entire group belongs – there were very many women. There is a book in Persian about women Sufis. I have seen it, and it is quite a thick book. It has not been translated because, after all, who is interested in the names of so many Sufi Saints. You see, I recently came across a book about women Sufi Saints. I read this book and was completely bored by it. It all happened so many hundreds of years ago that it no longer connects to our lives; it is too different, too unfamiliar. It is as if from another planet, and so it was not at all interesting for me. Further, while I do find history interesting, I find that it is better to think of the future. History is only important insofar as we can learn something from the lives of great beings; when we can read something of the lives of those people who went ahead of us, and who opened the way for us. For me it is only interesting from this point of view. And I do not think that a book that is only enjoyable to read is quite enough.

We should take joy from the future, and from what we expect for ourselves. And we should take joy in knowing that one day we will die. That is the greatest adventure we will have, and it is something that lies ahead of all of us. Death, as we think it is, does not exist; really it is only a change of consciousness. I can say that because I know it. I have promised myself never to say anything that I personally do not know; and by that I do not mean something that I know from reading about, but something that I know from ... somewhere. And this 'somewhere' is, of course, in meditation.

So here, in this world, we women are very different from men. And because we are created so differently, our path, our way, is also different. Now, in this life we all suffer – that is clear – but the question is: who suffers more? And that is what I want to speak about this evening. And I hope that afterwards you will have many questions.

So I have said that a woman is much more connected to material existence, and much more restricted than a man simply because her body is made that way. It is completely natural. The man uses his creative energy, which is manifested as semen in him, to have children. He produces children from his body in the form of semen, but they actually grow outside of his own body. But we women carry the creative energy of God in our bodies, in our chakras. We have seen, that from a spiritual standpoint, we women have all that we need within us. And we carry the children, not as a spark, not as a small semen cell, not as an energy as it is in men, but physically within ourselves. We physically carry the child for nine long months. And so, of course, we are very restricted, especially in the last weeks. We are restricted in many ways. We cannot bend, or even put our shoes on – I have seen it! I never had any children, but I have many friends who have children, and I know that it is very difficult.

There is also a very important psychological point. Women need protection to have a child. Look! We need warmth and comfort and the other physical necessities so that we can create a human being, and how can we do that? I think that it is because we are dependent on men for these things that we women have accepted the position of being second-class citizens. We need something that only men can give us. And I do not mean only these sparks of life, but also in life itself. They give us security, warmth and protection, a house and bread. In former times, of course, they also provided the animals that one ate, and sometimes they would make the fire when we were ill.

But it is not only that women need men. Men also need women. Guruji said, "At best, I take them together to God." They compliment one another. It is as if two souls would become one. And since I work with people, it becomes ever clearer that we should not be alone. We should not be alone! We need one another, and especially we women need each other. We do not only need men as friends, we need women as friends too. And no one, no one is more than the other. Men are not better than women, and women are not better than men. We are simply different, and that is all.

For the world to have been created, the one had to become two, and the two must be opposites: day and night, hot and cold, and so forth; and the colors too. Everything must have its opposite. And we are opposites, but that does not mean that anyone is greater or more powerful or more beautiful than the other. There are beautiful men and there are beautiful women, and women are just as clever as men. Ah! Men say that that is not true, but that is just silliness. Guruji often said, "We all swim in the same ocean. Who is closer to the shore, and to what shore?" The ocean has many shores. To which shore is one nearer? And I repeat, that no one stands higher or lower than the next; we are all simply different. And we need one another.

Now. Sexual relationships, including the relationships between homosexual partners, is based on a kind of energy that is connected to Kundalini energy. When two people unite in love – or even when there is no love and it is only a sexual attraction – what happens at the level of this energy? The energy generates a flow, a circulation. Please pay attention, this is very important. Those who are clairvoyant can see this flowing of energy. The Kundalini energy creates a circulation, a closed circular flow of energy between the man and the woman – that is the same energy that appears when you are sexually attracted to someone – it is a closed circulation, an interchange of energy between the man and the woman, so that both are connected in a net of energy, an interchange of Kundalini energy. And this net, this energy, displays wonderful effects.

But this circulation, this net of energy is disturbed so easily that the smallest disturbance can completely destroy it. A small injury, a slight pain that one inflicts on the other, and immediately it can be gone. It is as if the chemical combination were not quite right. You see, the things that disturb this energy may seem to be very insignificant, but they are enough to destroy it.

People come to me and say, "I cannot tolerate my husband – or my friend – any more." I had a woman friend in Italy. Her husband divorced her because she smelled bad. Imagine that! Unfortunately she challenged the divorce, so it went to court. And in court everything had to be discussed openly. If I had been in her place, I would probably have crept into a corner and said nothing. But she didn't want to do that. She loved her husband. So it appeared in all the newspapers. Can you imagine that!?! And there was no excuse, it was true; I knew because I was her friend. She had a body odor like an animal, and I know that she kept herself clean. Look, I am speaking of very fundamental things, but such things happen; and such a thing can cause people to separate. It is not only psychological problems; it can also be physical problems that destroy a relationship. Yes, it is funny when I say it, but it is not funny when it happens. It can really be quite terrible. The smallest thing can destroy a relationship.

Now, when one looks at the fundamental nature of men and women, one sees that they are really the same. When I am at a certain level of consciousness, I have difficulty telling them apart. When I do not pay particular attention I sometimes do not notice a difference, because for me a person is a person. When I first meet a person, I look at the soul, at something in people that is so fine that one simply cannot describe it. And that essence is the same in men and women. At the level of the soul we

all experience the same reality. My teacher, Guruji, said, "In the moment of sexual ecstasy, men and women have exactly the same experience." The feeling is the same. The feeling is the same because it is an explosion into empty space, into the void. If you analyze your own experience of this, you will see it. In this moment of ecstasy, we go into the Emptiness, we disappear to somewhere, we disappear like a burst of fireworks. Try to analyze it yourself if you can, but it is not easy to do.

I had never heard of this when I was younger, but I saw it myself and spoke about it with my husband; and both of us agreed that it was correct. In the moment of sexual union there is an explosion, a bliss, and then ... one is nothing. One disappears to somewhere else, but only for the briefest instant. Guruji said that the feeling is exactly the same for men and women. It is important to know that there is a level – it is not really an earthly level – on which men and women are the same. In a way it is an earthly level, although not from the psychological point of view; but there, in the moment of sexual ecstasy, we are the same. And why are we the same? Because it is really the soul itself that enjoys this bliss. The body only enjoys it through the reflection of the experience of the soul. The higher self, the soul, is that which experiences. The body takes part only through a kind of reflection.

Now, to be complete, we must have both masculine and feminine qualities. Everyone must have both. From the psychological point of view, in every woman there is also a man, and in every man there is a woman. No one is only masculine or feminine; it cannot exist, because we need both qualities of being. In the psyche of a woman there will always be some masculine attributes; just as in a man there will be feminine attributes. These attributes lie in the unconscious. It must always be that way; it is the law, and every psychologist knows it.

When a man, in the course of spiritual development, develops his feminine side, he will not become feminine; nor will a woman who develops her masculine side become masculine. Each will become more complete in that process, and will eventually arrive at a harmonious balance of both qualities. This is an idea that is very important in analysis; in fact, it is the goal of analysis.

The separation of the sexes is a consequence of the act of creation. To create the world, the One had to become two, and clearly, the two had to be different from one another. But because these two are different aspects of an underlying 'one', the meaning of life is to be found in uniting them. And this process will continue for millions and millions of years, during the time that Brahma, according to the Hindus, takes one breath, until finally we are all the same. Then, according to the sacred writings, there will not be men and women. We will each be both, together. But in this, I am quoting from books; I personally do not know it.

For the spiritual growth of a woman, pregnancy and the rearing of children are of great importance. For us, children foster our spiritual development, and the birth of a child is a great spiritual experience. Children are really quite special. They are a wonder; and giving birth to a child is certainly a spiritual experience. I never had children, and never really knew about this. But since I have been working with people I have seen that after the birth of a child, the woman is like another person. Something happens within her, and somehow she grows up. Sometimes the sense of responsibility changes completely. Sometimes one finds a young woman who has not yet arrived at her womanhood, but after she has a child it is very, very different.

Children are such a wonder, something quite unexpected, and something so beautiful. I have never seen an ugly baby, and I have traveled a great deal. I have not seen one in India, not in Europe, not in Africa; I have never seen an ugly child anywhere. But look at us. What have we made out of ourselves? (*An uneasy murmur comes from the group.*) I do not speak of everyone, I hope it does not apply to everyone! But are we all beautiful? ... I do not know, but the children are certainly all beautiful. I have never seen an ugly infant. Perhaps you have, but I have not.

But when a woman cannot have children, that is also OK. It is not something to be concerned about. It may not be your destiny, your Karma to have them. I did not have children, and I know many other women who do not have any. They could not have them; it was their fate. Some women suffer too much because they are unable to have children. It is in the nature of the woman to want children. But it

is exactly because children are so important for women that they are also the greatest obstacle to spiritual life.

A Swami in Dehra-Dun in India told me that according to the teachings of Vedanta it is easier for a woman to proceed on a spiritual path when she does not have children. We Sufis do not believe that. We believe that we are all equally able to go to God. This striving for the unity of the opposites marks and characterizes our spiritual way. And as I mentioned before, it is this desire for unity that is reflected in the relationship between man and woman.

All of the searching and striving of a lifetime, every desire and longing, every effort and hope, is in the end the reaching for the highest unity with the beloved God. Can we name that which we are calling our greatest love? He, or She – for God also has a feminine side – I would say That, has no name. But He appears to us by any name we call Him. He, That, has no name, but He answers to any name we call. If you say Jesus, then for you it is Jesus. If you call ‘Allah’, then for you it is Allah. Every name is the same.

The whole of life, my friends, from a stone to the galaxies, reaches for this unity. If we observe nature, we see that all beings want to be similar to humans. We can recognize human forms in trees, and even in pebbles! It is especially because we humans are made in the image of God that we always try to reach unity. Because we are made in His image, we seek to achieve unity, because He is One, because He is unity.

Sufis say that humans are the crown of creation; that we come from unity, and are nothing but unity. We have this striving for unity on every level of ourselves. When we love someone, we always want to be one with them. We want to join together harmoniously with our beloved, in our understanding and in our feelings. And in the moment of ecstasy, we finally have some glimpse of that unity that is nothing. And the full encounter with this ‘nothing’ is such a fulfillment, that from that time on, we are never alone again. If we can one day understand that this total unity between people, and the unity with God is the same, then we will never be alone again.

But you cannot experience that on the level of the mind. You can only experience that in deep meditation, in the moment, in the mystical condition, when you are united with the Great Beloved. Then you understand, not only this unity, but – as if by a miracle – you understand the unity of all people, of all of the people in the world. Then you can no longer do evil; then you can no longer abuse and destroy the earth, you can no longer hurt or injure other people. That is why the Sufis say, “Do not try to change the world. Clean your own threshold, and improve yourself.” If everyone would do that, then the world would really become better.

When one is young and enthusiastic, one wants to improve the world. One throws bombs, one becomes a Communist; one tries so many things. “Ah, I want to do something to change the world.” But you cannot do it. How could we change it? But we can improve ourselves. God will help us to do that. And spiritual life is precisely that: that we work to improve ourselves. That is the goal.

Now I want to speak about loneliness. Loneliness is a very great problem in the lives of many people. When one tries to proceed on a spiritual path, loneliness, or a feeling of loneliness, is certainly a problem, both for women and for men. It is, unfortunately more of a problem for women, because we have been created with a different psychology.

What actually happens when we are on a spiritual path? To be on a ‘path’, to use the current expression, means that there must be tension, there must be friction. It is like a law of nature: the ebb and flow of the tides, the passing of day and night, the swing of the pendulum; one comes first closer, then again apart. When we experience the condition of nearness with That, or Unity, or with God, or Emptiness, or with what we call ‘our higher self’ – these are all one and the same – then we are happy. And when we are separated, then our souls cry. But it is exactly this friction and tension that cleanses our spirit. You see, this is the cleansing process of longing, and this process causes pain. Friction

generates fire; and fire means pain and suffering and a deep sense of loneliness. It is a swinging back and forth, and in this way the spirit is purified.

In our group, we all know about this. We have a sign on the wall in the kitchen that says, "We all suffer from the 'Yo-yo' syndrome." We go up and down. Today I meditate wonderfully, and everything is fine; God is near, and my heart of full; and everything is wonderful. The next day I cannot meditate and I am nervous, and God does not exist, and spiritual life seems stupid and I will not continue with it. We all know that feeling.

When we first experience this, we are, of course, thrown into despair. People come to me and tell me, "I cannot tolerate you anymore. You sit there and do God knows what, except to talk. And I sit here and suffer and try to meditate, and I cannot meditate, and you do not help me at all." But how can I help them? They are going through the process of inner friction, of inner cleansing. And that is a very positive stage, it is very useful. Everyone, every one of us, must go through that. This stage passes eventually, but it takes time.

Women are lonely more often than men because they have more longing. We all, men and women, bring two characteristics with us into the world. The will to live, and the will to worship the Highest One. Please do not forget that we are made in His image. Somewhere within us, in our unconscious, we know that. The will to live is expressed in the drive for self-preservation. The will to worship is the aspect of love that is embedded in our souls. This aspect of love is the being of God within us. He manifests Himself in us as longing. And longing is the feminine aspect of love. We often feel empty and feel an unclear longing for ... something. There is always a place in the heart of every person that is reserved just for That, and no mortal being can fill this place.

My husband died a very long time ago, but I remember that I was very happily married. I often thought that life had given me all that life can give. I was happy; I had a good husband and a lovely home. Everything was as it should have been. But still there was an empty place in my heart. There was a longing – for what, I did not know; but it was sometimes so strong that I was tortured by it. Now, of course, I know what it was. This place is reserved for That, and no human being can satisfy it. Now I would like to pause and ask if you have a few questions.

(Question: Does the soul have a sex? Can one have both masculine and feminine incarnations?)

No, the soul does not have a sex. And regarding the second question, I personally do not know. But in all of the sacred writings it is written that it is true that one can sometimes have masculine and sometimes feminine incarnations. You see, if I make a positive statement, then that means that I know it from personal experience, and not just from books. In this case I do not know it in that way, so I can only quote from the sacred writings. It is said that when one incarnates as a man, then, of course, you get masculine karmas.

Karma is the law of cause and effect. I have these eyeglasses and I put them down. My movement is the cause, and the effect is that they lie there. Everything works that way in the physical world.

One day, someone asked me, "If I have masculine karmas, how can I become a woman in my next incarnation?" Well, it is quite possible. There are men who are not completely men. They have many feminine inclinations, and that is already the transition. And it is the same with women. In England homosexuality is now completely accepted, and one speaks of it quite freely. It is considered to be quite natural, and it is no longer a disgrace to be homosexual.

I find that that is as it should be. Because if one really believes in reincarnation, one must accept the possibility that one also brings karmas from another sex. Now, how can that work? I am a woman, and have created feminine karmas. How can I then reincarnate as a man? I may have a life in which I feel quite masculine, and then another life in which I am even more masculine, until after two or three lives, I might incarnate as a man that is not interested in women. But that is a transition phase. And

please! This is my personal opinion. I do not know it to be true, and I say that quite directly. Yes, you had a question?

(Question: If the longing is so strong, why can't we surrender more easily?)

Ahhh! Ego! That is the ego. The ego is the personality, the 'I'; it is my education, my family, my talent; and my 'I' is, of course, better than your 'I'. I am, of course, speaking symbolically. I certainly do not think that I am greater or better. But that is the ego. Somewhere inside oneself, one feels a little superior to the others; one feels that one is a little better than the others. And it is exactly that which blocks us from surrendering. Look, even when we love a man, we may not surrender to him at all.

On the other hand, one cannot always live in meditation, and the ego is unbelievably important in this world. But when you are on a spiritual path, then the ego must be ... tamed. That means that you still have the ego, but that you do not identify with it. Is that clear? Or not? (No, it is not quite clear.) Do you want to ask something more about it? Then I will try to answer ... (*Inaudible*) The ego is not destroyed, just that it is well under control, and that is the solution. You see, I have been doing this 'job' for twenty-six years (*Everyone laughs at the idea of such a 'job'.*) Of course I have an ego – certainly, but it is not – Hmmm! How can I say this?

It is really very difficult to describe in a way that you will be able to understand. My ego is there, but I control it. I know that it is there, but it is in the background. It is as if I would take a step backwards, in deference to you; that means that I consider you more important than I am. Is that somewhat more clear? You feel such a respect and love for others that you place yourself in the background. I do not see myself as the most important or the most clever, and I have a deep respect for what you are, for what you have reached as a person, here, as an individual.

Now I am not speaking about the soul, because the ego has nothing to do with the soul. I mean here and now, you and I, as people. OK? Yes, I think that now you understand more. Good. Shall we have an intermission? Yes, my boss tells me that we should now have an intermission. And if you would like, there is tea. (*Oops, there is no tea!*) They say that they cannot serve tea to four hundred people. OK.

(The intermission begins...and ends.)

So! I said before that we are created in His image, and that there is a place in our hearts that is reserved for Him or That, only. And He or She or That – you can say what you like – who has reserved this place in your heart, is the greatest lover, and a jealous lover; so no human can fill this place. We have already spoken about this. And longing is one of the messengers that the soul sends to the human being to remind it to go home. We feel, we know, that we must go home to the Beloved. And this longing is much stronger in women.

Everyone, man or woman, suffers on the spiritual path. There comes a time in spiritual development when we need to find perfect happiness within ourselves, and when we understand that we can only find this perfect happiness within ourselves; that we can only find it within our soul that is itself a ray of God. This is a step along the path, a process that we must all go through.

People come to me and say, "Ah! I cannot meditate. It is as if a wall stood in front of me, and I feel as if I am completely naked. I hang in the emptiness, and nothing is there. Even God is not there. I cannot pray, I cannot do anything. Everything is dark." Swami Rama has a particular piece of advice for this situation, "Settle down and make yourself comfortable in the darkness, and the darkness will pass."

I remember how, one day, my teacher spoke with L., the woman who brought me to him. She was so happy on that day. She was radiant, and told him all of her wonderful experiences and of her visions. And Bhai Sahib turned to me and said, "And you?" I just shrugged my shoulders, because at that point, I was in the phase of darkness and suffering. "Yes," he said, "Unity is good, but separation is better. When the human is happy, he doesn't do anything. He is simply happy; but when one is alone

and completely abandoned, then one cries for help and makes an effort. And for Brahma, the creator, a thousand years are not enough." I asked "But Bhai Sahib, will this state pass?" And he replied, "Yes, my dear, it will pass. It comes and it goes. But do not say that this state should go. Say instead, 'Oh, Beloved, this condition is not important. I still believe in You, and I am still loyal to You.' We cannot avoid suffering on the spiritual path, it cannot be done."

We have an expectation about spiritual life that is not correct. We think it would be wonderful to sit in the Himalayas with a master, and that then everything would be sweet and loving. (*From the laughter, no one quite hoped for that.*) It is certainly not that way at all. It is raw and difficult, and one is beaten and humiliated. Why? Because the teacher must help us to somehow learn to dominate our egos. And the ego will never go with kindness. Even in the old monasteries, from the beginning of time, they treated the novices badly. They had to clean the toilets and to serve the other brothers, and they were generally treated very badly. It is only through humiliation and being treated badly that one can learn to dominate one's ego. Humans are, unfortunately, made that way. We cannot progress on the path without suffering.

A young woman asked me a question as I was leaving the hall for the intermission. Well, as I tried to leave the hall; actually, there were so many people that I couldn't leave! She said. "I really do try to improve myself, but I see that the world does not improve." And I said, "If everyone would improve themselves, then the world would change! When one person improves himself, then he will change himself, and perhaps those around him, but one cannot expect to change the whole world. If everyone would work on themselves, then of course the world would improve." Then she asked me, "But why don't they do that?" (*Now Mrs. Tweedie is laughing ...*) That I cannot answer! They simply do not do it. Probably it is the ego that is the villain. Again the ego – it always is!

After my training in India, a friend asked me to describe the experience. I said, "Perhaps I can describe it this way: It was as if a steam roller had driven over me. And that which stood up afterwards was as thin as paper, and transparent; and there was nothing more that remained of me." That is how I felt at the time. It was really as if a steamroller had driven over me.

I do believe that women do, to a certain degree, suffer more than men. A woman is psychologically much finer, she is more finely made. I will not say, 'more sensitive', for I think that would express it too coarsely. But I have the feeling that we are more easily hurt than men. Now that is true. We are hurt more easily, and when we are hurt, it takes longer for the hurt to heal. I have seen that again and again with women. And I believe that that is the reason why we suffer more; that is, that we are hurt more easily.

I have used this word 'finer'. Fineness of feeling is connected with intuition and inspiration, and these are feminine qualities. Men also have these qualities; they can be very inspired and very intuitive, but then they are living their feminine qualities. If they do have these qualities they should not suppress them, because inspiration and intuition are wonderful. Every great discovery, every great invention was made, not so much with the mind as with inspiration and intuition. Suddenly, an apple fell from the tree, and Newton said, "Aha! that's it!" The mind is not able to take such a jump. Newton had worked and worked to try to understand how gravity functioned, and he could not do it. Then it was quite simple: an apple fell from a tree, and suddenly, "Of course!" It was so easy. That is intuition, and that is a typical feminine quality.

You see, we women work, somehow, from our inner selves; while men think things through. We act from our inner selves quite simply and naturally. That is the nature of the feminine qualities, and it is very connected with intuition.

We are not only very easily hurt psychologically; even our bodies suffer more. We give birth to our children with pain. Many years ago I read a wonderful poem. I no longer remember who wrote it, but it began,

“We women bleed,
 We bleed when we bear children,
 And we give our heart’s blood for our children, for our men,
 We bleed constantly for our men at war,
 For our men who hurt us,
 And for our children we always bleed,
 Our hearts bleeds always ...”

Very often, as I go into meditation, or just as I emerge from meditation and am only half conscious, I feel that women must always bleed for something. I cannot express it any better. That is the best I can say. But I am absolutely certain that a woman, in general, suffers more than a man. And look! To be a second-class citizen means that we are constantly suppressed. Do we not suffer that too? To be pushed to the ground again and again? Suffering comes to us from every direction. We feel it in our bodies, in our emotions, psychologically and physiologically: in every conceivable way. Well, that is the way it is. It is obviously God’s will that it is that way; perhaps that is all that one can say. And I cannot answer that. Do you have any questions? ... No? Then it appears to be clear.

I do not really believe that the loneliness and the suffering will ever end. As long as the world exists it will never end. But of course this is my personal opinion, and you should take it with a grain of salt. Actually, suffering is something wonderful, because it brings release. If we would not suffer, how could we know that there is a condition without suffering? How could we know that there can be such joy? Suffering is fire, and fire is purification. And there is something that I have experienced in meditation: that great pain and great joy are one and the same feeling. One can die from the greatest pain, and also from the greatest joy. Both are the same feeling, only they manifest themselves differently in life. But I am speaking about the greatest ... about absolute joy and absolute pain. It is only very rarely that people experience that, and most people never do. The Sufis wrote about this, but I had never heard of it and only discovered it in a book after I personally experienced it.

We have spiritual experiences in which we reach wonderful spiritual states that are full of beauty, full of joy, and full of peace; but then afterwards we are overcome with a sort of depression. It must be that way. This is not an ordinary depression; it is something that is very different. You see, this world is so difficult to endure, and in this other state it is so much more beautiful. The body is such an imprisonment that it is only in meditation that we know freedom. How could I so enjoy this other state, if I did not know the deep pain that follows it? Each time I have this wonderful state, I think, “Yes, tomorrow, everything will be dark.” But I accept it, for that too will pass. We must accept it. You see, there comes a time when illness no longer plays a role; and even pain does not play a role. Sri Ramana Maharshi died from cancer, but he did not suffer.

I knew a man who had cancer – I worked in a cancer hospital for a time – who refused to take medicine to relieve his pain. He said that he had pain, that he had terrible pain, but that he did not want drugs. He said, “I do not want to be drugged. Since this is the will of God that I suffer, then I want to experience this pain deeply and completely. Life has given me so much. I was very happily married. My wife is now dead, but I had so much happiness, and I experienced so much of the grace of God, that I feel that if this is His will, then I can certainly bear the pain.” And that is how he died. He had been very ill, but did not take any medicines. I remember that the doctors – even the head doctor – came to him and asked him to take the pain medication. He died from liver cancer, and that causes unbearable pain. He said, “No, I can endure it. I am a man, and I can endure it.” He meant that he was a man in the sense of the power, the strength, the might that a man can have. It was beautiful. It was the pride of a conscious human being. “I suffer, and I offer it to You, like a small flower, in gratitude for what You have given me over the course of my life.” I have never forgotten this story. I found it very beautiful – It is beautiful!

So, the time comes when nothing else has more meaning than this inner connection, this inner life; and it is because one has an endless joy that one is somehow able to offer up this suffering and to say,

“Oh God, I offer this terrible pain in me to You as an offering. I know that what I offer You is not enough, but it is everything that I have to offer.” I worked in this hospital for some time, and this one experience with this man made it all worthwhile for me. It was really quite an exceptional experience.

