

## THE SOUL

Talk by Kireet JOSHI

**W**hen we use the word soul, what do we normally mean? Soul really means the stuff of which a thing is made. When we say this is the soul of an institution, the soul of the home, the soul of life, what we mean is that it is that without which the thing concerned could not have been made. Many people, in many circumstances and many contexts, use this word, soul, loosely and that is why there is a great deal of confusion on this subject.

Apart from this definition that I have given you, we shall deal with some of these confusions. The word soul is sometimes used for something that is abstract, something that is ethereal, something that is intangible, something that is not capable of being seized upon, something that escapes us, something that seems to be lying above us. Now these words also are not entirely inapplicable to the real soul but they do not indicate exactly what the soul is. First of all the soul is not really intangible as many people believe it to be, the soul is not abstract, the soul is not something that cannot be seized, or that which cannot be grasped. To talk in positive terms the soul is concrete. In fact, when the soul is experienced, you feel that even the solidity of a substance such as a table is not as solid as that. When you really experience the soul, its concreteness is so great that the ordinary idea that the soul is abstract is found to be fundamentally incorrect. It is abstract only in the sense that in our ordinary life we take only material substance to be solid and everything else to be abstract, but actually speaking this matter is less concrete than the soul itself. When you really experience it, you feel the solidity and the stuff of it to be so powerful that it will be even much more solid than a heavy pillar of steel. It is true that it is above all that we know at present but it is also in everything that we know. The soul is present in everything — in the body, in our movements, in our thoughts, in our feelings, emotions, impulses, predilections, preferences, attractions, in everything it is present; because actually it is the stuff of which all this is made, so it is bound to be present everywhere.

Now there is another idea of the soul, which is conceived in the terms of a ghost. Very often people speak of the soul as spirit, and people say that when a man dies then the spirit goes on moving about in the house, in the surroundings and sometimes can be seen also by some people and they call it a ghost. In fact there is a great play of Shakespeare called Hamlet. The very first scene of Hamlet starts with a ghost. The story is that Hamlet was studying in a big university. He was a very bright and brilliant student and suddenly he is called back home because his father is dead. Everything is gloomy when he returns to Denmark — he is the prince of Denmark — and the entire play begins with the castle where Hamlet is waiting for his friend's arrival. There is a hush and the first one to arrive that night is Horatio, his friend. They discuss what Hamlet claims to have seen previously, namely the ghost of his father. They dispute the existence of the ghost and while the disputation goes on, suddenly the ghost appears before Hamlet and he cries, "Look, look, he beckons me." Nobody else can see, only he sees, and Horatio is horrified. Hamlet moves behind the ghost because the ghost is beckoning him. Horatio disappears from the scene. Alone with his father's ghost, Hamlet is told by him that he was murdered by Hamlet's uncle in which his own mother conspired. It is a horrible story that he hears from the ghost — the murder of his beloved father, the King, in which the King's brother and the King's wife have conspired, and he is unable to believe it. But the father's ghost says, "Do you not see that your mother immediately married your uncle after my death?" and gives the proof, as it were, of something that had really happened. Now Hamlet's entire tragedy hangs upon this story revealed by the ghost — a story that he cannot bear to believe. He had great regard for his mother. He himself was a man of great moral standards in which loyalty, faithfulness, and sincerity played the highest role in his life. He could never believe that his own mother could conspire to kill her own husband who was such a great man, and that too with his uncle — a man who was not even one hundredth of what his father was, so how could his mother stoop so low? It was impossible for him to believe it. Then his father's ghost tells him, "Take revenge." This is the special kind of mission that is given by the ghost to Hamlet. The question before Hamlet now is whether to believe in the ghost or not. Shakespeare has given a very vivid description of the interplay between men — a living man and a dead man and

how the dead man through his ghostly appearance influences the life of the whole of Denmark. In fact, ultimately, as the entire play unfolds, we see how the doubt in Hamlet's mind plays havoc with himself, plays havoc with his own beloved Ophelia. Ophelia was the one person in whom he had complete confidence and they were to be married. They were madly in love with each other. Unfortunately the father of Ophelia, Polonius, a warily wise man was also the chief adviser of the king, and the constant advice that he was giving to his daughter was, "Look, he is a prince and you are only a courtier's daughter, there is no comparison. The prince will use you for fun and frolic and you will go nowhere in life if you remain in this affair, so withdraw from it." She is motherless, so she has nobody to turn to for advice. Here Hamlet, shattered by the ghost's revelation, begins to wonder what a woman can be. Can a woman be like this? And he begins to doubt even Ophelia. If his own mother can be like this, can Ophelia be faithful? And this is the basic question in his life. Unfortunately, exactly at this time Ophelia's father advises her not to respond to Hamlet. So although she wants to respond to him with all her heart, whenever Hamlet approaches her, she withdraws and that shatters him further. Hamlet is a great philosopher himself, a man of great thought; at the same time he does not believe in ghosts. To believe or not to believe, that is his question; that is his basic theme — that if this is all that life presents to us, why should we exist in this world? He wants to commit suicide but shrinks from the one act that would end his sufferings and the only thought which prevents him is —the dread of something after death, the undiscovered country, from where no traveller returns, puzzles the will, and makes us rather bear those ills we have than to fly to others that we know not of. The ghost appears again before him and says, "Remember, remember, remember". Confused and in a fit of anger, one day, he kills Ophelia's father. He holds him responsible for preventing Ophelia from coming to him and also starts believing that he may be a partner in the plot to kill his father. That affects both Ophelia and her brother Laertes who now regards Hamlet to be his enemy because he is the murderer of his father. Unwilling to remain any longer in a state of doubt, he decides that he must do something to find out the truth. He pretends that he has become mad and speaks words, which mean nothing outwardly and yet mean quite a lot. For example, once he meets his uncle and smiles, the uncle smiles back and Hamlet remarks, "One smiles and smiles and yet he may be wicked." The king is shaken by these pronouncements because although he speaks like a mad man the message goes home and he wonders what has happened to Hamlet. He cannot banish him because he is the prince. Secondly, even though the queen betrayed her husband she was very much attached to her own son and she loved him very much, therefore he had to suffer him. Because of the conflict in his own mind, ultimately Hamlet invites a friend of his who is the leader of a troop of drama and says, "I will tell you a story, which I want you to stage. I will invite the king and queen to attend the drama and then we will see their reaction". And the story was a repetition of the plot in which his younger brother and his own wife conspire against the elderly king, and they put poison into his ears when he is asleep. After they see the play, both the queen and king are affected adversely. It is at that time that Hamlet is convinced that the story of the ghost is not untrue. Then of course, he kills the king, his uncle; the mother faints and dies. And then Ophelia's brother Laertes comes on the scene. Both Hamlet and Laertes kill each other. Left all alone, Ophelia becomes mad and drowns herself.

The whole story is told by Shakespeare to point out that in human life the role that can be played by doubt is horrible; and one that can lead to overall tragedy unless one becomes very clear, particularly about the inner realities of life. Men live basically on the outer surface but there are many inner realities, like the ghost for example. The important message of this whole drama is that there are invisible realities, which do play a role in life. But very often these ghosts are regarded to be the soul of man, which comes out of the body and wanders about but there is truly speaking a great distinction between the ghost of this kind and the true soul. This is the knowledge that India possesses. Ghosts certainly exist but we must know what exactly a ghost is? And how is it different from the soul? The ghost is the stuff of the vital desires, which are very strong and persistent; and when the human body dies, these desires still remain alive. They have a kind of subsistence and even a form, which is very similar to the form of the living man of which these desires were a part. So in certain conditions it can be seen even physically — you might say an invisible visibility — and there are so many facts of this kind that there is no reason to doubt the existence of this. But they basically are a kind of a conglomeration of the desires of the dead man and they are so strong that they persist for their satisfaction. There are human beings

who are very attached to their wealth and after the death the individual remains around the wealth and protects it. They can even harm the person who tries to steal the money or makes an attempt to possess the wealth. But it is not the soul. It is only a conglomeration of a few desires, which have been left unsatisfied, and they are so powerful that they want to persist in the same old atmosphere.

Over and above the vital desires there are also mental thoughts. There is a big distinction between desires on one hand and mental thoughts on the other. This entire science is very briefly given in one *Upanishad*, which is called *Taittiriya Upanishad*. There are hundred and eight *Upanishads*, out of which twelve are very important— *Upanishads* like *Isha Upanishad*, *Katha Upanishad*, *Kena Upanishad*, *Chandogya Upanishad*, *Vedaram Upanishad*, *Mundaka Upanishad*, *Mandukya Upanishad*, *Taittiriya Upanishad* are some of these twelve *Upanishads*. They are extremely important because they give in brief what is given at length in the *Vedas*. *Vedas* are such a vast literature — four big books containing thousands of mantras — that even one lifetime is not enough to read them. They are all in Sanskrit and in a language which one cannot understand. But the *Upanishads* are more intelligible, that is why many people turn to *Upanishads* to understand what is written in the *Vedas*. They are very brief, for example *Isha Upanishad* has only eighteen verses but in eighteen verses the whole philosophy of the *Veda* is contained. Some other *Upanishads* are smaller or bigger. *Taittiriya* is quite a long one but it is a very important *Upanishad*, which says that a human being is basically composed of three parts — *annamaya*, *pranamaya*, and *manomaya*. *Annamaya* is the physical, which is visible to all of us. *Anna* means food and food is a word, which is used in Sanskrit also for physical.

There is also *pranamaya*, which is a vital self. This vital being consists of desires; now the word desire is only a kind of a small abbreviation of many things. There is first of all instinct at the base of the desire. There is a distinction between instinct and desire. Instinct can even be unconscious but desire is always conscious — when you say “I desire something”, you are conscious about it — but in the case of instinct even though there is an impulsion you may be unconscious about it. When you say, “Instinctively I got up”, you may not have even intended but instinctively you get up. So an instinct is an urge to do something without any voluntary decision or even any conscious decision. You may also become conscious of it but for doing it you may not need to take a conscious decision. “I become angry”, is an instinct, anger is an instinct; curiosity is an instinct. You hear some sound and immediately you want to know what it is; I enter into some house, and immediately I begin to look around — it is simply curiosity, there may be no purpose in looking around but there is a real curiosity to find out what it is all about. Sexual desire is also an instinct; there are some attractions which are instinctive, there are some repulsions which are instinctive — for example the mongoose has an instinctive dislike and enmity against the snake and vice versa. Similarly among human beings also there are instinctive attractions and instinctive repulsions, they are involuntary. But all of them imply some kind of action. All instincts are, as it were, drives of action; they result always in action — there is an emotional feeling and there is also a drive towards action. Now this is the lowest part of our desire.