So spiritual life is fundamentally the endeavor to become independent of one's ego, of one's small self, one's small 'I'; and one can become quite independent of it. 'I', my real 'I', does not have a headache, this real 'I' cannot have a headache. My body can have a headache, but not this 'I'; not the 'I' that is my soul. And if you meditate a great deal, a time comes when you begin to identify with your higher self, and then the body and everything in its realm becomes rather unimportant. Of course, then life becomes very different, and even pain is not so very important.

When I say that we must somehow free ourselves of our egos, I do not mean to throw it away or to forget it, or to shove it down into the unconscious. No! I mean that we should become free of it, so that it serves us, and not that we serve it. We should not be running after our egos like children, saying, 'I am this, 'I have pain, 'I this, and 'I that. No. We are able to be much greater, much mightier than the small ego.

And the job of the teacher is exactly that: to free us from our egos. But the idea 'to free us' is also not right. I mean perhaps, to see it in the proper light, in the proper perspective. When the teacher helps us to overcome our ego, he is only doing his duty. Yes, perhaps this word, 'overcome' is better. But believe me, it is a terribly painful affair. The ego will not accept to be overcome. That is what it means, according to Christ, to be crucified. It is absolute crucifixion. The teacher brings the deepest parts of you to the surface; he turns you completely inside out; and in the end, you become a different person.

I have often been asked what one must do to find such a teacher. There is a spiritual law, "When the student is ready, then a teacher will appear," and it is true. If one sets out to find a teacher, one starts at the wrong end. When we have a longing, when we light our own torch, then we will be seen. There are those who watch in the darkness of the world: those who are pledged to recognize and help us. It is the law. And why does it work? Because we create a karma, a cause, and the effect will be that we find a teacher. Really, it is quite reasonable.

People ask me how I found my teacher. I believe that it is not important that I speak of that. It is more important for you yourself to find a teacher; and each of you will find one in a different way. I found my teacher because I went to India as a tourist. People recommended different teachers, and I traveled around, and one day I found him. How does one recognize a teacher? That is a difficult question to answer! Sometimes I thought, "Oh, this one, or that one, ... or even those!" I met several great beings. Anandamayi Ma, for example, was a great saint, a great Guru. People would tell me that this or that one was my teacher, but I found that it was not true. You see, I think we make a great mistake. We are so proud that we want to have a perfect teacher, and that is a fault and also not a fault.

I have said that we are made in His image, and, of course, God is perfect, and so something in us looks for perfection. "I will only follow someone who is completely perfect." But in truth, this is not at all necessary. What is necessary is that the teacher has what the disciple needs. And that is all. When the teacher himself makes progress, he will pull you behind him. In any case, the real teacher is life. If we would only look at our lives, and ask ourselves what life wants of us, and try to find out what we could learn from the people and situations in our lives, then we would not need a Guru. But one already must be well on the path to be able to do this, otherwise every eighty year old would be wise, and of course they are not.

So, people often ask me how I found my teacher. How should I answer? An attorney from America wrote me a wonderful letter, "Why do you never speak about how you found your teacher?" Later he came to me during one of my lectures in America and I told him, "You see my dear, of what use would that be to you? It would only feed your curiosity. You would certainly meet your teacher in another way. If you absolutely must find a teacher, then there are great beings here in America. But you do not need

one. An outer teacher will always point to your inner teacher, which is your own heart. He would point to that and say, 'There is your teacher, your own soul, your own higher self. That is your teacher.'" And that is true.

In my case, I found someone with whom I had a certain karma; i.e., that he had to be my teacher. But if your Karma is somewhat different, you cannot expect the same thing. Guruji once said to us, "If you want to be a very good Yogi, then marry and have children." Children will teach you everything. They are the greatest teachers. They will teach you patience, and they will teach you compassion. Your children will teach you a thousand virtues. Every father and mother has seen how children have the ability to bring out all of the negative feelings! (*Laughter...*) My God! Sometimes one feels as if you could bang their heads together. Then the little angels stand smiling in front of you and say, "Mommy, daddy..." it is enough to melt you, and you love them. And sometimes they drive you crazy. They are the greatest Gurus. I have seen that many times. As I have said, I did not have children. That was my destiny; but now I really can see that a child is the greatest Guru.

Now I want to speak about one thing more, and then I will answer questions.

When we speak of a teacher, it is important to recognize that each of us can only have one teacher. And it is the law that it can only be someone who has a deep Karmic connection with us, for only he will have the right to treat us in such a way. Sometimes he must treat us badly, and only one person in the entire world, who is absolutely pure and without any selfish interest in us, can do that without taking Karma onto himself. He must be pure in relation to us; that is, without any personal interest. But that does not mean that this person must be perfect.

Someone once asked me, "If I have had a teacher, can I go to another teacher after my teacher dies?" Yes, of course. In fact, a Sufi teacher may send you to another teacher. You see, the teacher can only teach you as much as he himself has learned; and sometimes the disciple is more talented than the teacher. In such a case the disciple will be sent to another teacher, the way one might be sent to another member of faculty at a university.

There is a very beautiful story – it is a Sufi tradition that may be a legend or may be historically accurate – of Mansur Al-Hallaj, a great Sufi from, I believe, the fourteenth century. They were taking him to his death. He was to be either hanged or burnt, I do not remember, but they tortured him first. He was led to the place where he was to be tortured along a route lined with people. He was in deep meditation, so he did not feel the stones that people were throwing at him; he was on another level. His teacher, Surawardi, was also standing in the crowd and, out of love, threw a red rose at him. And this rose struck the heart of Al-Hallaj, and Al-Hallaj said, "Oh master, why have you done that? You have awakened me, and now I feel the stones." In this case, the disciple was on a higher level than the teacher. That can happen.

OK. The 'boss' (*The woman who has organized the ball.*) tells me that I must stop so that you can ask questions or say something. OK? Then afterwards we will have a quarter-hour meditation. I had intended to begin with a short meditation, but I felt that I should begin speaking immediately. So! Do you have any questions ... or comments? Yes?

(Question *by a woman who sounds very sincere and troubled:* I have a problem with what you said about suffering. I can accept what you said about suffering on the spiritual path, but I cannot agree with what you said about women in the world being second class citizens. I find it right that women begin to work to change that.)

Of course. But unfortunately they were second class citizens. That you work to change this is quite right, and you must work to change that. Perhaps one day we will overcome it; but until now it has been that way. It is a historical fact, and that is what I wanted to emphasize. I did not mean that it was right, or that it should be that way. I only said it as a fact, as a situation that has created a lot of suffering.

(Questioner continues, (but already very relieved): I only wanted to hear that it is OK to work to change this.)

Yes! (*Mrs. Tweedie is laughing, along with everyone else.*) You should do that. And how! Yes?

(Question: [*from a man.*] I want to know if being sterilized can have an effect on spiritual development.)

No. I believe that it would not have any influence. You see, sterilization makes it impossible to have children, but the energy in the body remains the same. Sexual energy comes from the power that resides in the human body, which is called Kundalini. And that has nothing to do with sterilization. That only means that you cannot have children. The sexual might of a man is not diminished when he is sterilized, nor does it affect the woman that way.

I know someone who had that procedure done. He has a very beautiful wife, and I asked him quite directly, "Is everything OK?" And he replied, "Mrs. Tweedie, I do not know why people make such a big thing out of it. It has no such effect at all. Only now, I am free, because we do not want any more children." That does not have anything to do with the sexual energy itself, of that I am quite certain. If you would like, I can give you the address of this gentleman in America, and you can write to him directly. Yes, please?

(Question [from a man]: One sees that there are many more men than woman doing spiritual teaching, and Mrs. Tweedie said that it is because they have more freedom than women. But it seems that a man who takes responsibility for his family is not free either.)

Yes, you are quite right. But you see, it is easier for a man. When you have a wife and children, you must take care of them, but if you have money, you can give this money to your family and then you are free and you can even leave. But a woman cannot leave her children, it does not depend on money. It is a physical, bodily limitation, so we cannot leave. We are really more restricted by our bodies than men. That is a physiological fact. If a man has money, he can leave, he can travel; he can simply give the woman enough money so that she can take care of herself and the child. Many men do that.

(Questioner continues: But a man who acts in that way is not a spiritual teacher.)

Oh no! (*Somewhat taken back...*) A spiritual teacher may also be able to do that. Why must a man stay with his wife and children when he feels that he must teach? He doesn't abandon his wife, he only goes away. (*There is a minor revolution among the women!*) No no! There is a great difference. For us women it is much more difficult to leave our children than it is for a man. That is a psychological and physiological fact! Of course we can also do it, but it is much more difficult, and much more complicated to do it.

Even children are more dependent on the mother than on the father; and that is also a psychological restriction. But that is why all Sufis are married. All of the Sufi teachers that travel have wives, perhaps in Morocco or India, or wherever they live. It is OK. They come for a few weeks then return home again. But for a mother, especially if she has small children, it is very difficult. Yes, I really think there is a big difference. It is easier for a man. Also the man's character is more outgoing, and we are more reserved. There were many women Saints, even in Islam, and they were always somehow reserved. They were only well known in their local area; they were seldom widely known. Thank you. In any case that was an interesting contribution. Are there any other questions? Yes.

(Question: *Inaudible.*) The woman said that she, as a woman feel that she needs a spiritual woman as a role model.

I believe that a man could just as well be a model. I did not have a woman as a role model. A human is a human. And you see, it is not only a question of a model, it is also a question of Karma, a

question of whether you have a relationship with the person. I have said that only someone that has a particular karma with you is permitted to treat you in such a severe way without it happening that they themselves take on a negative karma. I think that a woman can have a man for a model and a man can have a woman as a model. As I have said, Ibn El-Arabi had a woman as a Murshid, and she was a very great Sufi. Perhaps it would be more comfortable for you to have a woman as a model. It is possible that you would prefer it, but if you do not have the right karma with her, then it will not work. Perhaps you will find a man who will really give you a shove along the spiritual path, and bring you some steps closer to the truth. Thank you. Another question? Yes.

(Question: Inaudible; perhaps: 'How can I find a teacher?')

I have said that it is not necessary. Do you have children? (She does.) Ah! OK. Stay with them! You will learn so much from them. But! If you regard your children as teachers for you, then you must exercise great self control, so that when the child does something that makes you angry, you are able to look within yourself to see if you can find out, quite precisely, why you have become angry. Then you will learn a very great deal. You must have a great deal of patience, and that alone is a great training. None of us have much patience. Who has patience? Almost no one. I too had to learn it.

It is interesting to see that when we are young, we are always in a hurry and do not have patience, yet we have our whole life ahead of us, we have a lot of time. But when we are old, we are no longer in a hurry, but we have no time left. *(She chuckles.)* Isn't that a paradox? But life is that way. So! Another question?

Oh! We have run out of time – and luck. We must begin our meditation now.

(and the meditation begins ...

The Lectures of Irina Tweedie

Sufi Camp of 1988: Part 2

The Spiral Path

Monday, July 4, 1988

Based on a Series of Lectures given
in Schwarzsee, Switzerland
July 2 – 16, 1988

Yesterday¹ I tried, with all of my heart, to somehow try to share my burning longing, the mountains, the atmosphere of the Himalayas, and my own transformation. I will read the last part of that experience to you on the last day we are together here. That was where I had a very great spiritual experience. But I will not speak of that yet.

Today, I want to speak about the spiral. I have taken this theme from the book, 'The Way of the Spiral', by Teresa O'Brien King. She compares the whole of life to a spiral, and I have taken my lecture from her ideas.

We will be together for another two weeks, and we will have an opportunity to speak with each other a great deal. Today, after I have finished the lecture that I have prepared, I would like you to ask questions. And as usual, if there is a question that I am not able to answer, someone else here will be able to.

Now, you have all probably seen, from high on a mountain, a river in the valley below as it winds its way across the plain. Or perhaps you remember, as a child, watching fascinated as the bath water flowed down the drain, and how as the vortex got faster and faster, you got worried that it might take your bath toys with it. Water thus shows us, in different ways, one of the fundamental principles of life: the archetypal principle of being, which wants self-awareness in all circumstances. That is important! And that is the spiral. Water shows us, in many different ways, how to find one's own way in the search for fulfillment, calmly, but with perseverance. You see, even spiritual experiences repeat themselves in a spiral. I am not the only one to have this experience. Everyone experiences that. That is the spiral that leads upwards to infinity. Spirals are usually of two types. There is one spiral that goes from below to above and ultimately leads to the Absolute, and there is also a spiral that leads downwards, leading into physical life.

The spiral that leads from below to above is like a chalice, a chalice that wants to be filled. In all of art – and all artists and painters know this – there are really only two themes: the theme of the spiral and the theme of the dewdrop. Try to see that. There will always be a spiral or a part of a spiral, or a

¹ Editors note: Part one of the Schwarzsee Suficamp was largely (70%) comprised of her reading the soon to be published German translation of her book, along with occasional asides about the landscape and about the subsequent devastation of the Himalayan landscape. While it was a very effective beginning in terms of setting the atmosphere of the camp, I felt that the actual contents did not justify distributing it.

dewdrop or a part of a dewdrop. And that is not only in art. The whole of nature is that way, and so is spiritual life. The principle of being is, above all, the search for self-knowledge. So one could say that water shows us, in many ways, how one can find one's way in the search for fulfillment, calmly, but with perseverance.

Now, water has a tendency to form spheres, as in the dew-drop; and in that way it reflects the entire cosmos. It falls from the sky as drops, forms beads of sweat on our skin, and sparkles as dewdrops in the morning light. On the other side, water must always be moving. The pull of the earth struggles to rule over water and forces it to move in a linear course, it hinders its natural tendency to form spheres. Again, we can consider art. It appears to be straight, but it is not. Now, the spiral is the compromise that water makes as it finds a harmonic balance between these two forces. And because of that, all waters – from a trickle to the widest river, to the oceans themselves – flow in spirals and never in straight lines, in a turning movement on its own axis.

And it is not only water, but also many other forms of nature that follow the pattern of the spiral. Spirals are to be found in all forms of life, from single cell life forms to human beings. Spirals manifest themselves in our bodies and in our psyche. Every life form passes through a liquid stage in the process of developing from the archetypal idea to its physical form, and in every being this stage will be visible as a spiral form. Even human conception begins as a spiral.

We are all familiar with the wonderful shells of sea animals and garden snails. We are amazed at the wonderful patterns we find in wood. We look dreamily at the spirals of steam that rise from a hot cup of tea. We are fascinated by the spiral unfolding of a leaf, or a flower bud. We are struck by the spiral form of the horn of an antelope. We watch with longing as birds climb in wide arcs, ever higher into the sky. And we are gripped by fear and awe in seeing the spiral vortex of a tornado. We all know about these things; one hardly needs to speak of them. All beings whose life cycle is determined by water follow the pattern of the spiral: from finger-prints, to the fibers of our muscles; the nerves and bones of our body, to the mysterious spiral fibers that set our hearts in motion.

So. After all of that, is it astonishing that the path that our spirit follows is also in the form of a spiral? The soul, by nature, is a perfect image of perfection, which embodies itself by pulling itself outward into the physical world. The soul becomes distorted as it enters creation, just as the pull of the earth affects the round form of the water droplet. The soul wants to experience space and time and relative existence, relationship and separation, and growth. And exactly as with water, the path of the spiral is a compromise for the soul. On one side there is the constant desire for the journey back to the Self, and on the other, this longing to grasp all of the facets of reality fully. The source of a river and its delta are really one and the same.

Today, physicists know that matter exists because of its own movement, that it only exists in movement, and that this movement is in the form of a spiral which originates in its own source and returns to it. So the path of the spiral exists out of its own movement. The spiral exists from its own movement. And our longing for spirituality is the longing for our real self. Look how logical that all is, and how lovely. It is really the law of nature. The more I study, the more I think and meditate, the more I see that spiritual life also follows the laws of nature. As it is outwardly, so it is within. It is above as it is below. If one can call it 'above' and 'below'. Really there is no 'above' and 'below'. It is inward and outward.

So this longing for our own self, in the middle of outer reality, can never follow a straight course. Never. Life itself runs in cycles, as we have all experienced. Time is cyclic. Nature, in all of its phases, from conception through birth, through life's journey and death, is also cyclic. And I have noticed, and many others have noticed it – perhaps you too have seen it – that when something happens, it never happens once. Usually, it happens three times. When one of your acquaintances dies, you can be sure that quite soon there will be two others who die. That has often happened to me. When something happens, it never happens once. Soon, something else that is quite similar will follow it. And that again is a cycle.

So the spiral is the most fundamental form of nature; it is the most fundamental law of nature. And the beginning and the end are the same. So the beginning of the river and its delta are really the same. Because if one extends it to infinity, then one finds that it is a circle, and so it really is a circle. When someone says that a straight line does not exist, they mean that if you extend it to infinity that it joins with itself. So the beginning and the end are the same.

So the spiral winds its way upwards in order to descend; it turns outwards so that it can again turn inwards. And we too do that, my friends. In the end, we too return to the place where we all began. And with time, we must grasp both realities. One cannot say that often enough. Prince Siddhartha, who later became Lord Buddha, learned that from the river: that everything changes, and that everything again returns. And our spiritual experiences and our wounds and our joys also return again. And what is especially interesting is that spiritual experiences begin quite slowly, as if the spiral were quite wide. And these turns of the spiral repeat themselves higher and higher, each turn on a higher level; and each turn of the spiral is faster and more intensive. These turns become quite intensive, and quite fast. When there is pain in the heart, and longing, then it is unbearable; and when there is love, it is incredible. And still we go on, until we end up somewhere where our minds cannot reach. As I have already said, our life is comprised of eternal change and of endless returns. The universe confronts us with the same situations, again and again, until we have finally mastered them.

You see, before the soul incarnates into this body, there is a moment of free will. The soul knows what it must learn, or grasp, or understand from this life – I do not know how to say it better – so it makes no sense to complain about your parents, or to feel that your fate is so terrible. You have chosen this life yourself. I know a very interesting example: a young woman who experienced the death of four people who were close to her over a short space of time. Both her mother and her father died from cancer, and she took care of them until their deaths. So her heart was broken twice. Then her best friend died from cancer, and again she took care of her until her death; and her heart broke for the third time. Then, in the end, we had a death in our group, and this young woman was a good friend of the woman who died, and helped to look after her too. So she experienced the same situation four times, and her heart was broken four times.

How many of us have never even seen one dead person? I know many people who have never seen a dead person; not even their parents. Their parents die somewhere or other when they are not around. But this woman has shared in this experience four times, and each time it was the same situation. Of course there was some difference, but not a great deal; the pain was the same. And what does she need to learn from all of this? Because, if you do not learn the lessons of your life, then your own Karma will repeat this situation for you; and it will repeat it again, and again and again until you learn what life is trying to show you. In the end, life and the desire of your soul are the same, because it is the soul that chose or desired this life for you. I find that extremely interesting.

You see, spiritual life, and the people you meet in spiritual life, is so interesting. I do not think that there is anything more interesting. I think that someone asked J. Krishnamurti – I read it somewhere, and I hope that I can quote it correctly – someone asked Krishnamurti, who died recently, “What is the highest form of art?” And he answered without hesitation, “The greatest art is to work with people and to help their souls.” I personally do not know if that is the greatest art. But personally, I would say that it is the most interesting thing there is. Every person is an adventure; every person is so different; every person is a miracle of God. As it is said of the Prophet Mohammed: “he loved perfume and beautiful women, and the shining eyes of people in prayer.” I find that statement so wonderful. I have meditated on it for years. The wonderful perfumes of flowers, of nature; of fresh wind, and beautiful women. Are women not beautiful? We all know that they are beautiful. And the shining eyes of people in prayer. Yesterday, I saw such a shining in some people. It is a wonderful sparkling. It is the light of the soul that one can see after someone has prayed.

So as I have said, the same situation will continue to repeat itself until we finally master it. It might be a situation in which we are dependent, or one that evokes anger; and it may demand that we develop compassion or power or fearlessness or generosity. Every time we encounter this situation,

and we become aware of the symptoms from a higher level of the spiral, we get a new opportunity to integrate what we have already learned, and in that way take a step forward in our personal growth.

In the same way, we all experience a collective learning process. The apparently endless wars that have repeated themselves for thousands of years, religious bigotry, genocide, and the destructiveness of nationalism have repeated themselves through history with only the smallest variations, and they will continue to repeat themselves until finally a generation will recognize the pattern and learn from it. For only in this way will there be any real change.

You see, what is Karma, really? Karma is our reaction to the environment. Karma is none other than our own reactions to the environment. Look! It is that simple. We are speaking about Karma, and it is often the case that people have no idea what it is. It is our reaction to the things that we encounter. When I encounter the same situation again and again, then I should recognize that there is something for me to learn, and that only after I have learned that lesson will the situation change. And you know, that is really true. When we have learned the lesson, then the situation changes automatically. We suddenly find that some new situation has developed, and then we no longer encounter the situation we have completed.

So. In our personal development, we follow the way of the spiral for our entire life. That would be an interesting meditation for you to try one day, if you have some time and you are alone and you feel drawn to it. Remember your childhood and think through the entire process of your life. You will see that it is a spiral.

The spiral is an important symbol, especially for us women. We experience the rhythm of life – the rhythm of growth and death – in our bodies much more than men do. Our entire existence is bound, in quite a complicated way, to the cycle of nature. Month after month, we are in rhythm with the moon. Our bodies change according to the cycle of the moon, from preparation for conception to cleansing renewal, independent of whether we bear children or not. We are bound in an endless cycle of nourishing, with our mothers and grandmothers and great-grandmothers. We are bound through nourishment, and through the ritual of the care of the sick, and the secret of death. In the flow of time, we are a child that bears a child, and watches how this child then brings a child into the world. You see, when you really think about it, if you meditated on it, you would see that it is really a wonder. It is like a fairy tale. Our own personal fairy tale, our mystery. And we, as humans, could not live without our fairy tale, without our secret. And, in the end, our secret is a spiral. It is a spiral that has gone through turn after turn, and that will continue, forever.

I have observed a very interesting psychological pattern in people. I met Guruji in sixty-one, and I began working with people after his death – really before that, I began in sixty-three – and I have worked with them ever since. And so often I have found that they live ... as if in a cursed circle. When a girl is born into a family in which the father beats the mother, then this girl will later, without question, find a man that treats her badly. If there is harmony in her family, then she will also find harmony in her marriage. There are, of course, exceptions, but the exceptions are really quite rare. For most people it is like a curse that they carry. What the mother used to do is now done by the daughter, and this woman's daughter too will continue it.

How often have I warned people? I have said, "Look, your mother did that to you. You have seen the way your mother treated you. Why do you behave the same way with your daughter?" Or I might say, "Look, your father was like that. Why have you found a boy friend that treats you in exactly the same way? Why does that fascinate you?" There was one case where I really warned a woman quite directly. Her father was always drunk. And everyone saw, including me, that her boy friend drank too much. I told her, "Do not marry him!" But no, she married him; and of course the situation was just the same as it had been between her own parents, and she had a little girl. The child is still small, but the child will probably also see the same things as she did, and eventually act the same way too. And so the same turn of the spiral will repeat itself.

When you think about your life, and how much in the form of a spiral it is, also think about the other people in your life. Where are the spiral forms in the psychological patterns of your family and of the families of these other people in your life? And you know, it is really quite fascinating. I have thought about it for days ... no, for nights at a time. I do most of my meditations at night. I do not have a great deal of time during the day, and we Sufis usually meditate in the night. It is quiet then, and there are not so many thought forms in the air. One is much calmer, and so it is the best time to meditate.

The spiral is a mystery, in ourselves, in nature, and also in other people. So what is this central point about which everything turns? It is an interesting question. What is the innermost seed from which we originate, and to which we must eventually return: spiritually, psychologically, physically and in our outer circumstances? Is this really our own inborn wisdom? Could it be the wisdom of our higher self, the source of wisdom that leads us when we fall? What is it? It guides us forwards. It pushes us forwards. It brings us back to itself, to ourselves. And each time, we are just a little older, with more trust, and more capable of recognizing our own real being. Every movement on the path of the spiral, be it upwards or downwards, into the depths or outwards, can be seen as simultaneous occurrences that are only slight variations in the central point, slight variations in the totality. To go downwards can also mean to go outwards, or it could mean to go inwards. Even an upward motion can be misleading. It only seems to us that we are going upwards. But the most wonderful aspect of the spiral path is that there is always hope, and that everything can be corrected. Everything changes, and everything returns.

When my teacher threw me out in nineteen sixty-three, not only from his presence, but even out of India, I said to him, "I will make mistakes, what shall I do? Now I try to improve my Karma; I try to improve myself; I try to become free. And there I will make mistakes." "Oh, that is not important," he replied, "There will always be an opportunity to correct your mistakes." And how true that is! There will always be a possibility to correct yourself, to improve yourself.

Sometimes I may give someone some advice. Of course, I only give advice if I am asked. Then we look at the situation together, and I might say, "Look, perhaps that would be better for you if you do this." And suddenly, this person will have a dream, and from the dream, it becomes quite clear that this dream is for me, and that my advice was not good. Yes, that happens quite often in the group in London, and the people in our group know it. Then it is quite simple. I must sit together with this person and tell them that I have made a mistake. I will say, "Look, we must begin from the beginning. What I did before was not very good, so we will try again." And usually we come to a solution after a time, but sometimes we do not find one, because life can be very difficult; or perhaps because the Karma of the person is so difficult and heavy.

Now the descending spiral winds itself from the state of order into a state of chaos. I have said that the spiral is in the shape of a bowl. But it can also turn in such a way that it leaves the world of order and descends into chaos. Then it becomes the symbol of the obstacles that we meet on our spiritual path. There are plenty of obstacles, but in general they fit into three categories: close relationships, dependency, and self-deprecation. Close relationships: by that I mean attachments to people. And dependencies: for example one can be dependent on one's mother, but one can also be dependent on money, on a profession, or on one's friends. My God! That happens so often! And the third category is self-deprecation.

Ah! Self-deprecation. That is the sin of women. How often do we depreciate ourselves? "I am not worthy", "I cannot do that", "The others are better", "I have blue eyes, but I wish I had brown eyes", "I have blond hair and I wish I had brown hair." Of course, I can dye my hair. I could dye my hair pink tomorrow if I want to, but I do not know what you would say about it. (*Everyone is amused to think of Mrs. Tweedie with pink hair!*) But we are never happy with ourselves, and we constantly depreciate and reject ourselves. That is the typical fault of women. In this area, men are much better. I have not seen so many men who reject themselves in the way that we women do. But I have seen very many women with that problem. So the sin of the woman is against herself.

All of these obstacles are the stones on the way, and they really do give pain. We trip over these things, and we do not believe that we can overcome them. We forget that every obstacle is a paradox; that at the same time that it blocks us, it is also essential for our growth. We fall in order to learn to rise. If you fall and stay down, then that is the end. When we fall, we must get up; you must learn to get up. That is how we develop. We are the result, the yield, of our mistakes. Thank God that we make mistakes! Thank God that we have fallen and gotten a bloody nose. My teacher rubbed my nose in the dust, and then he walked on me. Thank God! Because then I couldn't say, "Oh! I had such wonderful experiences. Now I am clairvoyant. Ah!" That is described in my book.

If I had not had a truly great and wonderful teacher, then I would probably now be in a mental hospital. Perhaps I would have been a Cleopatra, or Josephine, the wife of Napoleon. Or maybe Napoleon himself! *(That is too much for the audience, and the chuckling changes to a roar of laughter ...)* I had an American come to me in London five or six years ago. She was the Mother of God. Yes! She was the Mother of God. Of course, I tried to free myself of her as soon as was possible. And she had very little money, but I simply could not help her. She needed a psychologist. She needed analysis. She did not need me or our group, and she created a disturbance. She wanted to be treated like the Mother of God. She had no money and borrowed money from everyone because she thought that she had the right to it. Everyone had to give money to the Mother of God. Isn't that quite practical? *(The mood is light and everyone laughs, including Mrs. Tweedie, who is laughing so hard that she has difficulty speaking.)* Shouldn't we all give that a try? The question is where we would end up; but I do not think that it's a good idea after all.

Now, I have said that every obstacle is a paradox, because at the same time that it blocks us, it embodies something that is essential for our growth. And why is that so? Because every virtue that is taken to extremes becomes dysfunctional, while the qualities that a woman really needs for her growth are frequently suppressed in the process of her socialization. And so, characteristics that lead to maturity, such as the development of these virtues, can become stumbling blocks that block her further development.

We can be limited by our own helpers. Every one of us knows that! That has happened to everyone of you that are sitting here now. Of course, it happened to me too. I wanted to go for a walk with someone this morning, but a helper told me, "No, first you have to acclimatize yourselves to the five thousand foot altitude. Go to bed." So I said, "OK!" And I went to bed. Well, such things happen. But of course, I am telling you this as a joke, but it was really quite correct. I was much better off in bed than in trying to go for a walk. I can go for a walk next week. That is not important.

It is similar with close relationships. We can be limited in a bad way, but also in a good way. Our parents limit us, and so do our children, and our men; just as men are limited by women. In France they say, "On est toujours le jacobin de quelqu'un." One is always at someone's bidding. You always have someone who gives you orders. You always have a boss. And that 'boss' can be your life, or it can be your kitchen. It can be the omelet that you have to make in this minute. You want to hear something on the radio, or watch something on television, and you cannot. You have to make your omelet. Or your child cries out, and in that moment your child is your boss. Yes, that is life my friends, and it is good that it is that way. We learn. We learn something that is so valuable. We learn to be human, and we grow. You see, the process of growing up is so important. I know a sixty year old woman who is still a teenager. Yes! Emotionally, she is a teenager, and she is sixty. I think that I only really grew up since my teacher took me into his hands and kneaded me a bit.

But I still find very childish things within myself, and then I say to myself, "Aii Aii Aii. I should know better than that!" But for me it is not so very important. The things that come up now are no longer so important. But in general, they can be very important things, things that make a mess out of our lives if we do not grow out of them. I was very happily married. My second husband was a naval officer, and you know, he was really like a sixteen year old romantic. He was not quite emotionally mature. That did not disturb our marriage very much, but such things are always present in relationships.

The psychological development of a small girl is dominated by her need to learn the boundary between her mother and herself, while at the same time retaining her identification with the mother. You

see, that is a very important process and every psychologist knows it. And how can she find this boundary? The girl learns about the world as it is embodied in her mother, and she learns it as something that is, in a way, similar to herself. A boy sees the world as something different from himself. And this is the greatest difference, psychologically, between men and women. The man immediately sees that 'there is the world, and here am I', and the woman does not experience that. She sees her mother, and knows that she is somehow a part of her. And the time comes when the girl is a little bigger, that she must see that, "Yes, I am a part of my mother, but I am also 'I'". I had a truly lovely experience that relates to this.

There is a girl I know who is twelve years old, and I once said to her, "You look just like your mother." It was really true; her mother is very beautiful and the child was also very beautiful; and she looked just like her mother. But the girl said, "No! I am me!" And she said it so proudly! It was really quite lovely. I shouldn't have said that to her, because after all, she is herself. And she doesn't want to look like her mother. I found that very lovely, and I never again told her that she looked like her mother.

Now women, on account of their experiences in their early childhood, are more able to identify with others than men. You see, that is the strength of women, that is our 'plus'. Women are much better at developing good relationships than men. We are better prepared to feel sympathy and compassion, and we are often more open for mystical experiences. For women, it is much much easier to have mystical experiences. I have read, somewhere in a book on Zen Buddhism, that men must learn compassion and sympathy, and women must learn wisdom. Sympathy comes quite naturally for a woman, she already has that. The woman must learn wisdom. The man, according to Zen Buddhism, already has wisdom, but he must learn sympathy and compassion. I personally believe that we both have wisdom, and that both of us have sympathy. But of course, no one is completely man or completely woman. It is only that the masculine side of the woman is psychological while she has a feminine body; and the feminine side of the man is psychological while he has a masculine body. And when the man, as one finds especially with southern men – men from Italy and Spain – are culturally compelled to be macho, then compassion and the other feminine qualities are considered to be too soft. In English one says 'sissy' of a man who supposedly has too many feminine qualities. It is a misunderstanding, but look at how very many misunderstandings we have as humans. And I do not mean only collective misunderstandings. There are misunderstandings of the culture and of the nation, but there are also personal misunderstandings, our own misunderstandings, our own bad judgments.

Women must acknowledge the importance of attachments in the different phases of their lives, because within that lies the difficult-to-grasp mystery of women's development. There is the attachment to the children, the attachment to the husband, the attachment to relatives and friends, and the attachment to one's environment. Attachments are very important and valuable, but they can also be terrible obstacles. Attachments are necessary if one hopes to grow up. They enable us to develop. They are the foundation on which we are able to get along with other people. That is a fact that we all know.

You see, confusion reigns over this subject of attachments. In spiritual literature, all attachments are seen as dependencies and thus as negative. Now this contradiction – and it is a contradiction – can, to a certain degree, be resolved verbally. There is an aspect of our personal development for which attachments are useful. Attachment can be seen in terms of affection, love, and closeness. But the dysfunctional aspects of attachments always carry a sense of compulsion. Then attachment carries a sense of grasping and clinging. There is a saying, "We must love without leaving traces." To love without leaving traces is exactly what we need to learn. But we! We not only leave traces in the hearts of others, we leave gouges with our heavy, hobnailed boots. As a mother, we will try to bind and hold our son or daughter. Then the daughter will be full of hate, and the boy may become a homosexual.

If a boy becomes a homosexual, it is usually the fault of the mother. I have seen that very often. You can contradict me if you like, but I personally have seen it often. There is always a compulsive relationship with the mother in such cases. Always! Perhaps others have had other experiences, but that has been my experience. If the mother was very much attached to a male child, and oppresses the boy, then the man will later be instinctively afraid – terrified of women, and he will become homosexual.

And I personally – this is my personal opinion that you should accept with a grain of salt – can only say that every homosexual that I have known has had a mother problem, and a big one. Sometimes as big as Mount Everest. He may become a woman hater, or he may have a girl friend, but deep in his heart he does not like women. He distrusts them. And once he has this anger against women, what happens? He will have a grudge and anger against women for his entire life. Then every physical, every sexual encounter with a woman will be an unconscious rape of the woman, even if he loves her. This grudge will be within him, and it will somehow be expressed, (*Mrs. Tweedie says, now through clenched teeth:*) “I’ll show you!” He may love a woman and be very tender to her, but in his unconscious the sexual act will always be a kind of rape. Yes. That is my own experience with people, and I have had rather a lot of experience over the years.

(Comment: Inaudible) Aha! This woman is a psychologist and says that it is a two-sided problem. The father is also too weak and is not able to protect the child from the mother, and then this situation develops. Thank you.

But look how much damage we can do when we leave traces in the hearts of others. And we can leave such terrible traces, such eternal traces. Even if such a man does not become homosexual, he may end up fearing woman so much that he is always lonely and never marries.

I must say that I do try to take care of people. I am very interested in this work, and I find that every person is precious. It is easy to break a heart, but when one puts it back together, one finds that it is never again the same. You see, a heart is like crystal. Once it is broken, and you glue it back together – or even if there is only a tiny crack – it no longer rings. Have you ever tried to ring a crystal glass? It rings like a bell. But try to do it to a crystal glass that has a crack. It no longer rings at all. In a similar way, the heart no longer rings; once the heart is broken, there is no more music.

But of course, there are broken hearts and there are broken hearts. I told you earlier about a woman who had her heart broken four times as the people that she loved died one after another. This heart was broken in quite another way, and that is not destructive. That heart can still ring like a bell. I am speaking about attachment and imprisonment! I am speaking about slavery. In this other case, the human is free. That is why I personally find this path of the Sufis, our path, to be the best, because we are left so free. Free as the wind, free as the birds. We go – every one of us – our own individual and lonely way to the One. And no one will tell you that their religion is better than yours. We believe in the One, and we bow only before the One. For many of us, freedom is very important. And there are also some for whom freedom is not important at all. We are different, and it is good that it is so.

Now. What have I forgotten? (*A bird begins to sing loudly in the background.*) Ah. A bird is singing for us. Do you know what kind of bird that is? What do you call it in German? (*Someone suggests a sparrow.*) No, it is certainly not a sparrow. It is a chaffinch. I do not know the name in German. It is gray and – no it is not a robin. No, not a bullfinch. (*Suggestions are pouring in ...*) I think it is a chaffinch. (*She finds the correct German word.*) A bullfinch is larger, it is more like a blackbird, but this one is small. (*No one, including Mrs. Tweedie has actually seen the bird yet.*) It is a little larger than a sparrow. It is gray, and with, not exactly a red, more a brown part. (*An expert goes to the window and identifies the bird. Mrs. Tweedie was correct.*)

Have you ever thought that birdsong accompanies us from our cradle to our grave? I think I have said that here before. I find it fascinating that wherever you go, there are always little birds that sing in the morning and in the evening, and even during the day. And the sound of the songs of birds comes, as if from fairy tales. It is wild and free, and has nothing to do with people. It is very lovely.

Now. Dependency has a material aspect. We are dependent on our property, and we define our identities by it. But in truth, these things do not belong to us at all; we are only custodians of these earthly things, and even that for only a short time. We are only passing through. Now, a traveler can demand the very best: in accommodation, entertainment, good food, pleasant times, traveling companions, and so forth. But the traveler will always have a thought in the back of her mind that she has further to go. These things that we now own are only appearances of the instant. Of course, our traveler wouldn’t imagine considering the hotel room in Verona, or a restaurant in Katmandu to be part

of her property. She enjoys her time in each place, but knows quite well that she will be somewhere else the next day.

When the principle of attachment is over-valued in our lives, it can become a kind of compulsive clinging, and then it is a very great obstacle. Attachment drains one's life, and can be very dangerous. And often this attachment does not let go. Try to free yourself from your attachments. You will see how difficult that can be. And attachment becomes an obstacle for us women in an interesting way, because through attachment we give up the possibility of experiencing something new, something that can bring us forward.

We women are more dependent on things than men. Look. There are many more men Sanyasis than women. For a man it is easier; his psyche is made that way. You see, a man can love today and create a child, and simply move on. But we women? We stay here and we must carry this child for nine months, within our bodies. We nourish it with our blood. And then we have to take care of the child until it is independent. And so our psyche is made in quite another way from the psyche of the man. We are fundamentally different, and it is good that it is that way. But here is the explanation for women's greater tendency for attachment, and why attachment is so much more of an obstacle for women.

Feminine spirituality is always involved with freedom, while for men that is not necessarily so. If you analyze that, you will see that it is completely correct. We women have to be free in order to explore ourselves, and to be able to relate to a society from which we have been excluded for so very long. We must, above all, have the freedom to make mistakes and to try new things. If I cling to the identity of what I once was, then I hang a huge millstone around my neck. Yesterday's situations are dead. You see, I personally am an Aries – I was born in April – and Aries people kill the past. Yesterday was not as good as today, and tomorrow will be still better. That is a typical Aries mentality. I do not know much about the other signs, but I think that for Cancer being free of the past is much more difficult. I personally have the habit of simply throwing old things away, and sometimes I regret it. Of course, as soon as I have thrown it away I need it. But it is already gone; so that too can be silly. A Cancer would never do that.

So, we identify with our environment through attachments, and in that way we limit our possibilities to develop further. And this further development lies in ourselves. In this way, we lose ourselves by becoming the creation, and in that way forget that we, ourselves, are the creator. We lose our contact with our full power. We are only half, we are not complete. When we identify with something too much, and are no longer able to let go of it – that we are not able is important – then we close ourselves off from access to new possibilities in other areas.

Now, for the moment, I want to end my lecture and want you to ask me questions. What were you thinking about while I was speaking? You had thoughts, and perhaps there were also questions or contributions. (*There are no questions ...*) What is your reaction when I say that freedom is more important for women than for men? Do you know any examples? And why would it be that way?

A man also wants to be free. But a man can have an idea. For example, he can go into a monastery and study and become a wonderful monk. I have never met such a wonderful nun. Have you? I have not. Nuns can be quite fine. They are good school-teachers and good nurses, but do they have the drive that a man might have? No. You see, for us women to make progress, we must be free. We must be as free, as I said before, as the birds and the wind. A man can be quite happy with an idea, with his research. He can forget everything. A woman can never be completely happy with only an idea or with research. For us, relationships are important. I think that you could say a great deal about this. (*Nobody is saying anything, and now Mrs. Tweedie waits. Then, finally, a man!*)

(Question: You said that when a mother did not give her son enough freedom, that the boy can get a kind of crack in his heart, and that while that can be put back together, that the glass will no longer ring. I believe, I hope, that one can, after all, return to a state where one can ring again. What would you say to that?)

(Mrs. Tweedie pauses for a long time ...) You see ... I do not believe it. (Q: I do not know either, but I hope it might be true.) Yes, that is quite natural, but I do not think so. I must say that quite directly. Perhaps it is possible. ... Oh yes! One can! *(There is a laughter of relief from the audience.)* If you can fall in love so deeply, if your love is so great – love is such a power and such a miracle. I think that love can do anything – but a great love occurs very seldom in life. It must be a love like that of Tristan and Isolde. It must be forever. And what is ‘forever’ in this life? That means that you forget everything; you are, as if crazy. Then you forget your past, and your heart will ring again with your new love. I believe that one can overcome it in this way, but you need something greater than the wound that was inflicted. Yes, it is nice to see you. How are you? So-so? Well, OK. Me too, I am so-so. *(Everyone enjoys the interchange ...)*

There certainly are not many questions. Perhaps the people are all ... Yes?

(Contribution: I find that if we have chosen to come into this life as a woman, then that could mean that we are supposed to experience these attachments, and not experience the freedom that men have. And then there can be a life where one lives on the boundary between man and women, and then be born as a man the next time.)

Yes, when you choose to be either a man or a woman, there is of course a reason. And I have not said that a woman has less freedom than a man. Only that for her, freedom is more important. She can achieve it, but it is only that it is easier for a man. He almost has it from the beginning. But the man has other difficulties. For women, sexual relations are not nearly so difficult as for men. And if you are a Yogini and teach Yoga, you will know that men get completely different exercises from those that women get. The man has more physical problems, and we have more psychological problems. For us, to achieve some measure of freedom is absolutely paramount. When the man begins, he is already half way there, but he has these other problems. Of course, as we enter life, we choose a life in which we can develop ourselves. Guruji said, “The greater the obstacle, the greater the perfection.” So perhaps we need this experience, this teaching, where we have to make so much effort to achieve freedom, in order to become perfect. And if we need that, then we will be born into a family where we are very bound, and where we must try to free ourselves. And if we cannot do it in one life, then we may need several lives to do it. Thank you, that was a very good contribution. Yes?

(Question: Could it not be that our ability to form relationships, or our need for relationships, protection and security, is appropriate for the raising of children. And that we must only free ourselves of them after they no longer serve these functions, I mean after we are past the time when it is necessary for us to have these qualities as mother or wife, but still believe that we need these things for ourselves.)

Yes. If we have a family, then we do need these attachments, and we can only free ourselves from them after we have fulfilled our duty. That is quite correct. (Question continues: Yes, one could have understood you to mean that these attachments are only obstacles.) No, I did not mean that; and if I have said that, then I did not express myself well. You see, even in the Upanishads it is said that you must fulfill your duty to your family, and that only after your children are grown up are you free to do as you please, and even then only with the agreement of your partner.

Guruji said, “First, there must be peace in the house.” If your partner does not want you to follow a spiritual path, then it is better that you do not follow one; because there would be such a conflict that you could not progress spiritually anyway. You must have peace in the house. And a small child needs attachments. *(An infant sings out in agreement, and everyone laughs.)* He needs boundaries to bump into, and some children need very clear boundaries. The child constantly pushes the mother and father to prove its own identity. That is a part of the process of growing up. “I do not look like my mother! I am me. So I will do what I want. I will color my hair in yellow stripes, and I will be wild; I will do the opposite from what she tells me. I will dress in black, and have all black sheets in my bed just because my mother doesn’t like it.” We have all gone through that, or we have seen it in our daughters or in our sons. Does anyone have another question? Yes?

(Question: I can well understand what you are saying, and I remember how difficult it was for me to become free, because I saw that what I was doing to free myself developed in a funny way, and it all became too much for me. And then I would go back to my old patterns. It was a constant struggle to be free, and then feeling that what I was doing was restricting me, and then I had to go through it all again. Before you mentioned nuns. It is what one might search for one's entire life in a monastery: to be free, from things and so forth, but this striving was so obsessive that it itself became restrictive. And that doesn't happen to a man.)

No, I would not say that. I think that that is more a question of temperament. You personally are a very ardent and intense human being, and you are a perfectionist. You want everything to be perfect. That is your character. It is wonderful to be a perfectionist, but it is very difficult; there is a shadow side. If you are a housewife and a perfectionist, you will hunt down every speck of dust in every corner, and so you become a slave of your house. I am only giving an example. Of course, in your case, it is not so bad. *(Everyone laughs ... they are not sure that it might not be an exaggeration!)* But it was true in my case. When I was young I had to keep my house so very clean. I remember that when I had a woman to help with the cleaning, it was not good enough. I would get down on my knees and would clean the tiniest bits of dust out of the corners. My husband asked me if I were crazy to work the whole day like that. But I didn't change. No! It had to be completely wonderful. Each little bit had to be properly cleaned, and it did not matter how many years it took to clean it all.

But, you see, here is an interesting point. Everything needs love. Even objects. Everything needs attention. If you cannot dust the table today, you can apologize to the table. "I didn't give you any love today, I did not have the time; but tomorrow I will make you beautiful again. (Question continues: So then it is really through love that we have our possibility to be free.) Yes! I have tried to lead you to exactly that. Yes, exactly. It is always and always a question of love. It is the greatest mystery and the greatest power in the world. That is why the path of the Sufi is omnipotent: we work with love. God is love, and the human is all love. I always repeat that, but it does not come from me, it is a quotation; but unfortunately I have forgotten where it comes from. And you are created in his image.

(Comment: In reference to the heart that has once been cracked, I think, I hope that one can make the heart whole after it has been broken in a destructive way.) When one loves, one is a different human being, one is as if mad; and you can do anything. It is a wonderful thing to be in love. A gentleman I knew once said to me, "You know, if I am not in love, I do not feel alive." The consequence was that he was always in love with someone. It was not with the same woman, but he was always in love. Well, I suppose that if that is his way to love and to live, it is OK.

(Contribution: In connection with love, I thought that a man who feels trapped by a woman has a big chance, if the woman really loves him, to experience love through his other part, through his partner, and that if he can develop this love, then he can become free.)

This is very interesting contribution. She said that if the man is strongly bound to the woman, that he has a tremendous chance to understand why he is so bound. And through love and by understanding his problem he can change himself. But if the man cannot manage that? (Q: Then he remains dependent forever.) Yes, that is correct. And so what she is saying is that the man does not love his partner enough, otherwise he would be able to do overcome this dependency. And I think that it could be true.

(Question: Do you also mean that he does not love himself?) No, he does not love her enough. If he would really love her, then he would improve himself in order to leave the woman free. This is a complicated psychological process. But he cannot do it because he is too egoistic, because he only loves himself. *(Many people seem to object to what seems to be a misunderstanding on Mrs. Tweedie's part.)*

(Question continues: Mrs. Tweedie, I meant something rather different. I can only really love someone else if I love myself. If, in my own personal history, perhaps my mother did not love me, and thus I cannot love myself, then I have no possibility to give my love to anyone, I cannot love another person. And then I am not in a position to free myself of this pattern.)

Excuse me, but is not love to forget oneself? And if it is, then where is self-love? When you really love, only the beloved lives; the Sufis say that the lover is dead. One forgets one's self, totally and completely! I have loved in my life. I was very happy and felt very loved; but I did not exist. Only he existed. I believe that self-love no longer exists then. I only wanted to share everything with him, to give him everything; and when I had some lovely experience, my first thought was, "Oh, I wish he were here to see that." I was nothing. You see, that is why love is the greatest surrender. That is why one must so completely surrender on a spiritual path. Because if you have not totally and completely surrendered, then you cannot love.

So, God bless all of you.

For those of you who have only come today, our meditation is to fill our hearts with love. Feel this love, and drown every other thought that comes into your head in this love. I have a few leaflets about our meditation that have been translated into German. I will bring them tomorrow in case anyone would like one. It will be included at the end of the German translation of my book. So. One fills one's heart with love, and one drowns every other thought in that love, so that no thought remains, only a void.

(The meditation begins ...)

(...and the days meeting ends.)

The Lectures of Irina Tweedie

Sufi Camp of 1988: Part 3

The Character of Women, & Questions

Tuesday, July 5, 1988

Based on a Series of Lectures given
in Schwarzsee, Switzerland
July 2 - 16, 1988

(Mrs. Tweedie has been answering a few questions before the session begins ...)

That is discipline, you see – we must train our minds. The mind still belongs to the earth, and is made from the material of the earth, just like an animal. The body is an animal, and the mind belongs to the body. We must become masters of our own minds, not its slaves.

What is longing? It is the urge towards unity.

Now. This morning my friends, two very important things happened, two very esoteric things, and I will translate everything I say about them into English. In this School of Yoga, everything is done openly. Everyone knows everything that happens, especially when important things happen. Yesterday I saw someone who was crying a great deal, and she cried half of the night, first in I.'s room, and then with me. But finally she left, more or less smiling. People come to us crying and broken, with broken wings, and they go away happy and smiling by His grace. What happened is this: her heart had been opened, and that is a dangerous psychological occurrence. Then the human needs extra attention, both psychological attention and other attention from other levels. One speaks so easily about the heart being opened. There are Gurus in America who speak quite glibly about it. They use peacock feathers, or other powers of the Guru to awaken Kundalini or to open the heart. That is utter nonsense. The teacher can never ever do that; only the person himself can do that, with the help of God.

This woman has been with us for five years, and she has been loyal and has faith. Of course, at first she had doubts like every one of us has. She has always been very psychic, and that too makes life rather difficult because you have to live on two different planes of being. But now something suddenly happened. And when the heart suddenly opens like that, it is an act of the grace of God. And although one can never explain what has happened, one is like a newborn child. One is absolutely helpless and vulnerable. One's heart is completely open, and one cries and cries; and everything dark from within you comes to the surface. Every memory, and all of the awful things from your childhood that have given you so much pain appear in your mind. She told me about things that had happened to her since she was practically a baby. And sometimes things happen to us when we are children that make us wish we were dead. Sometimes adults do really dreadful things to us when we are children, and they do not realize it at all; they usually even mean well by it. When a human being is in this state, they are really like a new-born child; they are completely naked. And it is good that it is that way. This

opening is one of the greatest of all mystical happenings. But now this woman needs a little extra attention, so I may translate a few things we speak about into English for her.