At a little higher level, instinct begins to manifest as a desire in which you consciously begin to have an intention, motive and impulsion to do something to satisfy the intention and motive. There is also a distinction between motive and intention although we use the two words interchangeably. My motive is to get knowledge so that I can pass the examination. Going to the library and getting a book are intentions aimed at realizing that motive. Therefore, the higher object is called the motive and all other actions that we need to fulfil or to realize that motive are called intentions.

In a desire there is an emotion involved; the base of it may be instinct but not only instinct; you may have gone beyond the instinct. So although in the beginning it may have begun with an instinct, afterwards you begin to have a conscious desire for an object in which there is emotion involved, then there is a motive involved in it and then there may be an intention of doing something. And usually the desire has a kind of an urge to fulfil itself.

At a still higher level, there may be pure emotions. Not desires, but emotions, which are states of feelings. When you go to a beautiful forest full of flowers, you feel very happy — there is no desire to clutch at anything or to obtain something but you feel happy, that state of happiness is an emotion. I am sitting with you and I feel very happy, there is a joy, there is no desire in it but it is a

state of happiness. Similarly, there is no desire for sorrow, yet there is an emotion of sorrow. One can have a long list of various kinds of emotions. These different kinds of emotions are called feelings. While I am talking to you there is a real joy but a special movement of it may be feelings of joy. I may talk to you, there may be fun, there may be wit and it produces that feeling of greater happiness — apart from a general state of happiness there is a greater happiness — it is a feeling. So various branches of emotions are all feelings.

Now this entire field — instinct, desire, emotions and feelings is called *pranamaya* — *prana* means breath — it all depends upon breathing basically. According to the Indian science, if breathing stops, all these things will disappear because breathing is the real cause of what we call nervous reactions. If you examine our physiology you will find that all emotions, feelings, desires are nothing but reactions of the nerves. If nerves become dead then feelings stop. For example, if someone is paralysed, the nerves are affected, they become numb, and they do not function. Therefore even if you touch, there is no feeling. This paralysis happens because the breath has stopped in that part of the body. Therefore *prana* is very important for the entire field of instincts, desires, emotions and feelings.

There is one more element in the field of vital or *pranamaya* and that is will. There is a difference between desire and will. I may desire a glass of wine but I may not will it. I may have a desire for it but I know it is injurious to health, I know that it upsets my mind; I come out of my own self as it were; I lose control over myself. Knowing all these consequences, even though I may desire it, I may not will it. For a desire to become a will, you must weigh the consequences of desires and then make a choice to put the desire into action or not, and when you do that, then that takes the form of will. Normally, human beings are moved by instincts, just like animals. Animals are only instinctive, they have very little of thought or any kind of memory or any imagination. Human beings are also very largely instinctive, but these instincts develop into desires and some of these desires become very powerful in some human beings, for example, desire turning into ambition; a kind of a longing. Instinct becomes not only a desire for immediate satisfaction but also a longing, which can last for twenty five years, thirty years, maybe fifty years. A person may have the ambition to become the prime minister of his country. It may take fifty years to realise that ambition and one can sustain that kind of a desire for a long time if there is a great longing for it. There are certain kinds of love where even if you are separated for many years, but if it is a true love, and there is a longing to meet, then even if it takes years and years and there are hurdles and hurdles, you overcome them. So, certain desires become longings, attractions, longstanding attractions. Similarly, certain repulsions also become longstanding; it can remain for thirty, forty years. There are many people who fulfil their revenge after twenty or thirty years and then they feel satisfied in their life. So there can be longstanding ambitions, longstanding attractions, longstanding repulsions or shortlived desires or shortlived repulsions. So we see that most human beings are instinctive but when they become more conscious they are ruled by desires. Out of desire they begin to have many emotions, some of which human beings begin to value more. There are many things that I experience — out of them I select for example, “I would like to be with so and so for such and such time whenever I am free”, or, “Whenever A. is present I feel very comfortable so I always go to him whenever I have time.” Emotions, which are more stable, arise out of experiences of desires, from which emerge the consequences of desires. Then one considers the pros and cons. One can decide to satisfy ones desire taking into consideration the consequences, or control the desire, master it, eliminate it; all this is the operation of will. It is therefore said that a human being, as long as he is only instinctive, is purely animal. And when he begins to have some desires, he starts becoming human. But it is only when he begins to develop the will that his manhood really comes into picture. A man who has no will or has not developed his will power has not yet entered into manhood; he is carried over by desires, instincts, impulses, passions — he is not in his selfpossession. That is why it is said that the most important thing in education is to develop the will power of the child because a child is normally instinctive and gradually has to grow into manhood and therefore there is so much insistence upon the development of will power. Now this is true of all human beings because we are also like children, and we also need to develop quite a lot. The most important thing for human beings is to develop will power.

All this is the subject matter of *pranamaya*. There is a huge complexity in our whole vital life. And if we really open the drawer of our vital being, *pranamaya*, we will find all kinds of things littered almost in a chaotic manner — papers and pencils of various colours, some papers torn and some papers crumpled. This is what we are normally. But the will power develops basically when the third element develops, that is *manomaya*, the mental.