Then another young woman came to me, a German woman, who first came to me about five years ago at House Schnader in Lunaberger Heide, in Germany. Before she had ever met me, she bought my book and saw my photograph inside it, and that had done something to her heart. And things went very well for her: there was a nearness to God, and she could ask for help, and everything was good for her. But then suddenly, last year, everything collapsed, and she was alone and without any help. There was no one that she could turn to. She is, by the way, a young teacher, and she teaches children between ten and twelve years old, which is itself very difficult. She is a perfectly normal human being, without any great exaggerations, and without hysteria; she simply felt utter and complete despair. She saw me in Frankfurt but did not dare to come to speak with me. She wrote to me in England, asking to come, and received my invitation, but then everything happened in such a way that she could not come. Everything that happened was against her. And when you are alone, when the Beloved really abandons you and veils His face, that is a very dark time. Saint John of the Cross speaks of the 'Dark night of the soul'. And that is exactly what this is. So she must also get some special attention from me. But she will be OK now; Guruji has looked at her. Now, everything will be OK for her; but she has really suffered, and a state like that can go on for years. And then suddenly things begin to open, like the opening of a new door, like a breeze of new fresh air.

In our group, of course, we know about such swings. We call it the Yo-yo Syndrome. It is the usual up and down of spiritual life. This up and down is in itself a purifying process. Even Carl Jung mentions, that in the process of individuation this process is perfectly normal. It is the process of the reconciliation of the opposites. Once the opposites are reconciled within your psyche, then there is no longer a yo-yo problem. I do not have it anymore, but of course, I have been at this for twenty-seven years. So there is hope for you too. After twenty-seven years you will no longer have this problem. Have patience!

So both of these things happened this morning, and I am telling you that quite deliberately because I always say that we are all hopeless, but that there is always hope.

Now, are there any more questions or contributions from yesterday? Yes?

(Question: Mrs. Tweedie, I have a questions about hope that my father asked me to ask you. What does hope feel like? It is written in the bible, "Faith, love and hope." And he says that he does not know what this word 'hope' means, and he is very worried about it.)

Does anyone know what hope is? It is a question from her father. Yes?

(Comment: It is a kind of confidence.) And would that be enough? (Questioner: No.) (Comment: It means to expect something good or something better.) But what could that mean in a spiritual sense? (Comment: For me it is a kind of faith that something will come that will be better.) So for her it is faith that something better will come. Is that enough? (Questioner: No.) Again no. (Comment: For me it is always connected with light, and is never combined with anything dark.) For her it means more light, and of course that would mean more understanding. (Questioner continues: He said that he found a line in the bible that said, "And I will plant hope, even in the grave." And he is annoyed because he cannot understand it. He asks, "What shall we hope for?") That is lovely, I have not heard that line before. "And I will plant hope, even in the grave." The bible is, of course, always very poetic; especially the old translation. In English there is now a new translation, and it is not so beautiful.

(Comment: Could it not be the longing for salvation? There is still the hope of reincarnation in the grave, even if salvation does not occur in this life. So it is hope for salvation, and the longing for salvation.) Aha! Now we are getting nearer the point. Yes, I could accept that. I find that is a wonderful explanation. Perhaps someone can write that down. Yes, I think that is the answer. What do you think? Yes, everyone is smiling, I think that is it. Try to say that to him, and if he is still not happy, then we will try to think up something else. *(Everyone chuckles.)* But I think that hope is the longing for salvation; and of course, that is self-realization. Yes? (Comment: Hope is that our longing is fulfilled.) Hope is that our

longing will one day be fulfilled. It does not matter if it is today or tomorrow; it is a star that lies in the future, a wonderful sparkling star.

(Now to the original questioner...) What do you think about that? (Questioner: Yes, that is lovely, but ... *(Everyone laughs.)* but how can I make that clear to my father?) Yes, he must feel that longing. I think that is a question of the heart, and that one will never grasp it with the mind. If he does not believe in salvation or the beyond, then one cannot help him. But you see, that 'beyond' is here, with us. We have seen so much proof in our group. I have told you of a few things, and today two more things have occurred. Something happens every day. (Comment: I am reminded of a saying I once heard that 'God gives us the nuts, but we must crack them ourselves') Yes! *(Mrs. Tweedie repeats the line, but she makes, unawares, an interesting grammatical mistake.)* God gives us the nuts but we must crack ourselves. *(Now everyone has a really good laugh.)* That is so lovely! And it is really true! Such analogies are sometimes so very good.

Is S. here? (Yes.) Ah! You are here and I cannot see you! Do you understand English S.? *(Clearly, Mrs. Tweedie meant to ask about German.)* (S: English, yes.) *(Everyone laughs...)* Do you understand German? (S: No, not at all.) Now, S. is a member of our group in London. He does not speak German. He sits here understanding nothing, and he goes into meditation. He is a strong and silent type. He does not say much. Sometimes he will have an interesting dream, but he will not tell me until I ask him, "Have you had a dream?" Then he will say 'No' or 'Yes' and then he tells us his dream. And he is perfectly happy, because somewhere, even though I never explained it to him, he knows that the voice of the Yogi carries a special power with it. You know, he comes from a very ancient race, *(He comes from Haiti)* and they have it all within them, even if it is not in the mind. They know; they have this old knowledge in their blood. When I first returned to London from Gurujī, it sometimes happened that people who could not understand English at all understood every word that I said and were able to repeat it to me years later. Such things happen. So you see, that is another proof. So you can tell your father that if he does not believe in the beyond, that the beyond is here, with us.

There is spiritual life, and there is worldly life. And there can be great differences between them, and great obstacles in aligning them. But there comes the time, for all of us, when spiritual life and worldly life become one. Then you see that they are two sides of the same coin.

So, now that we have settled this question of hope – if the father of this woman is happy with our solution – I will continue with my theme from yesterday. And this theme is the spiral of life: the mystery of the spiral of life and its difficulties, for men and women alike.

Gurujī said, "Attachments become an obstacle for women, because in that way they lose the possibility to experience something new and unexplored." As I have said earlier, feminine spirituality is always connected with freedom. We have to be free in order to explore ourselves, and also so that we can manage in a society from which we have so long been excluded. So for us women, attachment is the greatest obstacle and the most difficult to overcome. Gurujī said, "Women have everything. They get it as a kind of a package at birth. They hold the creative energy of the Absolute in their chakras. But we men have to get this energy." Of course, I was very happy to think that spiritual life would be very easy for me. "I give men different exercises. And they must attain this energy, but women already have it." But when he saw how pleased I was about that, he said, "Oh no! It is difficult for everyone. It is only difficult in a different way."

Yesterday at supper a gentleman told me something very interesting. He told me that he had lived with the red Indians. He is a professional photographer and he was waiting to photograph a very interesting woman. But the woman was still busy when he arrived, and while he was waiting for her he had a conversation with a twenty-three year old Indian. The Indian told him, "Yes, women already have everything. For them spiritual life is much easier. For example, a woman does not have to do the practices I do, like sitting in a hole." I was told what it is like to sit in one of these holes. But perhaps the man who told me about it can tell you. *(Now, to the man who knows...)* Do you want to describe this hole? Or not? *(The man begins, softly.)* Please speak up. I cannot hear you. I am deaf. (He asks her, "You are deaf?" *(...well, it is someone who knows her quite well, and her hearing has always been unusually good.)* Yes, I am

completely deaf. I am not a pigeon, (*The German word is very close ...*) I am only deaf. (*Everyone laughs at the quite un-pigeonlike, but deaf Mrs. Tweedie.*)

(Gentleman: These holes are called Kivas. There are many in the southern states of the US, and probably also in Mexico. But the interesting part of this conversation I had was that the Indians believe that the woman receives, by her birth as a woman and all that that entails, a natural relationship to the mystical dimension of life and to mystical experiences. And they believe that men must attain this by struggling for it. For the American Indians – at least where I was – it was quite clear. This twenty-three year old Indian explained it all quite logically. Later, he went with me into one of these Kivas. It is a square room that has only a small opening in the roof, and so it was quite dark inside, but one could recognize many symbols on the walls. There were symbols for the four directions, and for the corresponding five elements. And he told me about the first initiations, where a man would remain in the darkness of the Kiva for 2 days with only water. Later the length of time would increase to four or six days and so forth, up to two weeks. The man can break off his quest if he cannot handle it, but then he will not have reached that inner level. In the end, he can only be called a warrior or a protector after he has gone through these periods in darkness, through these initiations. And if he is never able to do it, then he can never be called a warrior. Then one can only say that he became a man, but not a warrior.

This man explained that the woman did not need to go through this; that she already had this connection. He spoke about the time when the moon is below the horizon, when the woman has her period. This is, of course, completely different from our culture where the woman is considered to be 'unclean' and so forth. It is during this time, according to this man, that the woman is in a state to have real spiritual experiences. In this time of purification the woman is fully connected with the world of the spirit, and will usually separate herself from her family. If she has an infant, she takes it with her and goes to a house where there are only other women in the same situation. There she spends this five or six days experiencing this channel to the beyond in full consciousness. And I heard all of this from a twenty-three year old man.)

Thank you, that was very lovely. So strictly speaking, we women are already born as warriors from a spiritual point of view. But we have other difficulties, like attachments. And when we are dependent on things, that is very difficult to overcome for us. We must develop discrimination and detachment and dispassion. But it is natural that we are more attached to things than men. Look! As we spoke of yesterday, a man can create a child and then simply leave. We women cannot do that. We are dependent on circumstances. The child needs warmth and security and love, and someone must give these things to the child; and to accomplish these things we need money and comfort and warmth. Our very character is made in such a way that we try to get these things. Look how different we are, men and women.

Cecil Collins, a famous modern painter from England, said, "Men and women are so different that I absolutely cannot understand how they can be together at all." And that is really quite true.

So we women must, above all, have the freedom to make mistakes and to try new things. But if I accept to remain just as I have always been, then I hang a huge millstone around my neck. I spoke about that yesterday, and I am repeating it intentionally so that you have another chance to really hear it. That is why I picked this point to end yesterday's lecture. It is through attachments that we become identified with our environment, and it is in this way that we limit our possibilities to develop further. Please look in your hearts; you will see that this is correct. These 'further developments' depend on us! No one can help us with peacock feathers! Not with peacock feathers or with blessings. These things are in us! We are made in the image of God! We lose ourselves by being so aware that we were created that we forget that we are also the creator. Look how subtle that is!

You see, we can be almighty! And the Yogi is almighty. As I said yesterday, one arrives at a point where one must be careful about what one thinks, because what you think will happen. I am not here to speak over your heads or to speak at you. I am here to share with you what I know to be true. And that is dangerous.

When I say that “I know” something, that can sound very dogmatic. You could say, “Look how dogmatic that is!” But if you really know something, if you know it one hundred percent – you can try this for yourself – then people will think that you are dogmatic. And there is a very fine difference. Fanatics are also dogmatic, but really, they are fanatic because they themselves are in doubt. Actually, there is a great difference between real knowledge and doubt; but it is difficult to tell the difference. The inner quality is completely different, but it is almost impossible to tell the difference outwardly. And that is the danger. That is why there are so many pseudo Gurus. I just gave I. something to translate into German. It is an article explaining how to tell the difference between a real Guru and the false one, and I think that it could be very useful for you to hear it. It explains the difference between the real Guru and the one who only wants your money. (*Unfortunately, nothing more is ever said about this.*)

So. We forget that we are the creator and thus we lose our contact with our full power. We become too identified with something, and are no longer able or willing to let go of it because we feel that our security depends on it. We think, “The devil today is better than the devil of tomorrow.” I already know this devil, so I had better stay with it. I am afraid of just what tomorrow’s devil will do to me! (*There is a laughter of agreement.*) Hmmmm. But to let things go is very difficult. I have tried it, so I know it is difficult. But then we close ourselves off from the entrance to new possibilities in other areas.

So in this sense, my friends, attachment is a kind of refusal; it is, “No. I will not ... I do not want to find myself.” Look. What I am now saying to you is extremely important, and I hope that this will be recorded, and that you will play it again and again. These thoughts need to penetrate you. What I am saying to you is very esoteric and very deep. So this is a “No, I will not. I do not want to find myself. It is too difficult. It is the devil that comes tomorrow. This devil that I already have is not so comfortable, but at least I already know him.” Well, one thinks that one knows him, really you do not know him at all; one can never know the devil, he is far too sly.

The real problem is that we are unable to differentiate ourselves from other people. Look how we love our groups. I will not differentiate myself from others. I will not sit in the first row, I will sit in the back so that no one can see me. In this way, we forget our connection with the whole of creation, and we cling to one single object. This object can be a person, or some property; but it can also be a life style, or a town, or a social role. And we keep each of these things as our personal identity. Please, what I am speaking about today is one hundred percent true for every, and I repeat every one of us, but especially the women. And when you look inside of yourself I hope that you will be able to see that.

So what is this attachment? If you look at it quite precisely, attachment is a kind of false love. It is the total identification with another being, who is really not oneself, in whom one wants to merge so that we can feel: “I am that. That is my persona. That is the way that I appear in the world.” If we were honest with ourselves, we would see that it is not us, but we are not so honest. We lie! And in that way we lock everything else out, we lock out all of our other possibilities. Look, I am speaking about the ego. This is all ego. Do not forget that. I have not said that until now, but this is the ego. We lock out all other possibilities including our needs and even our own worth. And we women are especially bad in this. “I am not worth anything. I cannot do it. I want to be different from the way I am. I am unclean. I have so many sins.” We all have sins; we all have a dark side. Carl Jung says that even God has a dark side. And so what? We can bring this dark side into the light, so that we can look at it, so that we can say, “Yes, you are dark,” and so that we can see that this part of us is dark. But this darkness, this rage, this disgusting part within me is very strong. If I can bring it into the light and transform it there would be such energy! And this energy would help me and push me on towards the truth, towards the light.

(Question: It is in this area that I always have a difficulty with what you say. Because on the one side, you say that we should be careful of what we think because if we have bad thoughts then we cause terrible things to happen. On the other side, you say that we should look at this dark energy in order to transform it.)

Now, that is a real problem. On one side, it is said that you should not think bad thoughts and not do bad things; and here I am saying that we should look at the darkness within ourselves quite calmly, in order to bring it into the light so that we can transform it. Is that a contradiction ... or not?

(The response is that they are two different things and not a contradiction. Then someone adds: They are completely different, because on the one hand, there are the thoughts that I allow and the thoughts that I think are conscious; while in the other case, the darkness rises on its own, and is, at first, unconscious; and then I look at it. It is not something that I identify with; it is autonomous. And I do not say "yes" to it, rather I look at it in order to transform it.)

Bravo! That was very well said, and that is the answer. So it is not at all a contradiction. They are two different things. One is done consciously, while the other comes from the unconscious. Is that OK? Are you happy with that answer? (Questioner: No, she is not.) So we have to find another way to answer you. This was answered quite correctly, but when you explain something, you should try to illuminate the subject from different sides, as you might with a spotlight. It is the same light, only the direction is different. So we need to find other words or another example. Does anyone have an idea?

(Contribution: I thought of a story from your book, when you killed the mouse. That was when Mrs. Tweedie lived this side. And afterwards her teacher said, "Yes, it was good that it happened. It had to come out." Often we feel badly because we harm others, and as I read this part of the book I felt a lot, about myself and about Mrs. Tweedie, but I also had a certain feeling about this mouse. I felt so much love for this mouse, this mouse that had also fulfilled its task. It was good and necessary that Mrs. Tweedie take this step in her life, and when such a thing happens in the moment when we really need to do it, when it comes from deep inside of ourselves, then there must be a benefit for the other side, too. And this thought sometimes helps me to accept myself when I find myself in a situation where I am violent.)

So in other words, when someone does something violent – you see, I was horrified at what I had done. I knew that I could also have killed a human being at that time. But when I told my teacher about it, he said, quite calmly, "Yes, sometimes it happens like that." So perhaps that is an answer, I do not know. Perhaps if you do something terrible, even your victim ... you see, in this case the victim was a mouse. But I could have killed a human being. What then? Would it have been the destiny of that person to be murdered? Perhaps a Yogi would say, "Yes". We choose our lives. The higher self knows what will happen in a life before it enters it. And perhaps it might be necessary to have the experience to be murdered. You see, I do not think that I can answer this question. That is why I have asked you, the audience, to answer it. Yes?

(Question: Is it possible that it is simply a question of attitude? That we should try to practice that we do not think that 'I am such and such', but rather that 'I still have that trait or tendency'.)

Aha. So I do not think that I am this or that, but rather that 'I still have that'. (Contribution continues: And that one tries to give this part of oneself, inwardly, to the light, and tries to illuminate that darker part and transform it. And to do that with hope and faith.)

Yes, that can be. You see, when I listen to what people are saying, I think that every one of them has been correct, because quite simply one cannot give a general answer to this question. And I believe that you *(To the woman who originally asked the question...)* must answer your question for yourself. But I personally can accept that these two things, taking responsibility for your thoughts and exploring your darkness, lie next to one another, let us say, lie parallel to one another, and do not contradict one another. Try to think along those lines, and perhaps you will come to an answer in that way. But it is a very deep question. One says that one should only have pure thoughts and not do bad things; but then even Jung says that God has a dark side. And in Isaiah in the Bible – I do not have the number with me – God says, "I am the Almighty, I create evil." And that is from the Bible. So even God has His shadow side. In the Bhagavad Gita, it is said, "I am the gambling of the cheat, I am the evil of all evil things, I am the Om, I am the glory. I am the goodness of the good." And Rumi said, "I am the evil of the evil

doer itself, I am the pain of the sick, I am the cloud and rain, and I am raining in the meadows.” Really, all of these quotations say the same thing. “I am everything. I am also the evil.”

(Contribution: I think that it is a question of old and new ethics. The old ethic says, “Do only good things,” and so the other part rots in the dark and in that way it becomes larger and more dangerous. Jung says, “The responsibility of humans lies in knowing how much good and how much evil he is able to do.”)

Yes, that is good. I think that I can accept that. The woman said that it is a question of two different concepts. There is the old concept that said do not do any evil, and to do only good. Then evil is repressed, and there is more evil than is necessary. Jung, on the other hand, gives the human being the responsibility to correct his own evil. That is the modern way of looking at it. Thank you.

(Question: I am wondering if our ability to understand might depends on the level of our evolution. I mean, if the answer is too complex for our level, then we will not be able to grasp it. It is easier to understand evil and good as separate, and it is quite a step to be able to accept that they can be together in the same person. And maybe just as it takes time for the individual to understand this, perhaps it also takes time for humanity to understand.)

Yes, the woman says that it is much easier to see good and evil as two separate things. It is similar for a newborn baby. It cannot understand that a person can be good and evil at the same time. Infants cannot understand that. And so to be able to understand both things as one is a question of evolution. Yes, I think that is a very beautiful idea. She works with newborn children as a therapist. This is quite interesting, and look how far we have come. And yet this is all psychological. We have finished in deep psychology. Are there any other contributions?

(*Llewellyn reminds her of a Sufi story.*) Yes. There is a beautiful story about Jami, who is actually a spiritual ancestor of this line of Yoga. He was a great Saint and lived in the fourteenth century. The story is that there was a curfew in the town where he was living, and no one was allowed to be on the street at night. But Jami was wandering the streets, singing the praises of God, and he was quite intoxicated from it, when a soldier shouted at him, asking, “Who is there?” He said, “It is me!” And the soldier shouted, “Who are you? Are you a thief?” “Yes!” said Jami, “I am a thief.” So the soldier took Jami to prison and put him in a cell.

In the morning when the officer came, the soldier went to him and said, “Sir, I caught a thief.” The officer said, “A thief? Bring him here.” So the soldier brought the ‘thief’ to the officer. The officer said, “Are you crazy? This is the greatest Saint in the town, he is known everywhere!” “But sir!” said the soldier, “He said he was a thief! He confessed!” And what more could a soldier want? If you confess that you are a thief, then you are one. Then the officer asked Jami, “Sir, did you say you are a thief?” And Jami replied, with a blissful smile, “What am I not?”

That is a lovely Sufi story, and now we will continue. We have spent an hour already, and we want to meditate for twenty minutes. We have wandered quite far from our theme today, and I have only covered two pages of my notes.

I will repeat the last sentence from my lecture. Attachment is a kind of false love. It is the total identification with another being, who is really not oneself, in whom one wants to merge. And in doing this, we lock out all other possibilities, even our real needs and our own worth. But love is open, it leaves the others free. Attachment restricts one and shackles both, not only the one who is attached, but also the object of this so called love or worship. So when we are attached, it is not only ourselves who become slaves, but also those whom we love. When a mother loves her children too much, and is too attached to them, then the child is not free either. Look how really terrible – look what a terrible thing this attachment is.

Attachment always brings fear with it. If you are attached to another person, you will always expect something from that person. Again, I ask you to look into your hearts. When you project something onto

another person, you will always expect something from this other person. There is always an expectation, and it is always a fearful expectation. The attention of this person is not enough; you want more, and more, and still more. That is why one compares the mother who is very attached to her children to a spider who eats her young. Jung used this example very often. If you dream of a spider, that is always dangerous. Real love, in contrast, is generous and does not expect love in return. Khalil Gibran said, "Love gives only itself, and takes nothing other than itself. Love possesses nothing, and cannot be possessed, for love alone is enough." In that kind of love, one does not cling at all. And that is what we aim for: "To love without leaving traces." You see, this is terribly deep. I think that this cassette will be very important. You must listen to it several times, and try – you must try to understand it. You will not get it completely by understanding it with your mind, you cannot understand it only with the mind. You must read between the lines, even between the words, in an attempt to understand it. What I am saying about love is one hundred percent true. And it happens to everyone, without exception. In our meditation group in London, we have a motto that characterizes this love.

Give me the freedom to sing without an echo,
To fly without a shadow,
And to love without leaving traces.

That is our motto. And if, dear friends, we live this motto, then we are Saints. I think that to really live according to this motto, we need not just one life, but several.

Attachment leads, in a logical and natural way, to dependency. That is another obstacle that especially we women encounter. We become dependent on a man or money, even on our children. We are often obsessed by other people, not because we love them – Oh No! Rather because we are afraid that we are not loved. I ask all of the women who are here: Please! Look into your hearts. It has happened to every one of us at one time or another in life. We are afraid not to be loved. And I ask you: were you always quite sure that you were loved? Have you never feared that you were not loved deeply enough? It has happened to all of us. We fear not to be loved, to be alone, to be abandoned; and we fear to be responsible for ourselves.

Oh! Responsibility is something that a woman really hates! We want someone else to be responsible for us. "Oh! I cannot do that. I am completely helpless." (*There is a ripple of laughter. Mrs. Tweedie is not quite convincing as a 'completely helpless' female!*) And of course, because we are women, and because we appear to be so very helpless, and because the man has inherited the role of the protector – it is in his character – we can always depend on a man's help. Perhaps it is only to carry a suitcase, but it may be far more important than that. When a woman sits there and looks helpless – is F. here? She is a master at that! She sits there looking so helpless that every man runs to help her. (*There is friendly laughter from people who know her. Then Mrs. Tweedie repeats this in English, and the English group gets its chance to laugh.*)

She just sits there looking so lost, and five men come to carry her luggage! And she travels with plenty of baggage! (*Mrs. Tweedie is also laughing. F. is a well known member of her London group.*) So now I have put you under a microscope! But F. is above these things. She is not bothered at all. She does not have much ego left, it has already been ground down a great deal. That is true, and that is already no small thing. If you do not have much ego, then it is not important what people say about you. If you think, "Oh, one does not do that, and my neighbor will think this and that about me," that is the ego. But if you do your duty, and you have a clear conscience, then such things are not important at all. And her ego is already much smaller. F. has a very small ego. (*Then, laughing, to F.:*) Isn't that true?

The more we are on the path, the more we see of our faults. It is as if our glasses are cleaned. We clean our glasses, and we see our faults more clearly. But when we look at them, because we look at them, they become smaller and smaller; that is the law.

I said that we women are afraid to be abandoned and that we do not like to be responsible for ourselves. If we find someone who loves us, we cling desperately to this person. And of course we become dependent. You see how clear and simple that is? And it is psychologically correct. Many women are really afraid of independence. We are inclined to try to find someone to take care of us, and

to protect us from all of life's difficulties and hostilities. This is also very true. We are even prepared to pay for this by being submissive to our 'protectors'. And it is in this way that women have been submissive for thousands of years. We do not want to be independent. We want to have someone to protect us. It is in our character, in our make-up as women.

There is a story in the bible of the two brothers. One has his freedom and sells it for some lentils. What story is that? (Essau and Jacob...) You see? It is the same story. He sold his freedom for a plate of lentils.

The traditional treatment of women in our society reinforces this dependency even more. It is a very comfortable arrangement. And for the man too it is very comfortable to have a servant. The woman does everything and she is not paid for it. If the woman dies, or if a man lives alone with children, he must pay someone to help him look after the children. But the wife does that automatically. They are her children. So the traditional treatment reinforces the dependency that the woman has experienced since she was a small girl. We have been educated to be dependent. Some women retain, even into their maturity, the habit of getting agreement or even permission for everything they do, and not only from their husbands. They are so accustomed to not taking responsibility, that they will always ask someone for permission. That is terribly true, and it is a very difficult habit to break. We are so busy trying to please our parents, or teachers, bosses, lovers, husbands, children, doctor – even the man at the fruit stand, that we have no chance at all to take care of ourselves, and often we have no idea of how to begin.