What is mind, actually? Just as the vital is the field of feelings, emotions, desires, similarly, mind is the field of conception. There is a distinction between feeling and conception. A conception is a form in which the object, which is physical, or any other object is represented. A representative form of an object is called conception and normally this conception is expressed in the form of words. All our capacity of using words is because of the power of conception. I see a table; if I want to tell you about the table, I have two ways of expressing it. One is to take you to the table and say, "Look, this is what I mean", in which conception is not necessary. Or else if I know the trick of conception and the use of words, then without the need of bringing you to the table I can simply say, "I want to speak to you about the table". I use the word 'table' and immediately what happens is that the image, representation of the table comes to your mind. This representation of the table is the conception. That he is capable of these representations is a great capacity of man. It gives him the possibility of representations of various things and therefore within a small compass he can contain so many objects. All representations are brief as compared to the objects — the word table or the concept table is smaller than a table itself. So because of brevity, the capacity of connecting objects becomes quicker. Therefore the advantage of the mind is that by its use one can quickly connect many objects and understand their interrelationship. Here again, the word interrelationship is very important. Just as mind is fundamentally a capacity of conception, mind is also a capacity of understanding. We usually say that when we entertain our mind or train our mind we begin to understand things better. Therefore, just as the mind is fundamentally a capacity of conception, mind is also a capacity of understanding. What is the meaning of the word 'understanding'? When do I say, "I have understood", and when do I say, "I have not understood"? Both ways we can try to understand the thing. You understand a thing first when you can touch it; it is one way of understanding. But even that is not sufficient. You may say that even if you touch an object you may not really understand it. Take for example the story of Othello, Shakespeare's story again. In this story the handkerchief plays the major part. Othello and Desdemona love each other tremendously and marry and lead a very happy life until one man — Iago, goes on telling Othello that Desdemona is unfaithful to him. He is a poisonous man who cannot bear the happiness of Othello and Desdemona, and simply wants to disrupt this happiness. He goes on telling him about Desdemona's unfaithfulness with a story that Othello's friend, who visits him quite often is especially entertained by her, "She is so attentive to him, just see, you watch", and that spoils the whole mentality of Othello. But he is so sure of his wife that even though temporarily these doubts come in his mind, he just throws them out. Iago finds that Othello is invulnerable and the disruption that he wanted is not possible, so he devises a kind of plot. He bribes a maidservant of Desdemona to steal a handkerchief for him. It was a special handkerchief; presented by Othello to Desdemona as a special gift and it was prized above everything. Having come into possession of that handkerchief, he tells Othello, "I now have proof of Desdemona's unfaithfulness. You prized above all the handkerchief you presented to Desdemona — do you know where it is lying now? It is not with her! She has presented it to your friend." Othello does not believe it at all at first, but when he comes home he asks her for the handkerchief. She is quite sure that the handkerchief is there but obviously it is not there and she comes back empty handed. This infuriates Othello tremendously. It is for him the last straw on the camel's back after so many accusations, which he had heard over months. This becomes the clinching proof that Desdemona is really unfaithful and he becomes so angry that he murders her. Soon after, the maidservant enters and on seeing her dead mistress asks, "Why? What is the reason?" Othello answers, "The handkerchief." And she says, "But I gave it to Iago!" On hearing this, the whole matter becomes terribly chaotic in his mind. He accused her absolutely falsely; on no ground at all — such a faithful, such a beautiful woman. He feels he has done a great injustice to everybody in the world and he cannot even bear to look at himself — so he kills himself too. It is a tragedy. The story basically rests upon a handkerchief. Many people may see just a handkerchief but the way in which Othello sees it makes him understand many things; the whole story becomes quite different on seeing just one handkerchief. Merely seeing an object is not



enough for understanding, the context in which an object is seen is very important. So all understanding basically is the grasp of an object in the context of everything else. When the context is seen, then you say, “Yes, now have I understood”? That interrelationship of an object with all the rest is what is called understanding.

Now the human mind is capable of conception, it is capable of understanding, and thirdly it is capable of withdrawing from the rush of all emotions. It is the third capacity of the mind. It is very often difficult but it is capable of gradually withdrawing and becoming a witness, pure witness. I can observe my own anger although very often when I am angry, I become anger myself; I even lose all control over myself. When I do not even know that there is anger, I am simply a wave of anger myself; there is only explosion and nothing else. But when the mind has been trained to withdraw itself more and more, particularly in the calmer moments when our mind has become more and more a witness self, then we see that even when anger overpowers us, then this habit of witnessing comes to our help and we can see ourself that, “Now anger is rising, I am being overtaken by anger, explosion is taking place.” Because of this witnessing consciousness you can intervene and even if anger remains you can stop the manifestation of it. Now this intervention of the mind is actually the action of will of which we spoke earlier. So without the mind there is no action of will therefore will is usually called intelligent will. There is intelligence which works in order that the will operates and this will operates because of the capacity of the mind to withdraw from the rush of emotions, desires, instincts, sympathies. It is a great capacity of the mind.

So when we speak of educating a child in mental development, three things which are necessary are: the power of conceiving, the power of understanding and the power to withdraw from the rush of emotions so that one can witness them. These three powers are extremely important in mental education.