Since the women's liberation movement has begun, the social signals have, so to speak, been reversed, and now some women are in a very difficult position. They must outwardly show their independence, while inwardly they have to face that this too well-learned pattern of dependency is still there. So unconsciously they have to either accept or reject this need for dependency. I know a few women who are like that. They appear to be quite independent, but inwardly they are terribly insecure. And that leads to contradictory behavior. Today we reproach our partner for keeping us dependent, and tomorrow we are annoyed that he will not relieve us of some job that we should do.

(Question: How does this fit together? Yesterday you told us about your love for your husband, and you spoke of a love that is so selfless that you want nothing for yourself. And today you say that we women have to take care of ourselves. Doesn't that contain a kind of self-love?)

I do not think that I said that we should strive for this kind of completely selfless love. I only described my own experience, my own case, where the love was so strong that, at that time, I wanted nothing else. These are phases that we go through in life. You see, when we are very, very much in love, then we are slaves. When we are very much in love, we are crazy.

(Question continues: But in your case you said that your love was so strong that you could totally love your partner, and that in spite of that you remained independent. You said that this love was strong enough to also give you freedom. So there is a love that can give freedom. You have spoken about dependency in love, and a love that wants nothing for itself. How do these two fit together?)

Aha, you think that this is a contradiction. On the one side is the love that wants nothing for itself, and now I am saying that we should become quite independent in this love. You see, for me this is not a contradiction. Mysticism and mystical experiences, spiritual life itself, and all of the mysteries of love can only be expressed in paradoxes. One thing is correct in one situation and not correct in a different situation. The question is whether you yourself can bring them together in your understanding, and that is the difficulty. Yes?

(Question: It seems to me that if you love so much that there is no self any more, then you are no longer dependent.)

Oh yes! That is correct! Yes, that is a wonderful answer. When you love in such a way that there is only love, then there is no self. And of course, then there is not a contradiction; there can be love and

independence. If I love in that way, I do not need to be dependent, and I do not need to be protected; I will simply be myself. Thank you. That was a very lovely answer.

You see, when we think together, when we work together, something very beautiful happens. It is ...Yes?

(Question: Mrs. Tweedie, do you mean that it is really possible for a woman to be as inwardly independent as was just described, even though she is not outwardly independent?)

Now! ... Is that possible? ... I do not know. I really do not know. Has everyone heard the question? (No.) Could you repeat it?

(Question: I asked if it was possible to be inwardly so independent, to be able to love in such a way that only love is there, if one is not already a woman who is outwardly independent, or at least partly so.)

Yes, that is the sixty four thousand dollar question. (*Everyone laughs, slightly uneasy...*) Hmmm. Yes?

(Comment: But the basic theme is the spiral, and I think that we are now speaking of a process of growth. And I think that later in spiritual life one has to throw the laboriously obtained independence overboard again. It is a process of gaining and losing, but always on a new level, that makes this spiral movement possible. I cannot give without losing myself. But if I had to give all of myself right at the beginning, then I would really lose myself because I am not quite there, I am not yet quite present.)

The woman said that it is a question of the spiral. It is a question of losing and gaining and losing and gaining, each time on a higher level. Once I lose completely then I gain again. Yes, I think that is correct. Thank you. It is a spiral process.

(Comment: I would like to add something to that. A poem from The Morning Star, by the German poet Hans Christian has been going through my head. He speaks of the inner connection. And I think that is the central question. When I know where I belong, I have much more power to stay on the ground, and I am not so susceptible to other influences. Shall I recite it, Mrs. Tweedie?) Yes, please.

Look not what others do,
Their numbers are too great,
You join into a game,
That locks you in its fate.

Go simply on God's path,
Take only Him as guide,
Then you'll go straight and well,
With no one by your side.

Thank you very much. That was very beautiful contribution. And now we have only a few minutes until we begin to meditate. That is like a threat, because today our meeting has been so lovely and we have gone so deeply. I feel that we have done quite a lot today. So! One more quick question and one more quick answer. Yes.

(Comment: I would like to continue from where this poem ends, because I think that we are all dependent in the end. Even if I feel free, sometimes dependent or independent, I believe that I am nevertheless an ant in an infinite heart. This is the dependency that I feel.)

She has the feeling that whatever we say, really we are little ants in the whole, and really it is not terribly important, from a spiritual point of view, if we are temporarily dependent or independent. That is her point of view. And you see, we all have our own points of view, which should be respected. For me

it is very difficult, because I have the feeling that everyone is right. From where each of you are, at this moment, your understanding is correct, and that is the truth. But it is not a truth that is forever. It is a truth for now. I always say, when people ask me something, that today I can give you an answer, but tomorrow my answer could be very different, perhaps even the opposite. We grow. This is again the spiral, and spiritual life is a spiral. And in two minutes we will begin our meditation. Then we will end for today, and we will begin again tomorrow. And you see, I have only read four pages of my lecture today. I think that what I have written will be enough for two weeks. It was all very interesting; and again, thank you for all of the contributions.

So please, find a place that is as comfortable as is possible here. You will not be able to be completely comfortable here; not as you would be at home. And be completely still. And forget everything that we have been speaking about. And we offer our hearts to the Great Beloved.

(The meditation begins ...)

(...And ends.)

Of course, what I have said about women applies, to a large degree, to men also. And as we are all on the path, and we all want to come closer to the truth, it would be good to think about the things that we have spoken about, because to come nearer to the truth, we have to illuminate the darkness within ourselves. In this Sufi path, ethics are extremely important. One cannot reach the truth, one cannot become complete until one lives according to one's own light – and we all have our own light. Sometimes this light is very small and unsteady, and sometimes it is very great. To quote again from Isaiah,

“I am the candle of the Lord. May the Lord illuminate my darkness.”

(And the day's meeting ends.)

The Lectures of Irina Tweedie

Sufi Camp of 1988: Part 4

Dependency and Freedom And Questions on the Mother – Father Relationship

Wednesday, July 6, 1988

Based on a Series of Lectures given
in Schwarzsee, Switzerland
July 2 - 16, 1988

Now before we begin, I would like to tell you a little story, because I thought that it would be a very good idea for us to practice stilling the mind, just as we do in London. And this is a very effective way to do it. I will tell you a little story, and then Robin will sing a song for us. He will sing a wonderful song, a song to the Beloved; and Robin has a very beautiful voice. Then we will throw all of our thoughts away, and we will make our minds empty. Only the love in our hearts will remain. And we will stay like that for five minutes; and then I will begin my lecture.

So. This story happened about a year and a half ago, and is about an American friend of mine – she is here with us now – who has been married for eighteen years in a very happy marriage. They are both architects, and they work together. She is a very good business-woman and she helps her husband a great deal. And in those eighteen years of marriage she had never been sure if she wanted a child or not. She told me, “Well, yes, I do want a child; but I do not want to want the child with my mind. I want to want it from my heart.” And then last year, on the first of January there was a happy day and they were together, and she became pregnant. It was not planned; it just happened. And it came from her heart. The child was born, and it was a boy. And it was really a wonderful child. The birth was not very difficult, but also not so easy. It was difficult enough, but everything was OK. But then on the very next day, the infant began to forget to breathe.

You see, it is like when the earth was young and the creation had to learn to breathe. At first they had to breath consciously. We breathe quite automatically, and that is the result of our evolution. When the infant first forgot to breathe, he became quite blue, and there was a terrible alarm. The woman was already thirty-six years old, and so she thought that she should have the child at a hospital and not at home. She thought it would be safer. So there was an alarm that the child was turning blue, and a doctor came immediately, but he saw that the infant only had to be shaken a bit, and that then it would again begin to breathe. What is interesting is that every six hours the nurses changed shifts, and every time the nurses changed, the infant stopped breathing.

Of course, the parents were very afraid to leave the infant. They were with him almost the whole time. And after the parents could no longer continue because they were so exhausted, S., who is also here, stayed with the child and watched him, and shook him when it was necessary. In the end, the child somehow learned to breathe automatically, and now he is a wonderful little boy. But! That is not

all. They have a branch of our meditation group in Berkeley, California. Berkeley is a university town, and the parents and child live there. And every Thursday they have a meditation in their home, and when they go into meditation the child also meditates. He lies there and closes his eyes and does not move or cry. He stays completely still until the meditation is over.

When they came here on Saturday, everyone was shocked to see that he was, as if in Samadhi. He was away so deeply and for such a long time that the parents were very afraid that he had again stopped breathing. But he was breathing. And it was really – the mother told me this morning – it was really like a very deep meditation. You see, after a human has been in deep meditation, and they open their eyes, their eyes have a completely different expression. What is so lovely is that if you speak to this child – he is still very small, only six or eight months – he looks at you. He can already fix his eyes, and that is unusual for so young an infant. And when you walk away, he will watch you go away. I think that is quite unusual; and he is very beautiful. And he is our child, he is part of our group. When the infant could not breathe, the father telephoned us immediately in London, and we all prayed; the whole group prayed for him. So in a way, one could say that it is our child, that he is a little Sufi boy.

And now I will ask Robin to sing for us. Please. *(Robin asks what he should sing.)* Whatever you like.

(Robin sings a Persian song of great longing. Alas for the limitations of pen and paper!)

(That is followed by five minutes of silence. Only the birds are still to be heard...)

I have promised to explain our meditation. Perhaps there are friends who are new to us and who have not read my book in English. At the end of the English book, there is a description of this meditation, and I. has translated that description and has copies of it for anyone who wants one. They will be sitting just here.

Now I want to continue with what I spoke about yesterday. We spoke about many important things, and many people came to me afterwards and said that it was very useful for them. Of course, what I said was really nothing new. Everyone knows these things, but it is also good to be reminded of them. Unfortunately, we humans forget. That is why my teacher said to me one day, “I will not teach you anything. I will give you experiences, and you can do what you want with them.”

So, to repeat the last thing I said yesterday: Women can become very tied to a partner. And, of course, it is the same for the man. Today we reproach our partner for keeping us dependent, and tomorrow we are upset because he will not volunteer to do one of our jobs for us.

We want to be happy with our work, but behind this happiness is the conviction that we can give up our job at any time. And behind this obvious illusion lies a serious psychological problem: psychological dependency. We allow ourselves to be treated like property. You see, that is the problem. We become the property of someone else, because they want it that way. We give in, and become property, and then we cannot find out who we are. We remain weak, as any person who has not been tested by life will remain weak. This is the point. You cannot become conscious of your strength in that way. You see, we must be tested by life if we are to grow. Here, of course, is the greatest danger when you protect children too much, and it sometimes happens that both parents protect the child too much. You see, when Lord Buddha was still Prince Siddhartha, he was completely protected from anything sad or unpleasant. He wasn't allowed to see anyone who was sick or who had died, and no one who was old. And when he saw some of that one day, he suddenly understood the nature of life, and he left his protected home. Then later he became Lord Buddha.

You see, that is a great and mighty example of something that happens every day in every family. We protect our children. We are so afraid that we try to protect our children from all the terrible things of life. And the child must encounter these things himself; he must suffer. We build these high walls so that the child cannot see what life is really like. And the child begins to run into these walls, and that is the process of growth.

We must understand that we are completely responsible for ourselves, even when we choose dependency. As long as we do not really understand that, there will be no growth, and so no real happiness. When one is still young, one does not grasp this need for independence very clearly; but one has an instinct for it. Something within us knows what we need. Something in us wants to be independent. All of us have experienced that. In the end, we cannot depend on anyone except ourselves. No one can teach us anything. Carl Jung said, "We cannot become anything other than what we already are." And you see, we really are everything! I always use this example: if you tell a child a 'dirty' joke, the child will not understand it at all. And why? Because the part that might respond to that joke does not yet exist in him. He is still innocent. But we adults do have that part within us, and we laugh or are indignant according to our upbringing.

You see, we are so old! We have lived so many lives, that everything is within us. Every sort of criminality, every form of beauty and saintliness. All of the most beautiful things and all of the most terrible things are in us. So we cannot be other than what we are. That is modern psychology. The question is now to understand and accept it; and my teacher taught me how to do that. You see, my 'training' was really an analysis – more than an analysis, because it was done with Yogic power. Carl Jung said that the process of individuation is not spiritual. But I say, from the experience of it, that it is after the process of individuation ends that spiritual life begins. That was the theme of a lecture I gave in Davos in Switzerland. Someone I know in America is writing a book on Sufism, and I think that that lecture will be included in it. I have thought about this subject a great deal. And it is really true: spiritual life begins where the process of individuation ends.

What is the process of individuation? People who came to Carl Jung were a bit neurotic, a little psychotic, or perhaps only a bit nervous; but they were all somehow unable to deal with life. He did no more than to turn these people into good citizens, into good members of society. He changed them so they could marry, have children, and be happy. You see, if you have a terrible mother problem, how can you be happy? It will always sit on you like a heavy back-pack, like a stone hung on your neck, or like the chains of a slave. When that happens to a man, then deep in his heart he will hold a grudge against women. It will probably not be conscious, and especially if he is in love with a woman, he will not notice that somewhere within him there is this grudge ... this fear. But, I ask all of the gentlemen who are here to look inside yourselves. If that is your situation, what happens inside of you when you are with a woman sexually, even when you are with a woman you love? It is always a kind of rape. "I will show her!" There is something in you that compels you in that way. It may be completely unconscious, but do you think that the woman does not feel it?

Things that go on in the unconscious are transmitted, are conveyed, in a completely mysterious way. When you meet a group of people who are hostile to you, you will feel it, even if no one says anything. You go somewhere, and suddenly you do not feel well, you feel quite bad, and then slowly you begin to somehow understand with your intuition that they cannot tolerate you, or that they think badly of you. And no one has said a word. Perhaps they even smiled and greeted you. And if that dislike is unconscious on their part, then it can be very dangerous. That is why it is so important to bring such things to consciousness. Unconscious hatred, unconscious grudges, unconscious jealousy – Ah! That is a great danger. I have personally experienced it, and I have seen how people have been destroyed because of jealousy. It was just something in the air ... somewhere ... one could never put one's finger on the problem, but the person it was aimed at felt it. Children especially sense such things.

Children are incredibly intuitive. Personally, I believe that children are a miracle of God. They are born with all of the qualities that they need to develop, and somehow – one says, "a guardian angel" helps. Perhaps; but something helps them. Of course that could also be the higher self, I do not know. But something helps us to develop these qualities. So be quite sure that when you meet someone, you do not have any negative thoughts about them. When you come to them with an open heart, and say "Here I am. I want to know your best side," then everything will be OK. But if there is a grudge then things will not work so easily. And an unconscious grudge is the worst, because you do not know about it yourself. I know people who, unfortunately, are that way. And we can be like that too; it is not only other people who can be like that, even I can be that way.

So I said that, in the end we can only rely on ourselves. No one, and I emphasize no one can teach a person anything; one can only point the way. That is especially true of spiritual things; you already have everything that you need. You are old, and you are great souls. We are omnipotent, and we are wonderful. We know everything! It is only that we have covered it so thoroughly. We have covered it with so many wishes and desires and with so much conditioning; we cover it with our education, our inheritances, with our parents, and with 'what will the neighbors say?'

I remember an incident with a Swiss man I know. I told him that if he would stop saying, (*With a sharp imperative voice:*) "One doesn't do that!" that he would be free. But he still says it, and it has been some years since I told him that. I hope that it gets better. He is probably here with us; and this message is for him.

And why is it that we can only rely on ourselves? It seems at first strange that it could be that way, but it is because each one of us faces death alone. Each one of us finds God in his own way. That is the secret. You see, it is so simple, but we never think of it. The most important questions in life can only be answered individually. I cannot generalize and say that, "Oh, the Swiss are like this," or that Germans or Austrians or the English fit such and such a pattern. That would be foolish. These questions can only be answered individually. Yes, of course, there are national characteristics, but these questions go beyond them.

So when we make ourselves dependent, we only push away our responsibility for ourselves for a time. It is only for a short time. We push it into our unconscious and it works there, and it comes out at the moment when we least expect it. Now. How can we help ourselves? First, we must discover what we are especially afraid of. Then we must courageously face these fears. From my own experience, I can say that it takes a great deal of courage. I have honestly tried to look at whatever is within me. Of course, I mean since I was with my teacher. Before that, I lived like everyone lives, completely in ignorance. In just the same way as animals live, we react according to our outer circumstances and do not think much about it. As I said yesterday, Karma is our reaction to the circumstances that confront us. And this is where we can differentiate ourselves from animals: with intelligence and with good will.

In the end, my friends, life is the greatest Guru! Strictly speaking, we need no other Guru, because we have it all within us. Yes, the Sufi says that we need a Guru because he will always point the way; he will remind us of our goal and say, "Look, you must go there." I have quoted Saint Paul for you, I have done it badly because I do not have the Apostles with me, but he said, "I am not perfect, and I am not yet 'there'; but as an honorable human being I can say, 'Look, that is the way. If you will follow this path, you will come to your goal.'" He said that in another way, but that is the sense of it.

So we must have the courage to look at what is within us. And that can be really terrible. That can be very dark, and the first reaction will always be, "Oh, that is not me. I am not that way at all. I am a respectable person. I have this fine upbringing, I am educated, I have my diplomas, I come from a good family, I have money in the bank and my credit is good. No! That is not me." And we push these unpleasant parts of us away again and again. You must have the courage to say, "I do that for this reason." And then you look deep within yourself, and you will still say, "But of course I do it for this reason." And then you look still deeper, and slowly you begin to see that that is not at all the reason why you do this thing. It may be vanity or greed, or hatred may be hiding behind it in such a way that you never see it. And such hatreds are dangerous because they come from so deep in the unconscious. To bring these things up is very difficult, but as long as it is in the unconscious, you can never completely recognize it. The secret is that as long as something is unconscious, you cannot know it. It is only when it appears on the threshold of consciousness that you can see it ... a little. And this is where the understanding must play its role. And it is exactly here that we usually need another person to help us.

Now. When we openly look at the things that are within us, our fear loses its exaggerated quality. We suddenly feel, "Yes, it is not so very terrible. I can manage it." Then the fear gradually fades and allows you to deal with these problems. It is like the way small children are afraid of the dark, but when

there is a light shining in the darkness, then they are no longer afraid. Then the child realizes that the terrible snake is only a piece of rope. But we can only do that in small steps. Such things cannot be done quickly. There are levels of perception, and dawns of consciousness. We develop in our own power, and in our own goals, and in our pride as human beings; until finally, as mature women or men, we see the boundaries of our success. Then one finds one's real worth as a human being. Then, and only then, when we are fulfilled and completely integrated persons, can we really surrender to God.

Now I will quote something from my book. It was a time that I really felt totally crushed and destroyed by something my teacher said to me. One day we were sitting alone in his garden. He was sitting on his chair, and I was sitting not very far from him, and he was doing his mala. A mala is rather like a rosary, but in the Moslem tradition. There are a hundred beads, for the hundred names of Allah. So he was sitting there, calmly doing his rosary, when he suddenly turned to me and said, "Why are you not a human being?" It was so sudden. Shocked, I asked him, "Am I not human?" "No," he said, "You are no human being. You will only be a human being when you are less than the dust under my feet. Only then will you have an inner balance. And only then will I be able to call you a human being." "My God!" I thought, "Inflation!" It was something from Jung that flashed into my mind.

You see, the old training methods of the Sufis, which have been used for thousands of years, and which are methods that were discovered or invented by great beings from the distant past, are, after all, modern psychology. What is inflation? At some point during the process of individuation, the human begins to think, "Ah! I have power. He says I am Divine!" And if one does not have a teacher, and if one is not quite clever enough, then you can end up in a mental hospital as a Napoleon or a Cleopatra, or Jesus Christ or the Mother of God. But if I am less than the dust under his feet, how can I be inflated? Then I would understand that I am nothing; that I am just a speck of dust in the great and boundless ocean of bliss.

The greatest mystical experience comes to everyone who is sincere. You suddenly see that every leaf on a tree, every beetle, every spider, every atom, every dog, every fly and every flea is a part of the whole and a part of your heart. Then you can no longer do evil. And one loves everything, one must love everything. But these experiences can be completely terrifying for the mind. I almost went crazy from it the first time. I remember seeing that my reactions were just not normal. This happened shortly after my teacher died. He had taken everything away from me and made me give away all of my money, so that I was left quite poor; and then he died. And he had given me nothing – at least I thought that at the time. I had always expected him to give me something. Then I traveled alone to the Gandhi Ashram in the Himalayas to try to find myself. But what self, I no longer knew.

You see, spiritual life is very complicated ... and wonderful. You cannot reach it with drugs, and you cannot reach it if you go from Guru to Guru. These are children's games, it is illusion. The only thing that you have to do is to look inside yourself, at your own darkness. You have to grasp your own darkness, and illuminate it with your own intelligence and with your heart until you find the power and courage to say, "I am also that!" "I am a prostitute and I am a criminal. I am really capable of doing such things. I do not do them, but I have them within me." And then, of course, after you see that, you can never criticize others. You cannot feel yourself to be more than others. You cannot rely on your coming from a refined or aristocratic family, or that your upbringing was so wonderful, or that you are Swiss or Austrian or English, which is so much better than all of the others, and so forth. It is a complicated process. And all that I have done in these last twenty-one years is to repeat this same thing. And thousand of other people say the same thing, and they too repeat it over and over again. One cannot repeat it too often. People hear it and say, "Yes, that was well expressed." Then they go away and forget all about it. That is quite normal. So one must repeat it.

The third obstacle, especially for women on the spiritual path, is the most destructive. It is the tendency of self-deprecation. I have spoken of this before and said I would explain it later. This is the tendency of self-deprecation, the feeling of worthlessness, the passive acceptance of social attacks, self-hatred and the conviction that something is not right with us; that we are unclean. Men are better and more clever, or my friends are better and more clever. "I am full of sins, and I cannot help myself, and inwardly I am so terribly poor and I am full of self-pity." And on the spiritual path, self-pity is a

serious obstacle, because that is the ego! The Sufis say that the only evil, that evil per se, is the ego. If the ego is not present, then the human cannot be evil. Look! Every war, everything terrible in the world comes from the ego. "I want my place in the sun." It is in all forms of competition. Yes. It is all ego. "I must have a larger car than you, I must have a more beautiful wife, my house must be better." We all know these stories so well that I do not have to mention them at all.

Now, when we have self-hatred, we will constantly look for recognition. We hope, in this way to prove and experience our own self worth; and we fall back into self-hatred when this recognition is withheld. This feeling of worthlessness is usually ingrained into us in our earliest childhood. Our abilities have never really been important, and our strength, speed and flexibility were never good enough. And our future careers did not have any particular worth for society. Our brothers and sisters were very much better than we were. The least one could say is that our strengths and powers were not as important as the strengths of other people; and for women, our strengths were never as important as the strengths of men. We feel insecure even in the areas where women were traditionally valued and esteemed: in physical beauty for example. "Yes, I am beautiful, but ... ". We are never beautiful enough. As I mentioned yesterday, if we have brown hair, we want to be blond; if we have brown eyes we want blue eyes. And if we have blue eyes, we find the black eyes of Spanish women so beautiful. ... And my legs are too crooked and my stomach is too big. My God! Most women are always prepared to point out the weak points in their physical appearance. We all do that. *(There is a quiet laugh in the group.)*

And as the body ages, it further diminishes the miserable self-image we have of ourselves. When we are fifty, we forget that we cannot be as slender as when we are eighty...*(There is, of course, laughter.)* Oh, excuse me. Yes, I meant eighteen years old. ... Then something strange happens. We no longer see ourselves.

Yesterday morning someone said to me, "Mrs. Tweedie, do you know, I used to weigh 224 pounds." And this is a very short woman. I told her, "I cannot imagine that you were so heavy. How was it possible?" She said, "I simply did not see myself. I always imagined myself to be as I was when I was eighteen years old. Until one day I went into a large hotel, and there was a large hall with mirrors all around it, and I suddenly saw myself. And I thought, 'For God's sake!'" Then she lost weight very quickly, and now she is quite normal. She weighs 154 pounds. You see, we do not see ourselves. We live in a world of fantasy. We see our face in a mirror, and perhaps we think that we are still thin, even though we are not. How could we be the same? It is quite natural that at fifty or sixty or seventy the body is quite different from the body of an eighteen year old.

Now, this feeling of worthlessness is very interesting, because it leads to a victim mentality, and that inner expectation is quickly recognized by others and is easily exploited. There are people who are natural victims. Everything happens to them. They are always the victim. We women are easy victims. Oh yes! And it is because we think so little of ourselves. We are inclined to blame ourselves even in cases where we are the victim of violence or crime. We think that it happens because we somehow deserve it. Now, I will read a little more of my lecture, and then I want you to ask questions.

Many of us experience this self-denial as an inability to love ourselves. Didn't Jesus say that we should love our neighbor as we love ourselves? This inability to love ourselves shows itself in the ironic reaction we have to any praise we might get for our work or our appearance, or to any compliments for our good ideas. It is a vague feeling that we are leading a senseless life. It is the same feeling of inadequacy that we have before every new venture. It shows itself in our self-destructive eating habits, in always trying to lose weight, or when we feel compelled to eat. It show itself in the way we try to belittle other women with our endless criticisms – perhaps about a saleswoman – and in our fleeting thoughts about suicide. I am speaking of women, and it does happen to women more than to men. Of course, what I am saying is also true to some degree for men, but not for all. But I think that what I am saying does apply to most women.

Now, please, ask your questions. We have plenty of time, so we can spend some time on them.

(Question: What is the primary reason why a woman has a hidden hatred against men, or an incredible fear of her father?) A terrible fear of? (Questioner: Fear and panic.) Of men? (Q: Yes, and also hatred, perhaps a grudge.)

A grudge, hatred and fear of men. I think I have already spoken about that, have I not? (Question continues: But you spoke about men.) I think that it also applies to women, and in this case it is connected with the parents (Q: But not with the mother ...) In the case of girls it is the father. Yes, I must go a bit deeper into this.

When a child is born, and the eyes open, the child sees the mother for the first time. The mother takes the infant to her breast to feed it, and the child sees the face of the mother. That is the first imprint of the eternal feminine, the protecting and nourishing feminine. They are the two great drives in humans: sex and hunger. In this case, of course, it is hunger. And this imprinting happens for every child. The mother is the first impression for both the baby girl and the baby boy, but for the boy it has a deeper meaning than for the girl. For the girl it is – you see, the little girl must adapt to the psychological aspect of the mother within herself; but the boy has to psychologically overcome this part within himself.

For the little girl, it is the father who is terribly important. And I think – at least this has been my experience – that women have more problems with their fathers than with their mothers. I do not mean that they do not have problems with their mothers. There can be an interesting problem of jealousy and envy from the mother to the daughter and vice versa, and the mother can also suppress the daughter. You see, these things are so interwoven that it is difficult to differentiate them. But I have experienced that for the daughter, the relationship with the father is the most important.

If the father beats the mother and treats her badly, then the young girl will learn to fear men; and as I have seen it, it is like a cursed circle, a magic circle from which one cannot escape. The daughter will look for a husband or lover who has faults very similar to those the father had. I have seen it, in people who have come to me, where it has happened through three generations. It is really shocking. It is terrible. In one case I asked the woman, “Why have you chosen to marry this man when your father was the same way? He also drinks too much.” And she said, “I don’t know, but I am in love with him,” and so forth. And then her husband treats her just as her father treated her mother. Do you have an explanation for that? I do not. (E: Yes, I do.) You have the answer? Please tell us.

(E: I think that it is a problem that is passed from generation to generation.) Yes, it is a generation problem. (E: Then it must be possible to resolve it. It is like an embroidery, and one wants to become a part of it. It is as if – it is difficult to explain – as if we take up the thread when we incarnate into a family. We take up all of the mistakes and also all the good parts. But perhaps really it is because the situation itself wants to be resolved, because otherwise we would not incarnate into that family. And if there is something that the mother has not resolved – and this is something I see again and again – the daughter will always pick the same sort of people, the same structure, to enable her to try to resolve it. And I feel that this is such a grace. Also I think that That in one is always awake and alive, and never ends.

One can, of course, say that you only create these difficulties for yourself, but I think that there is a real chance that if one looks at it consciously, these situations really do become less and less severe; that the situation itself wants to be resolved. That is my experience.)

But how do you think these circles can be broken?

(E: Simply by looking at them again and again, and by living the pain of them.)

By looking at them, and living the pain.

(E: Yes, and then to go even further: to integrate the harshness and cruelty of the father. I experienced that very clearly in a dream.)

In a dream? Tell it to us.

(E: First I must say that when one goes into the pain really deeply, it is somehow like a gift; one cannot do it alone.)

It is a gift, and one cannot do it alone. That is beautifully said.

(E: One goes deeper and deeper and deeper, and suddenly one notices that behind the harshness and cruelty is longing and fear of nearness. You know from experience that your father has beaten you and that he was like a wild animal; and then you see that really, he wanted nearness and was afraid, and that in the end he could only lash out right and left. And one notices all of this, and then one starts to love. ... And now I will tell my dream. *(Everyone laughs, in appreciation of this extraordinary contribution, and also sharing E's relief that this difficult telling is at an end.)*

Yes, you see, she said that with such passion. That is a personal experience. E, please come up here to the microphone and tell us your dream. That is so lovely. (E: Then I'll break out in a sweat!) *(There is, of course, a lot of laughter)* That doesn't matter, sweat a little, here is the microphone, sweating is sometimes very healthy. *(E. comes to the microphone.)* (E., intending to talk to Mrs. Tweedie: My legs start shaking. Oh! Everyone can hear me!) Hold on to the microphone! So! Can you hear her? *(Not yet! She hasn't begun.)*

(E: So. I am in a huge, an immense building, and I cannot see another person anywhere. I am completely alone. I am in a bank, and I know that when I dream of a bank, that a lot of energy comes together. So there is an essence of energy, not from money, but from something else. And suddenly three men appear and are chasing me hard, and I begin to scream. I have a foreboding of what they want. I could not put it into words, but somehow I know it. They chase me like an animal, and finally they grab me and push me into a hall. Then I know that I will be led somewhere. It was as if my hair stood on end, as if something terrible awaited me *(There is some laughter.)* There is nothing to laugh about. *(Then everyone laughs.)* Why are you laughing? *(E. is rather unhappy about the laughter and seems to complain to Mrs. Tweedie.)*

Mrs. Tweedie says, "They are laughing, not me." *(More laughter.)* "It is because you are saying it so sweetly." (E. continues: There is nothing to laugh at.) Mrs. Tweedie adds, "For her it was a terrible thing. You must not laugh. Listen to her."

(E.: OK. And the hallway got narrower and narrower, and then I am in a room, and my father is there. And someone is standing to his right and to his left.

My father looked much younger – he was already dead at the time – and he looked somehow more loving than I remember him. Then these men drag me in front of him and hold me very strongly. I think that something horrible is about to happen. It was like before a rape and I cried, "No! No! No!", and then they pushed me forward until I stood directly before my father. And I began to cry out, "NO! You will not rape me yet again. Not again!" And he looked at me and nodded his head and said, "Yes." It was like a confirmation of all the terrible things I had endured that had always been denied. And then for me – I do not know how to describe it – it was as if an essence of pain and hate rose from the soles of my feet to the top of my head. There was such a wave of – I can only say that the essence of hate rose up, and pain; and it came through my heart, and then it came through my head in such a way that I thought I would go crazy. But it was not something that I was doing. It felt, again, like a gift. I could not do anything to stop it. It went through my whole body and through my head. And then it suddenly turned around and returned, and then it was love and sadness. It was so incredible!

I noticed that I had felt this pain for the first time: when one loves someone so much, and he treats you so brutally, it hurts so very much. If there is not this mixture with love, then you could just say that the other person is terrible and that would be the end of it; it would be simple, and there would not be this kind of pain. But this was so unbelievable. And then there was suddenly so much love that I

thought it would burst through my chest. Then I cried; and he had such loving eyes. It was like a confirmation. What I had thought was true, was true: if I go into his hate and cruelty, then I will find love and the longing for love. And that then this pain would be resolved. And shortly after that I had another dream in which my father gave a message for me to two women that I know ... Mrs. Tweedie says "Excuse me. She has a very large father problem." (E: I feel that I have managed to overcome it.) Yes, she has dealt with it. (E: But I am not yet finished with it, but the dream is not yet finished either. Then my father said, "I am very pleased with her." And it was as if he somehow acknowledged that it was good the way I had worked through this problem, and what I had achieved. And now I notice that even if I do still grumble about him, that sometimes I still feel like a little girl running around saying, "Where is my daddy's fountain pen?" And my heart is so big and full and overflowing with love. And then I think, "Oh, how much he must have suffered, never experiencing closeness and love the way I am experiencing it now in thinking of him." Because that is how it is for me now.)

(Mrs. Tweedie:) Thank you. (E.: I wasn't even sweating today. ...*everyone, of course laughs.*) Yes, but I was holding you. You never sweat when I support you. (E: Sometimes I sweat a lot, but not this time.) She has already been with us for three years, and she had a very large father problem. But as you have seen, as she told this dream that was so full of emotion, it is because she lived through that, that she has been able to almost completely transform her own hate into love and forgiveness. (E. adds: Not quite completely.) No. Of course! Three years is very little. You will need five. (E: So! Two years more.)

(Comment:)

The woman just said that she found it beautiful and courageous that E. could say all of that in front of so many people. You see, this is the process of healing. (E. says: It wasn't me. It just came out.) When you have the courage to digest these things within yourself, and have the courage ... to confess, so to speak: "I have done that, and this has happened to me," then you will no longer have fear of these things. Please. You should remember that I have been speaking about fear. Thank you E., that was very lovely.

(E.: May I say something more to the woman who asked the question earlier? I have noticed that when the mother has herself an unresolved father problem, then she will live this hatred in front of her children, and I have seen that there was a very large problem of this type with my mother. She said that my father was the devil – Mrs. Tweedie interjects: "She said it in front of the children." – And of course, when the image of the father is tainted by the mother, then it is not only a problem with the father.)

You know, that is the problem with a microphone, when people sit in front of it, they like to take over. (*Laughter, E. really has been taking over.*) Perhaps it would be better if you said this personally to the woman. (E: Good, I will do it.) But not yet, now I will speak a little more; do it afterwards. Can anyone else add something? Yes, please.

(Comment: I would like to add to what E. said, about when the mother is full of hatred towards the father because she had an unresolved father problem. That is what happened in my house, and it was deadly for me because my father and I had had a very deep understanding on an intuitive level, and that relationship had worked very well. But because my mother rejected him so very much, and because he had a great deal of natural vitality, he became like a wild animal. And he beat me a great deal because I was very provocative, and always told him that he suppressed my mother – straight to his face. Then he would beat me until I was blue, and I would retreat into my room and pray.

Look what a tragedy that is. And are you married? (Q: No.) Ah you see? (Q: But that is for the opposite reason. I have rather too much understanding for the faults of the man. And then I chose the father of my child in such a way that he rather manipulated me, because my father was also egotistic. My husband was egotistic in a rather hidden way. He never beat me, and I never beat him either. (*There is a ripple of laughter...*). When my daughter was ten months old, an inner voice told me that if I did not leave my husband immediately that I would get cancer and die. I took the child and moved away and withdrew from life and began to occupy myself with spiritual laws. Then I went to a healer and then I

separated from my husband and that was good. And I understood that these problems came to me through generations, and that I had to finally resolve them.)

Then you have resolved this circle, and you have made things very easy for your daughter. (Q: And it is also beautiful that my parents finally decided to get divorced.) And the parents finally get divorced, that is lovely. So. Is there something else? That was very good. Thank you.

(Question from a gentleman: I have also thought a great deal about this theme. My father was rather weak, and my mother took over the role of the father, and I think that was the reason why I was fixated on my mother. At first I worshiped her, and I tried to take over the role of the father in the family in regards to my younger brothers and sisters because there was a kind of vacuum. Later, that fell apart, and I more or less tried to suppress the masculine part in myself. And I did not want to be like my father. Then today I noticed that the whole situation could be understood from even earlier events. My father's mother died when he was ten, just when his little sister was born, and probably in that situation he did the best that was possible. There was also a vacuum. There was my father's father, and my father, aged ten, and a one-month-old child. Probably he took over the role of the mother. And through that – behind his closed facade he had a very great heart – that I know – and because of that, he probably became more feminine. Then later, in his own family, he did not take on the role of the father, standing there as a man; and now I notice in myself that I, more or less, have taken on the same role; that I somehow suppress the masculine qualities in myself, just like my father did in his circumstances. I might be in a situation similar to what his was.

And just now, it occurs to me that I somehow understand how my father became what he is; and that I simply have this wish, that deep deep inside of me, I might be able, with the help of God, to forgive him. I simply know that I have to try, for myself, to accept these masculine qualities within myself, and to develop them. And I think that if I am able to do these things, that this family and generation structure that has been going on for generations will be resolved.)

That is really wonderful. Did this happen to you today? (Q: Yes, while I was at a mountain stream.) *(The very strong emotion of the experience and the telling just breaks through his voice...)* If it happened today, then I cannot ask you about it. It is still too soon to ask you how you will manage with it, because now comes the greatest task: to actually turn yourself, to change your direction; to really manage it; and to begin, so to speak, to cook something new. But that is already quite wonderful that you have recognized that much. God bless you and give you the power to do it. (Q: Thank you.) Then you will break this circle. Lovely. Yes, that was a wonderful contribution.

(Comment: This is only a hint, but I recently found several books by a Jungian analyst that dealt with the problem of the father-daughter relationship, and found these books very helpful. The writer herself had had an alcoholic father. She is an American woman, Linda Schierse Leonard, who had been an alcoholic herself. In her first book, "The Wounded Woman – Healing the Father Daughter Relationship," she describes how she had discussions with her own inner father. Then in her second book, "On the Way to the Wedding: Transforming the Father–Daughter Relationship," she says that a woman must first overcome the problem with the father before she is able to love.) *(Mrs. Tweedie was quite interested and asked for the name of the publisher. These are the English titles, as published by Shambala Press.)*

It is a problem at first, and it is only after you overcome the problem with the father that you are able to further develop your ability to love. Yes, and I know a case where the problem with the father had already been overcome with the help of an analyst, not a hundred percent, but, let us say ninety percent, and now they are finding a problem with the mother. And the mother problem is more difficult and will cause even more pain, because the wound is much deeper and bleeds more. Yes?

(Question: Mrs. Tweedie, in the telling of these stories, it became clear to me – I see it in my own therapy practice – that every human carries a certain pattern within them, and that when this pattern is repeated, it is still unconscious and not yet resolved. For me, it is not a question of blaming someone else. The father problem is really an unresolved personal problem. In the moment that you begin to look at it – for example, in dreams – and you transform it and make it quite conscious, in that moment the archetype that you have carried with you, that is, your own pattern, is resolved and made

conscious, and in that way redeemed. Then you would be free, and able to love. Hate and love are really the same, but you can only live this love after you have experienced the hate. (*Here Mrs. Tweedie interjects her very sincere approval and agreement.*) So for me there is no guilty person outside of yourself, and in this I am not in agreement with some of what has been said. You may be unconscious of this pattern, but it is your own pattern that you yourself bring into life, that you see in your surroundings, and you see it there until you become conscious of it. Nothing can happen to you except that which you personally experience. It is after all your personal life.)

(Comment: Yes, I agree with that, but I also see that these problems have a transpersonal aspect, and I know that I have to accept this work, to resolve these conflicts.)

(Comment: I was thinking that when this woman was speaking, that what she says is true for her, and I was also thinking that for all of us, whether we have felt that we have significant problems with the mother or father or spouse, or even in connection with our children, that ultimately our seeing of it is not inward enough. We feel such longing for something beyond the human connections we have.)

That is really quite deep. The woman said that (*The comment was in English, and now Mrs. Tweedie translates and reshapes the comment.*) everything that has been said, and all of these problems with the father and the mother, is fundamentally not quite enough. That the most important thing is that we have such a longing for something that makes all of these human problems seem small. And, of course, that is spiritual life. Yes?

(Comment: I think that one could see it in another way. That the longing, this deepest longing for Him is so great, that perhaps these other difficulties and pains are there because we have a much greater fear of this one great longing that lies beneath these other problems. It is a kind of misunderstanding. I think that I have this great longing for something here to be resolved, and I do not recognize that the longing is really for the love of God. And it is only after I begin to recognize this much deeper longing that I am able to begin to see, "Oh, this is the reason for the pain, this is why the pain was so deep.")

Aha! When one recognizes that behind these other difficulties, there is something much greater, and that the pain of the father is only on the surface, and that beneath it is another pain of longing. Thank you. That now goes even deeper. Yes? We still have time for one more question.

(Question: Mrs. Tweedie, I was reminded of the words that you used to use when I first came to you. You used to talk of 'The Branded Ones'. I seem to be reminded of that phrase suddenly.)

Ah yes! This is a comment on what has just been said. I have often mentioned, and I still do, that there are people – I have seen this, in a psychological sense, very often – there are people who are branded by God. "This soul is mine." It is just the way the owner of cows or sheep brand their animals. As Jesus said, "I know my sheep and my sheep know me." There are souls who already somehow belong to God. And, of course, then, if there are mother or father problems, it may, possibly, be easier for these people to recognize that that is the surface, and that below that is a really terrible longing. Thank you. I think that that was a very good contribution. (*Now to someone else...*) You are also one of these. Yes, ... my blue-eyed wonder. She comes to London quite often. (*Next, she speaks about S. of the London group.*) You see? He is in meditation and completely happy. And he doesn't understand anything. That is lovely when someone is like that. We are very happy that he is with us. And he has already been with us for some time.

Good. There is nothing else, so we will meditate.

And now, twenty minutes of meditation.

I would like to give you a thought:

In stillness and in darkness

The seeds grow.

(The meditation begins,

... and ends.)

The Lectures of Irina Tweedie

Sufi Camp of 1988: Part 5

Ascending and Descending Spirals

Thursday, July 7, 1988

Based on a Series of Lectures given
in Schwarzsee, Switzerland
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Is everything OK? Can you hear me in the back? (Yes.) Then everything is OK. I just heard that there was a very successful drama workshop today. Is F. here? Where are you? (*Mrs. Tweedie is laughing quite gleefully.*) I heard that you had a personal success in the drama workshop. It is wonderful that she took part in that.

It is a beautiful day. It is hot in the sun, and we hope that we will have many such days. And now, again I would like to begin with ... R.? Are you here? I would like you to play for us, but if you do not want to ... (R.: I have not brought my ney...) Look, at least fifty people have asked that you sing for us again. Can you sing for two or three minutes. Or as you like – five minutes. You know S., and you know how tough a man he is. He said to me, "I cried," so I have nothing more to say. If your singing made, or should I say if He made S. cry, then you really sing with the Beloved in your heart. It would be an honor for us if you would begin all of our meetings with some of your singing. Will you do it, or is that too much? ... He will do it. So we will begin every meeting with something special. And that is really our privilege. Thank you, R.

(The singing is even more wonderful than the day before.)

We will do something different every day, and today I would like to begin with a question that I would like you to answer.

Every sacrifice, absolutely every sacrifice is not an effort and is not painful. It is fulfillment. Please. We should think about this. How can that statement be true? Yes?

(Comment: Because it is only possible by overcoming the self.)

Do you agree with that? (*Someone says: No. Then laughing, Mrs. Tweedie replies:*) Neither do I. It is something quite different.

(Comment: I think that it simply happens, without thinking about it; then it does not feel like a sacrifice. So it is a sacrifice and it is not a sacrifice.)

That is also an idea. But there is more. "A sacrifice is never an effort and it is never painful, it is fulfillment." Now why should fulfillment be a sacrifice? Try to turn the question around a little.

(Comment: Because we are fulfilling our promise, so it is not a sacrifice. It is a fulfillment of the promise that we ourselves made, then it is not at all a sacrifice.)

(Comment: But then, what about a sacrifice that one does not make voluntarily?)

(Comment: Or with sacrifices that one does, but with a lot of effort; for example if one has a piece of chocolate and wants to eat it, and gives it to someone else instead.) *(Everyone chuckles at this idea of sacrifice.)*

Oho! What an idea! What about that? We are still discussing. "When you make a sacrifice, it is never an effort, and it is never painful, it is fulfillment itself."

(Comment: A sacrifice is liberating.)

Yes, but that can also be painful. Look how precise this definition is; I am saying that there is no effort and no pain. And liberation can be painful, and it can also take effort. Yes?

(Comment Because it is an act of love.)

Yes, but that too can be painful. You see, everything you are saying is true, but it does not answer my question.

(Comment: Perhaps it is that it is painful and takes effort for the ego, but for the soul it is fulfillment.)

... .. Now I personally believe that is the answer. Have you all heard that? (No.) *(Now to the woman who made the contribution:)* Say it really loud! *(The woman does!)* You see, effort and pain only apply to the ego. But this fulfillment is on the level of the soul. I think that that is the answer. Thank you. You see, it is a question of level. Are you happy with this answer or not. *(There is a chorus of 'Yes!')* I think that everyone is happy with it. So that must be the answer. ... Yes?

(Comment continues: I would like to say that you yourself led me to that answer, to where I had my own personal experience.)

So we should pay attention to what she has to say. She wants to tell us about a personal experience that relates to this. Yes? *(There is a long pause ... and then a roll of laughter.)* You are supposed to tell us the experience! We are all waiting for you.

(Comment continues: Well, I had always thought that marriage and having a family would be a sacrifice; and you told me that I should take on this sacrifice. But my ego said, "No." I did not want to have anything to do with any of that.)

I had always told her that she should accept marriage and having a family as a sacrifice. It was very clear for me that it was important for her, but it was not yet clear for her; she had always felt that it kept her from her spiritual path. But now she has a very wonderful child, and everything is OK. I call him my little Siegfried. He looks like a little Siegfried, and he is all go. And it is not very easy for a mother when she has such a strong little boy. – Yes, and? *(Comment continues and Mrs. Tweedie restates it.)* Her ego had objected with a loud voice, but in her depths she knew that it was right. And although the voice of the ego was much much louder, she listened to the 'still small voice'. And it nearly killed her; she was really very very ill. She was so anemic that the doctors gave up on her completely. Then our group prayed for her, and she herself prayed; and she had faith. And she came to London, and when she went back her doctor told her that suddenly, somehow, everything was OK.

So! Stand up and show yourself, so they can see if you look anemic or not. Turn around. (*There is a real ROAR of laughter!*) You see! This is what God does with people when they have faith, when one allows the inner voice to be heard, and when one really follows it. Thank you.

She knew the answer. And the answer is, quite simply, that the pain and effort of a sacrifice can only be on the level of the ego. For the soul it is never an effort, and there is no pain from it, because the soul is something entirely different. And how did she know this answer? Because she had lived through an experience that let her see it. She had a real experience of it. As my teacher told me, "I will not teach you anything. I will give you experiences. Do what you want with them."

Good. Now we will continue with my lecture. ... But one has to deal with so much paraphernalia in life! Now I have to change my glasses. So. I think we got to self-deprecation, self-rejection. We described it as an inability – and we should pay attention to this – an inability to love ourselves. ... yes, we got to here ... this shows itself in our mocking manner when we receive praise for our work or for our good ideas, or when we receive compliments for our appearance. It also shows itself in our feeling that we are living a senseless life. We experience it as a feeling of inadequacy that shows itself in our destructive eating habits, and in the way we always want to eat more or to lose weight. I want to emphasize all of this, because something important follows from it. We see this self-rejection expressed in the impolite way that we deal with sales women, and in fleeting thoughts of suicide ...

And now comes the important question. How can we get out of this trap of self-hatred? You see, I think that every one of us has gone through phases like this. To get out of this trap, we must find a different perspective; we must look more precisely into ourselves and see more clearly what is there. Simply said, we must wake up and see what is really there inside of us. In order to do this you must have enough intelligence and enough awareness. Not everyone is conscious.

You see, in the Upanishads, it is said that people are asleep. The Sufis say that people are asleep, and that it is only the Sufis who are awake. We need to begin to understand that we must somehow change our perspectives; that the way we have proceeded in this until now is worthless. Please. I am trying to explain something to you that is not really very clear. It is fine that I am saying this and that you can hear it, as far as that goes. But when you are suddenly in a dynamic situation, are things so clear within yourself that you can really see what is going on within you with sharp clarity? It does not happen often, and it is difficult to achieve at all.

That is why Inayat Khan says that to reach spiritual life and self-knowledge is like trying to shoot an arrow in the darkness of the night, and to hit your target. You can see the arrow and the bow, but you cannot see the target. You must reach it in darkness. And our mind is really very dense – of course it is also very important. Our mind is a part of the mind of God. But it also betrays you: it does not show you things as they really are, because the mind belongs to the ego, and the ego is the greatest betrayer. So we need to wake up and learn to see what is real. Then we – every man and woman – discover our real power, our real beauty and our uniqueness.

So when we have learned to see more clearly on this spiral path towards spirituality, then we are able to move forwards on its winding path. You see, I compare it to a spiral because of the way that situations continue to repeat themselves on higher and higher levels. That applies to the spiral that leads us upwards to the One. But there is also a spiral that descends into life and that one teaches us to see the unity of life, and which ultimately leads us to the One in quite another way – one could say: in an opposite way. You see, that is why spiritual life is fundamentally very difficult for children. It is because the child is just entering life. Of course, there are exceptions, some children are further along in this, but the exceptions only confirm the rule. But we are slowly moving out of life, and into the eternal, into the beyond. We are still in life; we stand with both feet on the ground, and it should be that way. But there is already a star that we are following. Life here no longer completely satisfies us. And you see, there lie the problems of psychosis and neurosis. Something in us has split, but we do not yet know it.

Something in us still wants to live; we still want to be immersed in life and to enjoy life. And life is lovely. But something in us says, “Hmmm. Not completely.” Just as this woman said, there was the voice of the ego, and also a still small voice ... somewhere. And this still small voice is so easy not to hear. I do not want to hear it, but just outside, just at the edge of my hearing is this tiny voice; and this voice says something to me. But what it says is too uncomfortable, and I do not want to hear it. It is so easy not to hear it at all. But this voice will repeat and repeat its message, and it will get louder and louder and louder, and then what happened to me will also happen to you. You come to a point where you overturn everything and say to the Beloved, “I want only You alone. Everything else is illusion.” But as long as we live in this illusion – and this illusion is very beautiful – it is our truth.