Every human being normally has got these three elements — the body, the vital and the mental; but none of these is the soul, although the soul is present in all of them. The soul is the stuff of everything but the soul is still different from all the three. Many people think that the vital *prana* is the soul, which it is not. Similarly many people think that the mind is the soul (which also it is not) because mind seems to be uplifted and high and can move about in imagination — it looks as if it is ethereal, something corresponding to our concept of something that is superior and high. Now it is true that mind is certainly superior to many things in our consciousness but there is still something deeper than mind and that is the soul. In Sanskrit it is called *antaratman*. How do we distinguish between mind and the soul? Since the soul is the stuff of everything, it will naturally have qualities that are present in the body, life and mind. The soul, for example, has a kind of substantiality which even matter has got, it has feelings just as the vital has got, it has the knowledge just as the mind has got. Now these three things are present in the soul and yet it is something else. What is that something else? First, a spontaneous sweetness in the consciousness, spontaneous sweetness, not depending upon objects — when I am with you, I may feel very sweet because of your presence; with you I understand what sweetness of a relationship is. But when the same sweetness or even greater sweetness is experienced without dependence upon any object, that is the sign of the soul.

In *Katha Upanishad* it is described as *madhavadaha* — *madhu* means honey, *adaha* means eater — the soul is described as the eater of honey, the eternal honey, it is like a sponge which constantly oozes out honey. Each one of us has got a soul, just as each one of us has got a mind. It is full of sweetness, inherent sweetness, you do not have to manufacture it and you do not have to be in contact with any object in the world to experience it. When you touch it you will automatically find sweetness in it and you will be filled with sweetness. That is the first characteristic of the soul — inherent sweetness of consciousness — not merely sweetness coming from outside, but that which is inherent, inborn — just as the capacity of thinking is inborn in the mind, similarly the capacity of experiencing sweetness independent of any object in the world, internally, is a speciality of the soul.

The second characteristic of the soul is that it has an automatic knowledge of the truth. If the soul is brought into the real play, put in the presence of many facts, many people, it will automatically turn to the truthful man, truthful woman, truthful child, automatically, just as the sunflower turns automatically to the sun. The soul is like a needle that automatically turns to all that is truthful. In

the mind, truth is to be sought for. In the mind it may be mixed with error. We start with ignorance and doubt and gradually eliminate errors and arrive at some kind of truth. It is a big labour and in that too we are not sure whether it is really true or not. We simply say: "I think it may be true, probably it is true," and to make it certain you require so much evidence. Only then can you say, "Now I think it is really true" and even then fresh evidence might emerge and disqualify what was previously believed to be the truth. We see in the judgements of the courts, how very often, even with clinching evidence, a wrong judgement is given. So, mind is a seeker of truth, it may arrive at the truth but it is never certain about it. The soul on the contrary is automatically sure of what is true, without evidence. Therefore if the soul consciousness is really discovered, it can automatically find out what is true and what is false. It is compared with a swan, which has the capacity of separating milk from water. It is so said that if you fabricate a story and give it to the soul, it will automatically separate the truth from the falsehood — it will not look for evidence. Similarly, it has another capacity of distinguishing between good and evil, who is noble and who is not noble, whether somebody is truly self-sacrificing or not or only making a pretence of sacrifice. Similarly, the soul has a real eye for beauty; even in the ugly it can find out what is beautiful. That is why, when a mother has real love for her child, she always finds the child to be beautiful — because real motherhood is very near to the soul. All mothers in the world while experiencing real motherhood are very near to their soul. Fathers cannot experience this but mothers experience this very deeply, that is why motherhood is such an important thing in life. So, sweetness is the first recognition of the soul, and then comes the capacity to distinguish truth from falsehood, capacity to distinguish good from evil and the capacity to distinguish between the beautiful and the ugly.

There is a third element in the soul; it has an inherent knowledge of what is the purpose of the life in which it is involved now. "What is the direction that my life must take? What is the purpose of my life? What am I here to do? Should I be an engineer or a doctor or a lawyer, a coolie or a scribe, or what? How do I know what I am to do?" These are questions that everyone asks. If you give a chance to the soul it has an answer. In fact this is the one question, the answer to which you can find in no book but which you can find only in the soul, "What am I to do in life?" Books can give a general guidance, but what your specific work is, can be found only in your soul and nowhere else. That is why if you really want to know your aim in life, it can be achieved only by going to the soul. So, this is the fourth important element in the soul — the knowledge of the aim of life of the individual.

There is a further capacity of the soul. The capacity to deal with the confusions, doubts and errors of the mind, the capacity to control undesirable desires, to eliminate wrong relationships which one builds up in life, the capacity to overcome the obscurity of the physical, the resistance of the physical and the illnesses of the physical. These three capacities are also present in the soul. It not only has the knowledge of dealing with them but also the skill of dealing with them. You might say that the soul is both like an architect and a mason. An architect is one who designs out of materials a beautiful structure. Similarly, the soul has body, life and mind as materials and the soul knows how to design and harmonise body, life and mind in a beautiful manner and like a mason he can also ultimately construct that beautiful building.

The soul has a further capacity. It can communicate deeply with the souls of others inwardly, without even speaking, even without outer communication. It may use outer communication if necessary but it is not indispensable for it. The telephonic lines of the soul with other souls are very direct.