You see, that is the way of the descending spiral; the great, wide circles that descend into life. This spiral leads us downwards into life, and the other spiral carries us upwards. And of course, they are both the same. You can try to make a spiral, out of wire or something, and try to understand what happens, to meditate on it. A spiral is a very lovely and mysterious symbol. Situations in normal life repeat themselves again and again and again. Spiritual experiences repeat themselves in the same way. The nearness to the Beloved becomes deeper and greater; and the despair – when He veils His face – becomes ever greater and greater, until one day all of that somehow disappears. And these are the opposites that we have to unite: the opposites of the spiral. I know that what I am saying is not completely clear for many of you, but I cannot do any better. I am trying to say something with words, something that I myself have seen, and that I myself have experienced. And something that all of you have also experienced to some degree, some of you without really knowing it at all.

So I have said that every man and woman discovers his beauty and his uniqueness. And in that moment when we have experienced this beauty and uniqueness as reality – I mean here, and also there – then life becomes completely different. Then every person has such a deep meaning for us. Every person becomes so precious. Every person is such an adventure. You can no longer despise people, you can no longer criticize them. All that you can do is to try to understand them. That again is a very important statement. You should try to understand others. And here is the help for every form of depression. Simply forget yourself. Your own depression is not important. Try instead to understand the other person. Perhaps the problem of the other person is much more terrible than your own problem.

When people come to me and are very depressed and have all sorts of problems, or if they create terrible problems for themselves – and people usually create their own terrible problems – I always tell them to forget themselves. I tell them to find a job where they work with people. Or to find something that takes them out of themselves.

If you have terrible Kundalini problems – and they can really be strong and unbearable – try cleaning your home. Do your – how does one say that in German? – spring-cleaning, (*Mrs. Tweedie is laughing ...*) like you would do it just before Easter. And if it is not Easter, you can pretend that it is, and still do your spring-cleaning. Spend your energy! You should make your body so tired that you cannot think. And try to serve.

One can serve in a million different ways. You can serve your home and make it completely spotless, even pure. You can serve your husband, perhaps by cooking something quite special for him, and by giving him a big hug when he comes home. You can bring your wife, even just one little flower. It doesn't have to be a big array of flowers. “Here is a rose, just a small bouquet” – it doesn't have to be expensive; perhaps just a few violets – to say, “I have been thinking of you.” You see, life is not composed of great things. Of course, there are also great dramas in life too, even terrible things, but those things are rare. There are many people who have never had a great drama in their lives. People create their own dramas, but that is another thing. But something heroic or extraordinary? Such things happen very seldom, perhaps once in a lifetime, and perhaps never. Life is composed of little things, of small irritations and small obstacles, of small evils.

“You did something to me, and I will pay you back.” No. Do not spend your life on such things. Forget such little evils. And you see, why have these people done these ‘evil’ deeds? – Please excuse

my bad German. I hope you can understand what I have been saying to you; that is what is important, and everything else is irrelevant.

You see, this is the way to heal every neurosis and every psychosis, and for every mental illness. Of course when one is so mentally ill that one can no longer understand anything, then this will not work. I am speaking of smaller, more manageable problems, of small neuroses and small psychoses.

We had two women in our group who were paranoid. I say 'had' because the problem is no longer there. And doctors say that one cannot heal people who are paranoid. But we prayed for them, and I guided them – it was not me, I only listened inwardly. As I said yesterday, every job begins with listening and ends with listening; it is a listening to something from ... somewhere else, one could say, an inward listening. So someone had guided these people, through me. And now where has this paranoia gone? One of them is happy and laughing; she is married and they have a child. The other one does not have any children, but her marriage was saved. Usually such people go into the hospital and they leave the hospital and no one can help them. And it is really a very simple thing. Simply forget yourself. One of these paranoid young women began to work with old people. She did it as a volunteer, without any pay; and one step after another, the paranoia left. She doesn't even remember it anymore. She had had terrible depressions, and she was always afraid and always felt persecuted, which is one of the typical symptoms of paranoia.

I have been expanding on this last thought, and I am repeating it quite intentionally so that we can think more about it. 'It is only when we are able to see clearly that we can progress.' – You see, what I am saying is not easy. Today's theme is much more difficult than the theme of the previous days, because I try to keep going deeper and deeper into all of this with you.

So. As we progress on this path of the spiral, and have learned to see more clearly, we come to a point where we can look back and see that the self-deprecation of women can also lead us – at least a step – towards a new sense of self worth. You remember that I have said that we experience this self-deprecation as an inability to love ourselves. Please. That is what I said just fifteen minutes ago; and now I am saying that the self-deprecation of women is a step to a new feeling of self-esteem. I am speaking mostly to the women, but this also applies to sixty percent of the men. Men are made differently from us women, but this also applies to many of the men. So self-deprecation, for men and women, is a step towards a new feeling of self-esteem. And in this way it can be an essential phase in spiritual life. It can lead to a new level. Now I have come back to spiritual life. I have made a long detour, but I am again back to this theme; back to the path to the Self, to the Beloved, to enlightenment, to individuation, and to bliss.

Contemporary writers tell us that the experience of nothingness – and please, Absolute Nothingness is the greatest bliss – can lead us onwards; but they also say that the experience of worthlessness in life – our 'little nothingness', the 'I am nothing' that we ourselves create – can also help us forwards. These experiences can lead us to new awakenings and to the discovery of a new source of power, and to our own spirit. You see, there is the small nothingness, 'I am nothing and life is not worth living, everything is worthless, and everything is pointless'. And then there is the Great Nothingness. This Great Nothingness is only 'nothing' for the mind. This Great Nothingness is God, it is everything, the One, the Unity. It is eternal bliss. It is only 'nothing' for the mind, because the mind can not reach that level.

When you first experience this Great Nothingness, you may feel as if you have gone completely crazy. But that is a condition that passes. Your values will have changed so very much, and you will be so confused, that you really do not know what is black and what is white, if something is blue, or dead or alive. One is in a state of complete confusion, of utter and complete confusion. But that is really not so terrible. How often have I myself thought that I was crazy? I had really and honestly thought that I was crazy. I had no idea of where I stood; I had no idea where to put my feet, of how to be in life. Gurujī told me, "The time will come when you feel that you have no place to stand; that there is no place for you." That is what I felt. The values suddenly change and you are thrown into a state in which you ... cook ... in which you are cooked ... with fire. And spiritual life is fire. That is why I have always said that

all of my books, and all the translations of my books – they are both now translated into several languages – must have the word ‘Fire’ in the title. Well, “The Phoenix from the Ashes.” (*The title of the German edition of her abridged book, Chasm of Fire.*) implies fire. Spiritual life is fire. Kundalini is fire. That is why people say that it is so dangerous. In truth, it is only dangerous when it awakens on its own, and if you are with a teacher and he is not able to handle the situation. I say ‘he’ because that is more comfortable to me than to always say ‘he or she’, but of course there are great women teachers too. I have personally met Anandamayi Ma, and she was a very great Guru.

To be a teacher one does not have to be a man, or be a woman; one does not have to be a Muslim or a Catholic. These are all outer circumstances, and all illusion. The truth, God, is not so narrow that one’s religion has any importance at all. Religion is important as a start. It can help one to find a path by drawing your attention to something beyond ‘normal’ life. But really, your religion belongs to the world of illusion. Great love is the truth, the one truth; and love here on earth, the love we have for other humans, is an exercise to enable you to experience and recognize this one Great love.

We have many quotations of what Jesus said from the Bible, and this is exactly what he was speaking about. If you love your neighbor, then you love me; if you love your brother, you love me. These are not quotations, I just want to show you that these things are also in the Bible; and they are also in the Koran, and in the Upanishads. My friends, you will find the same thing in every one of these traditions. It is extraordinary how very much the same they are, how wonderfully the same they are. It comes at us from every direction, hammering at us, “Do not forget. Do not forget what you are. You are eternal and infinite. You have always existed and you will exist forever. You are a part of that which is beyond speech. You are not small, you are great.”

In the Katha Upanishad, Yama, the King of Death, says to the little boy, Nachiketa, “If you identify yourself with your physical body, you are small and poor and sickly; and you can die. But if you are identified with That, then you are That.” You will find this everywhere. You see, all of these sacred writings, all of these great beings, all of these people of wisdom cannot be wrong. One could be wrong; ten could be wrong; but they cannot all be wrong. And they all say the same things.

And all religions are also the same; they all say the same thing. And why? How is it possible that every religion could be the same? Yet if we look at the great Saints and Yogis who lived according to these religions, we would see that their lives are quite similar. They all loved humanity, they all lived a life of purity, they were without hatred for others, and they all fought against the ugly things within themselves. You see, all of them led very similar lives in this way. They use different words, in different languages, in many different countries and under very different circumstances. But beneath it all, my friends, it is the same. I could be wrong, but that is what I say: that all religions and all philosophies are one and the same. If you scratch just below the surface you will find the truth. It is quite near, just on the surface. You only have to scratch a little bit and you will find it. You look at each one of them, and you see that every tradition is the same.

The ancient sect of the Sufis – and they are more ancient than any religion – existed thousands and thousands of years ago. It is so old that we have forgotten how old it really is. It is older than the Upanishads, and older than the Vedas. It began at the very dawn of humanity. They were a brotherhood, the ‘Kamal Posh’, the blanket wearers. They would only have a blanket. They would wear it as a garment, and use it as their bed. They wandered from country to country in search of the truth, and they went to all of the teachers of the day in search of it. That is Sufism. One cannot say that Sufism is Islam. Islam came much later. You cannot say that Sufism is Buddhism, because it too came much later. It is the urge to find the truth that is in you and in me. It is like a fever that never leaves you in peace. It is like a tiger that has tasted blood and must always have more. It is our instinct, in our skin; we have brought it with us with us from beyond life.

You can see this longing in the eyes of the tiniest infant. They are born, and they open their eyes and look at you and Ah! My God! Eternity is in those eyes! I have the greatest respect for these tiny infants, and I really mean that. When I see a newborn baby, it is not only from tenderness – of course, when you see a tiny infant, we are instinctively tender and feel lovingly towards it – but there is also

something else. There is eternity written on their foreheads; there is eternity in the light of their eyes as they look at you. "I come from the clouds, from the clouds of eternal light. I have come here and I will suffer. And I will be with you. I will have parents, and I will marry and have children. Perhaps I will be a criminal, or perhaps a Saint. But where I come from is so unbelievably beautiful ..." And our minds, our small minds here, cannot begin to conceive of this other reality. And this is the source of every misunderstanding and of every problem in life. We are eternal, and we have a body that is an animal. This body must be fed and washed, and it must be exercised to keep it healthy; all exactly like an animal. It reacts just like an animal. We are half angel and half animal.

Shall I pause here, and let you ask questions? Or perhaps you would like to make a contribution? If not, then I will continue. Yes?

(Comment *(From one of the English group. Mrs. Tweedie translates into German. The comment relates to Marie Louise, who was a member of the London group who had recently died.)* Mrs. Tweedie, I would like to tell a dream that I had a few days ago about Marie Louise, because it reminds me of your description of the child. We were all together in a kind of a circle and your voice came from somewhere that I could not see on the left, and said, "Look everyone! Marie Louise is coming to visit us." And she was there, just across from us. She was Marie Louise, but she looked younger. At first she said, a little hesitantly, "I do not know how it will be to be in the body." And I, standing opposite, quailed – and this is the biblical term that came to me when I thought of it afterwards, I literally quailed – I said, "No, no, this cannot be. Your body is gone, this cannot be." I somehow rebelled. But quickly she was quite with us; she became quite physically real and quite young and quite light; but it was not a big deal for her, there was no 'Here I am!'; she was simply herself. And I said, "But how are you, Marie Louise?" and she said, "Look." And suddenly she was like a dolphin swimming along, above then below then above the crystal clear water. Then there was a short conversation that was somehow meant for me, and not so relevant for now; and then I saw her with luggage all around her, suitcases full of all of the important things of this world, and she bent lightly over them. And then I woke up. And I had seen how it was for her to be in the body. She was light, and a hundred percent there, and a hundred percent ... not there. That is the only way I can describe it.)

That was a very beautiful dream. She was there and she was not there. What a wonderfully symbolic dream. Thank you, that was very beautiful.

But because it was a real, personal experience, it is very difficult to explain. You see, it has very often happened to me that I have had a wonderful mystical experience in the night, and I have seen something or my mind has seen something in the greatest and most important depths. And I have thought, "Oh, I must tell the group something of this. It was so important and so clear." But when I tried to say something to the group, it came out completely flat and meaningless, and I saw that I really had not said anything; and I was unable to convey any of the feeling of the experience. There was no meaning in my words, and they did not carry any of the light of the experience I had had. It came out as flat, dumb words. *(An electronic alarm clock begins to sound, quite close to the microphone, and continues for some time.)* "The time has come!" the walrus said, "to speak of many things." – This is from Alice in Wonderland. *(She is speaking in English. The English group is laughing and the Germans are perplexed.)* – "Of ships and shoes, and sealing wax; and cabbages and kings." Can someone translate that into German? No? *(Then Mrs. Tweedie does something of a translation, amidst a chaos of laughter and confusion.)* Now we continue. Or do you have something to say? Or a question? Yes?

(Dreamer: I would like to tell a dream ... about a child that I dreamt of a long time ago.) Yes, and I will translate it into English afterwards. (Dreamer: There was a newly born child, and I had the feeling that it was my child, and it lay in a meadow; and while it lay there and slowly opened its eyes and opened its little fingers, and began to breathe, it began to transform itself. It became transparent, and its hands and feet began to merge into the landscape. And the newly born infant became part of the environment and part of nature itself. I cannot understand what that could mean.)

Aha. Once again, that is a personal experience and one cannot say much about it. That is all of it? (Dreamer: Yes.) Dreams that are very short usually have a great significance. And this was an

experience. In fact, it was a very common mystical experience: that you grow together with everything. And so, all of us – we who have had such a dream – know that it was not a dream. It was a mystical experience in which you were shown the Oneness in this particular way. In this way something in you: your higher self, tried to show you Unity. But look, I am speaking about this, and I can already see that you think that I am deceiving you or that I misunderstood you. But I know precisely what you said, and I know how you said it, and I know the feeling and meaning that this dream had for you.

Carl Jung spoke of the inner feeling of meaning in a dream. He said that it was exactly this sense of meaning that was the most important part of a dream. In your case, that was a real experience, so one cannot say very much about it. Perhaps what I said does not apply to you, but it was an important dream for you. And sometimes I too have an experience that is so clear and wonderful, and then in the morning I feel that I must say something to my group. I try to convey the beauty and meaning of the experience, and then ... I look at their faces and I see that they do not understand me at all. We do not have a language for such things. We have no language for this feeling of meaning. Only the soul understands it, and we too, if we can touch just the very edge of the soul, as if with the tips of our fingers. And we can do that. Rabindranath Tagore used the expression, "The hem of the garment of truth." If one can touch, with just the tips of your fingers, very softly and shyly, the hem of the garment of truth. But alas! Tagore was a poet. I cannot say it so beautifully. OK, now we will continue; or does someone have something else to say? ... Please.

(Question: Sometimes I have a similar experience when I want to describe ... how I receive a message in meditation. This happens when I am ... on my path – I have this somehow dark path – I try to explain it as a voice that I hear and do not hear. I never know how to say that. It is indescribable.)

Yes. That is a real mystical experience. That is exactly what I have tried to say, or explain. Then one knows nothing. One is really helpless. And you know that. It burns like a blissful fire in your heart, and still you cannot say anything about it. I mean that if you try to say something, it has no value for the others. And for you it is only frustrating that you cannot communicate it. That is our ... *(She looks for the right word in German, and someone suggests it.)* yes, our punishment. My mind is not working very well right now, it is somewhere else. It doesn't work at all! *(There is some skeptical laughter ...)*

So. I will repeat the last sentence. Contemporary writers tell us that the experience of nothingness and the experience of worthlessness often lead us to new awakenings and to the discovery of a new source of power, and to our spirit. They compare it with the dark night of the soul that the mystics speak of. It is a time of darkness, and a time of emptiness, in that the connection with the normal source of energy is completely cut off. But then there follows a phase of new and deeper insights. This is what happens when someone has a dream in which he or she sees a new landscape. The new landscape is this new insight, an awakening of a new consciousness. Something in the person has not yet arrived at that new insight outwardly; but the dream says that something has already opened within that person. There is already this new landscape.

(Question: Must such a landscape appear in a dream? Last night after I sat down in my tent, I had the experience that I saw this – I was not sleeping, but suddenly I saw this landscape in front of me. And this landscape looked so real! And I have never seen it in my life.)

No, that must not happen in a dream, it can also appear as a vision. And that was a vision, and it was a mystical experience. That absolutely means that something within you is newly born. And in this vision, this newborn thing within you appeared to you as a new landscape that you never saw before. That is a very important contribution.

(Contribution: I had a dream when I first met you – perhaps ten years ago – in which I was trying to sell a very old crumbling house. And I was doing my best to sell it, when a voice suddenly said, "Don't be ridiculous, that no longer has anything to do with you." And I turned my back on it and I saw a vision of range after range of mountains that I had never seen the likes of before.)

Ah! that is important. Thank you, that was perfect. That was a beautiful example. Yes, such things do happen to people. Our 'I', our real 'I', not the small 'I' – In English you always spell the word for 'I' with a capital letter, and it is not really justifiable. In German you have both possibilities, and I find that better. But I think that there is a slight difference in meaning between the English and German words for 'I'. I think that the German word 'ich' (*Pronounced 'ish' as in fish, but sounded far back on the tongue, like a cat might hiss.*) carries more of a sense of a physically focalized center; really big and tangible. From that point of view, I like the German word much better.

Now, I said that the connection with the normal source of energy is severed, and that then a phase of new and deeper insights follows immediately. This woman turned her back to the house, and she was faced with the mountains. How can she compare this old house that she wanted to sell with these mountains. You see? That was really a very valuable contribution.

So, to return to my notes: with this new insight that opens itself before your eyes, the experience of self-deprecation can be a shove towards spiritual awakening. It can lead us to new levels of self-knowledge, and it can bring women and men to the point where they can see their own true value. It is as if one would say, "Yes! That is it. I was blind and could not see that until now." That is real initiation.

Initiation is not something that the teacher gives you. That can also happen, but the real initiation is none other than the broadening of your own horizon. And the horizon of a human can be as narrow as a fly's, or as wide as the Absolute, for we are that great. We can be as small as a fly, and we can also reach the stars, and beyond them: to the galaxies and still beyond. Our horizon can be the horizon of the Absolute, and we can reach it with our inner spirit; but of course, that is only when we have become great masters of our lives, and that takes time.

So in this sense – to return to the spiral – the downward path of the spiral can be very useful for us in our life's journey, as it repeats itself again and again and again. We need only to look along its windings into the depths to understand where it is leading us, and to recognize the pitfalls. And we come to see that this spiral also leads us first upwards and then downwards as part of its motion. This eternal spiral has an element of returning again and again to the same theme.

It is often through a change in our energy that we are able to take a new step. Perhaps it comes through the help of a friend, or a prayer, or a ritual, or a book. How often it happens that just a simple book helps us to take a new step. Or sometimes it may be a painful experience, as happened in my case when my husband died. We transform the obstacle into a step forward, and we find that in overcoming our difficulty, we are on the upward path of the spiral, on our way towards self-realization.

Look. These thoughts are for you and for me and for the whole world. This the way of the spiral, the way we grow on the spiral path of life. S. painted a small picture for me. It is a lovely spiral, with a dew-drop on the end of it. He gave a lecture that art is nothing other than a spiral and a dew-drop, and he proved it to us logically. And it really is logical and true. This picture shows a spiral, with a pilgrim – quite a small pilgrim – with a very heavy backpack. I hung this picture in our meditation room because it is so symbolic. That is you and I and millions of other people who are on the spiral, going towards the eternal rainbow in the dew-drop. It is a lovely painting. So anything and everything can lead you to self-realization. And the first step can be a book, a friend that says the right word at the right time, or a painful experience, as it was in my case.

Now I want to speak about the spiral that leads you outwards and the spiral that leads you inwards. The spiral that leads outwards is a symbol for the broadening of our consciousness. You see, here the spiral has another significance. It is a sign of a growing awareness of our relationship with creation: our relationship with our environment, with each other, and with every living thing. It is about our relationships with the trees and the animals and the air and with water and the oceans and ... everything. The outward leading turns of this spiral lead us out of our narrow limitations to new concepts, to the understanding of the variety of beliefs, to the acceptance of different life styles, and on to new experiences. We begin to recognize that everything is One and that everything is Holy. The soul comes into this body in order to have experiences, and the soul is greedy: we want to experience more

and more new things. In one way that is good, and in another way it is not so good. Everything has two sides.

Our teacher, Guruji, said, "If you are interested in this path, then this is already your last life." Otherwise you would not be interested in this particular path. Anyone who is interested in this path is already returning to the eternal and, if we are really interested, we will no longer have a physical body after this life. That means that we will not reincarnate again. Someone asked me, "How can Guruji say that self-realization can be achieved in one lifetime? Even Buddha needed seven hundred or so lives to reach it." Yes, that is true. But how do we know how many reincarnations we have already had? And if you are interested in this particular path of Yoga, then it is probably your last life, IF you really live it! But how many really live it? (*Just as Mrs. Tweedie says that, someone sneezes quite loudly.*) So! Someone sneezed! In Russia, one says that if you are saying something and someone sneezes, then you have spoken the truth. (*Everyone enjoys a good laugh.*) So now you know. That is lovely.

We must try to understand variety, that everything is One, and that everything is holy. Patriarchal spirituality separated the holy from the profane, the spiritual from the physical, the supernatural from the natural. And just as it is true that we women are very bound up with nature, so it is also true that we were frequently excluded from spiritual and intellectual endeavors. Spirituality was traditionally reserved for people who were engaged in intellectual fields, and not for those who were close to earth, so it was open to men and not to women. That is why many women doubt that they can integrate their image of the sacred and holy into their lives. I have often heard women say, "Oh, we women are impure. We do not have the connection with the soul that men do. We cannot go very far, and we could never experience the truth the way men do." Do you think that only men can do these things? No! Here, in this world, we are women, but somewhere else we are souls; and a soul is a soul, it is beyond male and female. The soul becomes either a woman or a man in order to have certain experiences that it needs. It is really very simple and logical. It is only because it is so simple and logical and near to us that we cannot see it. Look, if I hold my hand a few inches from my eyes, I cannot see it; it is only an obstacle to my sight. If I hold it a little further from my eyes, then I can see it. Have you noticed that you lose your objectivity when you are with someone that you love very much? You no longer see that person as they really are. It is exactly because the person is so near to you that you can no longer judge them correctly. That is why doctors are not allowed to treat members of their own family. They lose their judgment, and they themselves know it. A doctor is always hesitant to treat members of his own family. Of course, I am speaking of a serious illness, not just a cold. You cannot see what is too near to you. It must be at some distance before you can see it. And this is the same thing. We cannot see this male-female issue because we are too close to it. You see, the spiritual laws and the laws of nature are the same.

Guruji said, "We are soldiers of the two worlds: the world of the spirit and the material world." Yet mystics, who live in both worlds, have assured us for hundreds of years that this splitting is false. In the scriptures, we read that every phase of life is holy, and that every action can lead us to perfect union; and that there is not only one path to God, but thousands and thousands of paths to Him. And this is the explanation of Karma Yoga. Karma Yogis say that there is no need to pray. They simply live their Karma or Dharma – their duty. And that is really true. If you understand that every action can lead you to the truth, that every action can be done for God – with God – then action itself can be our way to God, just as Brother Lawrence peeled potatoes for Jesus and cooked for Jesus. If we live in this way, we do not need to pray, because we are doing each act for God. So Karma Yogis do not need to pray, because their lives themselves are a prayer. Of course, you should not think that the path of Karma Yoga is easier; it is not. Every path of Yoga is difficult. In Karma Yoga you must remember God the entire day, and not take a single breath without remembering Him; and of course, that is very difficult. Kabir said, "Every breath that I take, without remembering Your name, is lost to me forever." But Kabir was a very great Saint.

So one cannot say that there is only one way to God, and that you must, for example, be Catholic or Protestant, or Jehovah's Witness, and that only then can you go to God, that only then will you reach self-realization, and that otherwise you will go to hell. How could that be possible? The spiritual path,

my friends, is very closely connected to every part of our life. And we should not forget that spiritual life is connected with every action of our lives. That is the real Karma Yoga. It is simply done in life.

In the beginning of the spiritual path, you see a split. You see spiritual life, and also worldly life. It is only later, when you are higher on the spiral, that the windings become narrower and narrower, until in the end there is only a point, and spiritual life and worldly life become one and the same for you. ... I just felt that many of you have understood me as I have said this.

If we deny our spiritual self, if we say that we are only our bodies and minds, and that there is nothing more, then we destroy the connection between our soul and our human life, our existence as a human being. And many people do that. The outer world, this beautiful kaleidoscopic world that we live in, is a guiding thread to the world of the spirit. If we simply look at nature, we can learn a great deal about relationships and interdependencies. It is quite incredible how everything is interconnected in nature. People who love nature understand that. Ecologists have made us alert to the destruction of the environment that we are causing. Hundreds of species of animals have been destroyed. And for what? We have destroyed links in the chain of interdependence, we drain swamps and cut forests, and have destroyed thousands of living things in the process.

From Eastern medicine we know that our feet and hands and ears and face have connections with every organ in our bodies. They can treat one point on a foot to relieve the pain in quite another part of the body. I do not think that that is new for any of us. Iridologists, who do diagnosis from the eye, claim that every part of the body has a corresponding part in the iris of our eyes. In the techniques of biofeedback we learn to influence our bodies with our wills, but until this technique was developed, doctors claimed that such functions were impossible to control.