And finally the greatest capacity of the soul is that it is inherently aware of God. God is, for most people, particularly in modern times, an idea or a belief which is imposed from the outside and most of us doubt whether God really exists or not. But for the soul, God is a living reality. For the soul, the one object that is really real is God. It is in direct touch with God and it can communicate with God, it has the sweetest relationship with God and it can discover what is God's will and can manifest it.

In the *Veda*, the greatest discovery that our Vedic *rishis* made was the discovery of the soul. The word they used for the soul was *Agni* and to explain to ordinary people, they said that you must light *Agni* every day in your house. This is the prescription they gave and they made *Agni* the

centre of the entire Indian life. They said that for every turn of life you have to do a *havan*, you have to light the fire. They said that if you go inwards, you will discover the soul, which is like a flame, an inner flame, a flame of aspiration, a flame, which always moves upwards. Like fire, it always moves upwards and it is always pure. In fact, impurities can be burnt by fire but fire is always pure. Whatever you might do, fire can never be impure; similarly the soul is always pure. Therefore every human being is basically pure in the soul and if you can really reach the soul of somebody, you can forget all the impurities of outer nature. All the things that we call ugly, wrong and bad are forgotten when we come to the soul plane. It does not mean that every human being in his outer being is pure. But if you really want to establish a true relationship with somebody, you can find in his soul, a real purity in which everything can be burnt away. So, if you really meet somebody at the soul level, the entire past can be thrown out, wiped out. Everything can be forgotten, forgiven, it truly vanishes. The soul is like a slate in which purity remains, whatever else you have written can be rubbed off. That is why the Vedic *rishis* compared the soul with only one thing and that is *Agni*, and that is why they made *Agni* the centre of human life, of the entire social life and they said that at every turn of life, human beings have to discover *Agni*. The very first mantra of the *Rig Veda* gives the whole secret of the soul. It says *agnimire*, "O soul, I worship you". This is the secret mantra. If you want to find your soul, you just say, "O soul I worship you." If you constantly do it, the soul itself will come out in the front and you will begin to shine with the nature of the soul. Then it says, *purohitam*, "you are the *purohita* — leader." *Purohita* does not mean an ordinary priest. *Puroha* means front, *hita* means put forward; that which is put forward is called *purohita*. So the soul is the *purohita*, one who is always in the front, he is constantly guiding you, although you may not listen to its guidance, you might not be aware of it. It says *purohitam yajnyasya devam ritvijam*. He is the *ritvija* — the one who knows the cycles of development, where one is at present in the long cycle of development. You may have had many past births. It knows all the past births, it knows where you are now, it knows the direction in which you are going, it knows the cycles by which you can move towards it. It is *ritvijam* — *ritu* means the season. It is the knower of the seasons of the soul's development. It is *hotaram*; it is the one who can call all the powers that are in God because it has direct contact with Him. It is *ratnadhatamam*. Here *ratna* means happiness, bliss, sweetness — it is the holder of all the bliss that is possible, even the highest bliss. So, if a human being is in search for the highest bliss he will get it only by going through the soul. Such is the importance of the soul in our search of life.

The soul, also called the *antaratman*, is a delegate of our real individual soul, the *Jivatman*, which is a still deeper reality behind the *antaratman*. When people talk of *jiva*, the soul, they are referring to the *Jivatman*. *Antaratman* is that which is spread out in our body, life and mind, which is there within our heart, inside our heart. The *Jivatman* is still beyond it, it is the real individual centre of God himself. Let us now dwell upon this.

God himself is Universal, therefore He is called the cosmic self, He is spread out everywhere and there are experiences in which you feel so wide and so intimate with everything in the world that it all seems to be one united thing. All diversity is, as it were, simply the diversity of oneness. These are experiences of the cosmic self. The *antaratman* is mainly connected with the individual development. It can also open up to universality, but universality is not its constant experience. In the cosmic self, its experience is universal constantly. This cosmic self is an expansion; it is never ending. It is therefore called an expansion of God, the essence which is universal.

Now if you examine the idea of essence you will find that essence is always something that is the same, however it may manifest. For example, we may tell a story to indicate one basic truth, we may tell the story in ten different ways but the essence of the story remains the same. Expressions of essence can be small, can be wide, and can be widest, as wide as the whole of space, whole of time, so even if there is an expression of the essence as wide as the whole of time or the whole of space, but the essence itself still remains the same. This can happen only if the essence is more than space and time. Therefore it is said that God is spaceless and timeless, capable of infinite space and infinite time. Essence is called *Sat*, that which is. It is also called Transcendental, because it transcends all expressions, all that we can conceive. So God is transcendental and capable of universality, He can expand and manifest Himself. He is also capable of — it is a very special capacity of God — of containing himself fully in individual centres. This is one of the surprising capacities of God that He can concentrate the whole of Himself in



many small individual centrations. It is somewhat like a poet writing a poem of seven lines, or fourteen lines, a sonnet and saying, "all my message is contained in these fourteen lines". All that he has thought, all that he has lived, all that he has experienced is contained in these fourteen lines. A great poet is capable of it. Similarly God can contain himself in a small centration of Himself and as you open out, it opens out itself to the whole cosmos and to the Transcendental. You might say that the centration of God is capable of universalisation and transcendence.

You might say that the centration of god is capable of universalisation and transcendence because it is itself a centration of the universal and of the transcendental. Therefore from this side also it can expand into infinity, into universality, into transcendence. *Jivatman* is God himself but in a finite centration. It always remains united with God. If you really discover your *Jivatman* you will find that it is all the time united with God. It does not have to make an effort to unite with God. This is why it is said that if you really want to see yourself truly, the best perception of it is given in the *rasa lila* of *Sri Krishna*. Sometimes in rare moments you can have this vision in which *Krishna* is dancing with *gopis*. Each *gopi* is a *Jivatman* and each one of us is one of them, already, whether we know it or not, each one of us is already engaged in the dance with *Sri Krishna*. We are constantly in play with Him, with God himself. This is our basic status, our only work. When we realise the self-knowledge, know ourselves truly we will find that we are constantly in play with the Lord, already. There is no division of the *Jivatman* from God, it is all knowing, and there is nothing, no knowledge that is denied to it. The *antaratman* or the delegate has knowledge but compared to that, the knowledge of the *Jivatman* is omniscient. The true *Jivatman* has all the knowledge and this *Jivatman* obeys God's decisions automatically, there is no disobedience.

Now I will tell you a story. A time came in the play of *Sri Krishna*, who is the symbol of the Lord Himself, when He decided to have a certain kind of play. He is capable of many kinds of play because there is nothing that is impossible for God, so He is also capable of a specific play. All the souls agreed to that play. He said, "I would like you to forget yourselves." But how does one forget? There is omniscience in which you cannot forget anything; all knowledge is present. God gave a kind of a process by which these individuals could forget themselves. Because of omniscience all around it had to be a gradual process. If you are living in the sea of knowledge, you cannot forget anything. In the first condition you are omniscient therefore you have got comprehensive knowledge. The faculty by which comprehensive knowledge can be obtained is what is called the faculty of truth consciousness. This is a Vedic word, called *rita chit* — *rita* means truth, *chit* means consciousness. All that is truth is known simultaneously without any effort in that faculty. It is quite different from mind, which has to labour and grope, whereas the *Jivatman* has the faculty of omniscience in which automatically everything that is true is known comprehensively. That *rita chit* is also called Supermind because it is a faculty of knowledge, which has to grope for nothing. So you might say that the basic faculty of the *Jivatman* is Supermind.

Now this supermind has three capacities: comprehensive knowledge, apprehensive knowledge and projecting knowledge. In comprehensive knowledge, everything is known as one, united. All the variations, which are there in the unity, are seen as harmonies of oneness. You can imagine a grand symphony being orchestrated by a great conductor who has complete mastery over each and every movement, all united together in complete harmony. Somewhat like this is the consciousness of the comprehensive *Jivatman*. The master conductor is aware of the totality of the symphony and at the right moment he can direct the flute player that it is now his turn to play the flute, simultaneously he turns to the violin man and directs him. Now this capacity of specifying particular movements is called apprehensive consciousness. Each one of us has also got something similar to this consciousness even in our life. I may know the whole story before I start narrating it to my child but I unfold it gradually. Now this is a capacity of apprehensive consciousness. It does not abrogate the totality that you have in your mind but you have a capacity of relating it step by step. So, manifestation of the totality in a step-by-step movement is what is called apprehensive movement, as opposed to the comprehensive movement. Now in an apprehensive movement a third movement becomes possible. As I narrate the story I give the emphasis on one point rather than another point. This capacity of playing with emphasis (multiple or otherwise), so that certain points become much more prominent and other points become subordinated is called projecting consciousness. Now all the three are present simultaneously in

the *Jivatman* — comprehensive consciousness, apprehensive consciousness, and projecting consciousness, just as the storyteller has all the three consciousnesses present simultaneously, (even though the child may not be aware of all the three simultaneously). God has got all the three simultaneously, *Jivatman* has got all the three simultaneously, but having reached the point of projecting, emphasising one thing, now a new possibility arises and that is of exclusive concentration of consciousness. When I emphasise one thing it is quite possible that I may remain for a long time stressing on that point. During that time, all the rest remains ignored, and if I will — that is important — if I will, then I may remain stuck to that concentration and keep all other points ignored for a long time. For example, I may be playing the role of *Rama* in a drama. I know the whole drama very well myself; I know also that I am not actually *Rama*, but somebody else. But when *Sita* gets captured by *Ravana* and I weep, I forget that I am an actor; I also forget that in the drama I am a great king — so noble and mighty, I forget that weeping is quite inconsistent for *King Rama*. Forgetting all that, I weep and weep thoroughly, truly, with all my heart. The greater is the concentration on my weeping, the greater is the forgetfulness of everything else and the greater is my acting. The more I forget that I am really acting the better is my acting. This is a special power, which is called exclusive concentration of consciousness. Now, to get back to the game — God wanted all the souls to forget themselves. To arrive at that command, the *Jivatman* had to first of all live in the three states of consciousness — comprehensive, apprehensive and projecting. At the point of projecting, it had to take one step further by which it became concentrated only upon one important point and all the rest he put behind and ignored. It forgot that it is the *jiva*, having the capacity of all — comprehensive consciousness, apprehensive consciousness and projecting consciousness. It forgot, but it was not abolished. When the actor is acting as *Rama*, that he is not *Rama*, is not abolished. He has got his own family, he will go back home and meet his wife and children and so on. He as Mr. X is not abolished, his family is not abolished, but for this moment, he believes that his family does not exist, he does not exist, the whole drama does not exist; only his weeping exists. It is a very special quality of consciousness that he exercises. He may not feel like exercising it, but if God has willed that the *Jivatman* wants to play a game of this kind, then it is possible for it to play this game. So at a given time, to follow God's game, the *Jivatman* agreed to forget itself. This act is called the act of ignorance. He ignores the rest, concentrating only on one point. It does not mean that the *Jivatman* is not enjoying the three states of consciousness at the same time — only that it is not aware of them. While it is exercising that exclusive concentration of consciousness it is not aware of all the three, but the moment it withdraws from that exercise it becomes aware of it. There is a state of consciousness where even while acting as *Rama* the actor is aware of his relationship with his wife, his home etc. But that consciousness is different from the frontal consciousness. This word frontal is very important. All forgetfulness arises out of making a distinction between frontal consciousness and inner consciousness. In the inner consciousness the *jiva* continues as before, his constant play with God continues, his *lila* continues but in the frontal consciousness it is left out. Now all of us are in that condition of self-forgetfulness. We are all *Jivatmans*, you are a *Jivatman*, I am a *Jivatman*, she is a *Jivatman*. Each one of us agreed with God, made a contract with Him and said, "You know the purpose of this game, we do not, but since you want to play a game, we shall participate in it." As a result of which we put back our consciousness of God, our consciousness of ourselves in the centres of God, our capacity of universalisation, our capacity of comprehensive consciousness, apprehensive consciousness, projecting consciousness. Even when they are operating, we shall remain unconscious of them, but unconscious only in that point. You can always recover it if you want it — just go backward and you will recover it and you will find that you were always in that consciousness. Now this is what has happened to all of us.