Natural scientists tell us that every cell of every living organism could be used to create an entire genetically identical organism. And this again is not new. And physicists have proved through experiment that material can be influenced by the mind. Could there be a greater proof of unity than that? And still we sit here with our rebellious minds and proud hearts, and say, "Unity does not exist. God does not exist. I do not need to surrender." We forget that we surrender to life all of the time. We surrender to our family, to our children, to our work. We surrender from morning to night. But we will not surrender to God. "I do not believe in God, and I do not want to surrender. Why should I? I am myself."

And in life itself, scientists have recently discovered that everything is interdependent, everything is interwoven, everything is one. Do we need still greater proof? No, we do not.

And now, my friends, ... meditation.

(There are a few minutes of people moving around and settling, and then ...)

Take a deep breath ... and relax ... And your heart is so full of love ... love for everyone and everything ... for Him ... and for life.

(There is a great stillness, and the meditation quickly deepens ...)

The Lectures of Irina Tweedie

Sufi Camp of 1988: Part 6

The Relationship with Nature

Friday, July 8, 1988

Based on a Series of Lectures given
in Schwarzsee, Switzerland
July 2 - 16, 1988

(Robin sings a beautiful song of devotion from the Mevlevi Sufis ...)

Before I begin, I would like to ask a young woman to tell us her dream. It is a short dream, and I think it fits well with this theme. Would you like to come to the microphone? *(She would rather not...)* Then never mind, just say it from there and I will translate it.

(Dreamer: I do not speak German, but yesterday I heard Mrs. Tweedie say something about the hem of the garment of truth, and I was reminded of a dream I had when Mrs. Tweedie went for her eye operation. In it, she was standing to one side and the group members were going around on a carousel. And a man gave me a jacket to wear that had a square front and back, and was apricot colored and he said, "This is yours to wear, but you must finish the hem yourself" ...So I recognized this expression yesterday.)

So that was a personal message for you. ... Yes, that was a special message for this woman, and she had never understood it until yesterday, and that is very lovely.

So. The lectures of this week have come from the book, "The Way of the Spiral" by Theresa O'Brien King, which I found very interesting. And I. has kindly translated my notes into German so that I can better present this subject to you.

When I speak about meditation next week, that will be from my own personal experiences and the experiences of the members of the group. That is not written anywhere, and will be, of course, completely original. And I will spend the whole week on that. Each of us has had experiences, visions, or something that we have seen in meditation; sometimes a blue light, sometimes a special power; and we will certainly speak about such things. That will happen next week. And now I will continue from my notes.

We have long known that body and spirit are connected with the phases of the moon, just as they are connected to the tides and possibly to the movement of the other celestial bodies. In my notes it says 'probably'. I say it is not 'probably', but that it is absolutely certain. In the Indian scriptures, it is written that the body is a microcosm of the solar system, and that each influences the other. Now, it seems to me that we women somehow feel this connection – which rules in the center of reality – more than men do. It is even in the scriptures that we women feel it more. Women are always interested in

the relationship between humans and natural objects: be it a flower, a stone, or a celestial body. The woman's body reminds her of this connection. From birth to birth we are connected with one another, entwined with one another through our memories. According to the scriptures, the child is connected to its mother through their auras until it is twelve years old. I have found that it is quite common, especially for girls, that this connection lasts much longer. One is not only connected in a mysterious way with the mother, but also with the father. In some families when something happens to the daughter, both the mother and the father will know it, even though the daughter is far away. And it also works in the other direction: that when something happens to one of the parents, the daughter will know immediately. That can also happen to boys, but it happens much more frequently with girls.

Now the thread of this personal myth leads through the labyrinth from womb to womb, to the formless spring, which is the spring that gives birth to creation. What is this formless spring? The scriptures say that it is the Great Goddess, who is constantly giving birth; the Great Goddess, who is, of course, nature itself.

For our spiritual life, it is very important, my friends, that we broaden our experience of relating to nature; that we consciously extend these experiences. You should try to go into nature, to meditate in nature. That helped me enormously, and I think that would help everyone. Just as we know our own bodies, so should we also know the nature of the world. The more we know about outer reality, the more we will know about ourselves, and the more we will know about God. Knowledge about nature and its structure, and our relationship to it, enables us to get brief glimpses into the immensity of life. Our consciousness would be expanded if we open areas within us that, so far, have only premonitions about, or perhaps know nothing about at all.

If we become more and more aware of the wonders of creation, we would be led to the innermost essence of every being. And from there we can get to know the innermost heart of Universal Being.

In deep meditation in the forest, you can become a tree. To do that, you must try to sit comfortably with your back against a tree. You could also put your arms around the tree, but that would be something different. Shamans say that if you have an illness you can allow the tree to take it from you.

What, after all, is an illness? It is an energy that is not flowing correctly in your body. But energy is energy, and while this energy hurts us and makes us ill, for the tree this energy can be useful. So if we put our arms around the tree, and really feel love for the tree – and I have done this – we can give the tree our illness without harming the tree. We can give it our influenza! I would advise you to try to do this.

But if you want to become a tree, then you must sit very calmly and very near to the tree. You must touch the tree from your head to the base of your spine, just as one sits in a chair. Then you can speak to the tree inwardly. But after you have spoken to the tree, remain completely still and quiet, and listen to what the tree says to you personally. There comes a moment – and this moment may come as a shock the first time – when you suddenly feel that you and the tree are one. You sense the rising of the sap and the rustling of the leaves and the probing of the roots. If you do this often, you can in some way – and I am speaking from experience – reach the consciousness of the tree. You come to feel the longing the tree has for light, the song of the tree in the wind, the illnesses of the tree, and the hopes of the tree. Everything in nature has its light, and trees too have an aura; one says that the aura of a tree is its fairy or its angel. I do not know, but I have never seen it as an angel, only as a kind of energy, and it is very lovely.

This is not a very deep meditation. Deep meditation is when you go somewhere where you no longer have a mind, where you are united with something beyond. But this communion with a tree is lovely. And what is more than lovely is that when you leave, you find that you have so much energy, and so much power. That is a gift of gratitude from the tree. Trees love us. All of nature loves us, only we have made ourselves so easy to hate. We have done so many terrible things. We have polluted the water; we kill the trees; we do so much damage to the earth – to our mother earth. But still the trees love us. But I have found that there are some trees in the Himalayas who do not like humans. Why in

the Himalayas? Because I had more time to observe such things there. Perhaps such trees also exist here. I found that the Deodar trees, the Cedars of the Himalayas, do not love humans. I have tried to commune with them several times, and I say that the Deodars cannot tolerate people. I do not know why. Of course, now they have cut them all down, but when I was there they were quite undisturbed, so there was no reason for them to hate humans. At least I thought there was no reason, but the trees probably know much better. If you sit against a Deodar, after a short while you begin to feel terribly afraid, and you feel that the tree wants you to leave NOW. And it is so uncomfortable, that, of course, you do leave. Why should one sit there when you are clearly not welcome? I experienced that with the Himalayan Cedar, but that was the only tree that reacted that way. Other trees did not react that way.

In India they take the oil from fir trees and make all sorts of things from it: perfume and window putty which, of course, smells very nice. They make a small cut in the tree, and they hang a small pot below the cut, and the resin flows into the small pot. And one sees that these trees die; they only have needles just at the top, and everything else is dried out. But in spite of that, if you sit next to this dying tree, next to the tree that humans are killing, it is still so friendly and smells so good. You sit there, and you feel completely welcome. So you see, the tree is dying, and it is still happy to encounter a human.

Now, if we want to change the world we must first change ourselves. If we do not first change ourselves, if we are careless, we will not be able to change the world. And how can we change ourselves? We must give our attention to exactly what we actually do, even at home. In my home my furniture is all made from pine, as it is here, and of course, if you have wood furniture, you must respect the wood. You cannot cut your bread on the table, you must use a cutting board. Unfortunately, so many people come to me that I cannot always be a policeman, and cannot always watch what people are doing. If someone wants a piece of cake, they often slice it directly on the table or on the counters. It hurts me to see it. And of course, these marks remain forever and I must live with them. One could have the surfaces redone, but now I just live with it.

I have a very lovely wooden plate that I bought at a fair in Poland. It is made of birch and is not made for bread, but for fruit. It was very expensive, but it was so lovely that, really, I had to buy it. And what happens? People slice bread on it. And although I cannot do anything about it, it gives my heart pain.

Now, if we have this kind of mentality, people who come to me to meditate, people who call themselves Sufis, how can we then change the natural world? We must change ourselves first. We must learn to respect things, we must have respect for everything. I have another example.

We have a very lovely garden, and there are small children who live above us. Llewellyn and Annatti have very lovely, beautiful children. The small boy is nine, and the girl is eight. When I first moved into the house eight years ago, everyone said to me that one cannot have a lovely garden if there are small children around. I said, "No, that is not at all true." And we made a garden that is for the children as well as for us. We planted bushes, and not small pretty flowers. One could buy those small pretty flowers that only bloom for one summer, but then a ball lands among them and destroys them, and because one had taken so much trouble with them, watering them and worrying about them, one is angry at the child for destroying it. And that is silly. The child is unhappy, the flower is unhappy, and we are unhappy; then we are really the slaves of the garden. So we planted bushes. When a tennis ball or even a football lands in a bush, well, a few branches might be ruined, but that is not so terrible. Then one says to the child, "Look, you shouldn't have done that." And we still have a lovely garden.

Our children are accustomed to respecting plants. Children can be wonderfully raised so that they respect nature. And what will happen when the child has grown up? He will be an adult that already has respect for nature in his soul, and his children will learn that from him. It is the parents who are responsible for all of these football hooligans that we now have in England, because they did not raise their children to respect anything.

A child is a miracle. A child is a fairy tale – a fairy tale made of flesh and blood. One can make anything of a child. The Jesuits say, "Give us a child for the first five years, and we will make of him

what we want.” And it is true. A child has trust, quite naturally, and a child will quite naturally trust you, and one can raise a child to respect the plants in a garden very well. So we have a lovely garden and happy children. And we even have children's parties in the garden. Only we have to be a bit careful, because the other children are not so respectful. But I have seen how small Emmanuel goes to a small friend of his and says, “No, no! You must not do that, because the flowers will die.” I have seen him do that myself. And that is lovely when a small child says that to another child. So when one says, “Ah, a garden and children do not go together,” that is just foolishness. They go very well together. It depends on the parents.

So I have said that we woman feel a special connection with nature, and that the center of reality is in nature. And the knowledge of nature and the structure of nature, and of our relationship to it, allow us to have tiny glimpses into the infinity of life. Larger glimpses are only to be found in meditation. Our consciousness will be broadened when we are able to open areas that we could only guess at before. You see, it is such a discovery to look more closely at nature. You should try it. Probably many of you have already tried it, but try it again. It is worth it. And I have also said that if we would perceive the miracle of creation more and more precisely, then we would be led to the innermost essence of every being, and from there we would recognize the very heart of the Universal Being.

We Sufis believe that there is only one being, and everything, and I say everything is a part of this being. That is why we should respect everything. So. If we want to change the world, we must first change ourselves. And to be able to change ourselves, we must first know who we are. The Message of The Sibyls, “Know thyself,” is a personal message for each of us. Guruji told us, “You must know who you are, from where you have come, and where you are going.” And you know, once you have grasped that, there is a human dignity in you, I would say a Divine dignity. I know from whence I come. I am an eternal ray of the eternal spiritual sun. I am here to have experiences. Life is the greatest Guru, and I go towards my spring, towards my source. It is a closed circle. One has such a dignity, such a security, such a bliss, that really, whatever life does, whatever blows life deals, they are simply not important. They are just passing events. Eternity is ours, forever and forever.

I am not pleased to hear a woman say, “I am not especially feminine. I do not have typical feminine qualities. I am very masculine.” Some women say that as a kind of apology, and others with a kind of pride, but it always sounds to me like a kind of self-denial of the things I spoke about yesterday. There is always a lack of self-awareness. Of course, no one is completely masculine or completely feminine; we all have masculine qualities. But to say that you have no typical feminine qualities and that you are very masculine is very exaggerated. When we make such statements, we accept the false idea that a real woman only has one particular style and can only be judged by one standard. And that is not possible. In that way, we narrow our consciousness, and set boundaries to the feminine side of God. We limit the feminine side of God.

Does God have a feminine side? And how! His feminine side is Beauty, His feminine side is Grace. It is the Great Goddess of Nature. In the Christian religion, it is the Mother Mary. In Hinduism, it is the wife of each god. The feminine side of God is Shakti, the power of God. The power of God is feminine. Now, you would say that everyone says that women are much weaker than men, and that they must be protected, and so on and so forth.

Of course, when you need muscles, then you need a man. My grandmother used to say that a man is ten times stronger than a woman. Women are, of course, built more delicately; but the fact is that women can deal with pain much more easily than men. Our body is made in that way. And, as all women know, when our man has a cold it is a great drama, but we can bleed and have children and have deep wounds – it hurts of course, it is terrible, but a man could never bear it. Every doctor would agree with that. We have the ability to bear great pain much more easily than men. So in this way, women are stronger than men. And why is that necessary? Because we have to bear children. Sometimes giving birth to a child rips us open. It literally rips us open, and a doctor must sew us together again. If the body would not forget the pain of birth, then, after the first time, you would never want to have another child. But the body does forget, and then you want another child. I know an Irish woman who has twenty children. Really! I know her. She has twenty children and they are all alive.

That would make two football teams, wouldn't it? (*There is a ripple of amusement...*) Just imagine so many children around one table! And she is terribly happy. How she managed it, I have no idea. I do not know her intimately, so I never had a chance to really speak with her. But I would like to know how she managed physically. She looks like a perfectly normal woman, but of course, just not very slender.

I do not say that men do not also suffer just as much as women sometimes. They get terrible wounds in war, and burns can cause awful pain and are just as painful for men and women, but in general, women can bear pain better than men.

And can the feminine side of God bear more pain than the masculine side? What is the feminine side of God? There is spirit, the masculine side, and matter, the feminine. Matter is Eternal and Divine. Matter is always virgin, always fresh, always new, always renewed. That is why Carl Jung said, "A woman who has realized herself is always a virgin." She is always new and fresh, she constantly renews herself. Of course, that has nothing to do with the body, I am now speaking from the standpoint of the spirit.

The feminine side of God – the material world – look, do not believe that matter suffers more than spirit. Do not think that matter is more easily hurt, or that it can bear more pain than spirit. Of course, we cannot know how much pain spirit can endure. We can only say how much pain our own spirit can bear. The Spirit of God is a mystery, but we can see with our own eyes what we do with matter. Scientists have long experienced the divinity of matter in atomic power, where some small number of atoms could destroy the world. Now if that is not Divine, then what is? So we have proof of the divinity of matter right before our eyes, and still we handle matter without any respect. We think, "This is only wood, this is only a flower. This is only my hair. It grew, I cut it and throw it away." But every hair has atoms that have their own light. Every stone has its atoms, every crystal, every tiny piece of wood that we burn. My friends, if you would really think with your heart and not with your head, you would see that everything around you, at every level, is a miracle. But I am not saying anything new.

So I said that some women say that they only have masculine qualities. Our greatest sin is that we reduce ourselves to a particular image. We limit ourselves, and in this way we limit God, the limitless. We are created in God's image, but we forget God and make our own image of Him and pray to that image. But really, we cannot do anything else. How can we imagine something that we have not experienced? And we cannot experience God; we will never be able to experience God. You see, we are made in God's image, so how could we experience Him? Can we see our own eyes? The eyes are the mirror of the soul, but we must look in a mirror to see them. Nature is the mirror through which we see God. Is that nonsense for you? Is it clear? (*Not quite...*) Well, this is not for everyone. This is, of course, very esoteric. But it is exactly because we are That, because we are a part of That, that we cannot know it. In the Upanishads it is written that the part cannot know the whole. And we are a part of That, so we can never know the whole of it. That is philosophically completely correct.

The outward-leading spiral is expressed by the ecstatic whirling of the dervishes. This spiral is a model of the expanding universe, and of the expansion of the human heart. If we move outward in a spiral movement, we expand our awareness, we abandon old patterns, and we gain new powers, new qualities and new inspirations, until the movement turns, once again, inwards. We see that every turn on the spiral gives only a slightly greater view of the whole, of perfection. One turns outwards, then inwards, then outwards, then inwards.

The inwardly directed spiral is the symbol of introversion, our inner search, our longing. It is a turning of our heart and spirit towards solitude, meditation and inner recollection. Our attention is gently drawn inwards in order to enter the realm of our real selves. Every expansion leads back into contraction. Whoever expands his conscious awareness, must return afterwards to concentrate on one single inner point. When we still the outwardly oriented aspect of the mind, we are following the stillness of the inwardly oriented mind. We slowly withdraw our awareness from everything, and allow our psyche to become peaceful and strong.

When we begin spiritual life we usually become rather confused. That happens to everyone and it is quite normal, because the inner life is very mysterious, and we, who are accustomed to looking outwardly, find it difficult to look inwardly. Of course, we are living in this world and must look outwardly, even psychologically. And suddenly we begin to look inward. Of course there will be some confusion! And when this confusion appears, there is a longing to be alone. I think that all of us have experienced that. I know people who believe that the family, that their father or mother, or brother or sister or husband or wife or children are terrible obstacles. The Sufi says, "No;" that all of that helps you to mature. The father, the mother, the children – according to the Upanishads, the children are the greatest Gurus. They teach you everything that you need, especially patience.

Now, introversion is the spring from which spirituality comes, and at the same time, it is the source of renewal of our life energies. If we are not able to look inwardly, or if conditions do not allow us to do that, then we cannot become renewed. Introversion is the sign of those who have consciously chosen to follow a spiritual path. Mystics need this inner sanctuary as much as others need air to breathe. And when you have been on the path for some time, you will feel that the need to turn inwards becomes ever stronger; and with it the wish to find that which is hidden within you. And there is a great deal hidden within each of us. This turning inwards is the meditation that leads us into the stillness. It is stillness that is the method, and ultimately, stillness is the goal. Meditation is a calming of the body, and a stilling of thoughts and desires and feeling. It is the stilling of perception itself. And the result is a state of total inner stillness.

Now, I would like to ask how many of you have found stillness in your meditations? Please! I am not asking if you always find it, we are not machines. Today meditation can be very good, and tomorrow it is quite impossible, and thoughts run around in your head like frightened mice. But do you sometimes have deep, still meditations? Yes, I think that everyone here has experienced that. And of course, if you have it sometimes, or even just once, then you always have the longing to have it again and again. Then you begin to strive for it, and you begin to work for it, and of course if you strive and work for it, you will reach it one day: there, where there is eternal stillness.

So the state of meditation can only come when the mind is very very still, and when we become able to perceive this stillness, and it is here in this stillness that we meet the very highest within us. Even if we do not know it, it is here that we touch the Divine within ourselves. These are moments of stillness that we can just lightly touch in meditation. You see, we are so accustomed to sensations, we are so accustomed to drama and every possible phenomenon, so accustomed to the restlessness of the mind, that this stillness may not appear important to us at all. But it is exactly this stillness that holds the Divine within us, the still small voice within us. Please. This is a very important statement. I think that this is the most important statement of all that I have said over these last days. I have been trying to lead you to this through all of these days. This little stillness, even if it only lasts for a few seconds, is the Divine within you. It is the proof, and we have so many doubts. We need some proof, and here it is. Sometimes we do not recognize it, but when you meditate diligently, when this stillness lasts, not only a few seconds, but longer and longer, then your mind must logically begin to recognize it. And then, quite simply, but slowly – this is a slow process – this meditation will change your life.

Now I would like you to ask questions.

(Question:)

The gentleman said that he has felt these moments of stillness, but he also noticed that these moments of stillness go together with the feeling of love, and when the feeling of love is absent, there is no silence, and nothing of those divine moments. Now look! We come back to love, this is incredibly interesting, and this is not something I spoke much about – well, I always mention it – but here is someone else saying it. Here is an objective confirmation. Isn't that interesting? And the gentleman also asked me what to do so that those moments become permanent, and the answer to that is simply: practice. Thank you, that was very important. I always wait for something like that from the audience; something that is so important and so vital; something that I know and you know, and that I perhaps cannot express properly.

(Question: Sometimes I am unable to differentiate between states of meditation and contemplation. A yoga teacher once told me that I confuse them.)

You see, we are playing with words here. What we Sufis call meditation does not have anything to do with understanding or with the mind. It is connected with love and feelings. Contemplation is on the level of the mind. You must have something to contemplate, something to observe, and one observes with the mind. (Question continues inaudibly...) Yes, then this is more a problem of the way one understands the words. (Question continues...) Yes, in Patanjali it is said that contemplation is one of the stages to Dhyana, and Dhyana is the state without thoughts.

(Question: Mrs. Tweedie, I would like to ask if something happens on the level of the body during meditation. I often have the feeling that I have a third heart in the middle of my chest that beats with a very strong rhythm, and before such a state of stillness appears – I do not know if it is stillness but it is relaxation where there are no thoughts – and there is a very strong pressure, a kind of pain in the forehead.)

She asks if the body is involved during meditation, and if there are different states for the body. And she has the feeling that she has a third heart in the middle of her chest and sometimes pain in the head. Yes, of course, the body is included, but pain in the head is not good. Something is not quite in order, perhaps you are not holding your head quite correctly. There should never be pain during meditation. You might feel a third heart. I, personally have never felt one, so I cannot explain that, but I do know that we have two hearts. There is a heart on the right side of the body, which is the heart of the soul, the heart of the Atman. Then there is also the heart chakra, which is what you probably feel. Or perhaps you also feel the beating of the physical heart and then you might think that that is the third heart; that is also possible, because the heart chakra does not beat, rather it spins. It is like a wheel, and looks like the sun.

I have always found it interesting that especially the heart chakra has a very strong color: it is like the sun, but there are other colors within it. But we are so individual. No one is like you, or like me; everyone is different. Even the heart chakras of individuals are completely different, and each person has a different ... arrangement of the colors. It is also interesting that there are very important chakras in your hands, and that they are exact replicas of your heart chakra, but in a smaller form. In very developed people, these chakras also become quite large. The chakras in the hands are to give and to receive, and to bless. So human hands are very, very important. Of course, my chakras, in my hands, will reflect my own heart chakra, and yours will reflect your heart chakra. And the color of the heart chakras, as I said, also varies. With some people it is more yellow and with others it is more orange, and in others are reddish or even a wonderful green.

There is a subtle or higher heart, called the Atmic heart, on the right side of the body, and there is a chakra that corresponds to this heart called the Atmic chakra. But this chakra is very difficult to see, even in moments of clairvoyance. It belongs much more to the realm of the spirit than the other chakras do. Sometimes one has lightning-like glimpses of wonderful colors from it, but it is difficult to see, and it can be very different with different people. But I can no longer see such things. There was a time while I was with my teacher that I could see them, but he took that ability away from me, saying that it was a child's game, and that I wanted the truth, and that I must long for the Beloved, and that all the rest is only illusion. Illusion is duality, it is always two: me and the other. It is only when I am the other, that there is no longer illusion. Then there is no 'other'. So for example, usually there is 'I' and 'Knowledge', there are two things. But when I am in union, in unity, I am the knowledge. You see, unfortunately we cannot perceive this state with our minds. But you only need to experience it once, and only for a second, and then you will know the feeling of it exactly. It is not the understanding, but the feeling that you will experience. That is why the Sufis say that you must hammer your head into your heart and think from there.

I do not know why everyone looks so lovely today. Perhaps it is that the weather is lovely, and so everyone is on a good mood, or that everyone has received a big slice of blessings. Yes, everyone looks very lovely today. I can see that even through my glasses. So, are there any other questions?

(Question: Mrs. Tweedie, you have said that breathing is not very important in this Sufi school, and that Kundalini will find its own way. But it is so strange, because I experience that my breathing changes a great deal during my meditations. And if I meditate longer, it seems as if the breathing were only in the heart; then there is a very strong heart beat, and then it gets very quiet.)

Yes, you see, it is even possible to not breathe at all when you meditate. When you are really in the state of Dhyana, the breath is very shallow, like when one is dying, and sometimes it stops completely. And you say that sometimes you feel your breathing in the heart? (Q: Yes.) Yes, that is quite possible. Again, this is very individual. We do not usually meditate on the breath, although Buddhists do that a great deal. We have one exercise for those for whom breathing is necessary. It is a very old Sufi exercise, which I think it already existed in the ninth century. But usually our meditation is still and silent. But the body does react to the meditation.

I have told this story before, but twenty years ago there was a young woman in the group who stopped breathing completely during her meditation. She was so shocked that she never meditated again. We explained to her that that can happen to anyone in the state of Dhyana, but only after one has entered the state of Dhyana, when the thinking process is already stilled. But this somehow happened to her before the thinking process had become stilled. So she was quite naturally shocked. Something happened that was not quite OK, and I do not have an explanation for it. Certainly it can be very frightening. Of course, none of us has died from it; I have never heard of anyone who died from meditation, but she was very frightened and could no longer meditate. She still lives in London, but I no longer see her. She got very angry with me. She thought that I had done something to her that was not very good. But really I had nothing to do with it. It was she herself who did it.

So. Now we will meditate for twenty minutes. Make yourself as comfortable as possible ...

(The meditation begins... ... and ends,

And the first week of the Suficamp ends.)