Each one of us actually knows why God has done this. The *Jivatman* really knows why this kind of game has been selected. It is the great secret of the universe. What is the reason for this self-forgetfulness? It is only by self-forgetfulness, that gradually this self-forgetfulness can be brought to such a point that it becomes completely unconscious. First of all this self — forgetfulness is partial but gradually you can reach a point where a stage is reached of complete unconsciousness. Now take again the example of the actor playing the role of *Rama*. When he concentrates only on weeping, he becomes so much one with weeping, his concentration on weeping is so great, that he even forgets he is weeping. He is not even conscious of it. It was only

an act of weeping at first, and then it became real. So to arrive at complete unconsciousness — a complete opposite of himself — was the first intention of God. God is full consciousness, but through the consent of the individuals this possibility was created in which complete unconsciousness was created.

If this unconsciousness can be broken afterwards, then the delight, which comes out of the breaking, is extremely intense. Such a delight is not available anywhere, not even in his highest consciousness. To attain to this kind of experience — the highest kind of delight, it was necessary to forget, to arrive at unconsciousness and then to gradually break it. During the breaking, a lot of suffering is produced. But if, during that period, you go on pressing forward and really break this unconsciousness, even partial unconsciousness, and rise up again to that original state, then something else will be added to it, which was not available in the beginning — the most intense delight, a kind of perfection in the exact opposite conditions. To give an example — unless you become very thirsty you will not understand what it means to be quenched. The real value of water is realised not when water is available easily but when you are deprived of it and are very thirsty. Then when you get water, the delight you experience in drinking it, is not available when you are getting water quite normally. Similarly, when you are deprived of the real consciousness and gradually you rise into it, the unconsciousness is completely broken and there is a rush of consciousness, then the delight that comes is tremendous. Now to gain this experience the whole drama had to be played. Each one of us has agreed to this drama; it is now no more possible for you or for me to say, “I do not like this drama.” In this drama, each *Jivatman* is given a specific role. It is as if God is playing the big orchestra in which each one has a certain part and we have all agreed to play that part. In the original stage, long, long ago, there was complete darkness. During the evolutionary process, first came matter, then came life, and then came mind. We are here now with our ordinary consciousness of mind. We are slightly conscious — quite unconscious in fact. We are, a mixed bag. It is in this present state that we feel all kinds of dualities: happiness misery, knowledge ignorance, honour dishonour, victory defeat, we experience all kinds of dualities. It is an important stage of development and at every step; your suffering is a reminder that you have to ultimately act to break the ignorance. Do not cry over the suffering which is there, it is inevitable because you are rising from unconsciousness towards consciousness in which all kinds of experiences of duality will be there. If you feel uncomfortable, it is inevitable. In the ignorant consciousness how can you expect a complete felicity? You cannot, this is the normal state of your consciousness and the moment you feel pain, you realise that it is God's message to you that now the time has come for you to break this and to move forward.

This knowledge has been given by the *Jivatman* to its delegate the psychic entity. Therefore, the psychic being has got the knowledge, automatic knowledge of what has gone before in previous births; where you have reached now and where you have to move forward. Therefore at any given stage in life, wherever there is a problem, we should take the problem as an indicator of the need to break the limitation, by going back to the soul — the psychic entity that is most immediately available to us. In our present consciousness, the *Jivatman* is not available because it is far off as it were, but the nearest to our body, life and mind is this *antaratman* ? the psychic entity, which is seated inwardly. The *Jivatman* has sent this delegate into us so that we may get the guidance more easily. Therefore, individuals need to discover this soul — the psychic entity as soon as possible, particularly when we are in a situation where we really feel some kind of suffering, some kind of a need to come out of it and to really enter into a new consciousness.